To the Students of
The Pacific Institute for Religious Studies
and
Sovereign Grace Baptist Theological Seminary
and
to the Members of
Sovereign Grace Baptist Church
who have been encouraged
by such studies
and have been encouraging
to the author

Historiography
and
Early Church History to 325 AD
An Introductory Survey

W. R. Downing

…that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men.
Dan. 4:17

And all the inhabitants of the earth *are* reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and *among* the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?
Dan. 4:35

…ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. Acts 1:8

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Historiography and Early Church History to 313 AD

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Preface

The modern evolutionary, secular concept of history is that it is ultimately meaningless. But history has great significance. It is, as the cliché declares, "His Story," i.e., God's revelation in time. It is the most inclusive theological subject for consideration apart from God himself, who is *supra–temporal*, or above and beyond time. God created the universe and everything in it, including time. Thus, when God has completed his use of time, it will be no more, χρόνος οὐκέτι ἔσται (Rev. 10:6).

Everyone and everything in creation has a history. As we are presently bound by time, everything and everyone in creation has some temporal or historical significance. Our knowledge of all created reality, including Church History and Doctrine is historically–conditioned.

God spoke the universe into existence, thus every fact within creation is a created fact (Gen. 1:1). When God created the universe and everything in it, he defined all things, i.e., gave to them his meaning. Man was placed into a created reality and context as the image–bearer of God, and therefore was created to "think God's thoughts after him," i.e., to give the same meaning to everything that God had given to it; to do otherwise would be sin. Man was thus created as a presuppositionalist, as well as a rational, morally–responsible being. As the source of truth and knowledge was and is external to himself, he is also by is very nature necessarily a creature of faith.

The key to time and history is Divine predestination (Isa. 46:9–10; Dan. 4:35; Rom. 4:17; 11:33–36; Eph. 1:11). Time therefore progresses from the future into the present and from the present into the past—from promise and prophecy into time and experience and then into history. Thus, man is meant to live with an understanding of history and anticipate the fulfillment of both every promise and prophecy. Each person should visualize himself as being and living at a certain point in history, and find his significance in faithful service to God as revealed in his inscripturated Word. We are to live by faith in the God of Scripture and history.

Early Church History is vital for two reasons: first, Church History is not self–interpreting; the pattern for Christianity is Apostolic Christianity as revealed in the New Testament Scriptures. Understanding the temporary nature of the supernatural χαρίσματα and the Apostolic office leaves us with the inspired and enduring New Testament pattern. Second, the Era of Transition and the Ante–Nicene Age (c. 100–325) witnessed the most significant changes within the history of Christianity. Every error or heresy finds its roots here, and almost every aspect of doctrine has been debated and delineated during this time. The study of the first four centuries of Christian History is therefore determinative.

May this short work, complied largely from lectures notes, be a suitable, though brief introduction to both Historiography and to this critical, transitional era in Church History.

—W. R. Downing

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Gen. 1:1. In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

This statement is presuppositional, i.e., the existence of God is assumed, never proved. It reveals the Creator–creature distinction and relationship. It further declares that every fact in this universe is a created fact and to be interpreted in the context of God's power, inscripturated Word and purpose.

> Rev. 4:11. Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they exist and were created.[1]

This passage reveals why God created the universe and everything in it. It was and is for his own glory and good pleasure. His eternal purpose is infallible and will be ultimately realized in the "new heavens and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness," and occupied by a redeemed humanity which will be completely conformed to the image of his Son (Rom. 8:29; 2 Pet. 3:13).

The following passage, though succinct, prophetical and spoken to the serpent as both a prophecy and a challenge, contains in essence the whole of fallen human history with redemption at its core. It is, as it were, a seed which is cast into the soil of fallen, sinful humanity and marks the beginning and end of redemptive history. This has been called the *Protevangelium*, or the first announcement and promise of the gospel. All animal sacrifices, from the coats of skins to Abel's lamb, to Abraham's lamb, to the Passover lamb, which anticipated "The Lamb of God" are contained in this promise, as was the priestly ministry of Aaron and his posterity, the David dynasty and the office of prophet. This gospel announcement, initially fulfilled at Golgotha through the cross, will be finally and fully realized in the "new heavens and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness."

> Gen. 3:15. And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; he[2] shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

The following passages contain the biblical and Christian philosophy of history. They commence with the one true God who is self–contained, self–sufficient and self–consistent. His redemptive purpose is the central focus of human history.

> Acts 17:24–31. [24] God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; [25] Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; [26] And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation;[3] [27] That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: [28] For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.

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[1] Rev. 4:11, BNT: διὰ τὸ θέλημά σου ἦσαν καὶ ἐκτίσθησαν.

[2] The Heb. reads "he," not "it" [הוּא].

[3] Acts 17:26, ὁρίσας προστεταγμένους καιροὺς καὶ τὰς ὁροθεσίας τῆς κατοικίας αὐτῶν, having fixed their boundaries and their opportune times, i.e., the rise and fall of succeeding civilizations.

> Eph. 3:1–11. For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, [2] If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you–ward: [3] How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, [4] Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) [5] Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; [6] That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: [7] Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power.
>
> [8] Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; [9] And to make all *men* see what *is* the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: [10] To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly *places* might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, [11] According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

This last passage reveals that the church as an institution or entity is distinctly a New Testament phenomenon, a mystery not previously found in the Old Testament, but hidden in ages past.

> Col. 1:16–17. For in the sphere of His authority were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether *they be* thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and in the sphere of His prerogative all things continue to cohere.[4]

This statement reveals that the Lord Jesus Christ, as eternal God the Son, created all things in the sphere of his Word, power and prerogative, and in this sphere they continue to be held together or cohere.

> Eph. 1:10–11. That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; *even* in him: In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.

History is linear, not cyclical or repetitive, as held by the ancient Greeks and some modern historians. It began with creation and will be brought to its conclusion and consummation in the Lord Jesus Christ and renewed creation. Though denied by many modern historians, world and human history is significant; its meaning is revealed through Divinely–inscripturated truth.

Introduction

Historiography has to do with the writing of history. It is the study of research techniques, methodology and the philosophy of history. The following issues are properly part of this subject.

There are certain areas of study that are essential to the Christian faith. That Biblical studies are essential is self–evident. Yet a thorough study of the Bible is necessarily inadequate without a given amount of expertise in the areas of the Original Languages (Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek), Hermeneutics (Biblical Interpretation), General and Special Isagogics (Biblical Introduction), Biblical Criticism, Sacred Geography, Biblical, Historical and Systematic Theology, and both General and Church History. The Divine revelation that culminated in the Scriptures was given at

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[4] Col. 1:16–17, …ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, τὰ ὁρατὰ καὶ τὰ ἀόρατα… V. 17, …καὶ τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ συνέστηκεν. All things continue to cohere, or are held together by his power and prerogative.

different times to different peoples who lived in different cultures and spoke different languages. It becomes self–evident that the study of the Scriptures, if approached adequately and consistently, must include many interrelated disciplines.

There are over twenty centuries of Church History between this generation and the New Testament and the close of the canon of Scripture—twenty centuries of doctrinal development and controversy, missionary endeavor, heresy, persecution, systems of interpretation, church and state relationships and varying approaches to the Scriptures.

Such forces as Gnosticism, Roman State persecution, the state church or "Constantinian" system, the rise of Islam, the "Dark Ages" brought about by the power of ecclesiastical Rome and the allegorical interpretation of Scripture, the Renaissance, the Protestant Reformation, the rise of Rationalism or the Enlightenment with its subsequent radical criticism of Scripture, Pietism, Fundamentalism, Modernism, and the modern cults, have all had a great effect upon present Christianity. Further, the effect of philosophy—Platonism, Neopythagorianism, Neoplatonism, Transcendental Idealism, Rationalism and Existentialism to name but a few systems—has been profound on every area of Christian thought. The present state of traditional Christendom,[5] which hardly touches the inspired Word of God at any given point, is a sad testimony to the failure of traditional and professing Christianity to learn from history or to gain a historical perspective to its faith.

Church History is thus an area of study that is essential to an adequate comprehension of the Christian Faith. It provides a historical perspective to one's faith and experience, a strong preventive with respect to error and a given amount of incentive to the life. The study of Church History should produce a heightened discernment and an intelligent fervency in every area related to Christianity and the Scriptures.

There are certain preliminary questions that need to be answered before proceeding to the events, personalities, controversies and flow of Church History:

What is Church History?

The word "history" was originally derived from the Greek ἱστωρία, which denoted an inquiry, investigation, record or narrative.[6] The word may be used in two senses. "It may mean either the record of events or the events themselves."[7] The common meaning refers to the record of events. A simple definition of history would be "...the branch of knowledge that deals systematically with the past; a recording, analyzing, correlating, and explaining of past events."[8] This definition is essentially correct, but fails to situate history in its truly proper perspective. There are at least three issues that must be considered: first, history is not anthropocentric; it is theocentric

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[5] By the term "Christendom" is meant world–wide, institutionalized Christianity as manifest in the "Catholic Church" and the major denominations, i.e., the Christian religion in its traditional development.

[6] "History," from ἱστωρία, n., ἱστωρέω, vb., "to inquire into, examine, narrate, research." The Gk. terms emphasize the subjective idea of history, i.e., the viewpoint of the historian. The German word *Geschichte*, from *geschehen*, "to happen, occur," suggests the objective idea, i.e., the sum of what has occurred." The German term *Heilsgeschichte* means "the history of salvation," or the unfolding drama of redemption. See Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek–English Lexicon*, p. 842.

[7] *Encyclopedia Britannica*, II, p.529.

[8] *Webster's New World Dictionary*, pp. 665–666.

or God–centered. The God of creation is the God of history.[9] The laws of nature are the laws of God. Apart from God all would be random, chance or fate. There could be no order, purpose or conclusion. History would ultimately become meaningless and so irrelevant. Because human history is theocentric, it is the fulfillment of the Divine decree or purpose and is teleological, or progressing toward a definite consummation (Eph. 1:10–12).

Second, all events, agents and information are not of equal importance or significance. Therefore, there must be an underlying philosophy of history that seeks to select and evaluate the facts of history from given presuppositions.[10] This is not to say that there are trivia in human history. Although some would consider some entities as trivial according to their respective presuppositions, every incident, occurrence and human being in history has its, his or her significance. The self–revealing triune God of history is by revelation a personal God, and each human being is his image–bearer. Every entity, incident or occurrence has its providential significance—from a windstorm (Job 1:18–22; Jonah 1:4), an earthquake (Acts 16:25–33), a locust plague (Book of Joel) or mass death of an invading army (Isa. 37:33–38) to a debilitating sickness (2 Cor. 12:7–10), the aimless releasing of an arrow (1 Kgs. 22:34–38), the death of a seemingly insignificant sparrow (Matt. 10:29) or the number of the hairs on one's head (Matt. 10:30).

Third, the record of events and agents is necessarily incomplete and inadequate, i.e., we do not know absolutely everything about everybody who has ever lived or absolutely all the details about anything that has ever occurred, nor do we know all of the providential interrelationships involved. Only God knows, ordains and providentially controls according to his eternal purpose (Rom. 8:28). Thus, any philosophy of history must necessarily include a systematic evaluation and interpretation of the existing record, and do so with the understanding that a moral and redemptive purpose runs throughout human history.

What, then is "church" history? The term "church" traditionally has had various connotations. The proper term is ἐκκλησία,[11] which originally designated an assembly or meeting of Greek citizens. In the New Testament Christian sense, it denotes a gathered assembly of baptized believers assembled together locally and visibly as a distinct corporate body.

Later patristic usage and the development of the doctrine of the "Catholic" or "Universal Church" resulted in this term being used to describe the Kingdom of God or Christianity in general.[12] In this sense, "Church History" or "Ecclesiastical History" has become synonymous with

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[9] Old Testament Prophetic Literature constantly emphasizes that Yahweh is Lord over both history and the nations. See author's *A Survey of the Bible*, Vol. II, "Introduction to Prophetic Literature."

[10] See Gordon H. Clark, *Historiography: Secular And Religious* for a thorough discussion of historical philosophies. See also C. Gregg Singer, "The Problem of Historical Interpretation," *Foundations of Christian Scholarship*, pp. 53–73.

[11] A grammatical study of the word yields the following: ἐκκλησία is derived from the preposition ἐκ, "out of," and καλέω, "call." The word denotes an assembly of citizens called out to a public meeting or an assembly of Christians gathered for worship. This word occurs as follows in the Scriptures: ἐκκλησία occurs 115 times in the Greek New Testament (The Critical Text omits the word in Acts 2:47). It is used to denote a Christian assembly or "church" 111 times. Three times the word refers to a town meeting of citizens (Acts 19:32, 39, 41). Once it denotes Israel as an assembly or congregation in the wilderness (Acts 7:38).

[12] The term "Catholic," derived from the Greek καθολίκος and the Latin *Catholicus*, "universal, general, all–inclusive," originally referred to doctrine that was universally accepted among Christians.

the history of Christianity. Church History, then, in its traditional [though not Scriptural usage] is the study of the history of Christianity or the Christian religion.

What is The Biblical Philosophy of History?

A philosophy of history is necessary for a consistent, relevant comprehension, coherency and application of historical data.

There is but one philosophy of history for the Christian, and that is a philosophy derived from the Scriptures—an extension of his Christian Theistic World–and–Life View. The Bible is the very Word of the triune, self–revealing God inscripturated, and so it is necessarily inspired, infallible and inerrant. This forms the ultimate basis for both a consistent Christian world–and–life view and a Biblical philosophy of history.

> Note: everyone, consciously or not, has a philosophy of life, a framework or a set of presuppositions from which he thinks and acts, a *weltanschauung*, or world–view. It is an individual's perception of reality and how he relates to it, his convictions and presuppositions which represent his total outlook on life, the world about him and ultimate reality. Our world–and–life view determines literally everything in our relationship to reality. It also necessarily determines our philosophy of history.
>
> The following contrast in world–and–life views demonstrates their significance: the atheist, if consistent, must presuppose there is no God, nothing transcendent or supernatural [dialectic materialism], no absolutes [relativism]; no certainty, except fatalism [determinism], no hope, except in chance; no basis for morality except by human consensus, and no ultimate meaning except that which man gives to things, and no future beyond this present life. Thus, the atheist, if at all consistent, must face ultimate meaninglessness and futility. For such a person, history must have little or no significance, except in an evolutionary sense of simply learning from the past, while seeking to shape the present and future through the principles of Social Darwinism.
>
> The Christian by contrast, if consistent with the Scriptures, presupposes that the Self–disclosing God of the Bible is the All–encompassing Living Reality, that he sovereignly rules this universe and everything in it, and is infallibly bringing his eternal purpose to completion for his own glory and the good of his elect. He presupposes that God has created all things and has given them meaning, that obedience to God begins by giving the same meaning to everything that God has given to it. He thus believes that the moral self–consistency of God [his absolute righteousness as revealed in his Moral Law] determines human morality, that man was created in the image of God to live by God's Word and "think God's thoughts after him." The Christian further looks to the future with hope and rejoicing because his faith is founded upon the inscripturated Word of the eternal, immutable, holy God who has intelligently revealed his redemptive purpose in his Word.
>
> The consistent Christian should therefore have a great interest in history, especially "Church History," as it reveals the redemptive purpose of God in time and experience.

There are five primary issues: the Doctrine of God, the Doctrine of Creation, the Doctrine of Divine Predestination, the Doctrine of Man and the Doctrine of Redemption.

The Doctrine of God

One must be Scriptural concerning the doctrine of God [Theology Proper]. God is absolute. The created universe and everyone one and everything within it is relative to him. He is absolutely sovereign, holy, righteous, omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, perfect in his wisdom and sovereign in his love, grace and mercy. God is intelligent and does not act without purpose. His purpose reflects his wisdom and moral self–consistency [absolute righteousness] and is infallible,

i.e., it will certainly be fulfilled. History is the out–working of the Divine decree or purpose in time and experience.

The Doctrine of Creation

One must understand the implications of the doctrine of creation [Cosmology] (Gen. 1:1–5). God created the universe and everything in it by his *fiat* decree. This means that the universe, man, time and history must be understood in terms of the transcendent, sovereign, self–disclosing, triune God of Scripture. Creation itself is Divine revelation (Rom. 1:18–20), i.e., general revelation as opposed to Scripture, which is special revelation.

The God of creation is the God of history. This means that what God created, he governs, and governs with a purpose toward a culminative end (1 Cor. 15:24–28; Eph. 1:10; Col. 1:16–17; Heb. 1:1–4; 2 Pet. 3:10–13). This further means that God is absolute or supra–temporal and time is relative to him. Again, creation is scripturally presented as an act, not a process. This at once negates any evolutionary concept of the origin of the universe or the progress of human history [social Darwinism].

This also means that man has been created in the image and likeness of God and as such bears a definite relationship and responsibility to him (Gen. 1:26–28). He is to live in submission and obedience to Divine revelation,[13] i.e., man is to have a "revelational epistemology." He is to give the same meaning to everything that God has given to it, rather than attempt to superimpose his own fallen, sinful meaning on anything in God's created universe.

The Doctrine of Divine Predestination

One must hold scripturally to the doctrine of Divine predestination. The past is not to be found in a primeval void or ooze, nor the future in a nebulous, undefined, foreboding abyss, but in the context of the eternal, transcendent, sovereign, triune God, whose purpose will infallibly be fulfilled in the context of his power, wisdom and moral character.

> Note: Divine predestination is *not* determinism or fatalism. The difference between determinism or fatalism and biblical Christianity can noted by contrast: Determinism or fatalism sees everything at the mercy of an impersonal, amoral force in which human endeavor is ultimately determinative or meaningless. Divine predestination enables the biblical Christian by faith to view everything in the context of the God of Scripture—sovereign, omnipotent, infinitely wise and good, absolutely righteous and holy, and infinitely merciful and gracious toward his own. It is in this biblical context that the Christian is to submit to the revealed Word and will of God, and live obediently by faith. Divine predestination forms the foundation of all biblical prophecies and promises, and consistent human responsibility and endeavor.

Divine sovereignty with reference to time and history is predestination. God has from eternity predetermined everything that occurs in time and history (Eph. 1:11; Acts 15:18), including the rise and fall of succeeding civilizations and all the affairs and circumstances of men (Job. 12:23; Dan. 2:21; Acts 17:26; Rom. 9:6–23).

> Note: By definition "predestination" (προορίζω) means "to determine the destiny before hand." The term has a three–fold usage in Scripture, referring, first, to the comprehensive, eternal purpose of God (Eph. 1:11); second, to the soteriological purpose (Eph. 1:5); and third, to the

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[13] Creation [natural revelation] (Gen. 1:1; Rom. 1:18–20) and Scripture [special revelation] are both revelatory of God (2 Tim. 3:16–17).

eschatological purpose realized in the believer's glorification and ultimate conformity to the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29). The comprehensive use of the term may be described as:

> The eternal (Isa. 46:9–10; Acts 15:18; 1 Pet. 1:20; Rev. 4:11), immutable (Isa. 14:24; 46:11; Prov. 19:21), all–inclusive (Acts 17:25, 28; Eph. 1:11; Rev 4:11), all–wise (Jer. 51:15; Rom. 11:33–35; 16:27; Acts 2:23; 4:27–28; Eph 3:10–11; 1 Tim. 1:17; Jude 25), just (Isa. 45:21; Zeph. 3:5; Rom. 9:14) and holy (Ex. 15:11; Isa. 57:15) decree or purpose of God (Isa. 14:24; Dan. 4:17, 24; Eph. 1:11), whereby, from eternity, from within himself (Psa. 115:3; Dan. 4:35; Rom. 11:33–36; Eph. 1:5, 9) and for his own glory (1 Chron. 29:11–13; Eph. 1:3–6, 12–14; Rev 4:11), he has determined whatsoever comes to pass (Psa. 76:10; Rom. 11:33–36; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3; Neh. 9:6).[14]
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> This would include the idea of "decree" or "purpose," emphasizing the immutability, power and determination of the Divine Mind; "counsel," stressing the perfect wisdom of God in both its formulation and execution; and "providence," which is that process by which God brings to pass in time His eternal decree.
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> Divine predestination is wholly inclusive, even of the alleged free acts of men. Cf. Gen. 24:10–27; Ex. 12:35–36; 34:24; Deut. 2:30–33; Judg. 14:1–4; 1 Sam. 2:22–25; 2 Chron. 10:3–15; 25:14–16, 20; Ezra 1:1–2; 7:1, 6, 12–28; Psa. 76:10; 105:25; Prov. 21:1; Isa. 10:5–15; 42:1–7; Ezk. 38:1–4, 10–13, 16–17; Dan. 4:16–17, 25–26, 32, 34–37; Acts 2:23; 4:27–28.

Divine predestination is necessarily inclusive. Thus, there is nothing *trivial* in God's universe or purpose (Cf. Psa. 139:1–4; Matt. 6:26; 10:29–30; Rom. 11:33–36).

Further, Divine predestination is the key to a proper understanding of history. History is not cyclical (i.e., history does not repeat itself) as some ancient and modern thinkers suggest, nor does it progress from the past to the present and to the future—an anthropocentric concept. The flow of time is from the future into the present, and from the present into the past. History is the progressive realization or unfolding in time of the Divine, eternal purpose.

> The movement of time, according to the Bible, is from eternity, since it is created by God and moves out of and in terms of His eternal decree. Because time moves in terms of the eternal decree, when its function is finished there shall be time no more (Rev. 10:6). Because time is predestined, and because its beginning and end are already established, time does not develop in evolutionary fashion from past to present to future. Instead, it unfolds from future to present to past.[15]

Church history cannot and must not be considered apart from the sovereign government or providence of God (Psa. 103:1–6; Neh. 9:6; Dan. 4:35; Matt. 10:29–31; Acts 17:23–28). It is nothing less than the continuance of God's eternal, redemptive purpose among men from the opening of the Gospel economy in the New Testament to the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus Christ.

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[14] The Scriptures use at least thirty–three different Hebrew and Greek terms to express the truth of Divine predestination. See the author's *Selected Shorter Writings*, pp. 161–203 for a full discussion of Divine predestination.

[15] R. J. Rushdoony, *The Biblical Philosophy of History*, p. 11.

The Doctrine of Man

Theologically, the doctrine of man is termed "Anthropology." Man was created originally righteous[16] as the image–bearer of God to rule or exercise godly dominion over the earth under Divine direction (Gen. 1:26–28; Eccl. 7:26). This "Creation" or "Cultural Mandate" was to be fulfilled through the procreation and propagation of the human race. Thus, God ordained law, marriage and the right of private property.

Mankind fell from this original righteousness in Adam. This is original sin—the rebellion against and apostasy of the first man from God and his truth. Man sought to be his own "god" and determine for himself what was right or wrong through the disobedience of an empirical experiment and thus alienated himself and all his posterity from God and his Law–Word (Gen. 3:1–13).[17] What, in man's primeval state, was to be blessed, enjoyable, productive and fulfilling, through the Fall became fraught with toil, exhaustion, hard labor and diminished results (Gen. 3:16–19).

Fallen, sinful man, however, has not completely lost the will and desire for dominion—power and control over the earth—it is both his desire and his very nature. But in his sinful state this has become frustration, violence, exploitation, greed, war, murder, rape, theft, plunder and a self–gratifying principle which is utterly contrary to the ordained purpose of God.[18] He seeks to dominate and selfishly exploit the land, the plants, the animal life and other human life. He seeks to do so to satisfy his own inherent desire for power and control, not for the glory of God.

The Doctrine of Redemption

The Doctrine of redemption is theologically termed "Soteriology." God has not left sinful, fallen man to himself, but even at the time of the Fall declared both the defeat of the devil and the promise of salvation through a Redeemer (Gen. 3:14–15). He immediately, upon announcing to the first pair their sentence, established the principle of blood sacrifice and atonement (Gen. 3:21).

The subsequent history of mankind is also the history of redemption—the unfolding drama of redemption—through the promise of a Redeemer and of a redeemed people who shall be ultimately conformed to the image of his Son, the "Second Man," the "Last Adam" (Rom. 5:11–19; 8:29–30; 1 Cor. 15:20–22, 25–28, 45–49; Phil. 2:5–11; Heb. 7:27–28) and ultimately of "new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Pet. 3:13).

Thus, history is not meaningless, but is filled with meaning and significance. God is in the process of redeeming his image in man. He is in the process of bringing all creation to righteous culmination in the Lordship of Jesus Christ (Gen. 18:25; Psa. 9:7–8; Dan. 7:13–14; Jn. 5:21–29;

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[16] Eccl. 7:29. יָשָׁר denotes "upright, agreeable to God." Primeval man in the person of Adam was only "innocent" in that he had not yet sinned. He was not created in a state of innocency, which would imply moral neutrality, as he was created as the image–bearer of God with the works of the law ontologically embedded in his heart (Rom. 2:11–16), rendering him an intelligent, morally–responsible being.

[17] Adam was the federal head of the human race [from the Lat.: *foedus*, a league or compact]. His sin was passed to all his posterity, as was his fallen sinful nature. Fallen, sinful men are thus sinners by imputation, by nature and by personal transgressions. The language of Scripture is that fallen, sinful mankind is under the reigning power of sin (Rom. 6:1–23).

[18] It is the context of redemptive grace that Christians are commanded to do all for the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31). The initial state of salvation necessarily includes a return to man's original purpose. Cf. also such passages as 2 Cor. 3:17–8; Eph. 4:1, 17–19, 25–32.

Acts 17:30–31; Eph. 1:3–11; Phil. 2:9–11; Rev. 20:11–15). Every human being has significance before God and therefore in history.

Why Study Church History?

Every Christian needs a historical perspective to his faith. Most professing Christians are sadly apathetic toward church history. They are more future–oriented and have little interest in the past. This attitude may in part reflect the disinterestedness, emotionalism and irrationalism of contemporary fundamental and evangelical Christianity in general and certain eschatological theories in particular, such as Dispensational Premillennialism with its doctrine of, and undue emphasis on, an imminent rapture. Whatever one may believe about prophecy and eschatology, an ignorance of or apathy toward church history is quite inexcusable, and deprives one of much truth, discernment, correction, encouragement, motivation and hope.

There are several reasons why every believer should acquire a historical perspective to his faith. Every believer needs to seriously consider the following:

The Faithfulness of God

History enables one to witness the faithfulness of God throughout history (Dt. 32:7–8; Psa. 77:5–12; Psa. 145:3–4; Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:1–11). Church history is the continuing record of the faithfulness of God to his own spiritual people within the New Covenant just as Old Testament Hebrew history is a witness to the faithfulness of God to his own national people under the Old Covenant. The providence of God in the lives of his people and churches is for the education, edification, admonition and anticipation of the present–day believer.

Truth and Faith in Experience

History enables one to view the out–working of Christian truth and faith in experience. This makes history vital, personally relevant and encouraging. True believers throughout history have had to suffer for their faith and put their doctrine to the test of experience under the most trying circumstances. Many have lived, labored, suffered and died gloriously for their faith. The stories of martyrs, ministers, and missionaries are always edifying.

Truth and Tradition

History should enable one to distinguish between truth and tradition. What a person believes is either derived from the truth of Scripture or from religious tradition. This is true, not only of the doctrines and practices of modern Christianity, but it is also true of the persons and events in history. An idealistic tradition often obscures the real personality or event and the given context. At times the truth of historical fact has been lost to the popular mind in the aura of legend or fiction. A study of history should bring a proper perspective of reality.

Avoidance of Error

History should enable one to avoid the errors of the past. A study of history will necessarily sharpen one's doctrinal perception. The History of Doctrine, or Historical Theology, is an investigation and evaluation of creeds, councils, confessions, controversies and characters of a doctrinal nature. Those who are ignorant of the history of doctrine are usually prone toward and susceptible to the same doctrinal errors as those who lived before them. The historical creeds and confessions of faith provide discernment, and form the basis for much of what historical and

traditional Christianity holds to be orthodox. Most modern errors and heresies are but recurrences of ancient errors and heresies.

The Historical Context

History should enable one to understand the full context of any given historical, scriptural, doctrinal, social, ecclesiastical or practical issue. This is necessary in both scriptural and historical studies. One must understand the historical circumstances of any given scriptural passage before it can be adequately interpreted. Nothing occurs in a historical vacuum. The historical context often includes the spiritual, moral, ethical, social, cultural and psychological realities. History necessitates the same, as far as research is able to provide the data.

One's own life must be viewed in a historical context. We need to envision ourselves as living at a given point in history. We must think in terms of years, lifetimes, and even centuries. In what kind of age do we live? What should be the major thrust of our lives and efforts for God? A historical context necessarily gives both discernment and direction in such matters as it witnesses to the truth of Scripture.

The Works of God

History enables one to witness the works of God. He is absolutely sovereign and is not bound or governed by anything external. He is self–consistent and bound only by his self–consistent moral character and purpose. History reveals that God may be pleased to accomplish in one century or even in one generation what he has not been pleased to do for centuries. This was true in the New Testament Era, the Protestant Reformation and in times of great revival and spiritual awakening.

The Past Witness to The Present

History enables one to call to remembrance the glorious work of God in the past as an encouragement and witness to the present. The God of the Bible is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, the God of the Apostles, the God of the Waldenses and others before the Reformation, the God of the Reformers, the God of the Puritans, the God of Whitefield and the God of Spurgeon. He is the immutable God of truth, the Gospel, revival and spiritual awakening. The study of church history should encourage the believer in his own experience and further prompt him to pray and labor with perseverance and fervency for revival in the churches and spiritual awakening among the unconverted.

The Truth Concerning Religious Human Nature

Human nature has not changed since the Fall. Men, though religious, are yet sinners. History witnesses to this scriptural truth. No trial, misunderstanding, opposition, or persecution is unique—or even new. Church history is filled with the record of the treatment of those who sought to stand for the truth and what they suffered, not only from the civil authorities, but from their own "brethren." A historical perspective is a great comfort in the time of trial and adversity from those "who profess to know God, but in works deny him" (Titus 1:16).

What are the Fundamental Presuppositions for the Study of Church History?

A study of church history must proceed upon certain assumptions, axioms or presuppositions. Consider the following questions: Is God fully and intimately involved in the history of Christianity, or has he simply left Christianity to itself to develop according to some

"natural law" or religious evolution? Is church history self–interpreting, i.e., is it the natural development of the religion found in the New Testament? Was scriptural, historic Christianity represented in the Church of Rome until the Protestant Reformation, when "the Church" was then "reformed?" Were all pre–Reformation groups apart from Rome heretical? The answers to these questions are determined by one's presuppositions and study of history, and are essential to any consistent historiography.

Time and Eternity

The first presupposition is that church history is the out–working in time of the Divine, eternal purpose with reference to Christianity. This has been discussed in detail under the biblical philosophy of history, and asserts that God is intimately involved in the totality of church history.

This presupposition is a denial of the pagan and atheistic concept of natural selection and the modern concept of social and religious evolution [Social Darwinism]. Church history is not a study of the evolution or natural development of the Christian religion, nor is it a study in comparative religions. As the one and only religion derived from Divine revelation, Biblical Christianity is "incomparable." It cannot be placed on a level with other religions without inherently denying its supernatural origin and unique character.

The key to understanding the work of God in church history is found in two realities: Divine predestination and the moral self–consistency of God. God has eternally and sovereignly ordained all events and agents as to their significance, sequence and interrelationships. The moral character of God [his absolute holiness and righteousness] provides the key to understanding the issues of good and evil events and agents in history. God is absolutely sovereign over both good (faith, faithfulness, orthodoxy, etc.) and evil (error, heresy, persecution of true believers, etc.), and thus works in and through both to fulfill his all–wise, most–holy and righteous will.

> Note: The teaching of Scripture is that God is absolutely sovereign over all men and things, even the sinful or evil acts of sinners (Isa. 45:5–8; Acts 4:27–28). The question is: how can God be absolutely sovereign over the sinful acts of men and yet remain holy and righteous i.e., morally self–consistent and free from sin? There are three possible answers:
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> (1) God only foreknew (in the sense of mere foresight or omniscience) the sinful acts of men. It is possible, then, that he might have prevented them by seeking some utilitarian solution, but evidently chose not to do so, thus possibly making him ultimately responsible for sin by allowing it when he could have prevented it. Or, he could not have prevented it, making him impotent with regard to sin and evil—a mere spectator to the affairs of this world. Language such as "permitting" or "allowing" sin does not remove the ultimate cause from God, unless it presupposes an impersonal force above or beyond God, i.e., a fatalistic determinism. Such an approach necessarily views God as arbitrary. Could we pray to a God whose answers to prayer would be completely arbitrary?
>
> (2) Evil in the universe exists in a mysterious dualism. It cannot be explained, but it exists apart from, independently of, and in opposition to God. God would then be impotent to deal with it. Prayers would be all but useless, and petitions for the souls and lives of sinners would be senseless.
>
> (3) God is absolutely sovereign over all things, even evil and the sinful acts of men. He is good, and he ordains evil, controlling it to bring about the highest good for his own glory. God can foreordain evil only if he himself is good, because evil is "evil" only by contrast with the goodness of God, who is absolute, and the Source, Support and End of all things (Rom. 11:33–36). Only then, if God is absolutely sovereign over and foreordains evil, can he bring forth his

good purpose in it for his own glory (e.g., the suffering and death of the Lord Jesus Christ, Acts 2:23; 4:27–28).[19] This approach alone is consistent with the teaching of Scripture. The very idea that God could be the author of sin in the sense of being himself tainted with evil or culpable to sin, is an unbelieving attempt to call God into account rather than humbly acknowledging that we have no right to question him (Rom. 9:14–29).

Church History is not Self–Interpreting

The second presupposition is that church history is not self–interpreting, i.e., it is not the natural development of the Christianity found in the New Testament. The Scriptures, and specifically, the New Testament, form the standard by which church history is to be interpreted. The pattern for the historical church is that of the New Testament church. The pattern for historic Christianity is New Testament Christianity. This has important implications for both Romanism and Protestantism.

Romanism and Protestantism consider the Church to be coextensive and synonymous with the Kingdom of God, rather than an entity within the Kingdom. Thus, they perceive the "Church" to be all–embracing and universal, including all religious agencies (i.e., para–church organizations).

Romanism developed from apostate Christianity, Old Testament Judaism and paganism. Its concept of the church rests partly on Scripture and partly on tradition and paganism. From its inception in the fourth century, the Church of Rome has never possessed the essential elements of a New Testament church.

Protestantism exists essentially as a Reformation of the Romish church, not a full return or conformity to the New Testament standard and pattern. Historic, traditional Protestantism possesses an "Old Testament mentality," i.e., it is patterned more after the Old Testament than the New. This is markedly evident in the monolithic state–church concept, a Reformed Covenant Theology, the almost universal practice of *paedorhantism* (i.e., infant sprinkling, from ῥαντίζειν, to sprinkle. Infant sprinkling allegedly replaced the Old Covenant rite of circumcision.), an ecclesiastical hierarchy and the tendency in some denominations toward a priestly concept of the ministry.

Note: An Old Testament mentality derives from the idea that the church is synonymous with the Kingdom of God and began with the history of redemption in the Old Testament. Such a view perceives the Old Testament to be the standard and inherently denies the progressive nature of Divine revelation and the finality of the New Testament in vital areas.

Such an approach reduces many of the Gospel or New Testament institutions to the level of the preparatory nature of the Old Testament. There is, for instance, a tendency to substitute one rite or ceremony for another rather than find the true fulfillment in the New Testament context. Two prominent examples are baptism for circumcision and the Lord's Supper for the Passover.

Physical circumcision finds its fulfillment in regeneration, or circumcision of the heart (Cf. Rom. 2:28–29; Col. 2:10–13). If baptism can in any way be considered a sign or seal of the covenant, then it is only for believers (i.e., those who are regenerate) in the New Testament context (In addition to the foregoing texts, cf. Rom. 4:9–12. Abraham was already a believer. The wording of these texts can only apply to believers).

The Passover was not fulfilled in the Lord's Supper, but in the Lord Jesus Christ himself (1 Cor. 5:7). Incidentals are not a sufficient basis for doctrinal foundations. Further, it is common

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[19] See this argument in its entirety in the statement by John Frame, "The Problem of Theological Paradox," *Foundations of Christian Scholarship*, pp. 321–322.

among some Protestants to find the pattern for a plurality of elders in the seventy ruling elders under Moses rather than seek a New Testament example or rationale.

The institution of the New Testament church is unique to this gospel economy. Such an entity did not exist in the Old Testament (Eph. 2:11–3:12). The reference of Stephen to Israel in the wilderness as a "church" [ἐκκλησία] must be understood in the basic and simple sense of a gathered assembly, not a church in the traditional sense (Acts 7:38). Thus, church history is not the record of the natural development of New Testament Christianity, but rather largely a record of apostasy from the New Testament pattern in doctrine and practice by both Romanism and Protestantism.

The Perpetuity of New Testament Christianity

The third and final presupposition is that New Testament Christians and churches existed from the Apostolic era to the Protestant Reformation apart from the Church of Rome. There are several considerations:

The Promise of Christ

The Lord Jesus Christ promised that his church would continue to exist as an institution, that it would not be obliterated and that he would be with it until the close of this gospel economy or age (Cf. Matt. 16:18; 28:18–20). Such promises were not fulfilled in or by the Romish State–Church system, as alleged by Rome. Some scoff at these promises referring to a continuation of New Testament churches and seek to render them null and void by ridicule. If the Lord did not mean that New Testament churches would continue throughout history, what did he mean? The conclusion is unavoidable and the witness of history confirms its validity. It is only Romish opposition and a Protestant mentality or prejudice that strive to negate the promise of the Lord Jesus Christ and the witness of history.

The Witness of History

The witness of history is that New Testament Christians and churches had a continuous existence from the Apostolic Era to the Reformation of the Sixteenth Century. These groups were considered heretical by the papists and were both slandered and rigorously persecuted. It was against such that the Romish Inquisition was first established and many crusades were raised. Their names varied: Montanists, Phrygians, Cataphrygians, Novatians, Donatists, Paulicians, Vaudois, Paterines, Albigenses, Berengarians, Bogomili, Cathari, Gezari, Arnoldists, Petrobrusians, Henricians, Waldenses, Lollards, Wycliffites, Bohemian Brethren, Hussites, etc. They were inclusively derided from the fourth to the sixteenth century by the generic term "anabaptist" because they baptized as believers those who were later converted, but had been "baptized" [sprinkled] as infants in the Romish State–Church system.

Principles and Practice

The history of these pre–Reformation groups is not that of a succession of churches with an organic connection through baptism or church–to–church authority as *neo–Landmarkism* supposes. Such an organic [so–called "chain–link" or "essential mother–daughter authority"] succession is neither essential nor consistently traceable. It is rather a continuance of New Testament principles and practice.

Note: *Old Landmarkism* is a movement among certain Baptists that originated in the mid–nineteenth century over the issue of recognizing *paedobaptist* ministers as true ministers of Christ or welcoming them into Baptist pulpits ("pulpit affiliation"). The issue reached to the nature of paedobaptist churches. Ultimately and consistently, as Baptists were the only ones

practicing scriptural immersion, a view of organic ["chain–link"] church succession was a *later* development.

According to the *neo–Landmark* theory, Church validity and authority do not rest on alignment to the New Testament Scriptures, but on a ["chain–link"] succession of churches ultimately and hypothetically traced to the New Testament Era by a succession of a church–to–church authority [the absolute necessity of a so–called "mother" church]. This has resulted in such teachings as the "Baptist Bride" position (i.e., only "true" Baptist churches compose the Bride of Christ and are alone true churches). Any perpetuity must be based on doctrine and practice, not on an alleged succession of baptisms and church–to–church authority. Many modern churches, attempting to trace their perpetuity or succession from Apostolic times, are filled with essential and radical doctrinal error. Many of the so–called "heroes of the faith" were inconsistent or plainly heretical in some of their doctrinal views. For an exposition of Landmarkism, see J. R. Graves, *Old Landmarkism*. It should further be noted that "alien immersion" did not refer to any immersion other than "Landmark Missionary Baptist" baptism, but rather to immersion performed by paedobaptist ministers, Cf. A. C. Dayton, *Alien Baptism*.

The Old Landmarkers, neither believed nor taught the necessity of a "mother–church" concept, or a "chain–link succession" of churches. This was a later development and may rightly be termed in some aspects "neo–Landmarkism." Mark the following from Ben. M. Bogard, "It is not necessary, but it is customary, for a council of brethren from neighboring churches to be called to assist in the organization of new churches."[20]

Note the following quotations from W. A. Jarrell:

The late and lamented scholar, J. R. Graves, LL.D., wrote "Wherever there are three or more baptized members of a regular Baptist church or churches covenanted together to hold and teach, and are governed by the New Testament," etc., "there is a Church of Christ, even though there was not a presbytery of ministers in a thousand miles to organize them into a church. There is not the slightest need of a council of presbyters to organize a Baptist church."

And the scholarly S. H. Ford, LL.D., says: "Succession among Baptists is not a linked chain of churches or ministers, uninterrupted and traceable at this distant day...The true and defensible doctrine is, that baptized believers have existed in every age since John baptized in Jordan, and have met as a baptized congregation in covenant and fellowship where an opportunity permitted."

Every Baptist church being, in organization, a church complete in itself, and, in no way organically connected with any other church, such a thing as one church succeeding another, as the second link of a chain is added to and succeeds the first, or, as one Romish or Episcopal church succeeds another, is utterly foreign to and incompatible with Baptist church polity. Therefore, the talk about every link "jingling in the succession chain from the banks of the Jordan to the present," is ignorance or dust–throwing.

All that Baptists mean by church "Succession" or Church perpetuity, is: There has never been a day since the organization of the first New Testament church in which there was no genuine church of the New Testament existing on earth.[21]

It is historically demonstrable that among these groups were those who held to the New Testament essentials of salvation by grace, a regenerate church membership, believer's baptism by immersion and liberty of conscience.

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[20] *The Baptist Way Book*, p. 70.

[21] The quotations from J. R. Graves and S. H. Ford and the closing remarks are from W. A. Jarrell, *Baptist Church Perpetuity or History*, pp. 1–3.

It is vital to understand that the aforementioned groups had many common interests: their names were often used interchangeably; they often used the same catechisms; an extensive correspondence circulated among them; refugees from one group were usually assimilated into another; and they made common use of itinerant preachers. As to the necessity of church succession, each church then and now possesses a distinct and immediate relation to the New Testament. This is determined by doctrine and practice, not any type of church succession.

The Issue of Orthodoxy

No inclusive claim of orthodoxy is made for these groups. What is maintained is that among these peoples there existed New Testament believers and churches. No church in the New Testament was entirely without error, neither is any present–day denomination or religious group completely orthodox, although orthodox believers and churches may exist within it.

There is an essential principle that remains constant: To the extent that any given church conforms to the New Testament, it is to that extent a New Testament church, and, conversely, to the extent that a church departs from the New Testament, to that extent, it ceases to be a New Testament church. This is not to state that a church may evolve into a New Testament church.

Prejudice

What is known about these groups is largely from the writings of their Romish enemies, thus great prejudice exists against them in the minds of some historians who have held to Romish and Protestant presuppositions. The charges made against these "anabaptists" by the papists have been echoed by some Protestant writers. Historical research in recent times, however, has proven many of these accusations to be false and merely guilt by association.

> Note: These groups were often charged with the most extreme heresies in order to discredit them, raise armies against them and persecute them as heretics. A common charge was Manichaeism, a pagan dualistic system. Rome likewise charged Martin Luther with being a Manichaeist in order to discredit him. Such charges were groundless. Some historians have followed the traditional Romish view without independent investigation. The Paulicians were one of the most maligned groups. In 1893 F. C. Conybeare, a well–known scholar, obtained a copy of *The Key of Truth*, the ancient Paulician confession of faith, mentioned by writers in the eleventh century. This document has shown them to have been of apostolic origin (i.e., a survival of primitive or New Testament Christianity) and to have been evangelical. See John T. Christian, *A History of the Baptists*, I, pp. 48–59. The Waldenses were evangelical, as every Protestant historian admits, and these were closely associated with the Paulicians.

The Testimony of Romish and Protestant Historians

Among both Romish and Protestant historians, there are authoritative voices that have witnessed to the faith of these early Christians.

Cardinal Hosius, President of the Council of Trent, wrote:

> Were it not for the fact that the Anabaptists have been grievously tormented and cut off with the knife during the past 1200 years, they would swarm greater than all the reformers...If the truth of religion were to be judged by the readiness and boldness of which a man or any sect shows in suffering, then the opinions and persuasions of no sect can be truer and surer than those of the Anabaptists, since there have been none for the 1200 years past that have been

more generally punished or that have been more cheerfully and steadfastly undergone, and have offered themselves to the most cruel sort of punishment than these people.[22]

Wilhelmus a\ Brakel (1635–1711), a Dutch Reformed pastor, theologian and writer, in answer to the question concerning church perpetuity, wrote:

Where was the Reformed [Calvinistic or Evangelical] church prior to Zwingli, Luther, and Calvin?

Answer: First of all, the true church remains steadfast by reason of her durability—a durability which does not fluctuate. True doctrine is an infallible distinguishing mark of the church…Wherever true doctrine resides…there also is the church…prior to Luther this church existed wherever this true doctrine, which never ceased to be, was to be found.

…The church existed in several independent churches which maintained separation from popery…Such churches existed since early times in the southern parts of France, as well as in some parts of England, Scotland, Bohemia, and also in Piedmont. Against these churches popes have initiated many persecutions, but they continue to exist until this day.…prior to the time of Zwingli and Luther there had been very many whoadhered to the same doctrine…and that Zwingli, Luther, and Calvin had by renewal brought this doctrine to light.…

Reynerius, one of the leaders of the Inquisition, who did some writing prior to the year 1400, writes concerning the Waldenses:

> Among all sects that either are or have been, there is none more detrimental to the Roman Catholic Church than that of the Leonists (that is, the poor men of Lyons–the Waldenses)…it is the sect that is of the longest standing of any; for some say it has existed since the time of the apostles…it is the most general of all sects; for scarcely is there any country to be found where this sect has not been embraced…this sect has a great appearance of godliness, since they live righteously before all men, believe all that God has said, and maintain all the articles contained in the *sybolum* (the twelve articles of faith)…

Archbishop *Sessellius* writes in his book against the Waldenses: "The Waldenses originate from a religious man named Leo, who lived during the time of the first Christian Emperor, Constantine the Great [313 AD–]."

Such is the witness of these parties. Do you yet ask whether the Reformed [Calvinistic or Evangelical] Church existed prior to Luther? To this I reply that she was to be found among those whom we have just mentioned; that is, those residing in Piedmont among the Waldenses.[23]

Pierre Allix (1641–1717) was a French Reformed pastor and then a historian in the Church of England who became an apologist for the Albigenses and Waldenses. He wrote that their origin could be traced to the fourth century, not to Peter Waldo, and that these were evangelical Christians.[24]

Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758), the New England Puritan Divine wrote concerning the testimony of the truth during the Middle Ages when Western Civilization was under the power of the papacy:

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[22] *Letters Apud Opera,* pp. 112–113, as quoted by John T. Christian, *Op. cit.,* pp. 85–86.

[23] Wilhelmus a\ Brakel, *De Redelijke Godsdeinst*, [*The Christian's Reasonable Service*], II, pp. 37–39.

[24] See Pierre Allix, *The Ecclesiastical History of the Ancient Churches of Piedmont and of the Albigenses.* See also Jean Paul Perrin, a Waldensian pastor and historian, *History of the Ancient Christians*, a source–book for Allix, and a history of the Waldenses, Albigenses and Vaudois.

> In every age of this dark time, there appeared particular persons in all parts of Christendom, who bore a testimony against the corruptions and tyranny of the church of Rome....ecclesiastical historians mention many by name who manifested an abhorrence of the pope, and his idolatrous worship, and pleaded for the ancient purity of doctrine and worship. God was pleased to maintain an uninterrupted succession of witnesses through the whole time, in Germany, France, Britain, and other countries; private persons and ministers, some magistrates and persons of great distinction. And there were numbers in every age who were persecuted and put to death for this testimony.
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> Besides these particular persons dispersed, there was a certain people called the *Waldenses*, who lived separate from all the rest of the world, and constantly bore a testimony against the church of Rome through all this dark time...[25]

In the year 1819 the King of Holland appointed Dr. J. J. Dermout, his personal chaplain and a historian of international repute together with Dr. Ypeij, an outstanding Reformed scholar and professor of theology at Groningen, to write a history of the Dutch Reformed Church. Among their findings is the following:

> We have now seen that the Baptists, who were formerly called Anabaptists...were the original Waldenses, and who have long in history received the honor of that origin. On this account the Baptists may be considered as the only Christian community which has stood since the days of the Apostles, and as a Christian society which has preserved pure the doctrine of the Gospel through all ages. The perfectly correct internal and external economy of the Baptist denomination tends to confirm the truth, disputed by the Romish Church, that the Reformation brought about in the Sixteenth century was in the highest degree necessary, and at the same time goes to refute the erroneous notion of the Catholics that their denomination is the most ancient.[26]

Dr. Williston Walker, the Congregationalist church historian and professor of history at Harvard University, wrote:

> Some men of weight in church history...would find a continuous relation between the Anabaptists of the Reformation period and individual sects like the Waldenses, and through them a line of free and possibly evangelical churches, back to the early days of Christianity.[27]

John Lawrence Von Mosheim (1694–1755), a Lutheran and the "Father of Modern Church History," wrote about these pre–Reformation groups:

> ...the origin of the Anabaptists...is lost in the remote depths of antiquity...Before the rise of Luther or Calvin, there lay concealed in almost all the countries of Europe, persons who adhered tenaciously to the principles of the modern...Baptists.[17]

L. Burnett, a "Campbellite" [Church of Christ] and editor of the *Christian Messenger*, wrote:

> The Baptists have connection with the Apostles through their line of succession, which extends back 350 years, where it connects with the Waldensian line, and that reaches to the

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[25] Jonathan Edwards, *Works,* I, p. 596. See the entire section on pp. 595–597.

[26] A. Ypeij and J. J. Dermout, *Geschiedenis der Netherlandsche Hervomke Kerk,* I, p. 148, as quoted by John T. Christian, *Op. cit.,* pp. 95–96.

[17] John L. Von Mosheim, *Ecclesiastical History*, II, pp. 119–120. See. W. A. Jarrell , *Op. cit.*, pp. 309–311 for comments and corrections on the part of the historians and translators, William Jones and Maclaine.

[27] Quoted by W. A. Jarrell, *Op. cit.*, p. 61.

> Apostolic day…Baptists also have connection with the Apostles in what they teach and practice.[28]

Further testimony of the evangelical nature of many of these groups can be found in the works of Samuel Morland, a Puritan; Augustus Neander and J. H. Kurtz, Lutherans; G. S. Faber, an Anglican; J. A. Wylie, a Presbyterian, and E. H. Broadbent, a Brethren.[29]

The Baptist Witness

Some closing quotes from C. H. Spurgeon, a Baptist of broad fellowship and gracious spirit, are quite appropriate:

> We believe that the Baptists are the original Christians. We did not commence our existence at the Reformation, we were reformers before Luther or Calvin were born; we never came from the Church of Rome, for we were never in it, but have an unbroken line up to the Apostles themselves. We have always existed from the very days of Christ, and our principles, sometimes veiled and forgotten, like a river, which may travel underground for a little season, have always had honest and holy adherents. Persecuted alike by Romanists and Protestants of almost every sect…"[30]

> We care very little for the "historical church" argument, but if there be anything in it at all, *it ought not to be filched by the clients of Rome,* but should be left to that community, which all along held by "one Lord, one faith and one baptism….The afflicted Anabaptists, in their past history, have borne such pure testimony, both to truth and freedom, that they need in nothing be ashamed.…It would not be *impossible* to show that the first Christians who dwelt in the land were of the same faith and order as the churches now called Baptists.[31]

> …when any say to us, "You as a denomination, what great names can you mention? What fathers can you speak of?" We may reply, "More than any other under heaven, for we are of the old apostolic church that have never bowed to the yoke of princes yet; we, known among men, in all ages, by various names, such as Donatists, Novatians, Paulicians, Petrobrussians, Cathari, Arnoldists, Hussites, Waldenses, Lollards, and Anabaptists, have always contended for the purity of the Church, and her distinctness and separation from human government. Our fathers were men inured to hardships, and unused to ease. They present to us, their children, an unbroken line which comes legitimately from the apostles, not through the filth of Rome, not by the manipulations of prelates, but by the Divine life, the Spirit's anointing, the fellowship of the Son in suffering and of the Father in truth."[32]

> Note: The resurgence of a more modern theory, that modern Baptists came out of the Separatist Movement in England, originally sprinkled, and did not begin to immerse until 1641, has been answered conclusively.[33]

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[28] L. Burnett, *The Christian Messenger*, December 8, 1886.

[29] See the bibliography at the end of this volume.

[30] C. H. Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 1861, p. 225.

[31] C. H. Spurgeon, in *Ford's Christian Repository*, as quoted by W. A. Jarrell, *Op. cit*., p. 330.

[32] C. H. Spurgeon, *Op. cit*., 1861, p. 613.

[33] Cf. Paul Nelson, Ed., *The Whitsitt Controversy: Argument and Refutation*, Morgan Hill, CA: P.I.R.S. Publications, 2010. 353 pp. John T. Christian answers the arguments of Dr.Whitsitt who formulated this theory. See also: John Stanley, *The Church in the Hop Garden*. London: The Kingsgate Press, n.d., 261 pp. This church had a continued existence since the time of Wyclif.

II
The Time-Divisions of Church History

Church history may be summarized in six eras or ages, each possessing its own unique characteristics and time–frame: The Apostolic Age (26–100) forms the inspired account of and standard for Christianity. True Christianity is preeminently New Testament Christianity.

The Era of Transition (100–313) marks the departure from New Testament or primitive Christianity with the rise of the ecclesiasticism and sacerdotalism that formed the basis for Romanism. This era is the time of the great departure from "the faith once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3).

The Imperial Age (313–476) was the time of the Catholic State Church under the Roman Empire and the age of the first four great Ecumenical Church Councils.

The Middle Ages (476–1453). The time–frame and dating varies according to the importance given to certain criteria. Some begin with the fall of Rome (476), and others with Pope Gregory the Great (590). Some date the end of the Middle Ages with the Italian Renaissance (c. 1300), and others with the fall of Constantinople (1453). This outline dates the time from the fall of Rome to the fall of Constantinople (476–1453).

The Era of Renaissance and Reformation (1453–1648) considers both the Renaissance and the Reformation together, as one is inherently related to the other. The time–frame is from the fall of Constantinople to the Peace of Westphalia, which politically ended the Reformation Era and settled the Catholic and Protestant boundaries of Europe. This age was a time of political upheaval, ecclesiastical reformation and spiritual revival. It forms the spiritual and ecclesiastical basis for all subsequent church history.

The Modern Era (1648–the Present) dates from the Peace of Westphalia and the end of the Thirty Years' War to the present.

There are four eras of church history that are particularly noteworthy. Each is relatively short, but each is greatly determinative—The Apostolic Era (74 years), the Era of Transition (213 years), the Age of Renaissance and Reformation (195 years) and now, the Modern Era. Each of these eras or ages signaled a great transformation and sweeping changes in the spiritual, religious and civil order.

The Modern Era has witnessed several times of great change: the great evangelical revivals of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the plethora of denominations, the great evangelical missionary movement. Now, especially since the 1960s onward with the onset of Postmodernism, Christianity has witnessed literally everything within society being transformed. The basic elements or characteristics of Postmodernity—relativism [no absolutes, situation ethics, no moral standards, the deconstruction and reconstruction of language and meaning, etc.], existentialism [extreme subjectivism and self–centeredness], pluralism [all religions are essentially the same] and the deconstruction of language [no authority, no objective truth]—have signaled major shift in our entire civilization.

This volume is concerned with the first two eras or ages: The Apostolic Age and the first century AD and the Era of Transition from New Testament Christianity to a State Church with its

Sacerdotal system. This era (100–313) witnessed the enormous transition form the old world with its paganism to the rise of Christianity, and from the rise and establishment of Christianity in the New Testament to its utter transformation into a state–church system with an highly developed hierarchical order which mirrored the Roman Empire, an order which was transformed into a sacerdotalism with exclusive rights over the souls of men.

III
The Apostolic Age
The Preparation for Christianity

The Hebrew Influence. God had been preparing the world for the truth of the Gospel since the Garden of Eden and the entrance of sin into the human race (Gen. 3:15, 21). The institution of substitutional blood sacrifice as a covering for sin and the promise of a redeemer were progressively revealed by God in the Old Testament to his covenant people through prophecies, ceremonies, rituals, types and symbols (Heb. 10:1). The Old Testament was preparatory to the New. The New Testament was the fulfillment and realization of the Old. Jewish preparation for Christianity consisted mainly in the following: first, the Divine progressive revelation from Abraham to the prophets concerning the promised Messiah. This messianic expectation, though somewhat obscured by tradition, was prominent in the national consciousness (Matt. 2:1–12; Lk. 2:25–26, 36–38; Jn. 1:19–34). The Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah, would be of Jewish descent, the seed of Abraham, of the Tribe of Judah, the Son of David.

Second, the revelation of the moral nature and character of God in his holy Law (Ex. 20:1–17). Wherever Judaism had an influence among the Gentiles, the nature and character of the one true God were known to a given degree. Such teaching stood in stark contrast to the polytheism and relative morality of the time.

Third, the dispersion of the Jews throughout the Roman Empire and beyond and the institution of the synagogue. The captivity in Babylon had cured the Jews of their idolatrous and polytheistic past. Their strict monotheism was spread throughout the Roman Empire and beyond. In the synagogues scattered throughout the Empire, Gentiles could hear the Scriptures read and hear the basic truth concerning God, his Law, his moral character and his promises. These synagogues would providentially provide places of evangelism for the Apostle Paul and others. Many of their converts would be former Gentile proselytes to Judaism.[34]

Fourth, Jewish religious traditions, social and political sects or institutions such as the Scribes, the Pharisees, the Herodians and the ruling Sanhedrin produced an environment for the rejection and crucifixion of the Son of God.[35]

As the Lamb of God, the Savior, the Mediator of the New or Gospel covenant, he must not only live a sinless life (active obedience), but also suffer and die (passive obedience), then be raised again from the dead and ascend into heaven as Mediator, Great High Priest and Sovereign Lord (Phil. 2:5–11; 1 Tim. 2:5; the whole of the letter to the Hebrews; Acts 2:36). The religious leaders, motivated by criminal unbelief, ignorance and envy, persuaded the people and the Roman authorities to crucify the Lord Jesus Christ (Jn. 7:1; 8:31–59; 11:45–53; Matt. 27:17–18; Acts 2:22–23; 3:13–18; 4:23–28; 7:51–52). The Hebrew race then providentially provided a historical, religious, social, geographical and cultural environment for the redemptive revelation of God to the nations.

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[34] For further discussion, see under “Apostolic Christianity and Religious Entities.”

[35] *Ibid*.

The Greek influence in the preparation for Christianity was three–fold: first, Greek philosophy permeated the thought of the ancient world. Many pagans had turned from their irrational and superstitious polytheism to philosophy. It questioned the religious, called attention to the transcendent and the eternal, and explored the nature of moral and ethical issues. But philosophy by its very nature was inherently incapable of enabling the human mind to apprehend the self–revealing triune God of Scripture. It created an intellectual void that only the truth of the Gospel could fill. It also provided in part a vocabulary and thought–structure for Christianity. The two prevailing philosophies of the first century were Epicureanism and Stoicism. Gnosticism was an admixture of pagan and Christian thought that sought to refine Christianity into an esoteric philosophy.

Second, the Greek language was spread throughout the later Roman world with the conquests of Alexander the Great (356–323 B.C.). The *Koine* (Κοινη?, "common") Greek became the *lingua franca*, spoken by Greeks, Romans and Jews. It was the common language of the marketplace and of the Gospel for teachers, evangelists, missionaries and the inspired authors of the New Testament Scriptures. The *Koine* Greek with its grammatical and syntactical intricacies and idioms was the best–suited for expressing the very Word of God.

Third, the Greek spirit, though not so prominent as the philosophy and language, instilled in Christianity an intellectual temper or approach more suited to the Western mind than the oriental Hebrew mentality and thought–process. Christianity was to become largely Gentile and Western in its missionary thrust and thought as its spread throughout the Roman Empire and the Western world.[36]

The Roman influence was physical, political, social and legal. Men traveled on Roman roads. Rome was the central and ultimate political power. Roman armies kept an enforced peace [*Pax Romana*]. There was some relative protection and stability for all subjects of the Empire, and especially Roman citizens. The *Pax Romana* brought a unifying principle to civilization and at the very first provided a protective and stabilizing environment for the spread of Christianity. Judaism was considered a *religio licita* by the Roman government and the Jewish foundations of Christianity providentially sheltered it for the first three decades.

The Jews in Palestine under Roman rule had no power of capital punishment and were under the authority of a Roman Procurator.[37] Paul as the Apostle to the Gentiles and a Roman citizen enjoyed a given amount of protection and certain privileges. Christian converts in the Roman army took the Gospel to the borders of the Empire in the first century. There is evidence that the Gospel came to Britain by 43 AD in this way. The preparatory influence in summary is that the Jews gave the world One Lord; the Greeks, One Language; and the Romans, One Law.

This relative short time period is both foundational and determinative for all of Church History. The New Testament and Apostolic Christianity provide the inspired pattern for both the church and for Christian faith or doctrine and practice, or Christian experience. All subsequent Christianity either reflects or is in misalignment with the Christianity of the New Testament.

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[36] *Ibid*. See "Hellenization."

[37] The one exception was the pollution of the Temple in Jerusalem by an uncircumcised person entering through the "middle wall of partition," which was punished by immediate death by stoning (Acts 21:27–31; Eph. 2:14).

A Explanatory Chronological Table of the Apostolic Age

(74 years)

This age extends from the public ministries of John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus Christ to the end of the First century AD. There are two major divisions: The Messianic Era (26–30) and The Apostolic Era (30–100). The Messianic Era contains the beginning and foundation of the New Testament church as an institutional entity. The church was established by the Lord Jesus Christ during His earthly ministry.

The Apostolic Age or the first century forms the basis for all subsequent Christianity and the standard or criterion by which it must be evaluated. The Scriptures and especially The New Testament reveal and teach by direct command and inspired Apostolic example the doctrine and practice of and for Biblical Christianity. This was the age of the earthly life of the Lord Jesus Christ and the inspired Apostles. It was an age of completion and fulfillment, of revival and expansion.

The five major issues in this age: first, the establishment of New Testament Christianity. Second, the inscripturation of the New Testament books. Third, The establishment, nature, character and primitive history of the New Testament church as an institution.[38] Fourth, the Apostolic missionary endeavors and the spread of Christianity across the Roman Empire. Fifth, the first State persecutions of Christianity.

Chronology of The Apostolic Age

I. The Messianic Era	(26–30).
A. The Year of Obscurity	(26–27).
B. The Year of Opportunity	(27–28).
C. The Year of Opposition	(29–30).
II. The Apostolic Era	(30–100).
A. The Era of Transition	(30–48).
B. The Era of Expansion	(48–64).
C. The Era of Persecution	(64–100).

Messianic Era (26–30 AD)

Caesar Augustus (Gaius Octavian) (27 BC–14 AD). The Roman Republic becomes the Roman Empire

Rise of the Jewish Zealots who defied Roman Rule (c. 65 BC–70 AD)[39]

Horace, Greek poet (65–8 BC)

Herod's Temple Built (20 BC–25 AD)

Herod Philip the Tetrarch, Ruler of the Northern Provinces (4 BC–34 AD)

Herod Antipas, Ruler of Galilee and Perea (4 BC–39 AD)[40]

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[38] The term "Church" is used in the institutional or abstract sense. The NT church is concretely expressed in local churches.

[39] The Zealots were not an open political party, but were extremists who sought independence by revolt. One of our Lord's disciples, Simon *Zelotes* [ζηλωτής, "zealot"] (Lk. 6:15; Acts 1:13), had been of this group. Even more radical were the *sicarii* [pl. of the Lat. *sicarius*, "dagger men"] or assassins.

[40] Herod Philip and Herod Antipas were sons of Herod the Great and ruled in various parts of Judea and Galilee during the earthly life and ministry of our Lord.

Herod Archelaus, Ruler of Idumea, Samaria and Judea (4 BC–6 AD). Deposed by Romans
The Annunciation and Birth of John the Baptist (6–5 BC)
The Annunciation and Birth of the Lord Jesus Christ (c. 4–6 BC)
Caesar Tiberius, Roman Emperor (14–37 AD)
Joseph Caiaphas, Jewish High Priest (c. 18–37)
The earthly life and ministry of Jesus the Christ (c. 27–30 AD)
Pontius Pilate, Roman Procurator of Judea (26–36 AD)

The Earthly Life of The Christ (4 BC–30 AD)

The Annunciation and Birth of the Lord Jesus Christ (6–4 BC) (Matt. 1:18–25; Lk. 1:26–56; 2:1–20)[41]
Wise men from the East (Matt. 2:1–12) (4 BC)
Caesar Tiberius (Roman Emperor, 14–37)
Pontius Pilate (Roman Procurator, 26–36)
Circumcision and Presentation (Lk. 2:21–38)
Joseph, Mary and our Lord's Sojourn in Egypt (Matt. 2:13–15; Lk. 2:39)
Slaying of the Children at Bethlehem (Matt. 2:16–18)
Our Lord's Childhood in Nazareth (Lk. 2:40; 51–52)
Coponius, Roman Procurator of Judea (6–8)
Ambivius, Roman Procurator of Judea (9–12)
Our Lord's Visit to Jerusalem and the Temple at Age 12 (Lk. 2:41–50)
Annius Rufus, Roman Procurator of Judea (12–15)
Caesar Tiberius, Roman Emperor (14–37)
Valerius Gratus, Roman Procurator of Judea (15–26)

According to the death of Herod the Great in 4 BC and the dating of the astronomical phenomenon (the "star" of the wise men) in 6 BC, The Lord Jesus Christ was born about 4–6 BC. He entered into his public ministry about 27 AD at age 30, and was crucified about 30 AD. The public ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ lasted approximately three and a half years. It may be described either by year (the Year of Obscurity, the Year of Opportunity and the Year of Opposition) or by geographical location (The early Judean ministry, the Samaritan ministry, the Galilean ministry, the later Judean ministry, the Perean ministry and the final journey to Jerusalem). The following is a summary:

The Year of Obscurity (26–28)

The time was approximately a year and a half. It began with the ministry of John the Baptist who prepared the nation for the public ministry of the Messiah and identified him for the people (Matt. 3:1–17; 11:2–13; Mk. 1:1–15; Lk. 1:5–17; 3:1–18; Jn. 1:19–34; 3:22–31). The public life of the Lord began with His baptism and wilderness temptation. This first year included: The calling of the first disciples, his first miracle and the early Judean ministry: the first Passover and cleansing of the Temple, the discourse with Nicodemus, the Samaritan ministry and the beginning of the Galilean ministry.

[41] Chronological data on the earthly life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ may be obtained from: Loraine Boettner, *A Harmony of the Gospels*; Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*; F. W. Farrar, *The Life of Christ*; John Peter Lange, *The Life of the Lord Jesus Christ*; A. T. Robertson, *A Harmony of the Gospels*; W. Graham Scroggie, *A Guide to the Gospels.*

The Year of Opportunity (29)

The major portion of the Lord's ministry was pursued in Galilee north of Judah and Samaria. He would only journey to Jerusalem during the religious festivals. His headquarters were at Capernaum and from there he went on at least three preaching tours of Galilee. This year encompassed the Galilean ministry and the later Judean ministry. The major events were: the choice of the remaining disciples, numerous healings and other miracles, the Sermon on the Mount, the death of John the Baptist, the transfiguration and the final preparation of the Disciples for the Lord's suffering, death and resurrection.

The Year of Opposition (29–30)

As opposition and hostility from the religious leaders heightened, the Lord went to the region of Perea beyond Jordan before his final journey up to Jerusalem. He did return for a short time to raise Lazarus from the dead. He finally returned through Jericho, then Bethany. The final week began with his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the second cleansing of the temple and the final Passover and Garden agony. Then followed his arrest, trial and crucifixion.

The Final Earthly Days of The Lord Jesus Christ. After his resurrection, the Lord Jesus Christ spent forty days with his Apostles and followers (i.e., his church), preparing them for his own immediate departure and their future (Acts 1:1–5). It was during this time that he instructed and commissioned them before his ascension into heaven to the right hand of God (Matt. 28:18–20; Mk. 16:15; Lk. 24:44–53; Acts 1:4–9; Heb. 1:1–4). The New Testament Church as an institution possessed all the essentials before the ascension of the Lord. It was complete and functional before the Day of Pentecost.

The Apostolic Era (30–100)

Pentecost and the empowering of the New Testament Church (30)[42]

Caligula (Gaius), Roman Emperor (37–41).

The martyrdom of James (c. 44). This was James the Greater, the brother of John, the son of Zebedee (Matt. 4:21). He became the first of the original disciples to be killed for the testimony of the Gospel. Peter was also taken prisoner at this time, but was supernaturally delivered (Acts 12:1–24).

Martyrdom of Stephen (33–35?)

Conversion of Saul (35–37?)[43]

Caligula ordered his statue placed in the Jerusalem Temple. Procrastination by Petronius and Caligula's death prevented this and a Jewish uprising.

Claudius Caesar, Roman Emperor (41–54)

King Herod Agrippa I, Procurator of Palestine (41–44)

Britain becomes a Roman province (43) Primitive Christianity introduced into Britain

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[42] The Lord Jesus Christ instituted his church during His earthly ministry. The New Testament church had every essential before Pentecost. Pentecost was the empowering or credentialing of the already–existing New Testament church.

[43] Chronological data on the life and missionary work of the Apostle Paul may be obtained from: W. J. Conybeare and J. S. Howson, *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul*, and F. W. Farrar, *The Life and Work of St. Paul*. A study on the Apostolic churches and doctrine may be found in Augustus Neander, *History of the Planting and Training of the Christian Church by the Apostles.*

James (44–46)[44]

Martyrdom of James the Greater (son of Zebedee) (c. 44)

Spread of the gospel through the missionary journeys of the Apostle Paul and others (c. 33–63)

Ventidius Cumanus (Roman Procurator, 49–52)

M. Antonius Felix (Roman Procurator, 53–59)

Claudius commands all Jews to leave Rome (Acts 18:1–2) (c. 54)

Nero, Roman Emperor (54–68)

Marcus Antonius Felix, Roman Procurator of Palestine (52–60)

Porcius Festus, Roman Procurator of Palestine (c. 60–62)

Herod Agrippa II (Marcus Julius Agrippa). Last of the Herodian Kings (c. 50–93)

Tiberius Alexander (Roman Procurator, 48)

Paul's First Missionary Journey (48)

Galatians (48–49)[45]

The Jerusalem Conference (51)[46]

Paul's Second Missionary Journey (51)

1 & 2Thessalonians (51–52)

Gospel of Mark (50–55)

Paul's Third Missionary Journey (53–)

Philip the Apostle bound & stoned at Hierapolis in Phrygia (c. 54)

1 & 2 Corinthians (53–57)

Romans (58)

Paul imprisoned at Caesarea (58–60)

Gospel of Luke (58–61)

Martyrdom of James the Just (61)

Paul taken as prisoner to Rome (61–63)

Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, Philemon (60–63) **Acts** (63)

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[44] Invaluable data on the order, historical circumstances and content of the Gospels and Epistles of the New Testament may be found in the following: J. Lawrence Eason, *The New Bible Survey*; Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*; E. F. Harrison, *Introduction to the New Testament*; D. Edmond Hiebert, *An Introduction to the New Testament*; William Hendriksen, *Survey of the Bible*; Thomas Hartwell Horne, *Introduction to the Scriptures*; J. Gresham Machen, *The New Testament: An Introduction to Its Literature and History*; W. Graham Scroggie, *Know Your Bible*; Merrill C. Tenney, *New Testament Survey*; H. C. Thiessen, *Introduction to the New Testament*; and Theodore Zahn, *Introduction to the New Testament.*

[45] The date of the Galatian epistle is determined by the usage of the term "Galatia." If Paul was referring to the northern portion of the Roman province, then Galatians would have been written later, about 57–58 AD, forming both a logical and historical introduction to Romans (the "northern Galatian" theory), but if referring to the whole province, then the "Churches of Galatia" would refer to the area of his first missionary journey (the "Southern Galatian" theory). This latter view, which internal evidence seems to substantiate, would necessitate the earlier date.

[46] This is traditionally referred to as the "First Church Council" in an ecumenical sense. It was rather a church conference between the churches at Jerusalem and Antioch. Although the Apostles were present, there was no ecclesiastical hierarchy or court, rather a discussion and conclusion. The Apostles did *not decree* anything, but *requested* the compliance of Gentile Christians in certain matters pertaining to immorality, idolatry and diet (Cf. Acts 15).

Albinius (Roman Procurator, 62–65)

Gospel of Matthew (60–66)
1 Timothy & Titus (63–64)

First Roman State persecution of Christians (c. 64–68). The Great Fire in Rome and first persecution of Christians under Nero. Believers ravaged by beasts, crucified, used for human torches in Roman celebrations (64)

Barnabas martyred (burned to death) at Salamia in Cyprus (61)

Annaeus Seneca (Roman statesman, Stoic Philosopher (5 BC–65 AD)

1 & 2 Peter, Hebrews, Jude, 2 Timothy (64–68)

Martyrdom of Peter and Paul: Peter (traditionally) crucified upside down. Paul beheaded (68)

Martyrdom of John Mark (c. 68)

Aristarchus, Epaphrus, Priscilla, Aquilla, Andronicus & Junia martyred at Rome (c. 68)

Silas martyred at Corinth (c. 68)

Andrew the Apostle martyred (crucified) at Patras in Achaia (c. 68)

Bartholomew the Apostle tortured & beheaded in Armenia (c. 68)

Thomas the Apostle martyred (tortured & burned alive) in Calamina (c. 68)

Matthew the Apostle martyred (tortured & beheaded) in Naddavar (c. 68)

Simon Zelotes & Judas Thaddeus the Apostles martyred (one crucified, the other beaten to death) (c. 68)

Matthias the Apostle martyred (stoned & beheaded) (c. 68)

Prochorus, Parmenas & Nicanor, 3 of the first deacons martyred (c. 68)

Carpus martyred at Troas (c. 68)

Trophimus martyred (beheaded) (c. 68)

Onesimus & Dionysius the Areopagite martyred (c. 68)

General persecution of both Jews and Christians in the reign of Domitian (93–96)

Luke the evangelist martyred (hanged) (c. 93)

Antipas martyred (burned alive) (c. 95)

Flavius Josephus writes his *History of the Jews* (81–96)

Nerva (Roman Emperor 96–98)

The Apostle John exiled to Patmos (96)

John, 1, 2 & 3 John, Revelation (90–98?)[47]

Timothy martyred (stoned) at Ephesus (c.98)

Clement of Rome (d. 99–100). The first Apostolic Father and Ante–Nicene Father, wrote an Epistle to the Corinthians (c. 96).

Trajan (Roman Emperor, 98–117)

The Bar Kokhba Revolt which ended Jewish national life (c. 132–135)

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[47] The dating of the Johannine writings is divided between two views: First, the traditional view that John, out–living the other Apostles, wrote his works at the end of his life during the Domitian persecution (c. 90–98 AD). Second, the preterist view that the New Testament canon was complete before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD John then wrote his works during the Neronian persecution. Both views have had strong conservative adherents.

The second division is the Apostolic Era, which traces the development and spread of Christianity from the ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ and Pentecost to the end of the century or the death of John the last Apostle. This era traces the development and spread of Christianity across the Roman Empire and beyond through the ministry of the inspired Apostles and early Christians. During this time the New Testament was written. There were three distinct periods: First, the Era of Transition (30–48). This extended from Pentecost to the first missionary journey of the Apostle Paul. It was the transition from Jewish to Gentile Christianity. Second, the Era of Expansion (48–64). This period began with missionary journeys of the Apostle and ended with the great persecution by Nero. It was the great period of expansion across the Roman Empire by the apostle Paul and others. Third, the Era of Persecution (64–100). This period began with the Neronian persecution and ended with the death of the Apostle John.

Era of Transition (30–48 AD)

Peter was the prominent person and Jerusalem was the central place. The transition began from predominantly Jewish to Gentile Christianity. It extended from Pentecost to the first missionary journey of the Apostle Paul (Acts 1–12).

The Significance of Pentecost (30). The feast of Pentecost had a six–fold significance: religious, typical, prophetic, ecclesiastical and evangelical. The religious significance: this was a yearly feast–day in the religious calendar of Israel. It was celebrated fifty days after the Passover and was the feast of the first–fruits of harvest (Cf. Ex. 23:16, 19; 34:22; Lev. 23:10–12; Numb. 28:26). The typical significance: this feast typically anticipated the first–fruits of the Gospel economy (the 3,000 converts) and was the prototype of the Gospel harvest. The prophetic significance: the out–pouring of the Spirit in Old Testament prophecy and language, as noted by the Apostle Peter in his address to the people (Acts 2:14–21; Joel 2:28–30) was on this particular Pentecost the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy (Acts 2:16, 32–33).

The ecclesiastical significance: the out–pouring or giving of the Holy Spirit on this momentous occasion was the identification or credentialing of the already–existent and functioning New Testament church. Through this phenomenon the New Testament church was identified or accredited as the God–ordained institution for the Gospel economy. Pentecost was not the alleged "birthday" of the church, but its endowment with power for the pursuit and accomplishment of its commission (Lk. 24:49; Acts 1:4–8).

This had typically taken place with the Tabernacle in the wilderness in the Mosaic economy. The Tabernacle was complete and functional, then the *shekinah* or visible glory of God descended and filled the Tabernacle (Ex. 25:1–9; 40:33–35). This identified or credentialed it as the God–ordained institution for that time and economy. The same is true of the Temple of Solomon. It was complete and functional, then the Shekinah filled it (1 Kgs. 7:51–8:11). Supernatural out–pourings of the Spirit also occurred in Samaria (Acts 8:14–17) and in the house of Cornelius (Acts 10:44–46; 11:15–18) as signs to the Jewish Christians that the truth and power of the Gospel extended beyond their religious and cultural boundaries.

The providential significance: Pentecost was greatest feast of the religious year for Jewish pilgrims and proselytes. The Passover was too early in the spring for safe land travel or shipping. The *Yom Kippur* was too late in the fall. The safest time of the year for travel was during the time of Pentecost. This providentially assured the Apostles of the greatest possible hearing. The evangelical significance: Pentecost was the beginning of a great revival and spiritual awakening that lasted through the early years of the Jerusalem church then spread to Samaria and on to the Gentiles.

Every enduring principle or characteristic of revival was exhibited in this first New Testament revival and awakening. It was the prototype of all subsequent true revivals and spiritual awakenings in church history. Briefly, the following may be noted: there are certain spiritual preliminary events. Revival or awakening is preceded by spiritual preparation, notably persevering prayer, on the part of some (Acts 1:14).

There is an unusual out–pouring of the Spirit of God upon the churches, or a revival, which in turn spreads a concern to the unsaved, or spiritual awakening. (Acts 2). Pentecost was unique as the promised Baptism of or in the Spirit, but unusual out–pourings of the Spirit of God have given impetus to every true historical revival. There is a return to Biblical preaching. Peter and the others expounded and applied the Scriptures. This was a great departure from the current accepted use of the Jewish Scriptures (Acts 2:14–340; 3:12–26; 4:33; 5:20–21, 42; 6:8–10; 7:2–53).

There is the experience of great opposition from both religious and secular authorities. The Sadducees and then the entire Sanhedrin opposed and persecuted the church at Jerusalem and even those who had fled. Then the secular authorities joined in the persecution (Acts 4:1–23; 5:17–42; 6:8–8:3; 9:1–2; 12:1–4). There are always great obstacles in the form of sinning believers or false converts and false doctrines. Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1–10) and Simon the Sorcerer (Acts 8:9–24) are early New Testament examples.

There are necessary and often unusual consequences to revival. The churches are purified, disciplined and filled with joy (Acts 2:41–47; 4:32–37; 5:11–13). There are a great number of people convicted of sin, converted and added to the churches (Acts 2:41, 47; 4:4; 5:14; 6:7). Revival inevitably creates problems, even within the churches (Acts 6:1).

The martyrdom of Stephen (33–35). The death of Stephen occurred approximately 33–35. John the Baptist was the first martyr of the Christian dispensation; Stephen the first of the Apostolic Church and Era. His preaching and prayers were blessed by God to the conversion of Saul of Tarsus (Acts 6:5–8:2). The conversion of Paul (34–37) was pivotal in the Book of Acts (Acts 9:1–18). It prepared the way for the great transition from Jewish to Gentile Christianity. Paul was the great intellectual and theologian of the First Century, the great missionary and the inspired writer of most of the New Testament Scriptures.

The Conversion of Cornelius (35–38). It was on this occasion that the door of Christianity was opened to the Gentiles by Peter (Acts 10:1–11:18; 15:1–12). God had to supernaturally and providentially overcome the extreme religious, racial and cultural prejudice of both Peter and the Jewish Christians. The issue of uncircumcised Gentiles becoming Christians without first becoming Jews through circumcision and proselytism was again a controversy that lead to the conference at Jerusalem (Acts 15). This was the beginning of the Judaizing party in Jerusalem.[48]

> Note: The conference in Jerusalem was concerned with the nature of the Gospel of grace and opposed to circumcision, and the relation of Jewish and Gentile Christians. Did one have to become a Jew in order to become a Christian? Was the rite of circumcision necessary for salvation? The legalistic

[48] The Jerusalem meeting in Acts 15 has traditionally been termed “The First Church Council,” but it was a conference held between two churches. There was no ecclesiastical authority above and over the local churches, even as manifested by the Apostles themselves, who were in attendance.

controversy, however, would continue until the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple (Cf. Gal. 1:6–9; 2:1–3:14, 24; 4:4–5; 4:21–5:4, 12; 1 Cor. 11:13–15; Acts 22:18–22) (70–72 AD).

Era of Expansion (48–64 AD)

Paul was the prominent person and the center of focus became Antioch in Syria, a predominantly Gentile church. The transition was complete from Jewish Christianity centered in Jerusalem to Gentile Christianity and the great missionary impetus to the Roman world. The great theological issue was the nature of the Gospel of grace in relation to the Law and Judaism. This marked the controversy over legalism and the separation of primitive Christianity from its Judaistic background. During this period most of the books of the New Testament were written. A major theme in many of these early epistles is justification by faith.

Martyrdom of Philip and "James the Just" (54–61). Tradition states that Philip the Apostle was stoned to death at Hierapolis in Phrygia (c. 54).[49] James "the Just," the half–brother of the Lord was allegedly martyred (c. 61) in Jerusalem during the interregnum after the death of the Roman Procurator Festus. He was thrown from the Temple, stoned and finally beaten to death with a fuller's club.

The First Missionary Journey of Paul (48). Paul and Barnabas were sent on this mission by the Syrian Antioch church after being separated to that ministry by the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:1–4). This missionary excursion occurred c. 48 and extended into Cyprus and Asia Minor (Perga and Atalia in Pamphylia and the Galatian cities of Pisidia: Anitoch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe) (Acts 13:4–26). This inspired account is vital to the establishment of biblical missionary principles, the example of the synagogue evangelism and Christianity's contact with paganism.

Paul's Second Missionary Journey (c. 51–52). This took him into Europe through Philippi, Thessalonica, Athens and Corinth. At Athens, in Paul's defense before the Areopagus, we have the first recorded confrontation between Christianity and Greek philosophy (Acts 17:16–34).

Era of Persecution (64–100 AD)[50]

There is little known concerning Christianity in this era apart from the remaining epistles, secular historians, Josephus and religious tradition. According to tradition the center of Christianity moved to Ephesus after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman General Titus in 70–72. The

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[49] Philip the Apostle (Matt. 10:3; Mk. 3:18; Lk. 6:14; Jn. 1:43–48; 6:5–7; 12:22; 14:8–9; Acts 1:13) is not to be confused with Philip the Evangelist, who was one of the first deacons in the Jerusalem Church (Acts 6:5; 8:5–6, 12–13, 26–40; 21:8).

[50] It is remarkable that the latter part of the first century AD is virtually unknown to historians except in the most general terms. Such lack of historical detail must be considered in the context of the political unrest in the Roman Empire, the frequent transitions in leadership, and destruction of records. This is especially true with regard to matters of Church History. Much information rests on early tradition. Records of the martyrs were preserved and later generations venerated them. Many church records were destroyed during the Imperial persecutions of 303–310 AD

It is most probable that all of the original Apostles with the exception of John were martyred during the Neronian persecution. For traditional stories concerning the Apostles and others martyred in the first century, Cf. Thieleman J. Van Braught, *Martyrs' Mirror* (1660) or John Foxe, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs* (1563).

Christians removed from Jerusalem before the destruction of the city. John, the only surviving Apostle, became the prominent figure.

The destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple ended the legalist controversy, but an incipient Gnosticism in various forms had already begun its infiltration of Christianity and would prove to be its insidious enemy for future generations.

The Roman persecutions began with Nero (64–68). Jewish Zealot insurrection led to the destruction of Jerusalem, then a general persecution of both Jews and Christians followed in the reign of Domitian (93–96). This century ended with another general persecution under the Emperor Trajan (98–117).

The Persecution under Nero (64–68)

The reign of Nero lasted from 54 to 68. He was a profligate and became more degenerate as his reign progressed. His personal history was one of murder, intrigue and possible insanity. He died a suicide.

It is alleged by the Roman historian Tacitus that Nero had the great fire in Rome started on his orders so he could rebuild it in greater glory and name it after himself as *Neropolis*. The fire was started about the 19th of July, 64 and raged for ten days. It consumed a major portion of the city. To remove suspicion and blame from himself, Nero had the Christians accused. They would prove convenient victims for the Roman government for the next two and half centuries. What began as a lie evidently became established policy under the subsequent Roman persecutions of Christians. This reign of terror lasted from 64 to 68. Believers were tortured and murdered in the most cruel fashion for the sport and entertainment of Nero. They were burned as human torches, as the sentence for incendiaries was to be burned alive. Some were torn apart by wild beasts, and others subjected to the utmost cruelties in death.

The persecution spread to the Provinces where authorities were evidently quick to follow suit, venting themselves upon the defenseless Christians. The Jews also allegedly used this opportunity to seek their own vengeance upon the Christians within their power. Thus, the very state power that at first had provided their providential protection finally turned upon the Christians in fury. Sporadic persecutions would occur until the Edict of Milan under Emperor Constantine in 313.

According to ancient tradition The martyrs of this persecution included most of the Apostles and first–generation Christians. The Apostle Peter was crucified upside down and Paul was beheaded. The other Apostles martyred under Nero in the years 64 to 68 AD were Andrew, Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew, Simon Zelotes, Judas Thaddeus and Matthias, who had replaced Judas. Some prominent believers mentioned in the New Testament were allegedly tortured and killed at this time: Barnabas, John Mark, Aristarchus, Epaphrus, Priscilla, Aquilla, Silas, Onesiphorus, Prochorus, Parmenas, Nicanor, Carpus, Trophimus, Onesimus, and Dionysius the Areopagite.

The death of Nero was followed by a decade of political turmoil in the Empire. Florus, the Judean Roman Procurator (66–70) plundered the Temple at Jerusalem and thus initiated the final revolt of the Jewish zealots. The Roman garrison at Jerusalem was massacred and a Roman army under Cestius Gallus was defeated and routed during its retreat by the Jews. This sealed the fate of the Jews and Jerusalem. The country was invaded and Jerusalem put under siege. The city and temple were destroyed in 70–71. Over a million Jews were killed and crucified. The Herodian fortress of Masada fell shortly afterwards to the Roman General Silva. With the final Jewish

insurrection in Egypt, the Jewish national identity was almost obliterated. This final rebellion occurred under Bar Kokhba (122—135).[51]

Before the final onslaught on Jerusalem, the Jewish Christians left the city and passed over the Jordan River to Pella in Perea. Tradition states that later Ephesus became the center for Christianity toward the end of the first century and the aged Apostle John its central figure.

Emperors Vespasian (69–79) and Titus (79–81) were largely concerned with administrative affairs of state. Under Domitian (81–96), however, there came a renewed persecution of Christians. He was zealous for the state religion as a means of strengthening the Empire, and insisted upon being worshipped as a "god" or "Lord" (Gk: Κύριος). Thus began the three century–long persecution of Christians as "atheists" and enemies of the state for refusing to bow to the Imperial insignia or burn a pinch of incense to image of the Emperor. The issue was Καίσαρ Κύριος verses Χρίστος Κύριος ["Caesar is Lord" vs. "Christ is Lord"]. Despite such persecution, Christianity continued to expand and penetrate even the Roman nobility. Martyrs during this era included Luke the physician and historian. John the Apostle was exiled to Patmos (Rev. 1:9).

The Early Church Fathers of the first seven centuries are classified according to their historical relation to the first great Ecumenical Council at Nicaea. There are three designations: The Ante–Nicene, Nicene, and Post–Nicene Fathers. The first Christian writers subsequent to the inspired Apostles are classified as the *Ante–Nicene Fathers*, or those who wrote prior to the first great Ecumenical Council at Nicaea in 325. There are two distinct groups: The Apostolic Fathers and the Apologists. Their writings do not measure up to the inspired New Testament Scriptures.

The New Testament Books (c. 44–98)

The Epistle of James (44–46)

The Epistle of James was the first New Testament Scripture. This was James "the Just," the half–brother of our Lord who was converted after his resurrection. He became a leading elder in the Jerusalem church (Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:8; 1 Cor. 15:7; Gal. 2:9, 13). This epistle was written to Jewish Christians of the dispersion (Jas. 1:1)[52] to comfort them through the triumph of true faith and correct them from the tendency to worldliness. This epistle also deals with the Law and justification, a necessary issue in view of the Jewish and Old Testament influence on Christianity. It may be outlined as follows:

The Introduction	(1:1–18).
A. The Need for patience and wisdom	(v. 2–8).
B. The Poor and the Rich	(v. 9–11).
C. The Origin and Result of Temptation	(12–15).
D. The Word as the Instrument of life	(v. 16–18).
I. Faith Tested By It Attitude Toward The Word of God	(1:19–27).
A. The Word is the instrument of life	(v. 16–18).
B. The Word is to be heard and obeyed	(v. 19–25).

[51] The final *Bar–Kokhba* ["Son of the Star," an alleged fulfillment of Numb. 24:17–19] Revolt ended with the destruction of Jewish national life.

[52] Dispersion, Gk: διάσπορα, "sown throughout, scattered abroad," referring to the Jewish Christians scattered throughout the Roman Empire. See "Apostolic Christianity and Religious Entities" in chapter V.

C. The Word is to Issue forth in true religion	(v. 26–27).
II. Faith Tested By It Reaction To Social Distinctions	(2:1–13).
A. Warning against partial judgment	(v. 1–4).
B. Divine and Human judgment contrasted	(v. 5–7).
C. The Law and True Judgment	(v. 8–13).
III. Faith Tested By Its Production of Works	(2:14–26).
A. Faith without Works is futile and dead	(v. 14–17).
B. Creed and Conduct	(vb. 18–20).
C. Faith which works illustrated	(v. 21–26).
IV. Faith Tested By Its Production of Self–Control	(3:1–18).
A. The Need to control the Tongue	(v. 1–6).
B. The Lack of Controlling the Tongue	(v. 7–12).
C. The true means of controlling the Tongue	(v. 13–18).
V. Faith Tested By Its Reactions To The World	(4:1–5:12).
A. The Seat and Remedy of Evil;	(v. 4:1–12).
B. The Uncertainty and Discipline of Life	(4:13–5:12).
VI. Faith Tested By Its Resort To Prayer	(5:13–20).
A. Discourse on Prayer	(v. 13–18).
B. Discourse on Saving a Soul	(v. 19–20). [53]

The contrast between Paul and James concerning justification by faith is a major concern with some. Mark the following comparison and contrast: It has been alleged that, while Paul teaches justification by faith alone, without works (Rom. 3:24–31; 4:1–8; Gal. 2:16), James teaches justification by faith and works (Jas. 2:14–26). An alleged contradiction has been perceived which has led to various errors concerning the nature of justification, even to the confusion of justification and sanctification. This has resulted in the belief in an infused righteousness rather than an imputed righteousness. It must be remembered that the Bible as the inscripturated Word of God is necessarily coherent [does not contain any inherent contradictions]. Any seeming contradictions are the result of human misunderstanding and doctrinal prejudice.

The following contrasts and comparisons reveal the respective emphases of James and Paul, and their compatibility: first, James wrote to Jewish Christians, some of whose profession of faith was contradicted by their conduct. Paul wrote to Gentile believers who had fallen prey to the Judaizers who taught that one must become a Jew in order to become a Christian, i.e., sought to bring them under the bondage of the law (e.g., Acts 15:1). James was dealing primarily with faith; Paul primarily with justification. Thus, the subjects, the religio–cultural situations, the reasons for writing and the readers were diverse.

Second, James denounces a dead faith; Paul writes concerning the necessity of a living faith. James describes what a living faith is as evidenced in the life and experience; Paul writes concerning faith as the instrumental means in justification.

Third, James writes against antinomianism, which, while professing faith, lacks its necessary and proper fruit. Paul writes against legalism, which sought justification either through

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[53] The Outlines of the NT books in this history are those of the author or have been adapted from D. Edmond Hiebert, *An Introduction to The New Testament in 3 Vols.* ; W. Graham Scroggie, *Know Your Bible*; Robert G. Gromacki, *New Testament Survey*; Merrill C. Tenney, *New Testament Survey*. Donald Guthrie, et. al., *The New Bible Commentary*; Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 3 Vols.

a works–righteousness [self–righteousness, law–keeping], or a combination of both faith and works.

Fourth, the concern of James was with faith and its manifestation by good works. The concern of Paul was with the instrumental means of justification, which is through faith alone. Good works are the evidences of our faith and of justification, but never their cause.

Fifth, the emphasis of James is that we are saved by faith alone, but by a faith that does not stand alone. The emphasis of Paul is that we are justified by faith alone. In other places Paul states that this faith is not alone, but "works by love," i.e., evidences itself as a living faith (Gal. 5:6). Both James and Paul decry a "dead" faith, and hold that true faith must evidence itself in good works (Jas. 2:14, 18, 26; Titus 3:8). James speaks of justifying our faith before men. Paul speaks of our justification before God by faith alone.

Sixth, both James and Paul point to Abraham as the great example of justification by faith, and by a faith that evidences itself in good works (Jas. 2:21–24; Rom. 4:1–3, 9–22). The issue is the juxtaposition of two incidents in Abraham's life. Paul points to Gen. 15:6, which focuses on the faith of Abraham apart from any and all his subsequent works. James points to the act of faith in the offering up of Isaac, which occurred about twenty–five years later (Gen. 22). Thus Paul, using Abraham as an example, emphasizes justification by faith alone, and James, using Abraham as an example, emphasizes that justifying faith evidences itself in acts of faith, i.e., good works.

The Epistle to The Galatians (48–49)

This was the second writing in the New Testament. The Apostle wrote this letter to those he had evangelized on his first missionary journey in the southern area of the province of Galatia. The date and readers of the Galatian epistle are determined by the usage of the term "Galatia." If Paul were referring to the northern portion of the Roman province, then Galatians would have been written later, c. 57–58, forming both a logical and historical introduction to Romans (the "Northern Galatian" theory), but if referring to the whole province, then the "Churches of Galatia" would refer to the area of his first missionary journey (the "Southern Galatian" theory). This latter view, which internal evidence seems to substantiate, would necessitate the earlier date.

As the epistle of James, this epistle deals with justification and the Law. The clarification of this issue was vital to the purity of the grace of the Gospel and the definitive separation between Christianity and Jewish legalism. The Apostle wrote this letter to those he had evangelized on his first missionary journey in the southern area of the province of Galatia. The Galatian Epistle may be outlined as follows:

Introduction	(1:1–10).
I. Personal: The Vindication of His Apostolic Authority	(1:11–2:21).
A. Warning against perverting the Gospel	(v. 6–10).
B. Apostleship from God with Divine authority	(v. 11–17
C. Apostleship not from Man	(v. 18–24).
D. Apostleship recognized by other Apostles	(2:1–10).
E. His message maintained before Peter	(2:11–14).
F. His message was ordained by God	(2:15–21).
II. Doctrinal: Justification by Faith	(3:1–4:31).
A. Holy Spirit received by faith	(3:1–5).

B. Abraham justified by faith	(3: 6–9).
C. The Law curses; it cannot justify	(3:10–14).
D. The Law cannot annul the promise	(3:15–18).
E. The purpose of the Law	(3:19–24).
F. Faith the superior condition	(3:25–4:7).
G. Legalism not better than paganism	(4:8–10).
H. His original contact with the Galatians recounted	(4:11–18).
I. The two covenants contrasted	(4:19–31).
III. Practical: The Life of Christian Liberty	(5:1–6:10).
A. Danger and meaning of falling from grace	(5:1–12).
B. The Law of love	(5:13–15).
C. The conflict between the Spirit and the Flesh	(5:16–26).
D. The true marks of spirituality	(6:1–10).
Conclusion	(6:11–17).
Benediction	(6:18).

Note: The exposition of "the Law" in this epistle must not be misunderstood. Some would take this in the context of sanctification rather than justification and pose an antinomian context. The Apostle's use of the term "Law" is inclusive of circumcision and the Moasic institutions, and has reference to justification. It is not an attempt to set aside the Moral Law of God. The Law was and is, i.e., continues to be […ὁ νόμος παιδαγωγὸς ἡμῶν γέγονεν εἰς Χριστόν… perf.] our schoolmaster to lead us unto Christ (Gal. 3:24).

The Jerusalem Conference. This occurred c. 51, and is described in detail in Acts 15. Again, the nature of the Gospel and the relation of Jewish and Gentile Christians was the major issue. The legalistic controversy, however, would continue until the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple (70–72).

The Second Missionary Journey of Paul (51–52)

This evangelistic mission began approximately four years after the first missionary journey. Because of a personal disagreement between Paul and Barnabas concerning John Mark, Paul took Silas as his companion. This was providential, as Silas was also a Roman citizen and gave him an equal standing with Paul, which Barnabas may have lacked. This was quite significant at Philippi (Acts 16:37–38). Their route took them overland to Cilicia, then on to the southern region of Galatia, the site of Paul's first missionary labors. There, Paul took Timothy as his assistant (Acts 16:1–3). [54] The Spirit lead them away from Asia Minor and Bithynia to Macedonia (northern Greece). Preaching at Philippi, Amphipolis, Apollonia, Thessalonica and Berea. Entering Achaia (southern Greece), they preached at Athens and Corinth, where Paul preached for a year and a half. From Ephesus, Paul sailed back to Jerusalem (Acts 15:36–18:22). Thus, the gospel entered Europe for the first time. At Athens we have the first recorded confrontation between biblical Christianity and Greek philosophy.

[54] The circumcision of Timothy was necessary, as he was considered as a Jew, having a Jewish mother. Paul refused to have Trophimus circumcised, as he was plainly a Gentile (Acts 20:4; 21:29; 2 Tim. 4:20). There was no thought of compromise, but rather of consistency.

The Epistles of I & II Thessalonians (51–52)

These two epistles were written c. 51–52 during the second missionary journey from Athens and Corinth within a few months of leaving Thessalonica (I Thess. 3:1–7; Acts 18:5). Paul probably wrote the first from Athens and the second from Corinth. As in the Epistles of James and Galatians, there is mention of the opposition of the Jews against Christianity. These two epistles are the earliest compendium of Christian truth, covering both doctrinal and practical matters.

I Thessalonians is one of Paul's most personal and revelatory letters, the others being 2 Corinthians and Philippians. The prominent notes are: A word of exultation (1:2–10), a word of Explanation (2:1–3:13) and a word of exhortation (4:1–5:24). The outline may be given as:

Salutation	(1:1).
I. Personal: Personal Relations to the Thessalonians	(1:2–3:13).
A. The Character of the Church	(1:3).
B. The Election of the Church	(1:4–7).
C. The Reputation of the Church	(1:8–10).
D. Paul's Conduct toward the Church	(2:1–12).
E. Paul's reception by the Thessalonians	(2:13–16).
F. Paul's Concern for the Church	(2:17–3:10).
G. Paul's Prayer for the Church	(3:11–13).
II Practical: Instructions in Doctrine and Life	(4:1–5:25).
A. The Problem of Sexual Immorality	(4:1–8).
B. The Problem of Social Conduct	(4:9–12).
C. The Problem of the State of the Dead	(4:13–18).
D. The Problem of Times and Seasons	(5:1–11).
E. Concluding Exhortations	(5:12–25).
The Conclusion	(5:26–28).

The second Epistle to the Thessalonians is supplementary to the first epistle. It deals with misunderstanding concerning the return of the Lord. After an introduction (1:1–2), There are some preliminary issues (1:5–12), then the prophetical issues (2:1–17), finally some practical issues (3:1–16), followed by the conclusion (3:17–18). The outline:

The Salutation (1:1–2).	
I. The Comfort Given Them in Their Affliction: Expectation	(1:3–12).
A. Paul's Thanksgiving	(1:3–5).
B. Paul's Encouragement	(1:6–12).
II. The Events Preceding The Day of The Lord: Explanation	(2:1–12).
A. Paul calms their anxieties	(2:1–2).
B. Paul explains the apostasy	(2:3–12).
III. The Renewed Thanksgiving and Prayer for Them: Encouragement	(2:13–17).
A. Exhortation	(2:13–15).
B. Prayer	(2:16–17).
IV. The Exhortation to Practical Christian Duties: Exhortation	(3:1–15).
A. Exhortation to Prayer	(3:1–5).
B. Example of Behavior	(3:6–9).
C. Command for Behavior	(3:10–15).

The Conclusion (3:16–18).

The Gospel of Mark (50–55)

Tradition identifies the author as John Mark, a cousin to Barnabas and a younger companion to Paul and Peter (Acts 12:25; 13:1–5; 15:36–41; Col. 4:10; Phlm. 24; 2 Tim. 4:11; 1 Pet. 5:13). This was the first written account of the Messianic Era and a life of Christ.

The key–term in Mark's Gospel is εὐθεόω, variously translated as "immediately," "Straitway," "anon," "forthwith," "by and by," "as soon as" and "straitly." It is the Gospel of action. Our Lord is portrayed as "The Servant of the Lord," and therefore this record contains no genealogy. The analysis of Mark's Gospel record may be given as follows:

I. The Opening Events of Christ's Ministry (1:1–13).
- A. The Ministry of John the Baptist (1:1–8).
- B. Our Lord's Baptism (1:9–11).
- C. The Wilderness Temptation (1:12–13).

II. The Galilean Ministry: First Period (1:14–3:6).
- A. The Disciples called (1:14–20).
- B. Demons cast out (1:21–28).
- C. Removing a Fever (1:29–31).
- D. Healing the Masses (1:32–34).
- E. The Demands and Urgency of the Ministry (1:35–39).
- F. Cleansing a Leper (1:40–45).
- G. Healing one with Palsy (2:1–12).
- H. The Call of Levi (2:13–22).
- I. The Defense of the Disciples (2:23–28).
- J. A Withered Hand Restored (3:1–6).

III. The Galilean Ministry: Second Period (3:7–7:23).
- A. Healing the Masses (3:7–12).
- B. Ordaining the Twelve (3:13–21).
- C. A Warning against Blasphemy (3:22–35).
- D. Preaching in Parables (4:1–34).
- E. Calming the Storm (4:35–41).
- F. Healing of the Demoniac (5:1–20).
- G. Raising of Jairus' Daughter (5:21–43).
- H. The Unbelief at Nazareth (6:1–6).
- I. Warnings to the Twelve (6:7–13).
- J. Murder of the Baptist by Herod (6:14–29).
- K. Miraculous Feeding of the Multitude (6:30–44).
- L. Miraculous Walking on the Water (6:45–52).
- M. Healing of the masses (6:53–56).
- N. Teaching on the Traditions of the Pharisees (7:1–23).

IV. The Galilean Ministry: Third Period (7:24–9:50).
- A. Healing of the Syro–Phoenician Girl (7:24–30).
- B. Healing of a Deaf and Dumb Man (7:31–37).
- C. Miraculous Feeding the Four Thousand (8:1–9).
- D. Warning about the Leaven of the Pharisees (8:10–21).

E. Crucifixion and Burial of our Lord	(15:21–47).
VIII. The Day of Resurrection	(16:1–14).
A. The Announcement of our Lord's Resurrection	(16:1–8).
B. The Appearances of our Lord	(16:9–14).
IX. The Evangelical Commission	(16:15–18).
XII. The Ascension	(19–20).

The Third Missionary Journey of Paul (53–57)

This trek began from the Syrian Antioch. Paul retraced his route to the cities of Southern Galatia, then westward to Ephesus in Asia Minor where he spent some three years. He left Ephesus after the city–wide riot and made a circuitous route through Macedonia and Achaia, visiting previously–established churches. From Corinth, he retraced his route back through Macedonia and down the coast of Asia Minor, meeting with believers along his way toward Jerusalem (Acts 18:22–21:15). At Jerusalem, after meeting with the leaders of the church, Paul was arrested by the Roman authorities after a riot (Acts 21:16–22:29). He was imprisoned at Caesarea until taken to Rome c. 61 (Acts 22:30–26:32).

The Epistles of I & II Corinthians (54–56)

These two letters by the Apostle Paul followed a first letter that has not been preserved (1 Cor. 5:9). They were written from Ephesus during the third missionary journey.

The city of Corinth was a wicked place, indeed, the very name "Corinthian" was verbalized as κορινθιανίζω, a synonym for debauchery. The terms Paul uses in 1 Cor. 6:9–11 reveal both female and homosexual prostitution and sinners of the worst sort. The Great *Akro–Korinthus*, the great rocky outcropping behind the city was the shrine for the goddess of sexuality and was served by a thousand female prostitute–priestesses with shaven heads. The church itself condoned not only immorality, but criminal behavior.[55]

I Corinthians was the second Epistle written to this assembly (1 Cor. 5:9). It was written to correct disruptive, immoral and unethical conditions within the church; to answer questions concerning marriage, foods, worship and the resurrection; to give instructions concerning a collection for the poor believers Jerusalem; to thank them for their gift which a deputation had delivered. The contents of 1 Corinthians reveal the various issues: Divisions in the Church (1:10–4:21), Disorders in the Church (5:1–6:20), Difficulties in the Church (7:1–14:40) and Doctrine in the Church (15:1–58). The analysis of this Epistle is as follows:

Introduction	(1:1–19).
I. Concerning Church Factions	(1:10–17).
A. The Fact of Divisions	(1:1:18–3:4).
B. The Evil of Divisions	(1:18–4:5).
C. The Cause of Divisions	(4:6–21).
II. Concerning Moral Delinquencies in the Church	(5:1–6:20).
A. With Reference to Discipline	(5:1–13).
B. With Reference to Law Suits	(6:1–11).

[55] Cf. 1 Cor. 5:1–11. The man who was cohabitating with his father's wife was not only indulging in gross immorality, but in criminal behavior, as such was a crime under Roman Law [Cf. *The Institutes of Gaius*, 63]. It is significant to note that the church handled the matter before the authorities were involved.

C. With Reference to Impurity (6:12–20.
III. Concerning Marriage (7:1–40).
A. The Lawfulness and Duties of Marriage (7:1–7).
B. The Consideration of Various Cases (7:8–40).
IV. Concerning Food Offered to Idols (8:1–11: 1).
A. The Relation opt Love to Knowledge (8:1–13).
B. The Principle of Self–Denial Illustrated (9:1–27).
C. The Peril of Participating in Idolatrous Feasts (10:1–14).
D. The Lord's Supper and Idolatrous Feasts (10:15–22).
E. The Principles of Liberty (10:23–11:1).
V. Concerning Disorders in Public Worship (11:2–14:40).
A. The Demeanor of Women (11:2–16).
B. The Lord's Supper (11:17–34).
C. The Matters Concerning Spiritual Gifts (12:1–14:40).
VI. Concerning the Resurrection (15:1–58).
A. The Doctrine of the Resurrection (15:1–11).
B. The Denial of the Resurrection (15:12–19).
C. The Necessity of the Resurrection (15:20–34).
D. The Nature of the Resurrection (15:35–50).
E. The Time of the Resurrection (15:51–58).
VII. Concerning Practical and Personal Matters (16:1–20).
A. The Collection for the Poor Saints (16:1–2).
B. The Representatives to Accompany Paul (16:3–5).
C. Personal and Traveling Matters (16:6–18).
Concluding Salutations (16:19–24).

II Corinthians was written to prepare the church for Paul's intended visit; to express his rejoicing over the obedience of the majority to the truth; to urge them to complete the offering for the poor believers at Jerusalem; to vindicate his apostleship against the charges of the Judaizers and their legalism (Cf. Acts 15:1). They had attacked his ministry, his doctrine and his character. He was forced to defend himself. This makes this letter one of his most personal, reveal things not only about himself, but also other trials which are listed only here (11:23–28). The major divisions may be stated as: Paul's defense of his conduct (1:3–2:11), Paul's defense of his ministry (2:12–7:16), Paul's defense of the collection (8:1–9:15) and Paul's Defense of his apostleship (10:1–12:13).The outline of this epistle considered in a three–fold manner:

Introduction (1:1–11).
I. Consolation: Paul's Trials and Comforts as a Preacher (1:12–7:16).
A. A Defense of His Conduct (1:3–2:11).
B.A Defense of His Ministry (2:12–7:16).
II. Solicitation: Paul's Plea Concerning the Collection (8:1–9:15).
A. Example of the Macedonians (8:1–7).
B. Example of the Lord Jesus Christ (8:8–15).
C. The Testimony of Titus and Macedonians (8:16–9:5).
D. The Blessings of Giving (9:6–15).
III. Vindication: Paul's Defense of His Apostolic Authority (10:1–13:10).
A. A Defense of His Authority (10:1–18).

B. A Defense of His Self–Supporting Work	(11:1–5).
C. A Revelation of His Sufferings	(11:16–33).
D. A Revelation of His Physical Weakness	(12:1–10).
E. A Revelation of His Miracles	(12:11–13).
F. A Defense of His Proposed Visit	(12:14–13:10).
Conclusion	(13:11–14).

The Epistle to The Romans (58)

This Pauline epistle was written from Corinth approximately 58 (Rom. 1:1; 16:21–23). The purpose was two–fold: first, to prepare the believers at Rome for his anticipated arrival (Acts 19:21; Rom. 1:9–13; 15:15–32). Second, because of Judaistic error, opposition and possible martyrdom and the need for a positive, didactic and definitive statement of truth, Paul set forth the major truth of salvation in a comprehensive and systematic epistle with the righteousness of God as the major theme.

Righteousness Required from Humanity	(1:18–3:20)
Righteousness Revealed in Christ Alone	(3:21–26)
Righteousness Received by Faith Alone	(3:27–5:21)
Righteousness Realized in Sanctification	(6:1–8:11)
Righteousness Retained in Glorification	(8:12–39)
Righteousness Rejected by Non–Elect Israel	(9:1–11:36)
Righteousness Reproduced in a Converted Life	(12:1–16:27)

This epistle was delivered to Rome by Phoebe (Rom. 16:1–2). It is the greatest and most profound of all Paul's Epistles, and encompasses what has been termed "A Philosophy of the Christian Religion." No short analysis does justice to its contents. The following must suffice as an analysis:

Introduction	(1:1–17).
Part I: Doctrinal	(1:18–3:20).
A. Condemnation	(1:18–3:20).
B. Justification	(3:21–5:21).
C. Sanctification	(6:1–8:16).
D. Glorification	(8:12–39).
E. The First Doxology	(8:31–39).
Part II: Historical	(9:1–11:36).
A. Personal Sincerity	(9:1–5).
B. Divine Sovereignty	(9:6–29).
C. Human Responsibility	(9:30–10:21).
D. Israel's Destiny	(11:1–32).
E. Second Doxology	(11:33–36).
Part III: Practical	(12:1–16:20).
A. The Believer's Spiritual Obligation–Consecration	(12:1–2).
B. The Believer's Congregational Obligation–Church	(12:3–13).
C. The Believer's Social Obligation–Community	(12:14–21).
D. The Believer's Civil Obligation–Citizenship	(13:1–14).
E. The Believer's Ethical Obligation–Conscience	(14:1–15:13).
F. The Believer's Evangelical Obligation–Calling	(15:14–33).
G. The Believer's Mutual Obligation–Charity	(16:1–16).

H. The Believer's Doctrinal Obligation–Caution	(16:17–19).
I. The Final Doxology	(16:20).
Conclusion	(16:21–24).

The Gospel of Luke (57–61)

Luke was a Greek physician and the author of both this Gospel record and the book of Acts (Lk. 1:1–4; Acts 1:1). He was the only Gentile writer of Scripture. He was a companion of the Apostle Paul (Col. 4:14; 2 Tim. 4:11; Phlm. 24. Cf. also the "we" and "us" sections of Acts, where Luke traveled with the Apostle on his missionary journeys (Acts 16:10–17; 20:5–21:18; 27:1–28:16).

Luke wrote this Gospel record for Gentile converts, notably Theophilus, while Paul was imprisoned at Caesarea (Acts 23:33–26:32). Paul's first incarceration gave him ample time to travel about Judea and Galilee and interview the mother and the brethren of our Lord, the Apostles and everyone involved in his Gospel account.[56] This Gospel record may be outlined as follows:

The Preface	(1:1–4)
I. The Birth and Childhood of our Lord	(1:5–2:52).
A. The Annunciations	(1:5–56).
B. The Birth of John the Baptist	(1:57–80).
C. The Birth and Childhood of our Lord	(2:1–52).
II. John the Baptist and Our Lord	(3:1–4:13).
A. The Ministry of John the Baptist	(3:1–20).
B. The Baptism of our Lord	(3:21–22).
C. The Genealogy of our Lord	(3:23–38).
D. The Wilderness Temptation	(4:1–13).
E. The Return to Galilee	(4:14–15).
III. The Galilean Ministry	(4:15–9:50).
A. The Announcement of Purpose	(4:16–44).
B. The Manifestation of Power	(5:1–6:11).
C. The Appointment of Helpers	(6:12–19).
D. The Declaration of Principles	(6:20–49).
E. The Ministry of Compassion	(7:1–9:17).
F. The Revelation of the Cross	(9:18–50).
IV. The Journey to Jerusalem	(9:51–19:10).
A. The Public Challenge	(9:51–62).
B. The Appointment of the Seventy	(10:1–24).
C. The Teaching of the Kingdom	(10:25–13:21).
D. The Rise of Public Conflict	(13:22–16:31).
E. The Instruction of the Disciples	(17:1–18:30).

[56] Cf. Lk. 1:1–3. …to set forth in order a declaration [ἀνατάξασθαι διήγησιν, to arrange in order a narrative] of those things which are most surely believed among us, [2] Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word; [3] It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first [παρηκολουθηκότι ἄνωθεν πᾶσιν ἀκριβῶς καθεξῆς, having investigated all things accurately], to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus. This was, further, an inspired account. He gives many details which the other Evangelists do not give.

F. Events en route to Jerusalem	(18:31–19:27).
V. The Ministry in Jerusalem	(19:27–21:38).
A. Arrival at Jerusalem	(19:28–44).
B. Conflict at Jerusalem	(19:45–21:4).
C. Predictions concerning Jerusalem	(21:5–38).
VI. The Passion and Resurrection	(22:1–24:51).
A. The Last Passover Meal and First Supper	(22:1–38).
B. The Betrayal	(22:39–53).
C. The Arrest and Trial	(22:54–23:25).
D. The Crucifixion	(23:26–49).
E. The Burial	(23:50–56).
F. The Empty Tomb	(24:1–12).
G. The Appearance at Emmaus	(24:13–35).
H. The Manifestation to the Disciples	(24:36–43).
I. The Commission	(24:44–49).
Epilogue	(24:50–53).

Paul: The Journey to and Imprisonment at Rome (61–63)

The Apostle Paul, having as a Roman citizen exercised his right to appeal to Caesar, was transported to Rome under guard. The record of the incidents and the two years of imprisonment are found in Acts 25:9–12, 21, 24–25; 27:1–28:31. The journey to Rome was mainly by sea and Acts chapters 27–28 record the journey with its great perils and triumphs. It is noteworthy that Paul, although a prisoner, assumed moral command of the ship (Acts 27:9–11, 21–26, 30–36).

The Prison Epistles and Acts (61–63)

The so–called "Prison Epistles" written by the Apostle Paul during the first Roman incarceration were Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians, and Philippians. Acts was written by Luke toward the end of this time (c. 63). One of the most remarkable features of these epistles are the Apostle's "Prison Prayers," which are without parallel in the remainder of Scripture for their profundity, depth and yet their intense practicality (Col. 1:9–17; Eph. 1:15–23; 3:14–19; Phil. 1:9–11). The Epistles to the Colossians, Ephesians and Philemon were sent from Rome by Tychicus and Onesimus to Asia Minor. The Philippian letter was written last and sent with Epaphroditus just prior to Paul's release.

The Colossian Epistle (61–63)

Colosse was one of three sisters cities [Laodicea, Hierapolis] in the Lycus Valley which received the gospel about the same time. The Colossian letter was occasioned by the arrival of Epaphras (1:7) who reported a heresy that had taken root in Colosse. It was a strange mixture of ritualistic Judaism (2:2–3, 10–18), Oriental mysticism (2:8, 18, 23), pagan asceticism (2:8, 16–23) and elements of Greek philosophy (2:8, 18–23). Some would find here the beginnings of Gnosticism.[57] In answer, Paul proclaimed the completeness of the Person and work of Christ (1:9–2:3, 8–10, 17; 3:1–4). The analysis of the Epistle to the Colossians:

Introduction	(1:1–8).

[57] For a full discussion, see chapter XI "Heresies and Errors of the Ante–Nicene Era."

I. Doctrinal: The Preeminence of Christ	(1:9–27).
A. The Prayer of the Apostle	(1:9–14).
B. The Person of Christ	(1:15–20).
C. The Work of Christ	(1:21–27).
II. Ministerial: The Apostleship of Paul	(1:28–2:7).
A. The Mystery and the Ministry	(1:28–29).
B. Christ the Center	(2:1–7).
III. Polemical: The False Philosophy and the True Faith	(2:8–3:4).
A. False Philosophy vs. Christ	(2:8–15).
B. False Worship vs. Christ	(2:16–19).
C. False Asceticism vs. Christ	(2:20–3:4).
IV. Practical: The Christian Life	(3:5–4:6).
A. Considered Negatively	(3:5–11).
B. Considered Positively	(3:12–17).
C. Considered in Family Relationships	(3:18–4:1).
D. Considered in General	(4:2–6).
V. Personal: The Friends of Paul	(4:7–17).
Conclusion	(4:18).

The Letter to Philemon (c. 63)

Philemon is a short letter to a close personal friend. It concerned a runaway slave, Onesimus, who had fled providentially to Rome and been converted under the ministry of Paul. The purpose was intercession and reconciliation, as Onesimus had absconded with funds from his master, but had not yet made restitution. Philemon was written about the same time as Colossians and taken there by the hand of Tychicus, who accompanied Onesimus back to that area (Col. 4:7–9). This short epistle possesses vital implications concerning the nature of the Gospel and the institution of slavery. The analysis of this short epistle is:

Introduction	(v. 1–3).
I. The Praise of Philemon	(v. 4–7).
A. The Nature of the Thanksgiving	(4).
B. The Cause for Thanksgiving	(5–6).
C. The Basis for Thanksgiving	(7).
II. The Plea for Onesimus	(v. 8–17).
A. The Basis of the Appeal	(8–9).
B. The Object of the Appeal	(10–14).
C. Providence and the Appeal	(15–16).
D. The Nature of the Appeal	(17).
III. The Pledge of Paul	(v. 18–22).
A. The Promise of Paul	(18–19).
B. The Confidence of Paul	(20–21).
C. The Anticipation of Paul	(22)
Conclusion	(v. 23–25).

The Ephesian Epistle

The Ephesian letter has many parallels with Colossians. Both have Christ and his church as dominant themes. However, where Colossians is more apologetical, Ephesians is more theological.

Colossians is controversial, whereas Ephesians is contemplative. Colossians emphasizes the local while Ephesians emphasizes the ideal or institutional. The doctrine of the church in both Colossians and Ephesians is considered in its abstract, institutional or generic sense. Internal evidence seems to indicate that this epistle may have been a more circular letter, fitted for the other churches in this part of Asia Minor. The analysis of the Ephesian letter:

Introduction	(1:1–14).
A. Address and Salutation	(1:1–2)
B. The eternal Redemptive Purpose of God	(1:3–14).
I. Doctrinal: The Church's Life in Christ	(1:15–3:21).
A. The Plan of God	(1:3–14).
B. The Prayer of Paul	(1:15–23).
C. The People of the Church	(2:1–22).
D. The Purpose of the Church	(3:1–12).
E. The Prayer of Paul	(3:13–21).
II. Practical: The Church's Life in Society	(4:1–6:9).
A. Walk in Unity	(4:1–6).
B. Walk in Maturity	(4:7–16).
C. Walk in Holiness	(4:17–5:17).
D. Walk in the Spirit	(5:18–21).
E. The Christian Ethic	(5:22–6:9).
Conclusion	(6:10–24).
A. Spiritual warfare	(6:10–20).
B. Final remarks and greeting	(6:21–24).

The Philippian Epistle (61–63)

Paul sent this letter to the Church at Philippi, the first church established in Europe, planted during his second missionary journey. Philippi was a *Colonia Romana*,[58] and the congregation was greatly loved by Paul. The record of its establishment is given in Acts 16–17. They had shown more of an interest in his labors than any other church (Phil. 1:5; 4:10–19).[59]

The Philippian letter was occasioned by the arrival of Epaphroditus from Philippi with a gift for the Apostle (1:5; 4:10, 14–18). An answer from Paul was delayed because Epaphroditus contracted a severe illness (2:25–30). When he finally recovered, Paul sent him back to Philippi with this letter. The purpose was to thank them for their gift and concern; to inform them of his state in prison and anticipated release (1:12–25); to encourage and exhort them to unity (1:26–2:16; 4:1–9); and to warn them of Judaistic and antinomian teachers (3:1–21). The analysis of this letter:

The Salutation	(1:1–2).
I. Paul's Relation to the Philippians	(1:3–11).
A. His Thanksgiving for Them	(1:3–5).
B. His Confidence in Them	(1:6–7).

[58] The status of *Colonia Romana* gave Philippi a special standing. It was largely self–governing, and its government was a miniature reflection of Rome itself.

[59] Phil. 1:5, ἄχρι τοῦ νῦν, until [the] now. This is a subtle reference to the gift he had just received from them.

C. His Longing for Them (1:8).
D. His Prayer for Them (1:9–11).
II. Paul's Present Circumstances (1:12–26).
A. Present Rejoicing: A Mutual Ministry (1:12–20).
B. Future Contemplation: A Blessed Expectation (1:21–26).
III. Paul's First Practical Exhortations to the Philippians (1:27–2:18).
A. Rejoicing in the Behavior of the Philippians (1:27–30).
B. Rejoicing in the Selflessness of Christ (2:1–11).
C. Rejoicing in the Grace of a Good Testimony (2:12–18).
IV. Paul's Plans for his Co–workers (2:19–30).
A. His Plans for Timothy (2:19–24).
B. His Plans for Epaphroditus (2:25–30).
V. Paul's Warnings against Errors (3:1–4:1).
A. A Warning against Legalism (3:1–16).
B. A Warning against Antinomianism (3:17–4:1).
VI. Paul's Second Practical Exhortations to the Philippians (4:2–9).
A. An Exhortation to Steadfastness (4:1–3).
B. An Exhortation to Peace (4:4–9).
VII. Paul's Rejoicing for the Philippians (4:10–20).
A. Rejoicing for their Gift (4:10).
B. Rejoicing in His Condition (4:11–13).
C. Rejoicing for Their Past and Present Concern (4:14–18).
D. Rejoicing in The Faithfulness of God (4:19–20).
The Conclusion (4:21–23).

The Book of Acts (c. 63)

The book of Acts, "The first Church History," was written by Luke from Rome during the final time of the Apostle Paul's first Roman imprisonment (Acts 28:16–31). It is vital for a proper comprehension of the implementation of New Testament truth in principle and practice. The book itself may be developed from either the two main personalities [Peter: chapters 1–12; Paul, chapters 13–28] and the center of operations: Jerusalem (chapters 1–12) then the Syrian Antioch (chapters 13–28) or from Acts 1:8 as to the expansion of Christianity radiating out from Jerusalem to the immediate surrounding areas and then to the whole world through the power and leadership of the Holy Spirit:

Introduction (1:1–11).
A. The Preface by Luke (1:1–5).
B. The Parting Instructions of our Lord (1:6–11).
I. The Foundational Emphasis of the Church: Jerusalem (1:1–5:42).
"Ye shall be witnesses unto me…in Jerusalem…"
A. Prayer and the Appointment of Matthias (1:12–26).
B. The Descent of the Holy Spirit in Power (2:1–13).
C. The Message of Peter and Revival (2:14–41).
D. The Fellowship of the Jerusalem Church (2:42–47).
E. The Lame Man Healed (3:1–11).
F. The Message of Peter in the Temple (3:12–26).
G. The Threat of the Sanhedrin (4:1–22).

H. The Reaction of the Church (4:23–37).
I. The Sin of Ananias and Sapphira (5:1–11).
J. A Season of Miracles (5:12–16).
K. Renewed Persecution by the Sanhedrin (5:17–42).

II. The Forward Emphasis of the Church: Judea & Samaria (6:1–12:25).
"Ye shall be witnesses unto me…in all Judea, and in Samaria…"

A. The Appointment of Deacons (6:1–7).
B. The Ministry of Stephen (6:8–7:53).
C. The Martyrdom of Stephen (7:54–60).
D. The Persecution of the Jerusalem Church (8:1–4).
E. The Evangelization of Samaria (8:5–25).
F. The Conversion of the Ethiopian Eunuch (8:26–40).
G. The Conversion of Saul of Tarsus (9:1–31).
H. The Healing of Aeneas (9:32–35).
I. The raising of Dorcas (9:36–43).
J. The Conversion of Cornelius (10:1–48).
K. The Report of Peter to the Jerusalem Church (11:1–18).
L. The Ministry at the Syrian Antioch (11:19–30).
M. The Martyrdom of James (12:1–4).
N. The Imprisonment of Peter (12:5–19).
O. The Judicial Death of Herod (12:20–25).

III. The Foreign Emphasis of the Church: The World (13:1–28:31).
"Ye shall be witnesses unto me…unto the uttermost part of the earth."

A. Paul's First Missionary Journey (13:1–14:28).
B. The Conference at Jerusalem (15:1–35).
C. Paul's Second Missionary Journey (15:36–18:22).
D. Paul's Third Missionary Journey (18:23–21:17).
E. Paul's Imprisonment (21:18–28:31).

The Gospel of Matthew (c. 60–66)

Matthew was one of the original twelve disciples. The purpose is to demonstrate that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Messiah and the Old Testament prophecies are fulfilled in his Person and work. It is a record suited for Jewish converts to Christianity. An analysis of Matthew:

I. The Birth and Infancy of the Christ (1:1–2:23).
A. The Genealogy (1:1–17).
B. The Birth of our Lord (1:18–2:23).

II. The Baptism and Temptation of the Christ (3:1–4:25).
A. The Ministry of John the Baptist (3:1–12).
B. The Baptism of our Lord (3:13–17).
C. The Wilderness Temptation (4:1–11).
D. The Early Galilean Ministry (4:12–25).

III. The Sermon on the Mount by the Christ (5:1–7:29).
A. The Citizens of the Kingdom (5:1–20).
B. The Laws of the Kingdom (5:21–7:12).

C. Blessing the Little Children	(19:13–15).
D. The Rich Young Ruler and Riches	(19:16–26).
E. Present and Future Rewards	(19:27–30).
F. Parable of the vineyard laborers	(20:1–16).
G. Reiteration of our Lord's forthcoming Passion	(20:17–19).
H. Selfish Request for James and John	(20:20–28).
I. Healing of Two Blind Men	(20:29–34).
J. Triumphal Entry	(21:1–9).
K. Second Cleansing of the Temple	(21:12–16).
L. The Fig Tree: A Lesson in Faith	(21:17–22).
M. Confrontation with Jewish Leaders	(21:23–22:46).
XI. The Warnings and Prophecies of Judgment by the Christ	(23:1–25:46).
A. Final Condemnation of the Religious Leaders	(23:1–39).
B. Revelation about the Future to the Disciples	(24:1–25:46).
XII. The Passion and Death of the Christ	(26:1–27:66).
A. Preparatory Events	(26:1–16).
B. The Final Passover	(26:17–29).
C. The Garden of Agony	(26:30–56).
D. The Trials of our Lord	(26:57–27:31).
E. The Crucifixion and Death of our Lord	(27:32–56).
F. The Burial of our Lord	(27:57–66).
XIII. The Resurrection of the Christ	(28:1–20).
A. Confirmation of the Resurrection	(28:1–10).
B. The Failure of His Enemies	(28:11–15).
C. The Great Commission	(28:16–20).

Paul: Release from First Roman Imprisonment (c. 63)

There are reasons for believing that the Apostle Paul was released from prison about the year 63 and that he revisited many of the churches before the outbreak of the Neronian Persecution which began c. 64. The reasons put forth include: first, the charges against him at the first were Jewish and he had an anticipation of an imminent release (Phil. 1:23–26; 2:23–24; Phlm. 1, 9, 22), whereas the persecution under Nero was directed specifically against Christians who were slaughtered unmercifully. Second, the first letter to Timothy mentioned nothing of imprisonment. Third, the first time he was not bound and was allowed relative freedom (Acts 28:30–31). The second letter to Timothy (2 Tim. 4:6–9) seems to describe an entirely different situation (2 Tim. 1:8–9, 16–18; 2:9; 4:6–18).

The Epistle of I Timothy (c. 63–64)

I Timothy was most probably written by the Apostle Paul during his short interval of freedom between the two Roman imprisonments (63–64). Timothy had been left at Ephesus to supervise the work (1:3).

This letter is intensely personal and was written with a three–fold purpose: first, to warn Timothy against false teachers and their doctrines (1:4–11; 4:1–7; 5:15; 6:3–5, 20. Cf. Acts 20:17–32); second, to exhort Timothy about order and disorder in the church (2:1–15; 3:1–15); third, to encourage Timothy to be faithful, courageous and industrious in the face of opposition (1:2–3, 18–

20; 3:14–15; 4:6–16; 5:21–23; 6:5, 11–21). The times were becoming increasingly dangerous, not only in society, but within the churches themselves. The analysis of 1 Timothy:

Salutation (1:1–2).
I. Paul and Timothy: A Warning against False Teachers (1:3–20).
A. Charge to Preserve the Purity of the Gospel (1:3–11).
B. Thanksgiving for Paul's Relation to the Gospel (1:12–17).
C. Reiteration of the Charge to Timothy (1:18–20).
II. The Official Commission: Regulations for Worship and Order in the church (2:1–4:16).
A. Regulations Concerning Public Worship (2:1–15).
B. Qualifications Concerning Church Officers (3:1–13).
C. A Personal Word to Timothy concerning Truth (3:14–16).
D. Advice to Timothy in View of the Apostasy (4:1–16).
III. Discipline within the Church (5:1–25).
A. Attitude Toward those within the Church (5:1–3).
B. Duty Toward True Widows (5:4–16).
C. Duty Toward Elders (5:17–25).
IV. Miscellaneous Warnings and Instructions (6:1–19).
A. Instructions Concerning Slaves (6:1–2).
B. Description Concerning False Teachers (6:3–5).
C. Godliness and Wealth (6:6–10).
D. Living in View of our Lord's Return (6:11–16).
E. Charge Concerning the Rich (6:17–19).
V. Concluding Admonitions (6:20–21a).
Benediction (6:21b).

The Epistle to Titus (c. 63–64)

The epistle to Titus was written about the same time as I Timothy. Paul had left Titus at Crete as he had left Timothy at Ephesus (1:4–5). The purpose of writing was three–fold: first, to authorize Titus to supervise in the ordaining of elders (1:5–9), in the strengthening of the churches against the false teachers of Judaistic traditions (1:9–16), to urge believers to live godly lives (2:1–15), and to exhort believers to be good citizens (3:1–8) and remain doctrinally pure (3:9–11). Second, to exhort Titus to avoid any and all occasions for self–reproach (2:1, 7–8, 15; 3:9). Third, to inform Titus of his own intention of wintering at Nicopolis (3:12), that he would send Artemas or Tychicus to Crete (3:12) and that Zenas and Apollos were expected to arrive at Crete also (3:13). The Analysis of Titus:

Salutation: The Source of Sound Doctrine (1:1–4).
I. The Administration of Sound Doctrine: Qualifications of Elders and Necessity of Dealing with False Teachers (1:5–16).
A. Appointment of Elders in Crete (1:5–9).
B. Refutation of False Teachers in Crete (1:10–16).
II. The Preaching of Sound Doctrine: Regulating Christian Behavior (2:1–15).
A. Instructions as to Character and Conduct of the Church (2:1–10).
B. The Grace of God the Great Motivating Power for the Life (2:11–14).
C. Titus' Duty Restated (2:15).

III. Counseling through Sound Doctrine: Life and Doctrine	(3:1–11).
A. Obligations of Christians as Citizens	(3:1–2).
B. Motives for such a Godly Life	(3:3–8).
C. Reaction to Spiritual Truth and Error	(3:8–11).
Concluding Salutations and Continuance in Sound Doctrine	(3:12–15).

I Peter (64–67)

The first epistle of Peter was written to Jewish (1:1–2, 15–16; 2:6–8; 3:5–6) and Gentile (1:14; 2:10; 4:3–4) Christians in Asia Minor at the very beginning of the Neronian Persecution. The theme of the letter is suffering. The purpose of writing was to exhort the readers to a consistent, godly life despite suffering adversity and persecution (1:13–14; 2:11–12, 19–25; 3:17–18; 4:1–2, 7–11) and to encourage them in the face of suffering and possible death with the certainty of the ultimate Christian hope (1:3–9, 13, 18–21; 4:12–19; 5:10–11). This is emphatically the epistle to persecuted believers. The Analysis of 1 Peter:

Salutation	(1:1–2)
I. The Destiny of the Christian and His Calling	(1:2–2:10).
A. Thanksgiving for our Great Salvation	(1:3–12).
B. The Life Arising out of this Great Salvation	(1:13–2:3).
C. The Reasons for Such a Life of the Saved	(2:4–10).
II. The Duty of the Christian and His Character	(2:11–3:12).
A. The Conduct of the Save toward the World	(2:11–12).
B. The Conduct of the Saved toward the State	(2:13–17).
C. The Conduct of the Saved toward the Household	(2:18–3:7).
D. The Conduct of the Saved Summarized	(3:8–12).
III. The Discipline of the Christian and His Conflict	(3:13–5:11).
A. Confidence in Defense	(3:13–22).
B. Confidence in Conduct	(4:1–6).
C. Confidence in Ministry	(4:7–11).
D. Counsel for Endurance in Suffering	(4:12–19).
E. Counsel for Ministry under Suffering	(5:1–11).
Conclusion	(5:12–14).

2 Peter (c. 67–68)

The second Epistle of Peter was written toward the end of the Neronian Persecution and very shortly before his death (1:12–15). If Peter was martyred at Rome as tradition alleges, it was either before Paul was brought to Rome or shortly after, as there is no record of Peter being there during Paul's final days (2 Tim. 4:9–17). This epistle was the last to be judged as canonical in the early church. Internal evidence reveals a close affinity with 1 Peter. This epistle, as those of John and Jude, reveal the decided battle with Gnostic heresies and their teachers of the latter part of the first century.

The purpose of writing was three–fold: first, to emphasize the return of the Lord and the end of the world in judgment (1:16–21; 3:1–17). Second, to warn his readers of false teachers who were evidently Gnostics (2:1–22). Third, to encourage his readers to live consistent, godly lives and progress toward spiritual maturity in light of their Christian hope, the certain judgment of these false teachers and the dissolution of this world (1:2–19; 2:1–12; 3:1–2, 8–9, 11, 14, 17–18). The analysis of 2 Peter:

Salutation (1:1–2).
I. The Knowledge of God: The Christian's Assurance and Growth (1:3–21).
A. Impartation of Divine Life (1:3–4).
B. Growth in the Christian Life (1:5–11).
C. Authoritative Ground for the Christian Life (1:12–21).
II. The Knowledge of the False Teachers: Their Description and Destruction (2:1–22).
A. Prediction Concerning False Teachers (2:1–3).
B. Examples of Divine Judgment (2:4–10).
C. Description of these False Teachers (2:10–22).
III. The Knowledge of God: The Christian's Hope (3:1–18a).
A. Denial of our Lord's Return (3:1–7).
B. Correct View of our Lord's Return (3:8–13).
C. Exhortations in View of the Christian's Hope (3:14–18a).
Doxology (3:18b).

Hebrews (c. 64–68)

Traditionally, the Apostle Paul has been considered the author of this epistle, but there have been other strong contenders in the minds of biblical scholars.[60] This epistle was written to Jewish Christians who were tempted to revert back to Judaism to avoid persecution. The historical circumstances and internal evidence necessitate a date of writing prior to the destruction of the Temple at Jerusalem (64–68). This epistle is crucial for an understanding of the Old Covenant and the finality which is in Jesus Christ. The purpose for writing was three–fold: First, to warn that a return to Judaism was apostasy. There are five major warnings:

Do not Drift! (2:1–4) [61]
Do not Disbelieve! (3:6b–4:13).
Do not Degenerate! (5:11–6:20).
Do not Despise! (10:26–31).
Do not Defile! (12:12–17).

Second, to emphasize the typical and transitory nature of the Mosaic and Levitical institutions of the Old Covenant (7:11–19, 26–28; 8:6–13; 9:1–28; 10:1–18; 12:18–24; 13:10–16). Third, to demonstrate and emphasize the finality of New Testament Christianity over Judaism, the superiority and finality of the Person and work of Christ over the Old Testament priestly and sacrificial system and the transition from the Old Covenant to the New (1:1–4; 2:5–18; 3:1–6; 4:14–16; 5:1–10; 6:18–20; 7:11–25; 8:1–13; 9:11–15, 23–28; 10:1–22; 12:2–4).

There are several key–words or phrases in this epistle that are used in connection with the theme: "Perfect," "Perfection" (τελειόω, i.e., "Mature, adequate, complete, fulfilled, accomplished"). This occurs fifteen times: twelve times in the English Version (2:10; 5:9; 6:1; 7:11,

[60] The absence of Paul's salutation and signature, the linguistic style and use of the LXX are said to stand against Pauline authorship. For statements which indicate that the author was well–known to the readers, that he was in Italy and was in prison, cf. 6:9–10; 10:32–39; 13:22–24.

[61] Cf. 2:1, "lest we let them slip," μήποτε παραρυῶμεν, "…lest we drift away."

19; 9:9, 11; 10:1, 14; 11:40; 12:23; 13:21). Three additional times in the Greek text (5:14, "... them that are of full age..." 7:28, "...consecrated..." 12:2, "...finisher..."). "Eternal," "Forever," "Everlasting" [εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ αἰῶνος]. Used of the abiding or permanent character of our Lord or Christianity as contrasted with the Mosaic or Old Covenant. These terms occur fifteen times (1:8; 5:6, 9; 6:2, 20; 7:17, 21, 24, 28; 9:12, 14–15; 13:8, 20–21).

"Heaven," "Heavenly" [οὐρανός, ἐπουρανίου] Used to contrast the glory and ultimate nature of Christianity as contrasted with the earthly sphere of the Mosaic institutions. These words occur sixteen times (1:10; 3:1; 4:14; 6:4; 7:26; 8:1, 5; 9:23–24; 10:34; 11:16; 12:22–23, 25–26). "Partakers" [μέτοχοι]. Used to connote a definite participation, association or companionship in the realities of the Gospel. This term occurs six times in the English Version (2:14; 3:1, 14; 6:4; 12:8, 10). "Once" [ἅπαξ]. Used both to demonstrate the finality of the redemptive work of Christ and also to contrast the temporary or repetitive nature of the Old Covenant with the once–for–all nature of the New or Gospel covenant. This term occurs twelve times (6:4; 9:7, 26, 27, 28; 10:2; 12:26, 27 and in a more emphatic form [ἐφαπαξ] in 7:27; 9:12; 10:10).

"Having therefore....let us..." This phrase occurs twice (4:14–16 and 10:19–24), and introduces the practical exhortation to truly appropriate and implement what believers are to possess in the Lord Jesus Christ. "Lest" [μήποτε]. This word is used to introduce several warnings about the fear of losing what believers are to possess in the fullness of the Gospel. This word occurs ten times (2:1; 3:12, 13; 4:1, 11; 11:28; 12:3, 13, 15–16). This term is related to the five larger warnings against apostasy which occur in this epistle. "Better" [κρείσσων]. This term is used to emphasize the superiority of the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ and the superiority of the Gospel covenant over the old Covenant. This word occurs thirteen times (1:4; 6:9; 7:7, 19, 22; 8:6 [twice]; 9:23; 10:34; 11:16, 35, 40; 12:24). The analysis of Hebrews is as follows:

I. The Superior Person of Christ	(1:1–4:13).
A. Christ is Superior to the Old Testament Prophets	(1:1–3).
B. Christ is Superior to the Angels	(1:4–2:18).
C. Christ is Superior to Moses	(3:1–19).
D. Christ is Superior to Joshua	(4:8–10).
II. The Superior Priesthood of Christ	(4:14–10:18).
A. The Superior Person of Christ	(4:14–7:28).
B. The Superior Priestly Work of Christ	(8:1–10:18).
III. The Serious Perseverance of The Christian	(10:19–13:17).
A. Encouragement to a Superior Approach	(10:19–39).
B. Past Examples of Faith and Perseverance	(11:1–40).
C. Personal Application and Exhortation	(12:1–29).
IV. Several Personal Admonitions and The Conclusion	(13:1–25).
A. Personal Admonitions concerning Practical Duties	(13:1–6).
B. Personal Admonitions concerning Religious Duties	(13:7–17).
C. Personal Encouragements concerning Prayer	(13:18–21).
D. The Conclusion	(13:22–25).

Jude (c. 68)

The author was Jude, the brother of James and also a half–brother to the Lord Jesus Christ. Because of the great similarity of this letter to II Peter, it is traditional to place this later in time (68). The antinomianism described in this epistle (4, 7–8, 10–11, 13, 15–16, 18–19) may well betray a

Gnostic dualism that separated the material or the flesh from the spiritual. Such teaching separated fleshly practices from spirituality, allowing for licentiousness (Cf. 2 Pet. 2:1–22).

Jude in his writing emphasized the following: first, an aggressive attitude toward such error; Second, the certain judgment of God upon such individuals (5–7, 11, 13–15); Third, the use of spiritual discernment when dealing such individuals (22–23), Fourth, an encouragement and exhortation concerning the readers themselves (20–21, 24–25). The analysis of Jude:

Salutation and Invocation	(1–2).
I. Apostasy: A warning	(3–4).
A. The Indication of His Former Purpose	(3a).
B. The Nature of His Altered Purpose	(3b).
C. The Reason for the Change in Purpose	(4).
II. Apostasy: Historical Examples	(5–7).
A. A Reminder Concerning Apostates	(5a).
B. The Examples of Divine Judgment upon Apostates	(5b–7).
III. Apostates: Their Description	(8–16).
A. The Nature of Their Conduct	(8–11).
B. The Figurative Description of Their Character	(12–13b).
C. The Prophetic Indication of Their Doom	(13c–15).
D. The Indication of Their Nature and Motives	(16).
IV. Apostasy: An Exhortation to Believers	(17–23).
A. Have an Awareness of Apostasy	(17–19).
B. Maintain a Right Spiritual Attitude	(20–21).
C. Have an Evangelistic Attitude Toward the Deceived	(22–23).
Conclusion and Doxology	(24–25).

II Timothy (68)

This epistle was the last writing of the Apostle Paul before his execution (4:6–8), written c. 68. Roman persecution was wreaking havoc in the Empire and error was advancing in the churches of the Eastern Provinces (1:15). Paul himself was facing execution by the state. This letter contained the final words to his younger associate and son in the faith and ministry.

The purpose of writing was three–fold: first, to encourage and exhort Timothy (1:1–14; 2:1, 3, 7–13, 15–16, 19–26; 3:5, 14–17; 4:1–5, 14–15); Second, to urge Timothy to come to him in Rome immediately (1:4; 4:9–11, 21); Third, to obtain necessary belongings and help (4:9–13). The Analysis of 2 Timothy:

Salutation and Introduction	(1:1–5).
I. Exhortations to Ministerial Steadfastness	(1:6–2:13).
A. The essential Qualities	(1:6–18).
B. The Necessary Duties	(2:1–26).
II. Exhortations to Doctrinal Soundness	(2:14–4:8).
A. The Coming Change	(3:1–17).
B. The Closing Charge	(4:1–8).
Conclusion and Farewell	(4:9–22).

The Johannine Writings (c. 64?–98)

John was probably the only Apostle to outlive the Neronian Persecution. He died c. 98. The dating of his writings varies from the Neronian Persecution before the destruction of Jerusalem to the persecution under Domitian (64–98). Some modern scholarship date the Johnannine writings during the Neronian Persecution, a mild Preterism, which views all the New Testament books written before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70.

The gospel of John

The Gospel according to John was traditionally written toward the end of the first century while he was at Ephesus. It is supplementary and selective in nature in relation to the earlier Synoptic Gospels. John chose eight various wonder signs [σημεῖα][62] to elicit faith (Jn. 20:30–31; 21:25). John emphasized the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, evidently against Cerinthian Gnosticism (Jn. 1:1–5, 14, 18).[63] While the Synoptic Gospels emphasize the Galilean ministry of our Lord, John emphasizes the Judean ministry as our Lord went to Jerusalem for the various feasts during his earthly ministry. The Analysis of John's Gospel record:

The Prologue	(1:1–18).
I. The Manifestation of our Lord to the World	(1:19–12:50).
A. The Lord Jesus and Individuals	(1:19–4:54).
B. The Lord Jesus and the Multitudes	(5:1–12:50).
II. The Manifestation of our Lord to His Disciples	(13:1–17:26).
A. Our Lord as the Servant	(13:1–38).
B. Our Lord as the Comforter	(14:1–31).
C. Our Lord as the Vine	(15:1–16:33).
D. Our Lord as Intercessor	(17:1–26).
III. The Manifestation of our Lord as the Savior	(18:1–19:42).
A. Our Lord as Sacrifice	(18:1–19:42).
B. Our Lord as Conqueror	(20:1–31).
The Epilogue	(22:1–25).

The Johnannine Epistles

The Epistle of 1 John was written against *Docetic* Gnosticism that denied the true humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ.[64] 2 and 3 John were more private letters. The theme of 1 John is the assurance of eternal life (1 Jn. 5:13). The analysis of 1 John:

Introduction: Fellowship and Assurance	(1:1–4).
I. The Necessity for the Tests of Assurance	(1:5–2:2).

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[62] Σημεῖον, sign, token, mark. There are two terms for miracles or wonder signs in the NT: (1) δύναμις, power, inherent ability to demonstrate the supernatural origin of the miracle. (2) συμεῖον, wonder sign, stressing Divine authority. John used the term σημεῖον rather than δύναμις throughout his Gospel.

[63] See chapter XI, "Heresies and Errors of the Ante–Nicene Era."

[64] Docetic Gnosticism, from δοκέω, "to seem," i.e., our Lord only seemed to possess a true human body and nature. These Gnostics held that all matter was inferior and thus inherently sinful. To preserve our Lord from the sinfulness of material creation and a true human body, they held that he was a phantom being who only seemed to have a true humanity.

A. Sin and Fellowship with God	(1:5–7).
B. Sin and the Believer's Nature	(1:8).
C. Sin and the Believer's Conduct	(1:9–2:2).
II. The Tests of Assurance Introduced	(2:3–27).
A. The Moral Test of Obedience	(2:3–6).
B. The Social Test of Love	(2:7–17).
C. The Doctrinal Test of Faith	(2:18–27).
III. The Tests of Assurance Developed and Examined	(2:28–4:6).
A. The Moral Test of the Practice of Righteousness	(2:28–3:10).
B. The Social Test of Brotherly Love	(3:11–24).
C. The Doctrinal Test: The Trial of Truth	(4:1–6).
IV. The Tests of Assurance Reviewed and Reiterated	(4:7–5:5).
A. The Social Test of Love	(4:7–12).
B. The Social and Doctrinal Tests of Love and Faith	(4:13–21).
C. The Three Tests Together: Love, Obedience and Faith	(5:1–5).
V. The Witnesses of Assurance	(5:6–17).
Conclusion: Summary of Assurance	(5:18–21).

The Second Epistle of John was either written to an individual, as were the Gospel of Luke, Philemon, and the Pastoral Epistles, or to a church referred to figuratively as the "elect lady." The purpose is two–fold: first, to commend the love of the truth and, second, to warn against the seductiveness of false teachers. In the latter days of the Apostolic Era, traveling teachers were common (Cf. Acts 18:24ff; 1 Cor. 16:12; Eph. 6:21; Col. 4:10; 2 Tim. 4:10b–12; Titus 3:12–13; Heb. 13:2) and heretical teachers sought to seduce families and churches. The Analysis of 2 John:

Salutation	(1–3).
I. The Path of the Believer: An Appeal for Reciprocal Love	(4–6).
A. Walk in Obedience and Truth	(4).
B. Walk in Obedient Love	(5–6).
II. The Peril of the Believer: A Warning Against Apostasy	(7–11).
A. Warning about the Presence of False Teachers	(7–9).
B. Warning against Receiving False Teachers	(10–11).
Conclusion	(12–13).

The Third Epistle of John was written to Gaius, a faithful and hospitable member of a church. The purpose was to both encourage him and also to warn against the conduct of Diotrephes, another person who loved to have preeminence in the church. The churches of the New Testament Era in many respects are little different from churches today. Most of the Epistles, both Pauline and General, were written to correct errors in doctrine and warn of false teachers. The analysis of 3 John:

Salutation	(1).
I. The Commendation of Gaius: Charity and Prosperity	(2–8).
II. The Condemnation of Diotrephes: Criticism of Pride	(9–11).
III. The Commendation of Demetrius: Character and Praise	(12).
Conclusion	(13–14).

The Apocalypse[65] or Book of Revelation is the final word of the New Testament in thought, if not in time. It was "a tract for the times," written during a time of great trial and suffering to encourage believers in the seven churches of Asia Minor (Rev. 1–3) concerning the ultimate future. John wrote this work while exiled on the island of Patmos.

Note: Hermeneutical presuppositions govern one's approach to this book: (1) the Preterist [66] view: The prophecies in this book had their fulfillment in the early centuries of Christianity, and alleged prophetic events are merely symbolic or referred to contemporary events. (2) The Idealist view allegorizes the symbols as the enduring struggle between good and evil. (3) The Historicist view holds that the symbolism depicts the history of Christianity from Pentecost to the return of the Lord. (4) The Futurist view is mainly that of Dispensational and Covenant Premillennialists.

Historic Premillennialism views the churches in chapters 1–3 as historic churches of the first century and is generally both historical and futuristic, holding to a future millennium. Dispensational Premillennialism generally spiritulaizes the churches of chapters 1–3 to refer to various "Church Ages," while remaining strictly futuristic in the remainder of the book. Postmillennialism is generally historicist, seeing the ultimate victory of Christianity over the world. Amillennialism is generally historicist, holding to a "realized millennium" spiritually fulfilled in the present reign of Christ.[67]

The outline of Revelation from a futuristic view, taking 1:19 as the text to be unfolded, "Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter…" yields the following:

Introduction	(1:1–8).
I. The Things Which You Have Seen: Christ and the Apostle	(1:9–20).
II. The Things Which Are: Christ and the Churches	(2:1–3:22).
III. The Things Which Shall Be Hereafter: Christ and the Cosmos	(4:1–22:5).
A. The Heavenly Throne	(4:1–11).
B. The Sealed Book	(5:1–14).
C. The Seal Judgments	(6:1–8:1).
D. The Trumpet Judgments	(8:2–11:19).
E. The Vial Judgments	(15:1–16:21).
F. The Seven Final Things	(19:11–22:5).
Conclusion	(22:6–21).

Persecution under Trajan (98–117)

The Emperor Trajan (98–117) held Christianity to be a proscribed sect (*religio illicita*) and considered it to be a bad superstition, incompatible with state religion and the unity of the Empire. Christians were treated as capital offenders. This was the general attitude of the Roman government until the reign of Constantine (313–337). The traditional date of Timothy's martyrdom is under Trajan's reign in 98.

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[65] Apocalypse, from Ἀποκάλυψις, revealing, unveiling, or "revelation." See Rev. 1:1.

[66] Preterist, from the Latin *praeteritus*, gone by. A past action or state. The view that prophecy has been fulfilled.

[67] Cf. Robert G. Gromacki, *Op. cit.*, pp. 393–395; Merrill C. Tenney, *Op. cit.*, pp. 385–389.

A Summary of Apostolic Christianity

The institution of the Christian Church was unique to the New Testament and distinct from the Old Testament Jewish Theocracy. It originated with the public ministry of John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus Christ and his Apostles. The New Testament Church was identified and supernaturally credentialed at Pentecost by the visible and audible presence and power of the Holy Spirit. A great revival and spiritual awakening followed for two decades until Christianity was firmly established. The polity of the New Testament churches was simple. Each local assembly was indigenous and autonomous. The officers or leaders were pastors, bishops or elders, the terms denoting the same office. The office of deacon was instituted later as an office of necessity. The inspired Apostles exercised an authority over all churches, but their office ceased with their death. There is no inspired record of an Apostolic succession to subsequent individuals, offices or succeeding generations.

> Note: The following terms are used to describe the office and work of the pastor and preacher: ποιμήν (Eph. 4:11), a shepherd, one who tends God's flock. Bishop, ἐπίσκοπος (1 Tim. 3:1; Acts 20:28), an overseer of God's people and work. Elder πρεσβυτέρος (Acts 20:17), Servant δοῦλος [slave] (2 Tim. 2:24), Steward οἰκονόμος (Titus 1:7), Minister διάκονος (Eph. 3:7), Preacher, herald κῆρυξ (1 Tim. 2:7) and Evangelist εὐαγγελιστής (2 Tim. 4:5). None of the predeceding describe or necessitate any ecclesiastical hierarchy above and beyond the local assembly.

Christianity and the Scriptures. The New Testament Scriptures formed the completion of the progressive Divine revelation or Word of God inscripturated. As such, the Scriptures were and are the sole rule of faith and practice for Christianity. Subsequent Christianity would either be aligned to the New Testament teaching, pattern and practice or be in error and eventual apostasy.

There was a transition from predominantly Jewish to Gentile Christianity as it spread across the Roman Empire, largely through the labors of the Apostle Paul and others. Christianity penetrated every strata of society from the market to the forum to the military and Roman Senate and even to Caesar's household.

Christianity was for a time incidentally protected because of its Jewish extraction. Judaism was a *religio licita*, or legal religion. When the distinction between Judaism and Christianity was made with the Neronian and later persecutions, it was pronounced a *religio illicita*, or illegal religion, and offenders were liable to capital punishment. The first opposition to Christianity was Jewish legalism, the second was Gnosticism, a mixture of religion, theosophy and philosophy which took several forms. Jewish legalism ceased to be a direct threat after the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, but Gnosticism would continue to threaten and seek to modify Christianity for the next three centuries. The principles inherent in the Gnostic system have resurfaced throughout church history.

The reasons for the state persecution of Christianity: Christianity was a *religio illicita*, or illegal religion. Some religions [that offered no threat to the State, the social structure and character, or the Roman religions] were each allowed as a *religio licita* [legal religion]. Christianity by its very nature could not qualify. To preserve the Roman state and the security of the Empire, the persecution of Christianity was viewed as a necessary policy. As the Roman Emperor was considered the embodiment of the State and its power, Christians were finally forced to choose between their faith and their life. The issue was decided by forcing them burn a pinch of incense to the image of the Emperor as a sacrifice and acknowledge him as "Lord" [Representative of the state

and its religion] or be executed. The issue was “Caesar is Lord” or “Christ is Lord.” In a sacralist society Christianity was early equated with anarchism, revolution and apostasy. Polytheistic religions could easily comply; Christianity could not.

Christianity was viewed as a secret society, or mystery–cult. Such secret societies were forbidden under Roman Law. Christian meetings and rites were perverted in the unregenerate mind: Church meetings and the love–feast or ἀγἀπη (*agape*) (clandestine meetings where debaucheries and immorality were practiced), Baptism (allegedly done in or with water or blood as a mystery rite), and the Lord’s Supper (allegedly cannibalism). Christianity was exclusive by nature (Jn. 14:6) moral and righteous in character. It necessarily condemned all other religions and gods as false; condemned immorality and licentiousness; and enjoined holiness and separation from the world. It stood as a rebuke to the society, religions and philosophies of the day.

Christianity was aggressive in its evangelism and universal in its claims. The Empire had laws against religious proselytizing, which Christianity by its very nature had to transgress. The Roman State viewed Christians as a threat to the peace and safety of the Empire. Some Christians at times brought persecution upon themselves by iconoclastic activities or practices considered subversive to the Roman State. Christianity had Jewish roots, which aroused the anti–Semitism of some Emperors. Jewish opposition to Christianity also created difficulties, misrepresentations and fostered persecution. Finally, Christians were blamed for natural and public disasters such as earthquakes, drought, pestilence, invasions by foreign armies, etc. It was thought that their religion had angered the pagan gods who then brought judgment upon society.

The various forms of Roman State persecution: popular antagonism, intellectual assaults and physical persecution. Christianity necessarily did much to offend the general population religiously. Christians did not subscribe to the Roman gods or State–sanctioned worship, and were thus charged with being atheists. Socially, the old pagan societies held to rites, rituals and social gatherings that had pagan overtones. Christians simply did not fit in such a society. Christianity condemned the moral relativism of the Greco–Roman society. The rise and spread of Christianity meant the demise of many industries related to idolatry, pagan observances and all forms of pagan worship, the pagan priests of the Roman state religion, and fortune–tellers.

There were also intellectual Assaults. Christianity had to face the pagan philosophers and scholars who severely criticized and challenged the truth and implications of the Gospel. This lead to the rise of the first Christian apologists and the gradual development of a systematic theology. The Roman government used intimidation, fines, confiscation of property, imprisonment, torture and capital punishment in its attempt to eradicate Christianity.

IV
The Era of Transition: 100–313 AD

An Explanatory Chronological Table of The Era of Transition

(213 Years)

This era extends from the death of the last (c. 100) Apostle to the Edict of Milan (313) and the general end to Roman state persecution. The major issues of the Era of Transition: the New Testament concept of the church was transformed by the rise of an ecclesiastical hierarchical system which rapidly became *Catholic* or universal in nature and character. A sacerdotal [priestly] system arose to largely replace the spirituality and simplicity of New Testament faith and Christian experience. A gradual division developed among the churches. Those assemblies that sought to retain primitive doctrine, piety and purity began to separate themselves from those of the *Katholikos* party that had become lax and innovative. These would be generically termed *Anabaptists* from the late Second Century to the time of the Protestant Reformation. The major groups in this era were the Montanists, Novatians and Donatists.

The Period of Sporadic Persecutions (98–248)

Roman Emperor Trajan (98—117)
- Clement of Rome (Apostolic Father) (c.30–100)[68]
- Barnabas of Alexandria (Apostolic Father) (c.100)
- Rise of Ebionism (A Jewish cult formed by a merger of a Qumran remnant with Jewish Christianity (1st—2nd cent)

Dacian Wars (101—106)
- Simon Cleophas martyred (crucified) (109)[69]
- Ethiopian eunuch martyred at Ceylon (110)
- Onesimus martyred (stoned) at Ephesus (111)

Pliny persecutes Christians in Bithynia (112)
- Publius (Pastor at Athens), Barsimaeus, Barbelius & Barba martyred (112)

Tacitus (Roman historian, 55—117)

Roman Emperor Hadrian (117—138)
- Ignatius (Apostolic Father & pastor at Rome) martyred (eaten by beasts) (117)
- Phocus (Pastor at Pontus) martyred (boiled) (118)

Plutarch (Greek writer and biographer, 46—120)

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[68] The Apostolic Fathers were an early group of Christian writers believed to have had direct contact with the Apostles themselves. This groups includes: Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Hermas, Barnabas of Alexandria, Papias and Polycarp.

[69] Many thousands of Christians were tortured and slain during this time. Only some very prominent are noted in this chronology. See Thieleman J. Van Braught, *The Bloody Theater or Martyrs' Mirror.* Scottdale, PA: The Herald Press, Fifth English Ed., 1950. 1157 pp. This large volume lists thousands of martyrs from the First through the Sixteenth Century. It was a sourcebook for George Foxe's *Acts and Monuments of the Martyrs.*

Rise of Ecclesiasticism: Elders and Monarchical Bishops differentiated (c.120)[70]
Papias (Apostolic Father) (c. 60—130)
A time of severe persecution of Christians at this time under Hadrian: multitudes slain (c. 130)
The rise of Montanism (c. 135—230)[71]
Gnosticism (a mixture of Judaism, Christianity, Eastern mysticism & Greek philosophy): The internal threat to Christianity from within for first three centuries.[72]

Roman Emperor Antoninus Pius (138—161)
Hermas (Apostolic Father) (c. 90—140)
Quadratus (Apologist) (c. 117—138)[73]
Jewish uprising under Bar Kokhba (122—135)
Marcionism (a heretical Gnostic system) (c. 140)
Beginning of the doctrine and controversy over baptismal regeneration (c.150)[74]
Polycarp (Apostolic Father & Pastor at Smyrna) martyred (burned & thrust through with a sword) with 12 others (c. 69—160)

Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius: A great era of persecution for Christians. 19,000 martyred at Lyons (161—180)
Aristides (Apologist) (c. 138—161)
Justin Martyr (Apologist) martyred (beaten & beheaded) (c.100—165)

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[70] The rise of ecclesiasticism. The era from 100—313 was one of transition from New Testament simplicity to the beginnings of Romish hierarchy and the Papal system. The first step was a distinction made between bishops and elders, then parochial bishops, then diocesan or monarchical bishops, then the Metropolitan bishops by the early fourth century. The transition was also from the New Testament simplicity of Gospel preaching and ordinances to sacerdotalism and an ecclesiastical priesthood.

[71] The beginnings of the various groups eventually designated generically as “Anabaptists.” As the more liberal churches took back into fellowship members who had apostatized under threat of persecution and death, conservative churches opposed such action and separated themselves. The rise of ecclesiasticism took place among the same liberal churches. During the era of transition (100—313) these influences resulted in several schisms, eg., Montanism, Novatianism, etc. The movement was essentially the same, but was named after its prominent leader. After the State—Church system in 313, these groups continued under various names until the time of the Protestant Reformation. Some were heretical in areas; others were more orthodox in doctrine and Biblical in principle; and some were very orthodox and evangelical.

[72] Gnosticism was a major threat to Christianity during the first three centuries. It was a mixture of Platonic philosophy, Oriental mysticism and apostate Judaism. Gnosticism manifest itself in a variety of forms, eg., Cerinthianism, Doceticism, Marcionism, etc. See under “Heresies and Errors of the Ante–Nicene Era.”

[73] The Apologists were a group of early Christian writers who defended Christianity against the ever—increasing opposition of pagan philosophy, politics and religion. This group includes: Quadratus, Aristides, Justin Martyr, Tatian, Athenagorus, Theophilus, Minucius Felix, Melito, Hegesippus and Tertullian.

[74] Patristic developments concerning baptism. By the mid—second century, the doctrine of baptismal regeneration was being debated. Until the sixth century, however, believer’s baptism (i.e., faith and instruction or catechizing were necessary prerequisites for baptism) was the general practice (which would preclude infant baptism), until changed by Imperial decree under the Eastern Emperor Justinian (527–565). Immersion was the usual mode (and continued to be, even in the Romish Church until the twelfth century), but affusion was considered valid in cases of sickness or extreme circumstances. Infant baptism logically followed.

Tatian (Apologist) (110—172)
Ptolemy (Egyptian astronomer and geographer, (c. 100—178)
Great Plague in Roman Empire (160—180)
Roman Emperor Commodus (180—190)
Athenagorus (Apologist) (c. 161—180)
Roman Defeat in Scotland (180)
Theophilus (Apologist) (d. 181)
Hegesippus (Apologist) (c. 117—189)
Melito of Sardis (Apologist) (d. 190)
Roman Emperor Pertinax (190–191)
Roman Emperor Didius Julianus (191–192)
Irenaeus (Ante–Nicene Father) Bishop of church at Lyons (c. 130—202)
Rise of Ecclesiasticism: Diocesan or monarchical Bishops and Apostolic Succession (c.180)
Roman Emperor Septimius Severus (193—211)
Carthage again becomes a world metropolis (c. 200)
Period of the Neo–Platonic philosophers (c. 200)
Rise of Ecclesiasticism: the Bishop of Rome begins to gain predominant position as pope.[75]
Galen (Greek physician, c.130—200)
Afghanistan invaded by the Huns (200—540)
Leonides (father of Origen) martyred (beheaded) at Alexandria (202)
Basilides (a former executioner of Christians) martyred (beheaded) at Alexandria (204)
Tertullian writes opposing the baptism of young children as they had not been instructed sufficiently as disciples (first possible mention of infant baptism) (204)
Roman Emperor Caracalla [Antonius] (211—217), Co–Regent with his father and brother,
Roman Emperor Geta [Pulius Septimius Antonius Geta] (211–212)
Clement of Alexandria (c. 150—215), early Church Father
Tertullian (Apologist) (c. 160—215) an early Church Father
Minucius Felix (Apologist) (c. 180—220?) and early Church Father
Roman Emperor M. Opilius Macrinus (217–218)
Roman Emperor Heliogabalus (218—222)
Goths invade Asia Minor and Balkan Peninsula (220)
Roman Emperor Severus Alexander: Resumes the persecution of Christians, which had ceased from 213 to 223. (222—235)

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[75] The rise of Ecclesiasticism and the rise of the Papal system: From the earliest times, the Bishop of Rome became central. This prominence derived from: the supposed principle of Apostolic succession from Peter, the Imperial capital being located at Rome, the Latin—speaking western part of the Empire holding preeminence over the Greek—speaking eastern part, the removal of the Roman capital to Constantinople under Constantine in 331, and the final division of the Empire into East and West in 395. This left the Pope in virtual control of the Western Empire as the prominent person. The first Pope with ecclesiastical, political and military power was Gregory the Great (590—604) who may be properly called the first pope. The Papal system reached its zenith with Gregory VI [Hildebrand] (1073). By the eleventh century the Pope ruled over an alleged spiritual empire that controlled most of the kingdoms of western civilization. Papal decline began with Boniface VIII (1303) and ended with the “Babylonian Captivity of the Church” in Avignon, France (1309—1377).

Henricus (Bishop of church at Lyons), Narcissus (a patriarch at Jerusalem), Julius & Eusebius martyred (223)
Hyppolytus (Ante—Nicene Father) (c.170—236)
Roman Emperor Maximin I [Maximum the Thracian] (235—237)
Multitudes of Christians martyred (237)
Roman Emperors Gordian I, Gordian II, Balbinus, Pupienus and Gordian III (238—244)
Julius Africanus (Ante–Nicene Father) (c.160—240)[76]
Roman Emperor Philip the Arabian (244—249)
Alexander of Jerusalem (Bishop of church at Jerusalem & martyr) (d. 247)
The 1000th anniversary of Rome (248)

The First General Persecution (249–260)

Roman Emperor Decius Trajan (249—251)
Manichaeism (c. 250—)[77]
Crucifixion of Mani (c. 251)
Rise of Ecclesiasticism: a change begins toward sacerdotalism (c.250)
Rise of Novatianism: Partly a reaction against the developing ecclesiasticism & laxness in discipline (c.250—)
First general persecution of Christians (248—251)
Roman Emperor Gallus (251—253)
Roman Emperor Volusian (252–253)
Roman Emperor Vallerian (253—260)
Roman Emperor Aemelian (253–268)
Babylas (Bishop of church at Antioch) & three others martyred (beheaded) at Antioch (254)
Pionius (Bishop of church at Smyrna) martyred (burned) (254)
Origen (Ante–Nicene Father) (c. 185—254)
Cyprian (Ante–Nicene Father) (c. 200—258)
Baptismal controversy re baptism performed by heretics (c. 255)
Roman Emperor Gallienus (260—268)
Marcomanni invade Black Sea region (257)

The Period of Relative Peace (260–303)

First Edict of Toleration for Christians (260)
Dionysius (Bishop of church at Alexandria), Gaius & Peter exiled (260)
Fructuosus (Bishop of church at Tarragona) martyred with his deacons (burned) (261)
Sabellian Controversy (Trinitarian) (c.262)
Goths plunder Athens, Sparta and Corinth (268)
Roman Emperor Claudius II (268—270)

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[76] The Church Fathers are classified according to their historical relation to the Council of Nicea (325): Ante–Nicene Fathers—those who wrote before 325; Nicene Fathers—those who lived and wrote in the immediate context of 325; and Post–Nicene Fathers—those who lived and wrote after 325. The Apostolic Fathers and Apologists are classified with the Ante–Nicene Fathers.

[77] For Manichaeism, see under “Heresies and Errors of the Ante–Nicene Era.”

Monarchian controversy (Trinitarian) (c. 269)[78]
Roman Emperor Aurelian (270—275)
Gregory Thaumaturgos (Ante–Nicene Father) (c.213—270)
Plotinus (Neo–Platonic philosopher, 204—270)
First form of compass used in China (271)
Privatus (Bishop of church at Gevauldan) martyred (beaten) (274)
Roman Emperor Tactius (275–276)
Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius Probus (276—282)
Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius Carus (282—283)
Roman Emperors Numerian and Carinus (284–286)
Roman Emperors Diocletian (284—305),
Maximian (286–305) and Constantius (d. 306)

The Second General Persecution (303–310)

First partition of Roman Empire into East and West (285). Period of relative peace for Christians (260—303). During this time the first church buildings were erected.[79]
Porphyry (Neo–Platonic philosopher, 233—303)
Arnobius in his writings cites the almost universal practice of faith & instruction before baptism (300)
Second great general persecution of Christianity under the Co–Emperors Diocletian (284–305) and Maximian (c.302—310)
Anthimus (Bishop of the church at Nicomedia) & many members martyred (302)
Phileas (Bishop of the church a Thumis, Egypt) martyred (beheaded) (302)
Cassian (Bishop of the church at Brescia, Italy & a Christian teacher) martyred by his heathen students (302)
Felix (Bishop of the church at Thibaris, Africa) martyred (303)
Agathopus (Deacon) & Theodulus (Lector) of the church at Thessalonica martyred (drowned) (304)
Sylvanus (bishop of the church at Emissa, Syria) & 7 others martyred (beheaded) (305)
Roman Emperor Constantius Chlorus assumes reign over eastern and western divisions of the Empire (306)
Roman Emperors Galerius and Licinius (c. 307)
Pamphilius (an Elder of the church at Caesarea) imprisoned & martyred (306)
Roman Emperor Maximin II [Daza] (308–309)
Roman Emperors Constantine the Great, Galerius, Licinius, Maximin, Maxentius all ruling jointly (309–323)
Lucian (an Elder of the church at Antioch) dies in prison (310)

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[78] For the various views of Monarchianism, see "Anti–Trinitarianism" in Chapter XI

[79] The church was orginally the ἐκκλησία, or assembly, congregation of the Lord's people. The first church buildings were designated as κυρίακον, that which belongs to the Lord (Κύριος). This eventually became the word "Church," as used in in the Scottish *Kirk*, the German *Kirche* and the Swedish *Kyrka*. The original concept of an assembly or ἐκκλησία is retained in the Spanish *Iglesia* and the French *l'Eglise*.

Donatist schism in North Africa (312)[80]

Constantine defeats Maxentius and with Licinius jointly issues two edicts of toleration for Christians, the Edicts of Rome (312) and Milan (313).[81] Licinius as Eastern Emperor still persecutes Christians (313–323)

Edict of Milan and Relative Peace (313–325)

Council of Arles, Constantine presides as a "Christian Emperor" (314)[82]

Arian controversy (Christological) (314–)

Basileus (bishop of the church at Pontus), Ammon (a deacon) & over 40 others martyred (316)

Lactantius (Nicene Father) (c.240–320)

Final Roman State persecution of Christians ends (323)

Roman Emperor Constantine the Great sole Ruler of Empire (323–337). With this era begins the great "Constantinian Change" or the establishment of a state church concept.

Pope Sylvester I (314–336)

Donatus (a Bishop at Carthage) rejects all infant baptism, the authority of the pope & stresses liberty of conscience (317)

Council of Nicaea: Arianism condemned, formulation of Nicaean Creed (325)[83]

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[80] The Donatists held to a more primitive Christianity and did not align themselves with the rising ecclesiasticism of the Catholic party.

[81] The Edict of Toleration issued by Constantine in 313 stopped the persecution of Christians in the western portion of the Empire, but Licinius in the eastern portion still persecuted Christians from 319—323. He may have thought they supported Constantine and therefore were disloyal to his regime.

[82] Constantine as the first "Christian Emperor" introduced the "Constantinian Change" to the "Church." This was the concept of a State Church in which every New Testament and Gospel principle would be modified to suit a monolithic system and the "Church" would receive the protection and power of the State. This State–Church system existed until the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century when it was rivaled by the "Neo–Constantinian" system of the Reformers and their rival State Churches.

[83] The Council of Nicaea was the first of the four great General or Ecumenical Councils of the Imperial age: Nicaea (325), Constantinople (381), Ephesus (431) and Chalcedon (451).

The Church Fathers or Christian writers of the first five centuries are categorized according to their historical position to this first Ecumenical Council: The Ante–Nicene Fathers (eg, the Apostolic Fathers, the Apologists, Origen, Cyprian, Gregory Thaumaturgos, etc.) and the Nicene and Post–Nicene Fathers (eg., Athanasius, Gregory of Nyssa, Eusebius, Augustine, Chrysostom, Theodoret, Jerome, etc.).

V
Apostolic Christianity and Significant Entities

To gain an adequate knowledge of and a correct perspective of the Apostolic Era, two areas of historical phenomena must be surveyed: the religious institutions of that day and the influence of the Herodian Dynasty.[84]

Geographical and Cultural Entities

Biblical and Ante–Nicene Languages

The three main original languages of Scripture were Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek.[85] The Jews of the later Intertestamental and New Testament Eras spoke all three. The Κοινή [common vernacular] Greek was, however, the *lingua franca* or universal language of the later part of this era due to the Hellenizing influence of Alexander and his successors.[86] The Scriptural version of the common people, which was weekly read in the synagogues, was the Septuagint [LXX]. Much of the religious teaching was through the *Targumim*, which are Aramaic paraphrases of the Pentateuch and Prophets and the "Oral Law" or Tradition of the Elders.

It must be noted that the LXX has added passages to the Hebrew text, and also contains the Apocrypha, which contains many additions to the canonical books of the Hebrew Canon. The *Targumim* also had additional passages, glosses and notes. Recent modern scholarship, departing from the older theory that our Lord originally spoke in Aramaic, has found evidence that Hebrew underlies much of our Lord's teaching and thought.[87]

The pervading influence of the Greek language and the establishment of synagogues throughout the Mediterranean world and the Middle East providentially prepared these vast areas for the spread of the gospel. Many early converts had previously been Jewish proselytes.

Greek remained the *lingua franca* until the Second and Third Centuries AD, when it was replaced by Latin in the Western part of the Empire. The earliest Church Fathers wrote in Greek. By the time of Tertullian [the first Latin Church Father] (c. 160–215), the trend began toward the Latin. This shift had determining effects upon doctrine and theology, which necessarily

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[84] This chapter excerpted from the author's *Survey of the Bible*, II, "The Intertestamental Era."

[85] Almost all of the Old Testament was written in Hebrew, with the exception of Dan. 2:4b–7:28; Ezra 4:8–6:18; 7:12–26, which were written in Aramaic. The Aramaic was the *lingua franca* of the Assyrian, Babylonian and Persian Empires. Aramisms [Aramaic words and phrases] occur in other various places. The New Testament was written in Greek.

[86] The Κοινή Greek (c. 300 BC–300 AD) replaced the Classical Greek (c. 600–300 BC) and became the *lingua franca* of the Greek and later Roman Empires. The LXX was the first Scriptural translation into Greek (c. 246 BC). The Κοινή Greek reached its zenith about the time of the New Testament (c. 44–100 AD) and gave way to the Latin by the second to third century AD. The Early Church Fathers wrote in Greek; the later Fathers in Latin. The old adage was that the Hebrews gave the world one Lord, the Greeks, one Language and the Romans one Law—all providentially preparing the world for the spread of the gospel through its preachers and missionaries.

[87] For further study, see Kenneth E. Bailey, *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes*. Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008. 443 pp.; David Bivin and Roy Blizzard, *Understanding the Difficult Words of Jesus.* Dayton, OH: Center for Judaic Christian Studies, 2001. 130 pp., and *New Light on the Difficult Words of Jesus.* Holland, MI: En–Gedi Resource Center, 2007. 180 pp.

demanded preciseness of language. The Western Church, centered in Rome, became Latin; the Eastern Church, centered in Constantinople remained Greek. The ultimate "Great Schism" of 1059 over Papal or Patriarchal authority would separate the two Churches into the Roman Catholic Church of the West and the Greek Orthodox Church of the East.

The Diaspora

From the time of the Babylonian Captivity, the following Persian, Greek and Roman Empires, Jews were increasingly dispersed throughout the known world through deportation, enslavement and later, through migration (Acts 2:1–11). Many Jews remained in the Middle East, having become successful merchants, holding positions of high office and even becoming influential financiers. Those who settled in the West had initially been deported there and eventually became merchants who lived along the trade routes and in the larger cities. Not even Hasmonean independence could entice them to return to Palestine. The great Jewish centers were the area surrounding Babylon, Alexandria in Egypt and Palestine.

This sowing of the Jewish people throughout the nations is known as the *Diaspora* [Διάσπορα] (1 Pet. 1:1, "scattered," as of seed [σπόρος], "dispersed"). The great majority of the Jewish people were of the Diaspora; the minority were located in Judea and the surrounding regions of Galilee and Perea. Those of the Diaspora were greatly Hellenized in most instances, as they lived, worked, intermarried and socially intermingled in Greek cities and attended the theaters and the gymnasiums.[88] The language of the Disapora was Κοινή Greek, with Aramaic as a second language in Palestine and the Middle East.

In 63 BC Judaism was given the status of a *religio licita*, or legal religion by Rome, giving great impetus to building synagogues throughout the Diaspora. The institution of the synagogue in every Jewish community became the focal point of cultural and religious life. Thus, the Mosaic Law, the *Targumim* and the Oral Law or Tradition of the Elders held a prominent position. Many proselytes were brought to embrace monotheism in this polytheistic society and some became Jews. Because of traveling dangers, distances and expenses, the serious pilgrims would go up to Jerusalem at the Feast of Pentecost when possible.

Hellenization

Hellenization refers to the spread and influence of Greek culture and language, which followed the conquests of Alexander the Great (331–323 BC). Greek cities had theaters and gymnasiums, both contrary to the Jewish Scriptures and tradition. Κοινή Greek became the *lingua franca* or universal language of the Mediterranean World from Greece to Egypt and to the Middle East. The Jews of the Diaspora were greatly Hellenized; those of Palestine more or less. Hellenized Jews were referred to as "Grecians" [Ἑλληνιστής, Jews who had espoused Greek customs], and were considered less orthodox and traditional by the "Hebrews" or the stricter Jews of Judea. This distinction and prejudice were carried over from Judaism into early Christianity (Acts 6:1; 9:26–29; 11:20).

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[88] Timothy came from such an interracial family (Acts 16:1–3). The Apostle Paul, although from Tarsus in Cilicia, one of the three great intellectual centers of the ancient world [Athens, Tarsus and Alexandria], maintained a strict lifestyle (Acts 23:6; 26:5; Phil. 3:4–6). Note that the KJV does not translate γενόμενος, "*having become* blameless." He thought he had finally achieved a perfect state as a self–righteous Pharisee before his conversion.

The Samaritans

Originally, the term "Samaria" [the capital city] was synonymous with the Northern Kingdom of Israel, peopled by the Ten Tribes; the Southern Kingdom being Judah and Benjamin. After the destruction of the Northern Kingdom, the Assyrians deported most of the population and repopulated the region with people from northeastern Assyria, known as the *Cuthim* or *Cuthubim* [כּוּתִּוּבִים, from the region of Cutha]. These intermarried with the remaining Jewish remnant to produced a mongrel race known as the Samaritans, which had a syncretism of Yahwehistic and pagan worship (2 Kgs. 17:24–41).

The Samaritans [Heb: שֹׁמְרוֹנִי, Gk: Σαμαρειτης] were then a mixed race who were constant adversaries to the returning Jewish remnant and opposed the rebuilding of the Temple and city walls (Ezra 4:1–24; Neh. 6:17–19; 13:28).[89] They later built a rival temple on Mt. Gerizim in Samaria, which was destroyed in 106 BC by John Hyrcanus (Jn. 4:20). They held to the Mosaic Law and Pentateuch only. This animosity between Jews and Samaritans lasted throughout Jewish national history (c. 722 BC–135 AD) (Jn. 4:9; 8:48). Jewish pilgrims from Galilee to Judea would cross the Jordan River and travel the ancient trade route on the eastern side down past Decapolis and through Perea to avoid Samaria. Our Lord's ministry took him through Samaria on at least one occasion where he witnessed some of the greatest fruits of his earthly ministry (Jn. 4:4–42). To the consternation of the Jews, he used a Samaritan as an example of loving one's neighbor as himself (Lk. 10:25–37). His ministry was not limited to the Jews, but was interracial and transcultural, extending into the Gentile areas of Tyre and Sidon and into Decapolis (Mk. 5:1–20; 7:24–37). His final commission, anticipating the universal proclamation of the Gospel, included Samaria by name, and a great revival later occurred there, and churches were established (Acts 1:8; 8:1–14; 9:31; 15:3).

Governmental Entities

Government Officials

The Caesars were the Roman Emperors, alleged manifestations or representations of divinity.[90] Emperor worship was synonymous with good citizenship, and was simply an addition to an existent polytheistic society.[91] The Roman Senate, once powerful during the Republic, was mainly subservient to the Emperor. The main rulers of the provinces were Procurators [civil governors] and Proconsuls [military governors].

John Hyrcanus had ruled the Hasmonean state from 134–104 BC. During his reign, the state was expanded, through conquest, to include Samaria, Transjordan and Idumea. Under the Roman Republic and Empire, Palestine was ruled by a Procurator who managed its political, military, and fiscal affairs. Its governmental structure was reorganized by Gabinius, the Roman governor of Syria from 57–55 BC, who divided the country into five συνέδρια, or administrative districts. This arrangement was intended to eliminate the old system dating from the reign of

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[89] Sanballat was the Satrap of Samaria under Persian authority. See notes under An Introduction to The Restoration Era in this volume.

[90] Roman Emperors also held the religious title, *Pontifex Maximus*, or High Priest, and controlled the worship of the Empire. The Roman Catholic Pope or Bishop of Rome has retained this title.

[91] The Jews were exempted in their monotheism by their status as a *religio licitia*. Christianity remained a *religio illicita*.

Solomon, and perpetuated by the Assyrians, Babylonians, and Persians, the Ptolemies and Seleucids. The intent was to destabilize the nation and thus prohibit any Jewish resistance, as in the previous Maccabean Revolt.

Under Julius Caesar, Hyrcanus II (son of Alexander Yannai, the Hasmonean King) was appointed *Ethnarch* [Gk: Ἐθνάρχης, "ruler of the nation"] (103–76 BC). Through the weakness of Hyrcanus and the relation of the Idumaean Antipater to Caesar, Antipater came into power and established the Herodian Dynasty before his murder in 43 BC. Antipater's son, Herod ["the Great"] ruled Judea as a vassal king under Rome from 37–4 BC. The kingdom was then divided among his sons as a Tetrarchy.

Two Roman military officers need mention: the rank of tribune or "chief captain" [χιλίαρχος, commander of a thousand or a Roman cohort (Acts 21:31ff), and "centurion [ἑκατόνταρχος, commander of one hundred] (Acts 10:1). A Roman cohort [Gk: σπεῖρα; Lat: *spira*] was headed by the *primus pilus*, or first centurion and comprised of 480 soldiers (Jn. 18:3). A Roman legion was comprised of ten cohorts. Centurions formed the backbone of the Roman Army and comprised the *Praetorian* Guard (Phil. 1:13).[92] Centurions are generally viewed with favor in the New Testament. For the Temple guard, the *Akra* and Tower of Antonia, see "Temple."

The Herodian Dynasty

The Herodian Dynasty lasted from 63 BC with the appointment of Antipater as Procurator of Judea to 92 AD and the death of Herod Agrippa II.[93] It was a dynasty characterized by intrigue, betrayal and murder,[94] not much different, however, than the Greek and Roman rulers with their own intrigues and bloodshed. Even the Jewish priesthood was not guiltless.

Herod ["the Great"], son of Antipater, ruled Judea as a vassal king under Rome from 37–4 BC. He was a master architect, building fortesses and palaces in various strategic locations throughout Judea, Perea and Galilee. He had destroyed part of the Second Temple in 37 BC in the Jewish war, and so enlarged it to twice its original size and elaborately beautified it—a project which took forty–six years (c. 20 BC–25 AD). The kingdom was divided among his sons as a Tetrarchy.

Herod Archilaus, the son of Herod and Malthace, a Samaritan, was given the main part of the kingdom: Judea proper, Edom and Samaria. He ruled for ten years until 6 AD, when he was banished to Gaul. Herod Philip I, son of Herod and his fifth wife, Cleopatra of Jerusalem, was given jurisdiction over the northeast part of Herod's kingdom; he ruled there until his death in 34 AD. Herod Antipas, another son of Herod and Malthace, was made ruler of Galilee and Perea; he ruled there until he was exiled to Spain by Emperor Caligula in 39 AD. This is the Herod who

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[92] Phil. 1:13, τῷ πραιτωρίῳ, "the *praetorium*," erroneously translated as "palace."

[93] The Herodians (Matt. 22:16; Mk. 3:6; 12:13) were a political party that favored the Herodian Rulers for political advantage and power.

[94] Herod the Great had his first wife, Mariamne, and her mother, Alexandra, killed, his brother–in–law murdered and three of his own sons executed. He massacred many of the Sanhedrin, and had all the infants from two years and younger in the area of Bethlehem murdered in his attempt to kill the infant Christ (Matt. 2:1–19).

had John the Baptist beheaded (Matt. 14:1–12; Mk. 6:14–29) and was involved in the trial of our Lord (Lk. 23:6–15; Acts 4:27–28).

Agrippa I [Marcus Julius Agrippa] (10 BC–44 AD) was the grandson of Herod, the son of Aristobulus IV and Berenice. The Emperor Caligula appointed him as ruler of the territories of Herod Philip I after his death in 34, and in 39 was given the territories of Herod Antipas. In 41, he was given the parts of Judea province that previously belonged to Herod Archelaus. Thus, Agrippa I extended his kingdom to the former boundaries of his grandfather, Herod the Great. He died in 44 under immediate Divine judgment (Acts 12:1ff). His son, Agrippa II, was appointed King and Ruler of the northern parts of his father's kingdom. He sat with the Governor Festus to hear Paul (Acts 25:13–26:22). He was the last of the Herodians, and with his death in 92 the dynasty was extinct, becoming fully incorporated into the Roman province of Judaea.

Religious Entities

Baptism

When the New Testament opens, baptism is an established reality and practice (Matt. 3:1–12; Mk. 1:1–5; Lk. 3:2ff; Jn. 1:19–28). Nothing in Scripture points to its source other than the Divine commission of John. Many within Christian tradition point to the tradition of proselyte baptism among the Jews as the probable source. There are several considerations: first, the Jewish traditional baptism [*tvilah*] or total immersion was for ceremonial uncleanness, not for initiates or proselytes, which was by circumcision for the males. Second, it was self–administered [sebaptism], whereas John's baptism was administered by a Divinely–ordained authority. Third, the historical authorities for such proselyte baptism are the *Targumim* and Rabbinical or Talmudic Judaism; the Scriptures are silent. A careful study of the *Targumim* and Talmudic literature reveals that the baptism of Jewish proselytes did not begin until at least c. 220 AD, two centuries *after* the establishment of Christianity.[95] That self–immersion for ceremonial pollution predated Christianity is an historic fact; *proselyte* baptism, however, postdated Christian baptism.

What was unique about the baptism of John? It was passive, i.e., John, and later our Lord's disciples, administered it to those who were repentant, i.e., converts. John's baptism was Christian baptism; it was the only baptism that our Lord and his disciples received. Further, Christian baptism is necessarily by immersion and for believers only. It is symbolic of the believer's union with Christ in his death, burial and resurrection (Rom. 6:1–14; Col. 2:10–13). Neither the mode nor the subjects can be changed without completely altering its meaning and symbolism.[96]

In the New Testament or Apostolic Era, baptism was by immersion and was performed on repentant and believing persons. It was not necessary for salvation, but a manifestation and

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[95] The two most thorough and conclusive studies on proselyte baptism are found in John Gill, *A Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity*. Atlanta: Turner Lassetter, 1965, pp. 1001–1023, and Richard Ingham, *A Handbook on Christian Baptism*. London: Simkin, Marshall & Co., 1865, pp. 80–86.

[96] Paedobaptists seek to find a connection between circumcision and baptism. Circumcision was the sign and seal of the Old Covenant; regeneration [spiritual "circumcision" of the heart] is the sign and seal of the New Covenant (Rom. 2:28–29; 4:9–17; Col. 2:10–11). Note: To Abraham personally circumcision was a sign and seal of his pre–existent faith (Gen. 15:6; 17:10–14; Rom. 4:9–12), i.e., Abraham was circumcised as a believer, contrary to his progeny, who were circumcised as infants.

witness to one's faith (Matt. 28:18–20; Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:36–40). As circumcision was the covenant–sign of the Old Covenant, so regeneration is emblematic of the New or Gospel Covenant, a "circumcision made without hands." Baptism is a figure of the believer's union with Christ in his death, burial and resurrection (Rom. 2:28–29; Rom. 4:9–11; Col. 2:10–14).

During the Era of Transition (100–313), the symbol began to replace the reality, resulting in the error of sacramentalism and the heresy of baptismal regeneration (c. 150). As this began to prevail, the trend was necessarily for infant baptism. The reason was that if baptism was salvific, then it ought to be performed as soon as reasonably possible. This also coincided with the rise of sacerdotalism, for the rite must necessarily be performed by a priest.

The Judaizers

The Judaizers [Ἰουδαιζεῖν, "to live according to Jewish customs"] were a party within early Christianity that sought to syncretize Judaism and Christianity (Acts 15:1ff). The traditional Jewish works–righteousness mentality sought to add circumcision and the works of the Law to the gospel of grace. They taught that one must become a Jew in order to become a Christian. Paul penned the Galatian Epistle to deal with this heresy. The "First Church Council" [i.e., conference] at Jerusalem sought to end it, but failed (Acts 15:1–29). The Judaizers of the Apostolic Era grew more separated from Gentile Christians after the destruction of Jerusalem. Between the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70–72 AD and the revolt of Bar Kochba in 132 AD, Judaism experienced a revival, greatly furthering the separation of Jewish and Gentile Christians. Pharisaic, Essene and Gnostic influences combined to produce four sects in the second to fourth centuries: The *Nazarenes*, the *Ebionites*, the *Elkesaites*, and the *Mandaeans*. These groups largely existed in a state between Judaism and Christianity,[97] and faded into obscurity by the end of the fourth century. The remaining remnants were lost in the advance of Islam (c. 582 AD–).

The Oral Law and Tradition of the Elders

Jewish tradition held that Moses received two laws on Mt. Sinai, the Written Law inscripturated in the Decalogue and Pentateuch as the Sinaitic Covenant, and the so–called "Oral Law."[98] The latter would become the primary source for the "Tradition of the Elders" (Matt. 15:2; Mk. 7:3, 5), an unwritten system of teachings and principles which traditionally developed from the time of the Babylonian Captivity and Restoration Era to its inscripturation in Talmudic Judaism (c. 200 AD–). It was meant "to put a fence or hedge about the Law."

> Note: The two great divisions of Jewish Talmudic literature were the *Midrash* (an exegesis, interpretation, and commentary on and application of the Pentateuch and Five Rolls) and the *Targum*. The Law of Moses [Pentateuch] was elevated to a unique position above the Prophets and Writings into a literal form of bibliolatry. Interpretation was divided into the *Halakha*

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[97] For a discussion of the Jewish Christian Sects, Cf. the following Church histories: Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, pp. 576–578; *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, pp. 287–288; A. H. Newman, *A Manual of Church History*, I, pp. 174–180; Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, II, pp. 428–442; H. M. Gwatkin, *Early Church History to 313 AD*, II, pp. 1–18; John Lawrence Von Mosheim, *Historical Commentaries*, I, pp. 396–405, 408–409; J. H. Kurtz, *Church History*, I, pp. 120–126; Augustus Neander, *History of the Christian Religion and Church,* I, pp. 341–365. Also the following histories of doctrine: Louis Berkhof, *History of Doctrines*, pp. 47–49; George P. Fisher, *History of Christian Doctrine*, pp. 48–51; Reinhold Seeburg, *The History of Doctrines*, I, pp. 87–91; W. G. T. Shedd, *History of Christian Doctrine,* I, pp. 106–112; Walter A. Elwell, Ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, pp. 139–140.

[98] See notes on Ezra in vol. 1 of this Bible Survey.

(exegetical interpretations of a legal nature, which were strictly binding and confined to the Law of Moses) and the *Haggadah* (homiletical [non–exegetical] interpretations of an edifying, non–binding nature, spanning all of the Jewish Scriptures). During the *Amoraic* or post–Christian Era, the large body of oral traditions from earlier times surrounding the alleged "Oral Law" was gathered and codified eventually into the *Talmud* [תַּלְמוּד, "Doctrine," from לָמַד (*lamad*), "to teach"] to form the basis for modern Judaism. The two fundamental issues were: first, the alleged "Oral Law" and its replacement of the Scriptures, and, second, later Talmudic Judaism and four–fold interpretation of the *Midrashim*, which consisted mostly of superstitious spiritualization and confusion of application with interpretation.

The scribes and rabbis of Judaism soon began to develop a superstitious bibliolatry and casuistry that began during the Intertestamental Era (c. 397–4 BC), and was already quite advanced by the Maccabean Era (c. 167–63 BC). Among the Pharisees were the Scribes [γραμματεῖς] or Lawyers [νομικοί] who made copies of the Scriptures, interpreted them and taught the people from the precepts and traditions of both the Written and alleged Oral Law (Mk. 1:21–22). Thus, the Oral Law and the Tradition of the Elders obscured and then superseded the Scriptures. The Sadducees by contrast denied the validity of the Oral Law and the traditions. This was the situation and politico–religious–traditional system that our Lord confronted during his earthly ministry, calling such the traditions of men which made the Word of God of none effect (Matt. 15:6; Mk. 7:13). Such traditions and commentaries would later be inscripturated as the *Talmud* (c. 200 AD–). See "The Pharisees," "Sadducees" and "Scribes and Rabbis."

Proselytes and God–Fearers

To be a Jew meant to be of Abrahamic blood, circumcised and devoted to the Law of Moses with all its regulations (Phil. 3:4–6). It might seem strange that, in a polytheistic society and a Hellenized pagan culture, some Gentiles would become proselytes [προσήλυτοι, "strangers, converts"] to a religion which was monotheistic and completely separated from all others—physically, culturally, socially and religiously. Yet it was so. There were two types: full proselytes ["proselytes of righteousness"], who submitted to circumcision, Yahwehistic monotheism, the Torah, synagogue worship, and the dietary and ritualistic laws of ceremonial cleanliness. These became Jews physically, culturally, socially and religiously (Matt. 23:15; Acts 6:5; 26:27), lacking only Abrahamic blood and genealogy.[99] The second type were the "God–fearers" [οἱ φοβούμενοι τὸν θεόν], "proselytes of the gate," or "devout" [σεβόμενοι τόν θεόν, "worshippers of God"], i.e., those, yet uncircumcised, who espoused Jewish monotheism and to some degree submitted to Jewish practices and synagogue attendance (Acts 2:10; 8:27; 10:7; 13:16, 50; 17:4, 17).[100] These latter seemed to be the largest group. It was from these that Paul gained converts in the synagogues during his missionary travels. See "Diaspora" and "Baptism."

The Pharisees

The Pharisees [fr. the Pers. פָּרַשׁ, "to separate"] were the separated ones, i.e., those who were orthodox and kept tenaciously to a very strict interpretation of the Mosaic Law and the "Tradition of the Elders" or the "Oral Law." These arose in the later Maccabean Era as the orthodox party. They believed in spirit–beings or angels and the resurrection of the dead (Acts

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[99] Female proselytes were not circumcised. The commitment was that of Ruth (Ruth 1:16–17). Some Old Testament persons were proselytes, e.g., Uriah the Hittite (2 Sam. 11:3). New Testament proselytes included the Ethiopian Eunuch and King Herod Agrippa II.

[100] See Emil Shürer, *Op. cit.*, II, Part II, pp. 291–327.

23:6–10). These stood in opposition to the Sadducees, who were of the priestly aristocratic party, denied spirit–beings, the resurrection (Matt. 22:23), held to the Law, but not the Tradition of the Elders, and were very accommodating to the Hellenized culture. The Pharisees were the religious and orthodox elite, often appearing very self–righteous and arrogant; the common people both revered and feared them and their judgmental attitude, yet they were the most popular party. They were the rulers and leaders in the synagogues.

The Sadducees

The Sadducees, with the Pharisees and Essenes, rose to prominence during the Maccabean or Hasmonean Era during the time of Jonathan the High Priest (c. 159 BC). The origin of their name is uncertain, but probably derived from either Zadok [צָדוֹק, "Zadokite"?], a priest, or from the term "righteous ones" [צַדִּיקִים]. Socially, they were of the priestly aristocracy and the affluent caste and nobility of Jewish society. Culturally, they were more affected by Hellenization than the Pharisees. Politically, they found it advantageous to support the *status quo* and so appeased the Roman authorities. The Pharisees were more popular among the common people than the Sadducees, due to their religious strictness, aristocratical aloofness.

They controlled the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem by a majority and its President was the High Priest, a Sadducee. Ritualistically, they controlled the Temple worship, and were exact in matters of sacrifice and purification, yet were responsible for the moneychangers and sacrificial animals in the Temple Court of the Gentiles, from which they received a generous remuneration. Religiously, they were more conservative than the Pharisees, holding strictly to the Mosaic Law only, and denying the authority of the Oral Law and the Tradition of the Elders. Theologically, these denied the resurrection of the body and angels or spirit beings, which the Pharisees believed (Matt. 22:23–33; Acts 4:1–2; 5:17, 27–40; 23:1–10). They denied all Messianic expectation and Jewish eschatology, and thus were the foremost in condemning our Lord at his mock trial (Matt. 27:56–68; 27:1–8). Both John the Baptist and our Lord condemned them together with the Scribes and Pharisees (Matt. 3:7; 16:5–12). The Sadducees as a political entity passed into oblivion with the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD.[101]

The Sanhedrin

The "Great Sanhedrin" [Heb: סַנְהֶדְרִין גְּדוֹלָה, Gk: συνέδριον, Lit: "a sitting together"][102] in Jerusalem was the Jewish High or Supreme Court, which claimed its traditional existence, legacy and right from the seventy elders appointed by Moses (Numb. 11:10–17). King Jehoshaphat (c. 872–848 BC) set up a high court in Judah comprised of the priests and elders, and overseen by the High Priest (2 Chron. 19:8–11). But the existence of the Sanhedrin came during the Greek rule over Palestine. Both the Greeks and the Romans gave the Jews great control over their internal civic, criminal and religious affairs. Each of the five districts [συνέδρια] in Palestine had its own "Small Sanhedrin" or provincial council, comprised of twenty–three members to handle local affairs, but all great matters were brought before the

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[101] See McClintock & Strong, *Op. cit.*, IX, pp. 234–241; J. E. H. Thomson, "Sadducees," *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, IV, pp. 2658–2651.

[102] Usually referred to in the KJV as "the Council" (e.g., Matt. 5:22; 26:59; Mk. 15:1; Lk. 22:66; Acts 4:15; 5:34; 22:30; 23:6; 24:20). The Jews also used the terms γερουσία, "Senate," and πρεσβύτεροιν, "Council of Elders."

"Great Sanhedrin" in Jerusalem.[103] Only in the matter of capital punishment did the Sanhedrin consult the Roman Procurator.[104]

The President [נָשִׂיא, "prince"] of the Sanhedrin was the always the High Priest, a Sadducee. The Vice President [אב בית הין, "father of the house of judgment"] handled internal affairs within the Council. Notaries worked as clerks with various cases. The Sanhedrin was composed solely of Sadducees from the priestly aristocracy until the reign of Salome Alexandra (75–67 BC), who brought in Pharisees. These often outnumbered the Sadducees, made the Council more amicable toward the common people and often divided its forces. The Sanhedrin convened in a large semi–circle in its own quarters [for a time, within the Temple precincts in its own room], with those addressed standing in the middle.

Our Lord had followers, even among the Sanhedrin (Jn. 3:1ff; Mk. 15:43–45). He and the Apostles stood before this august body. He was condemned to death (Matt. 26:57–68); they were tried and beaten (Acts 4:5–15; 5:21–33, 40–41). The biblical record reveals the division between the Pharisees and Sadducees in the Sanhedrin (Acts 5:33–40; 23:1–10). This institution, as known in the New Testament, passed away with the destruction of Jerusalem (70 AD). It continued as a religious court in various places associated with synagogues until c. 425 AD in the Talmudic Era.[105]

The Scribes and Rabbis

The biblical scribes [Heb: סֹפְרִים, "writers, administrators, secretaries"; Gk: γραμματεὺς, "writer"] were eventually known under several titles, including "Rabbi" [Gk: ῥαββί, fr. Heb: רַבִּי, "my Great One"] (Matt. 23:1–8), "Lawyer" [νομικός] (Matt. 22:34f; Lk. 10:25ff) and "Doctor (Teacher) of the Law" [νομοδιδάσκαλος] (Acts 5:34). In a society where most were illiterate, scribes held a necessary, high and honored position.

The role of the scribe in biblical history began with court recorders and administrators (2 Sam. 8:17; 20:25; 2 Kgs. 12:10) or amenuenses (Jer. 36:26, 32). With the destruction of the Temple, the Babylonian Exile and the return of the Jewish remnant, the role of the scribe changed by the time of Ezra to include the interpretation of the Law (Ezra 7:6, 10, 21; Neh. 8:1ff). The early scribes were often priests, and the priests were the interpreters of the Mosaic Law.

A shift from the preeminence of the priesthood [which was more susceptible to and affected by Hellenization in the Greek period] to that of the scribe occurred in Judaism with the destruction of the Temple, the influence of the Aramaic language, the Diaspora and the

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[103] The Jerusalem or Great Sanhedrin also had a lesser Sanhedrin of twenty–three members which arbitrated in minor matters.

[104] The only exception was the immediate execution of an uncircumcised Gentile who unlawfully entered the Temple precinct through the "middle wall of partition," which separated the Court of the Gentiles from the Inner courts (Acts 21:26ff). Herod himself, before he was king, was brought before the Sanhedrin to answer for killing a Galilean brigand, Hezekiah, without their permission. Upon his accession to the throne, he murdered the majority of the Sanhedrin. Stephen (Acts 7:51–60) was lynched by the infuriated members of the Sanhedrin.

[105] For a full discussion, see: McClintock & Strong, *Op. cit.*, pp. 342–347; Paul Levertoff, "Sanhedrin," *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, IV, pp. 2688–2690; D. A. Hagner, "Sanhedrin," *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, *Q–Z*, pp. 268–273.

institution of the Synagogue. The scribes, then, predated the Pharisees and Sadducees by over two centuries. These not only made copies of the Law, but also interpreted it for the people. They developed the "fence about the Law," i.e., the "Oral Law" or "Tradition of the Elders," which sought to apply the Law to any given life–situation [casuistry] (Matt. 7:28–29). Most of the scribes were Pharisees and were often classed together with them (e.g., Matt. 5:20; 23:2–29). Their commentaries and applications eventually became the substance of the *Talmud* and Rabbinic Judaism (c. 200 AD–).[106]

Saul of Tarsus was a strict Pharisee (Phil. 3:4–6), and may have been a rabbi of the Cilician Synagogue in Jerusalem, as he was from Tarsus in Cilicia and a freeman [KJV: "libertines," Gk: **Λιβερτῖνος**, a free man] (Acts 6:9ff; 21:39; 22:3, 24–28). Jewish Rabbis had to be well–studied, not only in the Scriptures and Tradition of the Elders, but also in the various Greek philosophies and religious systems of the day.

The Synagogue

The three pillars or entities which have preserved Judaism from the time of the Babylonian Captivity through the New Testament Era (c. 586 BC–135 AD) and to the present, are the Scriptural Canon, the institution of the Synagogue and the class of Rabbis.[107] The Canon of Scripture revealed the truth and Law of God and a record of Israel's moral and spiritual history. The destruction of the Temple and the Diaspora made the local synagogue central and elevated the Law of Moses. The lack of a local Temple and sacrifices negated the necessity of an active priesthood for the Jews of the Diaspora. Scribes or Rabbis copied and interpreted the Law and determined its application to all of life—the forming of the *Targumim* and the foundation for Rabbinic Judaism and the *Talmud*

The synagogue [συναγωγή, "meeting or gathering place"] was also known as "the house (place) of prayer" [Heb: בֵּית־תְּפִלָּה (Isa. 56:7), Gk: προσευχή or προσευκτήριον] (Acts 16:13), "assembly (congregation) of God" [מוֹעֵד אֵל] (Ex. 33:7) and "Sabbath place" [σαββάτειον]. Its traditional origins are found in the "Great Synagogue" in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. Historically, however, the origins are found in the Captivity and Diaspora, when local meeting places became the center of worship by necessity where there existed ten or more heads of families. The emphasis was on the reading of the Law and prayer. Later, explanations or homilies (Lk. 4:16ff; Acts 13:15ff; 14:1ff) were given (the beginning of the *Targumim*) and schools for the religious education of the young were established. The synagogue thus became central to Jewish life, religious studies, discussion and the administration of justice (Jn. 9:34–35; Acts 9:1–2; 2 Cor. 11:24).

The leader or ruler was the ἀρχισυναγώγος (Mk. 5:36; Lk. 8:41; Acts 18:8). In addition, there were elders [πρεσβυτέροι] who comprised a "little sanhedrin" for local religious government and justice. Other officers handled the finances and alms. The Pharisaic party was predominant, as was the promulgation of "the Tradition of the Elders." Synagogues were, if possible, located near water sources for ease of ritual cleansing (Acts 16:13). The largest synagogue was located in Alexandria, Egypt, which was reputed to seat a congregation of 8,000. According to tradition, there were 480 synagogues in the vicinity of Jerusalem.

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[106] See: McClintock & Strong, *Op. cit.*, IX, pp. 464–475 and J. Julius Scott, *Op. cit.*, pp. 165–179.

[107] Werner Foerester, *From the Exile to Christ*, p. 8.

The service began with the recitation of the *Shema* (Deut. 6:4–5), which was a declaration of faith,[108] the reading and explanation of the Law, a homily and the formal prayer [the Eighteen Benedictions]. Gentile proselytes of the gate [God–fearers] were permitted to attend. The synagogues of the Diaspora became places of evangelism for the Apostle Paul (Acts 13:15ff; 14:1ff; 17:1ff).[109]

The Temple

The Temple was the center of Jewish worship and the only place where sacrifices could be offered. It was also the repository where all public funds were kept. The Temple retained its centrality, even though the institution of the synagogue throughout the Diaspora largely replaced it on the local level, giving prominence to the Law rather than the priesthood and sacrificial system. Jewish pilgrims sought to attend at least one of the major feasts at Jerusalem, mainly Pentecost, once a year. See "Diaspora," "Feasts" and "Synagogue."

The era of the First Temple dated from Solomon (1 Kgs. 6:1–9:1) to the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar (c. 960–586 BC). The Second Temple Era extended from 536 BC (Ezra 3:10–13; 6:15) to 70 AD and the final destruction of Jerusalem (Matt. 24:1–2; Mk. 13:1–2). The Seleucid King, Antiochus [IV] Epiphanes, in his Hellenistic zeal and through the intrigue of the High Priests Jason and Menelaus, stopped all Jewish rites and customs, including circumcision; plundered and desecrated the Temple with pagan altars and unclean animal sacrifices (168 BC). This led to the Maccabean revolt and the Hasmonean Era of Jewish independence. The Temple was cleansed and rededicated in 165 BC and the Feast of *Chanukkah* was established. The Temple was rebuilt and doubled in size (Jn. 2:20; 20 BC–26 AD) by Herod the Great through his desire to show favor to the Jews and his love of architecture.[110]

The Temple precincts enclosed the first great Court of the Gentiles, containing the place for the money–changers and those who sold animals for sacrifices (Jn. 2:13–16). This was separated from the inner courts [the Court of the Women, the Court of Israel, the Court of the Priests, the holy Place and Holy of Holies] by "the middle wall of partition" (Eph. 2:14), which, at every entrance had written that no uncircumcised could pass through upon pain of death (Acts 21:26–31).

A continual burnt sacrifice was offered twice daily (Ex. 29:38–43), and the Court of Israel was the most sacred place of prayer for Jewish men (Matt. 21:10–13; Acts 3:1ff). Adjacent to the Temple during the Greek rule was the *Akra* or fortress, built by Antiochus Epiphanes in 168 BC after sacking the City and desecrating the Temple. During Roman rule, the Tower [παρεμβολή, barracks] of Antonia, built on the same location by Herod the Great (c. 19 BC), housed the Roman garrison (Acts 21:30–37). The Temple was manned by its own guard [φύλακες τοῦ ἱεροῦ], and overseen by a captain [στρατηγός] taken from the Levites. 240 men, Levites and

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[108] The *Shema*, from "Hear…" [שְׁמַע], is a declaration of faith in the one and only true God who is a unity [שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה | אֶחָד׃]. The *Kere* [what is spoken] is אֲדֹנָי [*Adonai*], as יְהוָה [*Yahweh*], the *Kethubim* [what is written], is considered the Unpronounceable Name of the LORD.

[109] See McClintock & Strong, *Op. cit.*, X, pp. 71–84.

[110] See Oesterley & Robinson, *Op. cit.*, pp. 376–378. Herod had destroyed part of the Temple in 37 BC, with Roman assistance, when he conquered Jerusalem. He built palaces and fortresses throughout Palestine, including Masada, where the final Jewish resistance committed mass suicide in 72 AD.

priests, were required to attend to and guard the Temple daily and nightly. It took twenty men to open and close the doors. The order of service for priests, Levites and their functions were chosen by lot (Lk. 1:5ff).

Our Lord evidently taught in the Court of the Women, which contained the treasury, or in Solomon's Porch, accessible to both men and women as his hearers (Mk. 12:41–43; Jn. 7:28ff; 10:23). The Apostles also preached in Solomon's Porch, a colonnade on the eastern side of the Temple (Acts 3:11; 5:12).[111]

[111] See Alfred Edersheim, *The Temple Its Ministry and Services*, 414 pp.; McClintock & Strong, *Op. cit*., X, pp. 250–266; W. Shaw Caldecott and James Orr, "Temple," *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, V, pp. 2930–2940; H. G. Stigers, "Temple, Jerusalem," *Zondervan Pictorial Bible Encyclopedia, Q–Z*, pp. 622–656; and Emil Shürer, *Op. cit.*, Second Division Vol. I, pp. 207–299.

VI
Early Christianity and the Roman Emperors

Not all of the Roman Emperors were bloodthirsty tyrants as was the insane Nero. Strangely, however, those considered the wisest, the most conscientious and tolerant were often the greatest persecutors of Christianity. The reason? These Emperors sought to maintain the peace, coherency and stability of the Empire. In attempting to do so, they adhered more rigidly to the laws forbidding any unlawful religion [*religio illicita*] and were prone to stifle any movement that threatened the peace and stability of their government in a monolithic and sacralist society.[112] They therefore sought to maintain the old state religion, which necessarily meant the persecution of Christianity. The most profligate and sensual Emperors, occupied with their own pleasures and projects, often allowed Christianity to exist with either only sporadic persecutions or in relative peace.

The following biographical material remains but a necessary sketch to generally describe the Emperors and the climate of the Empire. The relation of major interest is their relation to and influence upon Christianity. Some are not significant, as their reigns were of extremely short duration, and so are not mentioned.

The Historical Outline

The traditional view that there were ten great Roman persecutions during this era derived from an early Christian allegorical interpretation of Rev. 2:10 coupled with the analogies of the ten Egyptian plagues and the ten horns or kings in Rev. 17:3, 12, and 14. Such tradition has no basis in Scripture or history. There was an era of sporadic state persecutions from the time of Nero (c. 64–68) to the reign of Philip the Arabian (244–249), then the first general state persecution of Christianity, which began under the reign of Decius Trajan (249–251) and then continued under the reign of Valerian (251–260). From the reign of Emperor Diocletian (284–305) began a policy of persecution against Christians in the imperial army (295), then a general edict against Christians throughout the Empire (303). The following is a general outline of these eras, the lives of the various Roman Emperors and their relation to biblical history and Christianity.[113]

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[112] A monolithic [lit: one stone] society is a society which is solid and unfragmented, i.e., it is bound together governmentally, socially and religiously. A sacralist society is a society which is bound together by one religion.

[113] The major sources for historical and biographical information on the Roman Emperors, in addition to the standard Church Histories by Earle Cairns, Henry Chadwick, George P. Fisher, W. H. C. Frend, Justo Gonzales, H. M. Gwatkin, Charles M. Jacobs, J. H. Kurtz, K. S. Latourette, Andrew Miller, Augustus Neander, A. H. Newman, L. P. Qualben, Philip Schaff, Henry C. Sheldon, Williston Walker and William Jones; the following: F. F. Bruce, Ed., *The Advance of Christianity*, J. D. Douglas, *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church*; E. F. Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*; Edward Gibbons, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*; John McClintock and James Strong, *Cyclopedia of Historical, Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature*; J. L. von Mosheim, *Historical Commentaries on the First Three Centuries of Christianity*; Adrian Walford, Transl., *Encyclopedia of the Early Church;* William Whiston, Transl.*, The Complete Works of Josephus*.

Emperors of The Apostolic Age (30–100 AD)

Augustus[114] (27 BC–14 AD) was the first Emperor of the Roman Empire, which had formerly been a republic. He initiated the *Pax Romana* as he greatly enlarged the Empire. He ruled during the birth and youth of our Lord.

Tiberius [Tiberius Claudius Nero] (14–37), a reclusive person, yet one of Rome's greatest generals. During his reign our Lord fulfilled his earthly ministry and Christianity began to expand geographically.

Caligula (37–41), the popular name for Emperor Gaius.[115] Although he began his reign as a benevolent person, he soon turned tyrant, given to immorality and deviation, and was finally assassinated by members of the Praetorian Guard. During his reign Christianity continue dot expand, but was still viewed as a sect of Judaism.

Claudius [Tiberius Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus] (41–54) was denoted to the old State religion and instituted several reforms. He had the Jews expelled from Rome (Acts 18:2) because of Jewish disturbance over Christianity, which was still viewed as a sect of Judaism.

Nero (54–68) was the last of the Julio–Claudian dynasty. This marks the first state persecution of Christians. The insane Nero blamed them for the burning of Rome, which he himself instigated, intending to rebuild it on a grander scale as "Neropolis." The fire destroyed three of fourteen Roman districts and severely damaged seven. Christians were tortured, soaked in oil and used as human torches for his garden parties.

Galba, Otho, Vitellius (68–69). The internal conflicts within the Empire with three successive Emperors meant relative freedom for the Christians. Vespasian (70–79) quelled the great Jewish revolt of 66–69. He became patron to Flavius Josephus, author of the historical work, the *Antiquities of the Jews*. Titus (79–81) conquered Jerusalem as a general and destroyed the Second Temple. The Jewish leaders were executed at the Roman Forum after Titus' triumphal entry into Rome. The Christians had previously abandoned Jerusalem. Ephesus became the large Christian center toward the latter part of the First Century.

Domitian (81–96) solidified his position as Emperor and virtual dictator of the Empire. He considered himself divine, and was addressed as *Dominus et Deus* by his devotees out of flattery. He nominated himself as perpetual censor, governing Roman public morals and conduct and strengthening Imperial worship. Jews were heavily taxed and Christians were openly persecuted. Domitian was assassinated by the palace intrigue of the Praetorian Guard. Nerva [Marcus Cocceius Nerva] (96–98) rose to power as a Procounsel under several Emperors of the Flavian Dynasty. He was 65 years old at his accession, the first Emperor to be elected by the Roman Senate. He ended most of the strong measures of Domitian. Christians evidently did not suffer under his reign.

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[114] Succeeding Emperors took the title "Augustus" to their names and titles, designating them as Caesars.

[115] The young Gaius earned the nickname "Caligula" (meaning "little soldier's boot", the diminutive form of *caliga*, hob–nailed military boot) from his father's soldiers while accompanying him during his campaigns in Germanica.

Emperors of the Era of Transition (100–313 AD)

The Period of Sporadic Persecutions (100–248)

Trajan (98–117), one of the best Roman Emperors, enforced laws against secret societies and so persecuted Christians as a matter of State policy for the stability and unity of the Empire. Emperor Hadrian (117–138) also considered the Roman religious establishment—state religion embodied in Emperor worship—a high priority and political necessity; but he opposed indiscriminate persecution of Christians.

Hadrian (117–138) was devoted to Hellenistic culture [a *philhellene*] and took a Greek male lover, Antinous. He was devoted to the Greek and Roman gods. After visiting Jerusalem, he had statutes to the old Roman gods erected throughout the city, naming Jerusalem *Aelia Capitola*, after himself. He further forbade circumcision, which he viewed as mutilation. The Jews were forbidden to enter the city of Jerusalem. This precipitated the second and final Jewish War, The Bar Kokba Revolt (132–135). He sought to expunge Judaism. Large numbers of Christians were martyred by the Jews during this uprising.

Emperor Antonius Pius (138–161) attempted unsuccessfully to shield the Christians during times of the great natural and public calamities (earthquakes, famine, pestilence, insurrections and foreign invasions) that occurred during his reign. Christians were blamed for unusual calamities, which were viewed as manifestations of the the anger of the gods. Marcus Aurelius (161–180) was an Emperor–[Stoic] philosopher and greatly biased against Christianity. The early persecution of Christians had been left mostly to the local administrators, but these increased under his reign. Thousands of Christians were martyred during this time.

The Emperor Commodus (180–190), the son of Marcus Aurelius and grandson of Antonius Pius, was a weak individual and a megalomaniac, given to extremes and cruelty to compensate for his cowardice. He took the deified title of *Dominus Noster* ["Our Lord"]. He was, however, favorable toward the toleration of Christianity. Emperor Septimius Severus (193–211) was not overtly hostile to Christianity, but enforced the imperial laws against it.

The Emperors Caracalla (211–217) and Heliogabalus [Elagabalus] (218–222), though personally dissolute and licentious, tolerated Christianity. The latter, a sexual and religious deviate, even by pagan Roman standards, turned from the Roman gods (including the central god, Jupiter] and instituted Sun god worship with himself as high priest. He was Emperor from age fourteen to eighteen, when he was assassinated.

Emperor Alexander Severus (222–235) gave Christianity a place in his eclectic religious system. During this time, the first Christian public houses of worship seem to have been erected. He had many Christians in his household, and was evidently favorable to them. Persecution, however, was later resumed in the final years of his reign (224–235). Emperor Maximinus I ["Thrax," i.e., the Thracian] (235–238) came from the ranks of the military. He severely persecuted Christians, as he hated the household of his predecessor, Alexander.

Marcus Opilius Marinus (217–218) was from the equestrian class; the first Emperor who did not hail from the senatorial class. He was a Prefect of the Praetorian Guard, and was executed by his own troops. Such short terms had little effect on Christianity. The two Gordians, Maximus Pupienus, Bzalbinus (237–238), Gordian II [the Younger] (238–244) reigned during "the year of the six Emperors," and their terms were too short to evaluate with regard to Christianity. Emperor Philip the Arabian [Marcus Julius Philippus] (244–249) was very

favorable toward Christianity, and it was rumored that he might have been the first Emperor who converted to the Christian faith.

The First General Persecution throughout The Empire (249–260)

There were two periods of persecution during this time with a short respite between: the first occurred under the reign of Decius Trajan (249–251). The second period of persecution occurred during the reign of Emperor Valerian (253–260).

Decius Trajan (249–251). During his short rule, there was an Empire–wide persecution of Christians as Decius sought to unify, stabilize and strengthen the Empire on its 1000th anniversary by a renewed adherence to the ancestral gods. An imperial edict was issued in 250 to universally suppress Christianity. Many were imprisoned, enslaved and martyred. Multitudes, however, apostatized and turned from their profession of Christianity.

> All the inhabitants of the empire were required to sacrifice before the magistrates of their community 'for the safety of the empire' by a certain day (the date would vary from place to place and the order may have been that the sacrifice had to be completed within a specified period after a community received the edict). When they sacrificed they would obtain a certificate (*libellus*) recording the fact that they had complied with the order. That is, the certificate would testify the sacrificant's loyalty to the ancestral gods and to the consumption of sacrificial food and drink as well as the names of the officials who were overseeing the sacrifice.[116]

Bishops and leaders of various churches were ordered to sacrifice to the Emperor. Some submitted; many refused and were subject to torture and execution. At this time a severe plague in Carthage, North Africa, was blamed on the Christians and many suffered martyrdom. Decius died at the Battle of Abrittus with the Goths. Gallus [Gaius Vibius Afinius Trebonianus Gallus Augustus] (251–253) ruled jointly with his son, Volusian (252–253). He may have ordered a localized and somewhat spasmodic persecution of Christians.

Valerian [Publius Licinius Valerianus Augustus] (253–260) had his son, Aemelian (253–268), as co–regent. For the first four years of his reign, he was favorably disposed toward Christianity, but reversed his policy, and from 257 to 258, he sought to suppress Christianity without bloodshed. While on the Persian campaign, he sent two letters to the Senate, ordering steps to be taken against the Christians. The first, sent in 257, commanded Christian clergy to perform sacrifices to the Roman gods or face banishment. From 258–260, he imposed the death penalty on all Christian leaders and persons of note who persisted in their faith after confiscation of property and imprisonment.

The following year, the second ordered Christian leaders to be executed, Roman senators and knights who were Christians to perform acts of worship to the Roman gods or lose their titles, their property and, if they continued to refuse, also to be executed, Roman matrons who would not apostatize to lose their property and be banished, and civil servants and members of the Imperial household who would not worship the Roman gods to be reduced to slavery and sent to work on the Imperial estates. This shows that Christians were prevalent at this time in very high positions. When Valerian's son, Gallienus (260–268), became sole Emperor in 260, the legislation was rescinded.[117]

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[116] See David S. Potter, *The Roman Empire at Bay AD 180–395*, p. 241.

[117] See W. H. C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity*, p. 326.

The Period of Relative Peace (260–303)

The Emperor Gallienus (260–268) was favorably disposed toward Christianity. He recalled exiles, restored church properties and prohibited further harassment of Christians. Sporadic, localized persecutions and martyrdoms occurred, however. Aemelianus (268), a military leader, ruled for only three months. Claudius II [Gothicus] (268–270) was a wrestler and military leader and the first of a line of tough, often cruel Emperors. Most of his reign was spent dealing with internal revolts and external campaigns. The observance of Saint Valentine's Day by Romanists, Lutherans and Anglicans arose from the legend that Valentine had been beheaded by "Emperor Claudius in 270 for not renouncing Christ."

Aurelian [Lucius Domitius Aurelianus Augustus] (270–275) rose through military ranks to become Emperor. Aurelian strengthened the position of the Sun god, *Sol Invinctus,* as the main divinity of the Roman pantheon. His intention was to give to all the peoples of the Empire, civilian or soldiers, easterners or westerners, a single god they could believe in without betraying their own gods. The center of the cult was a new temple, built in 274 in Rome, with great decorations financed by the spoils from the Palmyrene Empire.[118]

During his short rule, Aurelian seemed to follow the principle of "one god, one empire," that was later adopted to a full extent by Constantine, who substituted Christianity and the cross for sun god worship. Aurelian appears with the title *deus et dominus natus* ("God and born ruler") on some of his coins, a style also later adopted by Diocletian. Lactantius, an early Christian writer (c. 250–325) argued that Aurelian would have outlawed all the other gods if he had had sufficient time. He was recorded by Christian historians as having organized persecutions.[119]

Probus [Marcus Aurelius Probus Augustus] (276–282) was a military leader and as Emperor had his armies do work on civil projects. He died by assassination by his disgruntled troops. Carus [Marcus Aurelius Carus Augustus] (282–284) had a short but victorious reign as a military commander. He named his two sons Carinus and Numerian (284–286) as Caesars. The former was given to debauchery. He was condemned by the Roman Senate and his name was erased from the official records.[120] His brother, Numerian, died on his return from fighting in Persia.

The Second General Persecution throughout The Empire (303–310 AD)

Diocletian [Gaius Aurelius Valerius Diocletianus Augustus] (284–305) came to power as the Commander of the Cavalry of the Imperial Guard. He successfully unified the Empire and delegated power to a tetrarchic system of four governors. The early persecution of Christians derived from a failed attempt to predict the future through pagan sacrifice and divination. The

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[118] The Palmyrene Empire was a splinter empire that broke away from the Roman Empire during the Crisis of the Third Century. It encompassed the Roman provinces of Syria Palaestina, Egypt and large parts of Asia Minor. It was conquered twice by Aurelian (270, 273).

[119] See Wikipedia article on Aurelius.

[120] *Damnatio memoriae* is the Latin phrase literally meaning "damnation of memory" in the sense of a judgment that a person must not be remembered. It was a form of dishonor that could be passed by the Roman Senate upon traitors or others who brought discredit to the Roman State.

Christians were blamed. Galerius, whom Diocletian had elevated as Caesar pursued the persecution zealously, adding to the edict punishment by death for Christians. Both Christians and Manichaeans[121] were severely persecuted. Christians were tortured in the cruel manner, and killed, their places of worship plundered and destroyed. Such persecution, however, failed to daunt the Christians and even the pagans began to oppose such state practices.

Maximian II [Marcus Aurelius Valerius Maximianus Herculius Augustus] (286–305) was Co–Emperor in the West with Diocletian in the Eastern part of the Empire. He was forced to abdicate his title in 305 by Diocletian, and committed suicide after a failed attempt to reclaim the throne in 307.

Constantius I [Chlorus] (293–306) was the father of Constantine the Great and the founder of the Constaninian Dynasty. He died in Britain during a military campaign, breaking the Triumverate with Galerius (d. 311) and Licinius (d. 323) (304–324). Although Galerius was a staunch opponent of Christianity, he rescinded Diocletian's Edict against them and issued an Edict of Toleration. He was in constant conflict with Constantine, but did agree to issue the Edict of Milan (313), which gave official toleration to Christians in the Western part of the Empire.

Constantine I ["the Great"] (309–323; ruled as sole Emperor 323–337). The first partitioning of the Empire into East and West occurred in 285. Constantine rose through the military ranks to become Tribune under Diocletian and Galerius. He was acclaimed Emperor by the army upon the death (306) of his father, Constantius at York. Several individuals vied for power. In 312 Constantine defeated Maxentius to become the sole ruler in the West. Before the deciding battle at the Milvian Bridge on the Tiber River he allegedly saw a vision of a cross with the words *In Hoc Signo Vinces* ("By this sign thou shalt conquer").[122] He attributed his victory to the God of the Christians. This moved him to issue an Edict of Toleration (Edict of Milan) in 313 in the West.

But was Constantine himself a true Christian? He was a shrewd politician and, in an age in which the Catholic party had come to nominally hold to baptismal remission of sins [baptismal regeneration], he postponed his "baptism" [affusion or pouring] until his deathbed, and was buried in the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople. He retained the title *Pontifex Maximus*, or "greatest pontiff," the pagan title of the Emperor as the high priest and embodiment of the Empire and its Emperor Worship. This title was later assumed by the various popes. Jacob Burckhardt explores the relation of Constantine to religion in general and to Christianity in particular. He presents the Emperor as an astute politician who had a syncretistic concept of paganism and the Christian religion.[123] Henry Chadwick gives some determining remarks:

> The sign [Chi–Rho], which appears on Constantine's coins from 315, was a monogram of the name of Christ. Late fourth–century writers called it the 'labarum'. Its name and shape might suggest the double–ax (labrys) which was the ancient cult–symbol of Zeus. But that its meaning was universally understood to be Christian is shown by the fact that under Julian it was abolished. Perhaps Constantine decided to make the Christian monogram his military standard even prior to 312. Before a battle against invading barbarians (he told Eusebius of Caesarea many years later) he had seen the cross athwart the midday sun inscribed with the words 'By

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[121] For a description of Manichaeism, see Chapter IX, "Heresies and Errors of the Ante–Nicene Era."

[122] Legends of the battle describe Constantine's soldiers as having a cross [Gk. Χ] or a Chi [X] superimposed with a Rho [P] on their shields, which stood for Χρίστος.

[123] Jacob Burckhardt, *Op. cit.*, pp. 272–274, 292–306, 375–376.

> this conquer'. The occasion may have been during his campaign against the Franks near Autun in 311; a contemporary pagan orator mentions a vision of the Sun–god on the eve of his victory on this occasion.
>
> In other words, Constantine was not aware of any mutual exclusiveness between Christianity and his faith in the Unconquered Sun. The transition from solar monotheism (the most popular form of contemporary paganism) to Christianity was not too difficult.[124]

Much of Constantine's "Christianity" has been positively portrayed through the writings of Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 265–340), a Church and Roman historian and one of the leading personalities at the Council at Nicaea.[125] Most church historians comment on his tendency to embellish the facts and show the Emperor in the best possible light.

The Edict of Milan and Peace: The "Constantinian Change" (313–325)

Licinius ruled in the East and followed a policy of opposition to Christianity. A brief period of intense persecution occurred from 319–323 in the East under his rule. Constantine conquered Licinius in 323 and became the sole ruler of the Empire and the State persecution of Christians ended. Constantine is known as the first Christian Emperor. He founded Constantinople and the Byzantine Empire.[126]

The "Constantinian Change" describes the creation of a state–church which became into being under Constantine, effectively making "the church" an institution of the state—a radical and unbiblical concept of the church.[127] Constantine as Emperor convened the Council of Arles [southern Gaul] in the West in 314, which dealt with the Donatist schism.[128] This is the first instance of a Christian group appealing to the state, and it ended with the Donatists being condemned. In 325, Constantine, as Emperor, presided over the first Ecumenical Council at Nicaea in Asia Minor to define the nature of God for all Christianity and the Empire. He saw schisms and doctrinal differences not only as detrimental to religion, but as destabilizing to the Empire. He succeeded where Aurelian (270–275) had previously failed—to have one God and one religion for the Empire.

> Note: The Council of Nicaea overwhelmingly affirmed the Deity and eternality of Jesus Christ and defined the relationship between the Father and the Son as "of one substance." It also affirmed the Trinity—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were declared to be three co-equal and co-eternal Persons. The Council of Nicaea was the first of the seven great Ecumenical Councils, the first four of which are generally recognized by both Catholics and Protestants. The latter deny the validity and orthodoxy of the final three Councils.
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> The following Councils were: the First Council of Constantinople (381), convened by Emperor Theodosius I, which confirmed the Nicene Creed, gave a definitive Trinitarian statement and settled the canon of Scripture; the Council of Ephesus (431), called by Emperor Theodosius II,

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[124] Henry Chadwick, *Op. cit*., p. 126.

[125] Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* is the earliest Church History, earning him the distinction, "The Father of Church History."

[126] See Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, III, pp. 10–37.

[127] For the most complete study, see Leonard Verduin, *The Anatomy of a Hybrid: A Study in Church–State Relationships*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976. 274 pp.

[128] For the Donatists, see Chapter VII, "Primitive and Catholic Christianity."

reaffirmed the Nicene Creed and condemned Nestorianism; the Council of Chalcedon (451), called by Emperor Marcian, dealt with the hypostatic union of the two natures of Christ; the Second Council of Constantinople (553), convened by Emperor Justinian I, the Third Council of Constantinople (680/681), convened by Constantine IV; and the Second Council of Nicaea (787) was convened to deal with Byzantine iconoclasm.

VII
Christianity and the Roman Empire

Conflict between Christianity and the Roman Empire was inevitable. It was a conflict of power: the spiritual and moral versus the political, the eternal versus the temporal, the true God and the truth of God versus the false gods, religions and superstitions of paganism. Yet, as religion invariably not only modified human institutions, but was in turn modified by them when tradition and external elements encroached upon the Scriptures, so Christianity in its ecclesiastical expression eventually came to reflect the structure of pagan, Imperial Rome. As pagan Rome sank into oblivion, ecclesiastical Rome rose to take its place.

Although Christianity and the Empire were deadly enemies, there was a tragic transference from one kingdom to the other. The kingdom of God became identical with "The Church" in a Catholic sense. This alleged spiritual kingdom increasingly took to itself the structure of the Empire.

The rise of ecclesiasticism took place during these two centuries, beginning with local assemblies of believers with their bishops or elders and deacons and ending with diocesan, patriarchal and metropolitan bishops, who claimed "Apostolic Succession." The Bishop of Rome began to claim superiority over other bishops.[129] The beginning of the actual papacy, however, dates from the sixth century with Pope Gregory the Great (590–604). A sacerdotalism developed and doctrinal controversies arose as the post–apostolic churches sought to answer Gnosticism, Greek philosophy, combat heresy and error and defensively develop a consistent theology.

The Progress of Christianity

Despite great and varied opposition for the first four centuries, Christianity spread across the Empire and gained converts from every class of society. Tertullian, the early Church Father (c. 160–215) could write about Christians:

> We are but of yesterday, and yet we have filled every place belonging to you—cities, islands, castles, towns, assemblies, your very camp, your tribes, companies, palace, senate, forum. We leave you your temples only. We can count your armies; our numbers in a single province will be greater.[130]

This permeation of every class of society in the Empire by Christianity may be accounted for by the following: first, the eternal, redemptive purpose and sovereign grace of God. Wherever the truth of the Gospel went, it was accompanied with saving power (Rom. 1:16–17) and, as at Antioch in Pisidia, "… and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." (Acts 13:48). God predetermined the spread and success of the Gospel throughout the Roman Empire.

Second, the means used was preaching or the declaration of truth through preachers, evangelists and ordinary believers. It is remarkable that without any organized missionary endeavor or outstanding evangelists since the Apostles, Christianity rapidly and firmly entrenched itself in every part of the Empire and beyond.

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[129] The foundation for the papacy was laid in the Western Empire through the rise of ecclesiasticism, centrality of Rome and the removal of Emperor Constantine to the East. This created a vacuum for the preeminence of the Roman Bishop.

[130] Tertullian, *Apology,* chapter xxxvii. *The Ante–Nicene Fathers,* III, p. 45.

Third, Christian doctrinal truth produced a spiritual and moral influence and earnestness that enabled men and women to willingly die for that truth. Paganism produced no martyrs. It was during this era that a Church Father, Tertullian, wrote that, as it has been traditionally misquoted, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church."

> Note: The actual quote is: 'Excellent governors, you may torment, afflict, and vex us; your wickedness puts our weakness to the test, but your cruelty is of no avail. It is but a stronger invitation to bring others to our persuasion. The more we are mowed down, the more we spring up again. The blood of the Christians is seed.'[131]

While it is true that many apostatized to avoid persecution and death, the glorious influence and dying testimonies of those who were martyred was a moving force within and without Christianity.

Fourth, paganism was in an irreversible state of decay. Only Christian truth answered the deepest desires and needs of the human soul. While pagan religion and philosophy might contend for this life, only Christianity pointed clearly and authoritatively beyond to life eternal.

Fifth, the insistence of Christianity that it was the only true religion. Further, Christianity transcended all racial and national boundaries; it was universal rather than national, racial or cultural in nature.

Sixth, the Christian truth–claims of Divine origin that derived from the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies was a deciding factor to many.

Seventh, the life and witness of the churches in practically reflecting the truth of the Gospel in love, concern, sympathy and brotherhood made an indelible impression.

The Rise of Ecclesiasticism

The nature, structure and concept of the church changed radically during these two centuries. The major changes occurred in the distinction between clergy and laity, the development of the episcopal system, the transition from New Testament Christianity to sacerdotalism and sacramentalism, and the emphasis upon catholic unity. Elders and Ruling Bishops were differentiated by about the year 120. The beginning of the Diocesan or Monarchical Bishops and the notion of Apostolic Succession developed by the close of the Second Century. The Bishop of Rome began to gain a predominant position as the central figure in Christianity (c. 180). A change began toward sacerdotalism (c. 250). A baptismal controversy arose concerning the legitimacy of baptism performed by "heretics" [those of the non–Catholic party] (c. 255).

Several groups came to prominence which sought to maintain Apostolic Christianity. These seem to be the remnants of New Testament Christianity. The rise of Montanism began as a reactionary movement against spiritual and disciplinary laxity in the churches (c. 135–230). The rise of Novatianism was also a reaction against the developing ecclesiasticism and laxness in church discipline (c. 250). The Donatist controversy in North Africa (c. 311–347) centered over laxness in

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[131] *Loc.cit.*, *The Ante–Nicene Fathers,* III, p. 55.

restoring those who had denied their faith under persecution [*lapsi*] and had given up the Scriptures to be destroyed [*tradtiores*].[132]

The Distinction between Clergy and Laity

By the close of the first century and the beginning of the second, the preaching and teaching ministry in many churches was no longer under gifted men (i.e., men called and gifted by the Holy Spirit and so spiritually qualified), but under the office of the eldership. This innovation began to create an official distinction between the elders or bishops and the people. Only the official ministers could baptize, administer the Lord's Supper, publicly teach and preach, and administer the funds.[133]

By the third century, the developing sacerdotalism, referring to the ministers of the churches as priests, completed the distinction and separation of clergy and laity. Salvation was slowly seen as a priestly, sacramental function rather than by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8ff). The scriptural truth of the priesthood of the individual believer was largely lost.[134] Among the laity, there were two classes, the *faithful* or baptized members and the *catechumens*, or those who were being instructed in preparation for baptism.

The Rise of The Episcopacy

An ecclesiastical hierarchy gradually developed from the second to the fourth centuries. The autonomous nature of the local church and its eldership was soon lost to the principle of the episcopacy.[135] The development was generally from the local pastor or bishop to the Parochial Bishop with his influence over other elders, to the Monarchical Bishop who had authority over the eldership of a given church, to the Diocesan Bishop who had authority over a city and its surrounding areas [*diocese*], and ultimately, to the Metropolitan or Patriarchal Bishop who ruled over vast regions.

By the middle of the second century (c. 150), there were Diocesan or Monarchical Bishops who presided over several churches and their elders in a given locality. The principle was "One city, one Church; one Church, one Bishop."[136] The developing sacerdotalism eventually taught "Where the Bishop is, there is the Church."

The development of the Metropolitan or Patriarchal Bishop. Although the title (from *metropolis*, a major center) was not used legally until the Council of Nicaea (325), the hierarchical

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[132] Philip Schaff, *Op.cit*., II, p. 76 list three types of compromisers: those who offered incense to the gods [*thurificati, sacrificati*], those who procured false witness of their return to paganism [*libellatic*i], and those who gave up the Scriptures to be burned [*tradtiores*].

[133] It is noteworthy and to be lamented that within fifty years after the last inspired Apostle, great and infinitely harmful departures arose, including an ecclesiastical hierarchy, the beginnings of sacerdotalism, sacramentalism and baptismal regeneration. One generation can easily depart from the faith. Every generation must keep faithful to the Scriptures.

[134] The sacerdotalism evidently derived from an Old Testament mentality and the Levitical priesthood, and also from paganism.

[135] Episcopacy, Gk: ἐπισκοπή, Lat: *episcopatus,* an inspection or visitation—rule by Bishops, an ecclesiastical ruling order above that of the elder, minister, pastor or priest.

[136] Charles M. Jacobs, *The Story of the Church,* p. 20.

system had already developed during the later years of this era. Metropolitan Bishops presided over provinces and vast geographical areas. Some of these were Patriarchal Bishops whose churches were apostolic in origin (e.g., Rome, Jerusalem, Antioch, Ephesus, etc.), and thus believed to be in a direct line with the purity of apostolic truth.

How did such a departure from the New Testament take place? The causes were manifold: first, a pragmatic approach to church government. With a plurality of elders in a large assembly, one eventually became its president or leader, and hence a "bishop" in the episcopal sense. Many assemblies of believers were small and rural. An early distinction was made between country bishops with relatively small congregations and city bishops with large assemblies and greater influence. A city bishop would eventually preside over an entire city, including the smaller assemblies of believers in the rural districts within that locality—a Monarchical Bishop. Among these Diocesan Bishops, one would eventually come to greater prominence and so there eventually developed the office of the Metropolitan Bishop.

Second, The gradual departure from the New Testament ministry to a sacerdotalism necessarily gave tremendous power and authority to the bishops, who were looked upon as the visible representatives of God. Ignatius (d. 117) stated "We ought to regard the bishop as the Lord himself."[137]

Third, the bishops became the administrators of the churches and their funds, in sole charge of distributing to the widows and the poor.

Fourth, the assaults of pagan religion and philosophy had to be answered and orthodoxy had to be maintained against error and heresy. This was the burden of the office of bishop, as most believers were from the lower classes and relatively uneducated. Thus, the Diocesan and Metropolitan Bishops became the source of orthodoxy for the church.

Fifth, there was a tendency to pattern the government of the church after the model of the Empire. The secularization of the Christian religion in its ecclesiastical structure was a constant trend.

Sixth, before the third century bishops were claiming Apostolic Succession to buttress their doctrinal positions and authority over the churches. Did the episcopal system derive from the Apostolic office, or did it elevate from the eldership? It developed from the eldership, but very early claimed the tradition of Apostolic Succession. Religious tradition gradually replaced scriptural authority. Copies of the Scriptures were relatively few; the people had little or no direct access to the Scriptures themselves, and were thus wholly reliant on the church authorities for their religion.

The Rise of Sacerdotalism

Sacerdotalism denotes reliance on a priesthood.[138] This radical departure from the New Testament gospel ministry was gradual, with Christian ministers so designated by Tertullian (c.160–215), who, however, also argued the priesthood of the individual believer.

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[137] Henry Melville Gwatkin, *Early Church History to AD 313,* I, p. 294.

[138] Sacerdotalism, from the Lat: *sacer*, sacred," and *sacerdos*, "priest." *Sacerdotium* refers to a hierarchy of priests. The belief that propitiatory intercession for the supplicant or worshipper is by a priesthood. This was patterned after the Old Testament Levitical priesthood and pagan priests.

Cyprian (c. 200–258) was the first writer to maintain the full priesthood of the Christian minister and especially the bishop. Cyprian stated that no man could have God for his father who did not have the church for his mother. This was customary by the third century. Salvation thus became inseparable from the Catholic Church, which was equated with the Kingdom of God.

How did such a radical departure occur? The most probable reasons are as follows: first, the separation or distinction made between clergy and laity. Once the ministry became an office apart from the necessary gifts, the foundation was laid for the subsequent emphasis on the outward: the office, authority and ritual or ceremonial.

Second, many Jewish and pagan converts still possessed a strong inclination for a priesthood, an altar and rituals or ceremonies.

Third, the large influx of professing Christians during times of relative peace lowered the general spirituality of the churches. Many of these nominal adherents received the whole traditional episcopal system without question. Institutional Christianity had already largely substituted tradition for the inscripturated Word of God.

Fourth, an "Old Testament mentality" began to develop which equated the Christian ministry with the Levitical priesthood and sacrificial system.

Fifth, the administration of baptism and the celebration of the Lord's Supper or Eucharist had become rites closely associated with regeneration, and only the official ministers could administer such. This was by nature a sacerdotal function and gave the officials control of the alleged spiritual power and regenerating grace of the church.

Sacramentalism

Sacramentalism is derived from the Latin *sacer*, holy or sacred, and so *sacare*, to consecrate, and *sacramentum* [Gk: μυστέριον, "mystery"] an oath of loyalty. It is the belief in the efficacy of the outward and symbolic rather than the reality of inward grace. The two ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper soon became sacraments or in themselves saving rituals.

By the year 150 the baptismal regeneration controversy had begun. This would eventually lead to two issues: infant baptism and "anabaptism."

Infant baptism is the logical result of sacramentalism. If baptism is a regenerating ritual, then logically it should be performed as soon as possible. The controversy over infant baptism would continue into the sixth century when infant baptism would be commanded by Imperial decree during the reigns of the Byzantine Emperors Justin (518–527) and his nephew, Justinian (527–565). Immersion would continue as the predominant mode until approximately the twelfth century, with pouring or sprinkling performed in cases of emergency, sickness or imminent death.[139] "Anabaptism," or the alleged "re–baptism" of believers who had been baptized as infants, began in this era and would continue into the seventeenth century, a reaction to both Catholicism and later Protestantism.[140]

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[139] For the history of infant baptism and baptism by immersion to the Middle Ages, see John T. Christian, *A History of the Baptists*, I, pp. 27–38, 77–82, 171–184.

[140] "Anabaptist" was a derogatory name, and denied by those so accused, as they declared that infant baptism was not true baptism.

Those who maintained the scriptural observance of believer's baptism by immersion would be labeled "anabaptists" as a generic and derogatory distinction. Historically, they would be known by a variety of names up ot the time of the Protestant Reformation of the Sixteenth Century: Montanists, Novatians, Donatists, Paulicians, Vaudois, Paterines, Albigenses, Berengarians, Bogomili, Cathari, Gezari, Arnoldists, Petrobrusians, Henricians, Waldenses, Lollards, Wycliffites, Bohemian Brethren, Hussites, etc. They were inclusively derided from the fourth to the sixteenth century by the generic term "anabaptist" because they baptized believers who had been baptized as infants in the Romish State–Church system.[141]

The Lord's Supper, "Communion," or the *Eucharist* (from the Greek εὐχαρίστειν, "to rejoice, receive with gratitude") began to have an elevated place in worship. It eventually came to possess the nature of a sacrament in the popular mind, then by the end of this era, that of a [bloodless] sacrifice in the writings of some of the Church Fathers, e.g., Cyprian (d. 258). The celebration of the Mass,[142] with its doctrine of transubstantiation,[143] however, was not universally held by Romanism until the late Middle Ages, and was standardized by Pope Pius V (1566–1572) as a Cardinal at the Council of Trent (c. 1545–1563).

Catholic Unity

The term "Catholic" (from the Gk. Καθολίκος and the Lat. *Catholicus,* all–inclusive or universal) originally referred to the common or Apostolic faith which was universally held as orthodox. Ignatius (d. 117) was the first to use the term "Catholic Church."[144]

This catholic concept viewed the church as a religious organization of priests and bishops, a religious empire that was universal in scope and authority. It is true that many of the essential dogmas of Rome were as yet non–existent, but the foundation and essential structure were laid in this Era of Transition (c. 100–313).

There was a great tendency to centralize and unify Christianity into a cohesive whole. This theory of the nature of the church allegedly derived from the spiritual unity of all believers and also reflected the idea of the Roman State in an alleged spiritual kingdom.

The Catholic or Universal Church as manifested through the bishops became synonymous with "the Body of Christ." It allegedly gave the church a united front when facing the challenge of pagan religions and philosophies. It helped quell heresy and schism and quieted fanaticism. It

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[141] The so–called "Mad Men of Munster" were referred to derogatorily as "anabpatists," but they practiced infant sprinkling, not believer's baptism by immersion.

[142] The Mass, also called "Holy Communion," derives from the Lat: *missio*, "dismiss," originally referring to the dismissal of catechumens before Holy Communion was celebrated [Lat: *Ite, missa est*, or "Go; it is the dismissal"]. The Mass is allegedly the continual offering up of Christ in a "bloodless sacrifice," denying his once–for–all [ἐφαπαξ] sacrifice or finished work (Heb. 7:27; 9:28). See J. G. G. Norman, "Mass, The" in *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church*, p. 641 and P. H. Davis, "Mass," *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, p. 697.

[143] *Transubstantiation* is the doctrine that during the sacerdotal manipulation of the bread and wine, these become literally the body and blood of Christ. Lutheranism teaches *consubstantiation*, i.e., that the elements, if received in faith become the body and blood of Christ. This has left Lutheranism with the doctrine of "the ubiquity of the body of Christ," i.e., that he can be physically in many places at once.

[144] Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church,* II, pp. 145–148

became the interpreter and preserver of the Scriptures and doctrinal orthodoxy. But it was a radical departure from the New Testament Church, which was expressed through each local assembly as "a body of Christ."[145]

The idea that the Kingdom of God and "The Church" were one and the same resulted in confusion and an amalgamation of power.[146] The church, with the arm of the state, assumed political and military power. Some of the later popes were also military leaders in crusades against Christians outside the Church of Rome.

Church Councils or Synods were a means of maintaining and promoting ecclesiastical unity and condemning contrary opinions and views. They were convened to consider and decide matters of doctrine, discipline and practice. These were attended by representatives from the various congregations and were held publicly. These were mainly consultative in nature.

From the Council of Nicaea (325) onward, the Roman Emperors convened the Councils, and only the bishops had power to discuss, challenge and vote, and not as representatives of their churches, but as the alleged successors to the Apostles.

Doctrinal Controversies

This section is introductory. The various heresies and errors of the Ante–Nicene Era are considered in Chapter XI. What are here emphasized are the necessity of theology, the place of Historical Theology, the primacy of the Scriptures, the nature of theological development and a list of the major controversies in the Ante–Nicene Age as Christianity by necessity defensively developed its theology.

For man as the image–bearer of God and Christianity as a Divinely–revealed religion, theology was and is a necessity. Man by nature and instinct possesses an organizing principle. The Scriptures are Divinely–revealed truth and so self–consistent or coherent, i.e., non–contradictory. As the Scriptures, being inspired and authoritative, form the foundation of Christianity, Divine truth must be systematized to be grasped and defended by all Christians.[147]

> Note: The beginnings of a doctrinal system may be found even in Apostolic Christianity. 'Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus' 2 Tim. 1:13. The term "form" [ὑποτύπωσις] refers to "an outline, sketch, brief and summary exposition." See J. H. Thayer, *Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament*, p. 645; H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, *A Greek–English Lexicon*, p. 1900. See also Phil. 2:5–11; 1 Tim. 3:16; Titus 1:9, which imply a distinct body of scriptural and doctrinal truth.
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> Note: Theology [Gk: θέος, "God," and λόγος or λογία, "study of or discourse concerning"] is the science comprised of a systematization of various doctrines [Gk: διδαχή́, διδασκαλία, "teaching"]. Dogma [Gk: δόγμα, "commandment, precept"] is an ecclesiastical doctrine or body

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[145] ἐκκλησία. This term denoted the local assembly in the *usus loquendi* of the New testament and the Κοινη?. The Apostle Paul referred to the local assembly at Corinth as "a body of Christ," using the anarth. const. [ὑμεῖς δέ ἐστε σῶμα Χριστοῦ καὶ μέλη ἐκ μέρους].

[146] Erastianism is the idea that the state can interfere with and rule over the church. Catholicism in history used the state to implement the church's purpose in the persecution of "heretics," i.e., those who would not come under its jurisdiction.

[147] "Theology is a rational necessity. If all theological systems were destroyed today, new systems would arise tomorrow," A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology*, p. 16.

of doctrine, i.e., the accepted [and thus unquestioned] doctrine of a church as expressed in its creeds and confessions.

The study of Church History is parallel to that of Historical Theology. Both are concerned with error and controversy as Divine Truth is declared, defended, controverted and clarified. Historical Theology is primarily concerned with controversies, creeds, confessions and leading historical characters. Most heretics and schismatics were men of note, and often men of great learning, eloquence and influence. Theology arose out of necessity as a form of defense—against foes without—paganism with its religious rites, mysticism and philosophy, rationalism, with its secularization and denial of Divine revelation, and state persecution with its temptation for denial, compromise and retreat. There were also foes within—unscriptural traditions, bare intellectualism, mysticism and doctrinal errors and heresies, which omitted, perverted, diluted or substituted the truth. Yet Historical Theology is but a department of the larger subject of Church History.[148]

The Faith of Christianity, although grounded in and derived from the Holy Scriptures, must find consistent expression in the practical, individual life of the Christian and the corporate life of the church. Thus, the Scriptures must be held as Divinely–inspired and authoritative, the sole rule of both faith and practice. All other sources of doctrine and theology must be secondary and subservient to the Scriptures. But the Scriptures are themselves subject to critical analyses and hermeneutical deviations and traditions, as noted in the early allegorical approach of Origen (c. 184–254). The great care must be taken for reverence and consistency in the axioms of *Hermeneutica Sacra*. Truth held in traditional misunderstanding, ignorance or with disregard to the given context or "analogy of faith" is fertile soil for error and heresy.

Note: The terminology "the analogy of faith" refers to the total teaching of Scripture as it bears upon any given point or aspect of Divine truth. The Scriptures, as the very Word of God, are necessarily self–consistent and non–contradictory. Synonymous terms used for this principle are "Scripture interprets Scripture," or "the perspicuity of Scripture," i.e., the more obscure passages may be understood by those parallel passages which are more plain and easier to understand. For a discussion of this term, see Chapter XI and "the History of the Canon."

It is both interesting and necessary to note the development of doctrine as Christianity assumed its place among world religions in its exclusiveness and evangelical power. The first two centuries were given to Apologetics and Polemics[149] concerning the entire Christian system—against Gnosticism and Judaism internally and paganism and Greek philosophy externally.

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[148] For a thorough study of Historical Theology and its interrelation with Church History and the history of doctrine, see: Louis Berkhof, *The History of Christian Doctrines*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1949. 293 pp.; William Cunningham, *Historical Theology*. London: Banner of Truth, 1960. 2 Vols.; George P. Fisher, *History of Christian Doctrine*. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1949, 576 pp.; Justo L. Gonzales, *A History of Christian Thought*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1987. 3 Vols.; Alister E. McGrath, *Historical Theology*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998. 388 pp. James Orr, *The Progress of Dogma*. London: James Clarke & Co., 1901. 365 pp.; Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1991. 5 Vols.; Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1877. 3 Vols.; Reinhold Seeberg, *The History of Doctrines*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House. 1977. 2 Vols. and W. G. T. Shedd, *A History of Christian Doctrine*. New York: Scribner's, 1868. 2 Vols.

[149] Apologetics [Gk: ἀπολογία, "defense"] refers to a defense of the Christian faith against those without. Polemics [Gk: πολέμικος, "war–like"] refers to differences and controversies within the Christian system.

In the Third and Fourth Centuries the essentials of the nature of God and the Godhead, the Deity of our Lord and Personality of the Holy Spirit in that order in the Trinitarian Controversies [Theology Proper] were first settled (the Monarchian, Arian, Sabellian and the later Macedonian Controversies).

The Fifth Century witnessed the Augustinian and the Pelagian Controversy over free will, human depravity, Divine grace and predestination [Anthropology, Hamartiology and Soteriology]. The Christological controversies (Fifth through Seventh Centuries), with the Nestorian, Eutychian, Monophysite and Monothelite Controversies [Christology]. The nature of redemption was prominent in the Eleventh–Twelfth Centuries [the Atonement].

The church, its nature and authority, was prominent in The Sixteenth Century Reformation [Ecclesiology]. Finally, in more modern times, the doctrine of end times became prominent (Eighteenth–Twentieth Centuries, with the rise of Postmillennialism and Dispensational Premillennialism) [Eschatology]. The development of doctrine throughout the history of Christianity fairly parallels that of a Systematic Theology. Indeed, "The temporal and theological order correspond."[150]

The major controversies of the Ante–Nicene age (30–325) began with the Judaizers who taught that one must become a Jew in order to become a Christian, and demanded that Gentile believers be circumcised as essential to salvation (Acts 15:1). The Epistle to the Galatians was primarily written to combat this heresy. Other passages throughout the Pauline writings also dealt with it. Gnosticism[151] remained the greatest internal threat to Christianity for the first three centuries. The Epistle to the Colossians dealt with an early form, and the Gospel of John began with a defense of the truth against Cerinthian or Valentinian Gnosticism, as his first Epistle dealt with Docetic Gnosticism.[152] The Books of 2 Peter and Jude are concerned with this heresy.

In the Second Century the early Church Fathers known as the Apologists faced the pagans, pointedly the Greek philosophers.[153] The Third and Fourth Centuries were given to controversies concerning the true nature of God and the triune nature of the Godhead—the Trinitarian Controversies: Monarchianism,[154] Arianism[155] and the later Macedonianism.[156] These are discussed more fully in Chapter X.

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[150] W. G. T. Shedd, *Op. cit.*, I, p. 35–38; James Orr, *Op. cit.*, p. 21. This principle of the parallelism between the development of doctrine to Systematic Theology is worked out in detail by James Orr in *The Progress of Dogma*, pp. 21–30.

[151] Gnosticism was an eclectic, syncretic religio–philosophical system which combined elements of paganism [or Eastern mysticism], Judaism and Christianity into a system characterized by an esoteric "knowledge" [γνῶσις] or wisdom.

[152] Valentinian Gnosticism denied the true Deity of Christ by holding that the "Christ element" came upon him at his baptism and left him in the garden agony before his crucifixion. Thus, he died as a mere man (Jn. 1:1–3, 14, 18). Docetic Gnosticism, holding that all matter was inherently evil, denied the true humanity of Christ, holding him to be a phantom being (1 Jn. 1:1–3; 4:2–3).

[153] The first recorded confrontation between doctrinal Christianity and Greek philosophy occurred when the Apostle Paul addressed the Aeropagus at Athens (Acts 17:16–34).

[154] Monarchianism took two forms: *Dynamic Monarchianism*, A second century anti–trinitarian heresy that denied the Deity of Christ and taught that he was a mere man who received an anointing at his baptism and so was in the process of becoming Divine. Also termed *Adoptionism, Subordinatonism* and

Allegorical Interpretation

One of the greatest departures from the foundational truth of Scripture began with the influence of the ecclesiastical writer Origen (c. 184–254)[157] and the allegorical approach to Hermeneutics. This approach set aside the historical–grammatical meaning for an alleged deeper spiritual meaning which was usually completely arbitrary. This approach to religious writings had been held by the ancient Greeks and Jewish rabbis. It was brought into Judaism from pagan writers and philosophers through Philo the Jew (c. 25 BC–50 AD) in Alexandria, Egypt.

Following and building upon the influence of his predecessors, Origen formed the allegorical interpretation into a system and applied it to the Scriptures for Christians in his voluminous writings. At first this arbitrary approach was applied to the Old Testament, and then to the New Testament. As the allegorical interpretation of Scripture was arbitrary and convoluted, the "Church" alone could interpret the Scriptures. This enhanced the prestige and power of the Romish Episcopacy and the eventual Papal power of Rome. Any who presumed to disagree with the "Mother Church" [synonymous with the Kingdom of God] was proclaimed a heretic. The allegorical approach greatly affected Patristic [Church Fathers] and Scholastic [Medieval] Exegesis, and reached its height with the Medieval *Summa Theologica* of Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274).

A study of the Bible must be in accord with its nature as the God–given rule of both faith and practice. Thus, the only consistent interpretation is a historico–grammatical approach, i.e., an approach to understanding the Scriptures that reflects the facts of history and the rules of grammar. We should read and study the Word of God as God intended it to be read and understood—as Divine revelation given for man to understand and live by. Seeking to "spiritualize" or "allegorize" Scripture and find some esoteric meaning or "code" hidden in the text is foreign to the Divine design. The allegorical approach seeks "a deeper meaning" than the literal or common and ordinary usage of the language [*usus loquendi*]. Bernard Ramm explains:

> Allegorical interpretation believes that beneath the letter (ῥητη) or the obvious (φάνηρα) is the real meaning (ὑπονοία) of the passage...the basic problem is to determine if the passage has such a meaning at all...If there are no cues, hints, connections, or other associations which indicate that the record is an allegory, and what the allegory intends to teach, we are on very uncertain ground.[158]

A. Berkley Mickelsen and Milton Terry are very blunt about this approach and its potential evils:

Humanitarianism. Modern representatives in principle include Socinians, Christadelphians, Unitarians, Theosophists and Mormons. *Modalistic Monarchianism*, an anti–trinitarian heresy that held to one Person in three manifestations or modes rather than distinct Persons in the Godhead. Also called *Sabellianism* and *Patripassianism*. United Pentecostals ["Jesus Only"] or the "Apostolic Church" is the modern representative of this ancient heresy.

[155] Arianism was an anti–trinitarian heresy which denied the absolute Deity of Christ. The modern representatives are Socinians and Russelites [Jehovah's Witnesses] (1 Tim. 3:16).

[156] Macedonianism followed the Council of Nicaea, and was also known as *semi–Arianism* and the adherents, *Pneumatiomachians* [combaters against the Spirit], these denied the Personality of the Holy Spirit.

[157] For a description of the powerful influence of Origen, see Chapter IX.

[158] Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, p. 24.

> In the allegorical method a text is interpreted apart from its grammatical historical meaning. What the original writer is trying to say is ignored. What the interpreter wants to say becomes the only important factor.[159]

> The allegorical method of interpretation is based upon a profound reverence for the Scriptures, and a desire to exhibit their manifold depths of wisdom. But it will be noticed at once that its habit is to disregard the common signification of words, and give wing to all manner of fanciful speculation. It does not draw out the legitimate meaning of an author's language, but foists into it whatever the whim or fancy of an interpreter may desire. As a system, therefore, it puts itself beyond all well–defined principles and laws.[160]

The allegorical method is an arbitrary approach which leads to irrationalism, and such stands diametrically opposed to the coherence of Scripture. The history of *Hermeneutica Sacra* [Sacred or Biblical Interpretation] reveals the torture of the Scriptures by such by such arbitrary fancifulness. Mark the statement of Thomas Aquinas, who wrote from the accepted four–fold interpretation of Scripture of the Romish Medieval Church:

> The author of Holy Writ is God, in whose power it is to signify His meaning, not by words only (as man can also do), but also by things themselves. So…that the things signified by the words have themselves also a signification. Therefore that first signification whereby words signify things belongs to the first sense, the historical or literal. That signification whereby things signified by words have themselves also a signfication is called the spiritual sense, which is based on the literal, and presupposes it. Now this spiritual sense has a threefold division…the allegorical sense…the moral sense…the anagogical sense. Since the literal sense is that which the author intends, and since the author of Holy Writ is God, Who by one act comprehends all things by His intellect, it is not unfitting, as Augustine says (*Confess*. Xii), if, even according to the literal sense, one word in Holy Writ should have several senses.[161]

Primitive and Catholic Christianity

As Catholic Christianity was progressively transformed by the rise of ecclesiasticism, sacerdotalism, unscriptural tradition and laxity in discipline and the beginnings of an allegorical approach to the interpretation of Scripture, increasing tension mounted between the remnants of primitive, New Testament Christianity and the Catholic party. There are several preliminary considerations: first, the schisms or divisions were between the representatives of primitive, New Testament Christianity and the progressive, contemporary Catholic majority party, not merely attempts within the Catholic Church to reform itself.

The Catholics during this age were not universally in power nor did they universally represent Christianity as the "Universal or Catholic Church." This claim to universal power would not have validity until the "Constantinian change" to the State–Church concept. They did, however, in the third and early fourth centuries, comprise the majority party.

Second, this era marks the time of division between the Catholic or majority party and those groups that sought a return to purity of membership and holiness of life. Such schisms or divisions between primitive and Catholic Christianity would continue down to the Sixteenth Century

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[159] A. Berkeley Mickelsen, *Interpreting the Bible*, p. 28.

[160] Milton S. Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, p. 164.

[161] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Part 1, Question 1, Article 10.

Protestant Reformation. These all denied the validity of Catholic baptism and so "re–baptized" their adherents, hence the beginning of the generic, derrogatory term "anabaptist."[162]

During these centuries of state persecution, various groups began to situate themselves in rural or mountainous regions to avoid persecution. Such groups as the Vaudois and the Waldenses in the Piedmont Valleys of the Alps, and the Paulicians in the eastern part of the Roman world [Asia Minor or Turkey] can be traced back to these early times.

Under the Emperor Constantine, the persecuted church, largely represented by the Catholic majority, became the persecuting Church of the Empire. This State Church system would develop into the Roman Catholic Church of the Middle Ages and Reformation era with its Inquisition and crusades directed against the "anabaptist heretics." When "The Constantinian Change" to a State Church took place in the early fourth century (c. 313), many identified with these primitive "anabaptists" in the rural and mountainous areas of the Empire.

In the British Isles, primitive New Testament Christianity existed until Pope Gregory (590–604) sent the Monk Austin to "convert" the ancient Britons to the Romish faith (597).[163] The subjugation of primitive Christianity to Catholicism was officially completed by 664 when England adopted the Romish faith at the Synod of Whitby.

Third, three major schisms occurred during this era: Montanism in the second century (c. 135–160), Novatianism in the third century (c. 250), and Donatism in the beginning of the fourth century (c. 311). These were interrelated reform movements, with each succeeding attempt gathering the remnants of the preceding movement.

Fourth, these early movements did not differ in doctrine from the orthodox or Catholic faith, but were mainly concerned with laxness in discipline concerning those who had renounced the faith or apostatized during persecution (Those who had renounced the faith or apostatized were termed the *lapsi*. Those who had surrendered copies of the Scriptures or other Christian writings to be destroyed were the *traditores*.). The Catholic or liberal churches re–admitted such back into membership; the strict churches would not.[164]

Fifth, it must be noted that some of these movements were reactionary in nature and so themselves were given to some alleged extremes. However, they were attempts to reform

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[162] The allegations of "anabaptism" were denied by these groups, as they did not recognize Catholic baptism as valid. Most historians note the interrelationship of these early groups. See Philip Schaff, *Op. cit*., p. 197; Albert Henry Newman, *A Manual of Church History*, I, pp. 206–209.

[163] Patrick the Roman Catholic "Patron Saint" of Ireland had lived, exercised his ministry from c. 387–461, or 136 years before the Romish religion entered Britain with Austin. Patrick was a primitive or New Testament Christian. He personally immersed over 12,000 converts, established 365 independent churches, preached salvation by grace and baptized believers only. He taught that the Lord's Supper was a memorial observance with believers partaking of both the bread and the wine. Primitive Christianity in Britain was subdued by warfare waged by a Catholic army. See W. A. Jarrell, *Baptist Church Perpetuity or History,* pp. 472–479.

[164] When the claim is made for the doctrinal orthodoxy of these groups or movements and their doctrinal agreement with the Catholic party, the following should be noted: By "doctrinal orthodoxy," is meant the essential truth concerning the basics of the Christian religion (e.g., The Trinity, Nature and character of God the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, sin, and to some degree, salvation). There were differences concerning salvation, the nature and character of a true church, church discipline, holy living and baptism.).

Christianity and bring it back to its original purity. Each group contained both extreme and moderate elements, and it must be carefully noted that what is known about them is largely from the writings of their enemies or opponents.

Montanism

The Montanist movement began in Phrygia in Asia Minor in the mid–second century (c. 135–160) and can be traced down to the eighth century.[165] This movement began in Ardaba, a rural village of in the area of Mysia in Phrygia. Montanism was most prominent in Asia Minor and in North Africa, although adherents were found across the Empire and even in Rome. It derived its name from Montanus, who claimed a supernatural prophetic gift. He was joined by two prophetesses, Priscilla and Maximilla.

The Montanist movement was not merely a schism from or an attempt to reform the Catholic Church. It was representative of the primitive Christianity of that time. Dr. Moeller wrote:

> Montanism…was…not a new form of Christianity; nor were the Montanists a new sect. On the contrary, Montanism was simply a reaction of the old, primitive church, against the obvious tendency of the day, to strike a bargain with the world and arrange herself comfortably to it.[166]

The greatest adherent of Montanism was the Church Father Tertullian of Carthage (c. 160–215), who became the prominent spokesman and theologian for the Montanist movement. The character of such adherents leads one to question the slanders made against these people. Dr. David Benedict, the Baptist Historian stated:

> With this party the famous Tertullian united, about AD 200, and wrote many books in the defense of their sentiments. It is proper here to remark that heresies in abundance were attributed to this people, relative to both their faith and practice; but when we consider that such a man as Tertullian, with many other eminent characters, became their associates and defenders, it seems to relieve in a measure the gloomy picture which many have drawn of their ignorance and fanaticism.[167]

They called themselves "spiritual" Christians in contrast to the "carnal" or Catholics, and were the earliest Puritans in their moral perspective. They were variously known as Montanists, Phrygians, Cataphrygians, Pepuziani, Tertullianists, and Priscillianists (after one of their prophetesses). These are not to be confused with the later Priscillianists who were followers of Priscillian, a fourth century Spanish Bishop and martyr from Avila.

Montanism was opposed by a number of Catholic bishops. The Catholic party in theory did not deny the continuance of prophecy and other miraculous gifts, but sought to discredit the movement by attributing the alleged prophesying to demonic activity. Their leaders were also charged with immorality, madness, infant sacrifice, and suicide. Several of the early Church Fathers wrote against Montanism. In the year 230 the Montanists were excommunicated by the Catholic party at the Synod of Iconium. They were later identified with the Novatians of the succeeding centuries.

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[165] Most historians trace the continuance of the Montanists to at least the sixth century. Christian states that they were in existence in the year 722 and were probably in contact with the Paulicians, who were located in that geographical area. Cf. John T. Christian, *A History of the Baptists,* I, p. 44.

[166] Dr. Moeller, *Schaff–Herzog Encyclopedia,* II, p. 1562, as quoted by W. A. Jarrel, *Op. cit.*, p. 76.

[167] David Benedict, *A General History of the Baptist Denomination*, p. 4.

Their doctrine and practice. There was no departure from the orthodox faith. There were, however some alleged extremes in the areas of asceticism, legalism, and a rigorous church discipline. There were either attempts to continue some of the apostolic gifts, or some of them had not completely died out at the beginning of the second century. It must be remembered that the apostolic gifts had begun to decline at the most less than a generation before toward the end of the first century.[168] Montanism was hardly a generation removed from the Apostolic age (c. 135) and there was no inherent reason for any to believe that such gifts had completely ceased. Women could exercise the prophetic gift, but the Montanists did not allow them to teach or perform any spiritual ministries in the churches.

The Montantists, although believing in the Apostolic gift of prophecy or inspired preaching, denied the apostolic office and were opposed to the ecclesiasticism and sacerdotalism of the Catholic party. They affirmed the universal priesthood of all believers.

They were designated "anabaptists," as they denied the efficacy of Catholic baptism and "re–baptized" those who became their adherents or those who had denied the faith under persecution. They opposed infant baptism. Tertullian, the first Church Father to write about the subject, condemned it.

The Montanists were *Chiliastic* or Premillennarians, proclaiming the imminent return of the Lord. They held to three dispensations: That of the Father (or Old Testament dispensation), the Son (or New Testament era), and the Holy Spirit (i.e., in their day). The dispensation of the Spirit to them meant a continuation of the supernatural gifts and the imminent end of the world with the second advent of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Novatianism

This third–century movement was a reaction against laxity in discipline concerning those seeking re–admittance to the churches after the Decian persecution (249–251). Novatianism was in reality Montanism revived.

Toward the end of the Decian persecution (249–251), a crisis was reached with the election of Cornelius, a liberal to the bishopric of Rome after the death of Fabian (c. 250). [By a "liberal" is meant one who would receive again into the church's communion the *lapsi*, or those who had renounced the faith under persecution or torture]. A conservative presbyter, Novatian, was unwillingly elected as rival Bishop of Rome by the strict party, and a schism occurred. Novatus of Carthage had recently removed to Rome and championed the strict party, aligning himself with Novatian.

Novatus and other elders in the church at Carthage had opposed the election of Cyprian as Bishop of Carthage over other older, allegedly more qualified candidates. Further, Cyprian as an

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[168] It must be noted that both Catholics and Montanists held to the continuance of the Apostolic gifts, especially prophecy, or inspired preaching. Alleged reports of such would continue into the second and even into the early third century. Cf. 1 Cor. 13:8–13. With reference to the charismatic gifts, the terminology used (καταργηθήσονται…παύσονται...καταργηθήσεται) seems to indicate a gradual inactivity and cessation. Further, the reference to that which is perfect (τό τέλειον, neut.) refers, not to the completion of Scripture, but to the maturity of Christianity, as necessitated by the context. The modern idea that "that which is perfect" refers to the completion of the canon of Scripture has doubtless given rise to idea that the Monantists sought to revive the prophetic gift that had allegedly already ceased.

elder in the church at Carthage had retired during the Decian years to avoid persecution. When Novatus ordained a deacon in his own church without the approval of Cyprian, the Bishop declared such an act a violation of his episcopal rights. A schism then developed between those who would readmit into the church the *lapsi* and those who would not.

Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, supported the election of Cornelius and his practice; Novatus supported Novatian. Cornelius excommunicated Novatian and schism began. Novatianism spread across the Empire and flourished for two centuries, despite later State–Church opposition. Remnants of this movement have been traced down to the eighth century. Schaff wrote about its later history:

> Despite this strong opposition the Novatian sect, by virtue of its moral earnestness, propagated itself in various provinces of the West and the East down to the sixth century. In Phrygia it combined with the remnants of the Montanists. The Council of Nicaea recognized its ordination, and endeavored, without success, to reconcile it with the Catholic church. Constantine at first dealt mildly with the Novatians, but afterwards prohibited them to worship in public and ordered their books to be burnt.[169]

Robert Robinson wrote:

> In the end, Novatian formed a church, and was elected bishop. Great numbers followed his example, and all over the empire puritan churches were constituted, and flourished through the succeeding two hundred years. Afterward, when penal laws obliged them to lurk in corners, and worship God in private, they were distinguished by a variety of names, and a succession of them continued till the Reformation.[170]

The doctrine and practice of Novatianism. The Novatians were orthodox in doctrine, and differed mostly in the area of the church and discipline. Slanders were raised against these separatists to discredit them, but as Mosheim, the Lutheran historian, wrote:

> This sect cannot be charged with having corrupted the doctrine of Christianity by their opinions…There was no difference, in point of doctrine, between the Novatians and other Christians. What peculiarity distinguished them was, their refusing to re–admit to the communion of the church, those who, after baptism, had fallen into the commission of heinous crimes, though they did not pretend, that even such were excluded from all possibility or hopes of salvation. They considered the Christian church as a society where virtue and innocence reigned universally…and, of consequence, they looked upon every society which re–admitted heinous offenders to its communion, as unworthy of the title of a true Christian church. It was from hence, also, that they assumed the title of *Cathari*, i.e., the pure…they obliged such as came over to them from the general body of Christians, to submit to be baptized a second time, as a necessary preparation for entering into their society.[171]

Crispin, a French historian, alleges that the Novatians were distinguished by four characteristics: first, for purity of church members, by asserting that none ought to be admitted into the church but such as are visibly true believers and real saints. Second, for purity of church discipline. Third, for the independence of each church. Fourth, they baptized again those whose first baptism they had reason to doubt.[172]

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[169] Philip Schaff, *Op. cit.,* p. 197.

[170] Robert Robinson, *Ecclesiastical Researches,* pp. 126–127.

[171] John Lawrence Mosheim, *Institutes of Ecclesiastical History*, II, p. 84.

[172] Crispin, as quoted by G. H. Orchard, *A Concise History of the Baptists,* p. 87.

The Novatians, as the earlier Montanists, were called "anabaptists" for their practice of denying the validity of Catholic baptism and thus "re–baptizing" those entering their membership. They also, as the Montanists, must have opposed any infant baptism. The Baptist Historian J. M. Cramp wrote:

> Novatianism and infant baptism were diametrically opposed to each other. It was impossible to preserve the purity for which the Novatians contended in any church which had admitted the novel institution.…We may safely infer that they abstained from compliance with the innovation, and that the Novatian churches were what are now called Baptist churches, adhering to the apostolic and primitive practice.[173]

Donatism

The Donatist schism in North Africa was a reaction against the Catholic or majority party (c. 312). This movement grew out of the Diocletian persecution (c. 303–305) and the laxness of discipline concerning the *lapsi* and *traditores*, or those who had previously renounced their faith and then sought re–admission to the churches. This early fourth century movement followed the Montanist revival of the second century and the Novatian schism of the third century. The Donatist schism belongs more to the Imperial Age than to the Era of Transition, but a brief consideration is given.

The history of the Donatist movement. Again, as with Novatianism, a crisis erupted over the ordination of a bishop. In 311 Caecilian, an alleged *traditore*, was a candidate for the Bishopric of Carthage. (He and his predecessor Mensurius had given up heretical documents rather than surrender the Scriptures, but it was considered an outward act of compromise). Knowing that he would be opposed by the other Numidian bishops, especially Donatus and Secundus, he was ordained by a neighboring bishop, Felix of Aptunga, himself a *traditore*. Donatus and the other Numidian bishops elected Majorinus bishop and declared Caecillian deposed. The name of the movement was derived from another Donatus, who succeeded Majorinus as bishop in 315.

The subsequent schism spread over North Africa. Both the Catholics and the Donatists appealed to the Emperor Constantine; a step which they afterward had to regret and repent. Constantine referred the matter to the Roman Bishop and other prelates. They decided against the Donatists. The Donatists were again condemned at the Synod of Arles in 314. They appealed to Constantine again, and he judged against them and issued penal laws against them in Milan in 316. In an edict of Toleration in 321, he granted them full religious freedom. Their subsequent history is one of Church–State persecution and martyrdom. The Donatists thus became the first group to be persecuted by the State Church.

The doctrine and practice of the Donatists. The doctrinal characteristics of Donatism differed little from either Montanism or Novatianism. The Donatists insisted on rigorous church discipline, a pure membership and the rejection of unworthy ministers. Later in their history they opposed the interference of the state in religious matters and championed liberty of conscience.

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[173] J. M. Cramp, *Baptist History,* pp. 58–59.

VIII
Early Christianity and Greek Philosophy

Πίστει νοοῦμεν

Some of the recommended philosophical works gathered from a general Christian perspective for the serious student:

Colin Brown, *Christianity and Western Thought*. Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990. 2 Vols.; *Philosophy and the Christian Faith.* Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1968. 320 pp.; Gordon H. Clark, *Ancient Philosophy*. Unicoi, TN: The Trinity Foundation, 1997. 495 pp.; *An Introduction to Christian Philosophy*. Jefferson, MD: The Trinity Foundation, 1993. 152 pp.; *The Philosophy of Science and Belief in God*. Jefferson, MD: The Trinity Foundation, 1986. 140 pp.; *Religion, Reason and Revelation.* Jefferson, Maryland: The Trinity Foundation, 1986. 264 pp.; *Thales to Dewey.* Jefferson, Maryland: The Trinity Foundation, 1985. 561 pp.; *Three Types of Religious Philosophy*. Nutley, NJ: The Craig Press, 1973. 126 pp.

Frederick Copleston, S.J., *A History of Philosophy*. The Newman Bookshop, 1946–1974. 9 Vols.; Francis Nigel Lee, *A Christian Introduction to the Study of Philosophy.* Nutley, NJ: The Craig Press, 1969. 249 pp.; Ronald H. Nash, *Faith and Reason*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988. 295 pp.; J. M. Spier, *An Introduction to Christian Philosophy.* Nutley, NJ: The Craig Press, 1976. 269 pp.; Diogenes Allen, *Philosophy for Understanding Theology*. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985. 287 pp.; C. Stephen Evans, *Philosophy of Religion*. Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1982. 191 pp.;

Francis A. Schaeffer, *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer*. Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1982. 5 vols.; Rousas J. Rushdoony, *The Flight from Humanity.* Fairfax, VA: Thoburn Press, 1978. 67 pp.; *The One and the Many*. Philadelphia: The Craig Press, 1971. 388 pp.; *The Word of Flux*. Fairfax, VA: The Thoburn Press, 1975. 110 pp., and Robert L. Reymond, *The Justification of Knowledge*. Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Company, 1976. 168 pp.

During the first three centuries, there were several concerns which challenged Christianity internally and externally, doctrinally, and intellectually. The major internal attempt to corrupt the Christian religion came from Gnosticism; the great external challenge came from Greek philosophy. The former sought to entrench itself into and modify the Christian religion; the latter sought to challenge and discredit it. As Gnosticism was religious in nature and an attempt to corrupt and modify Christianity, it is considered in Chapter XI. The subject of Greek philosophy and its relation to early Christianity must be approached with some preliminary considerations.[174]

Theology and Philosophy

Theology and philosophy are necessarily, inescapably interrelated. Philosophy is concerned with a comprehensive and systematic knowledge and understanding of all reality. Theology possesses the same goal, and, if deriving from and consistent with Divine revelation, claims to possess the answers to the questions raised by philosophy, leading to a seemingly inevitable conflict between faith and reason.

[174] It must be noted that Greek philosophy was not the complex and developed science or system exemplified by modern philosophies. Philosophy in the Greco–Roman world was primarily a way of life and an attempt to find an intellectual or rational substitute for the ancient pagan polytheistic religions.

Philosophy and Theology Defined

The term "Philosophy" is derived from the Greek words φίλος, "friend, associate;" or φιλέω, "love," and σοφία, "wisdom." The term φιλοσοφία denotes "the love [or pursuit] of wisdom." A basic definition and description of philosophy from a Christian perspective may be stated as follows:

> "Philosophy," the love of wisdom——first so called by Pythagoras——may be defined…as "Man's scientific total–view of all created reality." Philosophy is man's view, a view qualified by human capabilities and limitations.…philosophy is not man's simple knowledge, but rather his scientific knowledge of creation….Philosophy is man's total–view of all created reality…it attempts to account for [all] interrelationship[s] as parts of the cosmic whole.…philosophy is man's scientific total–view of all created reality. It deals with the created universe and all creatures in that creation.
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> It is not (and does not include) man's scientific view of the Creative Reality, of God the Creator of the universe…[which is the realm of theology]. Philosophy is therefore the human science of all created reality, and accordingly the science of all its sub–sciences. It is the encyclopaedia of all the sub–sciences in their relation and separate demarcation…Philosophy is the omnibus science of all the many facets of an integrated world outlook, and Christian philosophy is the scientific study of God's entire creation as revealed in all of His works and as interpreted according to all of His Word.[175]

The term "Theology" is derived from two Greek words: θεός, "God," and λόγος, "word," "rational expression of thought," "study or science." (Cf. the Eng. "–ology"). Thus, "Theology" is essentially "a discourse about God," or "the science of God." The following definitions and descriptions may prove adequate for theology as the Divine science and also as a practical tool for every believer:

"Theology…is the science of God's essential being and his relationship to the universe as set forth in the Holy Scriptures." [176]

> Theology is a science that is concerned with both the Infinite and the finite, with both God and the universe. The material, therefore, which it includes is vaster than that of any other science. It is also the most necessary of all sciences.[177]
>
> Theology is the science of God and the relations between God and the universe…The aim of theology is the ascertainment of the facts respecting God and the relations between God and the universe, and the exhibition of these facts in their rational unity, as connected parts of a formulated and organic system of truth.[178]

Christian Theology is "...the science of the Christian religion, the science which ascertains, justifies, and systematizes all attainable truths concerning God and His relation through Jesus Christ to the universe and especially to mankind."[179] "...The phrase 'Christian Theology' is used...in the...sense of the systematic study of the fundamental ideas of the

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[175] Francis Nigel Lee, *A Christian Introduction to the History of Philosophy*, pp. 2–3

[176] Fitzwater, *Christian Theology*, p. 19

[177] W. G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology,* I, p. 16

[178] A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology*, I., pp. 1–2.

[179] Alvah Hovey, as quoted by Peter Connolly, *Christian Theology*, p. 12.

Christian faith."[180] "Theological language is Bible metaphor crushed to powder and recompressed in mathematical forms."[181] "...Systematic Theology...is an effort to apply Scripture systematically to various spheres of faith and life."

> ....It is a serious mistake to see theology as an academic exercise. The word *theology* means *God's word;* it begins with the presupposition that Scripture is the word of God, and the duty of the theologian is to understand it *and to* apply it to every area of life and thought….Theology belongs in the pulpit, the school, the work–place, the family, and everywhere. Society as a whole is weakened when theology is neglected....For me theology means the total mandate of God through His word.[182]

Philosophy and Theology Contrasted

Philosophy begins with man and reason; theology must properly and consistently begin with God and faith. This is not to intimate that theology and faith are irrational, but to emphasize the difference of approach. Philosophy is primarily rational i.e., it derives from human reason or rationality; theology is primarily revelational i.e., derives from Divine revelation and is systematized by an intelligent or rational faith (as opposed to an irrational faith). Philosophy is anthropocentric i.e., it derives from man and his abilities or inabilities. Theology, if consistent, must be theocentric, i.e., it derives from the consistent, Self–revelation of God as revealed in His inscripturated Word.

The contrast or conflict, therefore, is not in reality between faith and reason, but between reason and revelation, i.e., between human reason and Divine revelation. It is, further, a contrast between an intelligent or rational faith and an emotional or irrational faith. An intelligent faith presupposes an intelligent God; an irrational faith presupposes a non–intelligent God and is mystically or emotionally based.

The conflict is likewise focused upon the question of priority: Which is prior, faith or reason? Belief or understanding? This question is fundamental and the consequences are pervasive. The issue may be illustrated by the statements of two Medieval scholastics: Thomas Aquinas and Anselm of Canterbury. The Thomistic tradition is summarized by *Intelligo et credo,* "I understand and I believe." The Statement of Anselm was: *Credo ut Intelligam*, "I believe in order that I may understand." In the Thomistic tradition of the priority of reason over faith stands Roman Catholic tradition, Arminianism and Evidential and Classical Apologetics, which reason *to* the Scriptures. The priority of faith over reason is characteristic of the Augustinian, consistent Reformed tradition and Presuppositional Apologetics, which reason *from* the Scriptures.[183]

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[180] Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology*, p. 119.

[181] D. M. M'Intyre, quoted by Peter Connolly, *Loc. cit.* This definition evidently refers to systematizing the Scriptural teaching on any given subject in order to be consistent and thorough.

[182] Rousas John Rushdoony, *Systematic Theology*, I, p. xv.

[183] For a thorough discussion of the relation of faith to understanding, See Robert L. Reymond, *The Justification of Knowledge,* pp. 7–10.

The relation of faith to reason must be carefully noted in Hebrews chapter 11. Mark the words of v. 2: "By faith we understand. . ." (Gk. Πίστει νοοῦμεν, from νοέω, "to perceive with the mind, intellectual perception, to ponder, consider, understand."). The properties and exemplification of such a faith are reiterated throughout this chapter.

Philosophy and Theology Correlated

Philosophy and theology are not necessarily opposed to each other. In the providence of God, many of the early Church Fathers were prepared by Greek philosophy for the truth of God. In the words of Philip Schaff:

> The Grecian philosophy, particularly the systems of Plato and Aristotle, formed the natural basis for scientific theology; Grecian eloquence, for sacred oratory; Grecian art, for that of the Christian church. Indeed, not a few ideas and maxims of the classics tread on the threshold of revelation, and sound like prophecies of Christian truth; especially the spiritual soarings of Plato, the deep religious reflections of Plutarch, the sometimes almost Pauline moral precepts of Seneca. To many of the greatest church fathers, Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and in some measure even to Augustine, Greek philosophy was a bridge to the Christian faith, a scientific school master leading them to Christ.[184]

Christian theologians have defended the faith against the philosophical onslaughts of the greatest worldly intellectuals. It is likewise true that Christian philosophers have defended the faith against the corruptions of unbelieving theologians.

The truth or falsity of one's position does not lie in either philosophy or theology, as though one were inherently correct or right and the other inherently incorrect or wrong. The rightness or wrongness lies in one's presuppositions. The decisive issue is whether one's presuppositions are biblical, and consistently derive from scriptural principles or are inconsistent with or a denial of the Word of God.[185]

Theology broadly provides the material for Christian doctrine in the inscripturated Word of God and the substance of the Christian religion. Philosophy provides the means and method of organization through logical argumentation, organization, and a consistent, definitive thought–process. Mark the words of Colin Brown with reference to the Apostle Paul and philosophy:

> To Paul rational thinking was important. Without it the unbeliever and the believer alike could bring disaster upon themselves. Philosophy could be used, but not as a substitute for faith and discipleship. To Paul and other New Testament writers philosophy was what it was to many other great Christians in later ages—— a good servant but a bad master.[186]

Both philosophy and theology necessarily remain fallible, due to the finite limitations of the human mind and the noetic effects of sin, i.e., any and all epistemic efforts of man have been affected by the fall, and are not totally removed at regeneration (Rom. 1:18–25; Eph. 4:22–24; Col. 3:9–10). No one man possesses all the truth; nor does any given system, be it philosophical or

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[184] Philip Schaff, *Op. cit*., I, p. 78. It must be emphasized that pagan philosophy was fallen man's intellectual search for ultimate truth without the necessary reality of Divine revelation. What approach to truth may be found in the ancient pagan philosophers derived from the image of God in them, an image devastated in every aspect by the effects of the fall.

[185] Cf. Robert L. Reymond, *Loc. cit*. for a full discussion. The doctrines and practices of the modern Charismatics, Evangelicals and Fundamentalists are filled with inconsistencies and inherent contradictions. These serve as examples of an anti–intellectual bias and an irrational faith resulting from the lack of a consistent Christian philosophy. Such thinking, or rather lack of the same, may be characterized by *Credo quia absurdum est*, or "I believe because it is absurd," i.e., the focus is placed on subjectivism or the inward religious experience and thus tends toward irrationalism.

[186] Colin Brown, *Christianity and Western Thought*, p. 75.

theological, contain all the answers. The imperfection or inadequacy lies with the human mind and both its finite limitations and noetic infirmities.

Philosophy and Theology in Confrontation

Philosophy and theology must also necessarily confront each other. Philosophy raises theological questions which must be answered, and theology raises philosophical questions which it in turn must attempt to answer biblically, systematically, cogently and with authority. This confrontation is what occurred in the first three centuries between early Christian theology and pagan philosophy.

The History of Greek Philosophy.

A survey of the history of Greek philosophy demonstrates its influence upon and relation to Christian thought and theology.[187] There are three main periods:

The Pre–Socratic Era (585–399 BC)

The Pre–Socratic era began with Thales and ended with Socrates himself (c. 470–399 BC). This was the age of the Ionians or Milesians, Pythagoreans, Atomists, Sophists; of Thales, Parmenides and Socrates. In this era some of the basic tenets and forms of Greek philosophy were formed.

Major issues that would influence Christian thought included: speculative pantheistic and polytheistic theories concerning the gods, the origin of the universe, the nature of the universe or κόσμος with its unifying principle or Λόγος, the evolution of human life, the principles of speculative science, theories of relativism and pragmatism and the transmigration and immortality of the soul.

The Era of Plato and Aristotle (385–323 BC)

The era of Plato and Aristotle marked the high point in the development of Greek philosophy. The influence of these two great thinkers would constantly re–surface in Christian thought through the centuries to and including the Modern Era.

The influence of Plato (c. 427–347) may be noted in: the theory of "forms," or "ideas," which reject a materialistic concept of the universe; a cosmological argument for the existence of the gods; the immortality of the soul and a life after death associated with rewards and punishments; the refutation of atheism; and a political philosophy in his *Republic*,[188] which anticipated socialism, or a welfare state, with statist education, wives in common, a military class, artisan class, and a ruling class of philosopher–kings.

The influence of Aristotle (384–322) is seen in: the classification of knowledge, the science of logic or "Analytics," his works on physics, metaphysics, a form of cosmological argument for God as the transcendent "First Cause" ["Unmoved Mover"], his studies on human nature and the

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[187] For a history of the influence of Greek philosophy—particularly Neoplatonism—and its influence on Christian thought, see Colin Brown, *Op. cit*.; Gordon Clark, *Op. cit*.; Sinclair Ferguson and David E. Wright, Eds., *New Dictionary of Theology*, p. 519; Philip Schaff, *Op. cit*.; Frederick Coppleston, *A History of Philosophy*, Volume I: Greece and Rome; Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, pp. 299–371; R. J. Rushdoony, *The Flight From Humanity*.

[188] Though seemingly innocuous as an after–dinner conversation, the *Republic* remains one of the most influential documents ever penned—the basis for all totalitarian governments.

soul (the human soul is distinguished from the animal soul by its rational capacity), and his system of ethics (i.e., habit and character more than behavior).

The Hellenistic Era (300 BC–529 AD)

The Hellenistic era was historically the longest and the most diverse, spanning over five centuries and encompassing historically most of the Intertestamental period (397 BC–6 BC), the Apostolic Christianity of the first century, the Era of Transition (100–313), the Imperial Age (313–476) and the beginning of the Middle Ages (476–529).

There were several prominent and competitive philosophical systems or schools of thought: first, The Epicureans, who were the ancient empiricists, and held that all knowledge derives from sensations or experience; the belief that everything in the universe is composed of atoms and constantly in motion; the theory of a materialistic universe and no life after death; the idea that pleasure is good and pain is evil. Epicureanism emphasized the need for practical wisdom in securing pleasure, which was not necessarily synonymous with hedonism.[189]

Second, the Stoics, deriving their name from the Painted Porch (Gk. ποικίλη στοα) in Athens, a colonnade where their founder, Zeno, began teaching. Stoicism went through several stages of development. Emphasis was upon the necessity of strength of character in personal ethics and politics; the Λόγος was the universal Word which sustained all things; a peculiar pantheism that equated Reason with "god" and a spark of divinity in every human being.

The idea that stoicism means the attempt to make one's self immune to the joys or trials of life derived from later Stoicism. Some later Stoics, whose lives or influence affected Christianity were Seneca (c. 4 BC–65 AD) and Marcus Aurelius (121–180), a Roman Emperor, who, because of his pagan philosophical mentality became a persecutor of Christians. Cf. Acts 17:18 for their reaction to the Apostle Paul (see above under "Epicureanism.").

Third, the Cynics, so called from the nickname given to their founder, Diogenes (c. 400–325 BC). The name is from the Greek κύνικος, or "dog–like," and given to him by Plato, who questioned his ability to think abstractly. The Cynics taught that virtue is the only good [not moral virtue in the Scriptural or Christian sense, but virtue as self–realization brought about by an awareness of the natural as opposed to artificial values]. The best life was one of simple self–sufficiency and so Cynics were prone to asceticism. They were unconventional and believed their mission in life was to criticize all that was conventional and to uncover the illusionary.

Fourth, the Skeptics (Gk. σκέπτικος, an "inquirer") or Pyrrhoneans began with Pyrrho of Elis (c. 360–270 BC). His method of questioning and casting doubt on claims to knowledge gave rise to the current meaning of the term "skeptic." The goal of this inherently futile school of thought was to attain ἀταράξια, or the state of being unperturbed. A governing principle was the suspension of judgment in conflicting arguments.

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[189] Note the statement of Acts 17:16–18. Mark the designation given to Paul: Τί ἂν θέλοι ὁ σπερμμολόγος ουτὸς λέγειν;, i.e., an eclectic philosopher. Note the polytheistic mentality and presuppositions: "He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods," (Gk. Ξένων δαιμονίων, "alien or foreign deities"). Consider the words: "Jesus and the Resurrection," (Gk. τὸν ᾽Ιησοῦν καὶ Τὴν ἀνάστασιν), which they evidently took to be a male god and a female goddess because of gender of the words, very similar to the ideas of healing and restoration.

Fifth, Neopythagoreanism, a first–century revival of certain tenets of older Pythagoreanism (which had all but disappeared by the fourth century BC), mixed with an eclecticism borrowed from Platonic, Aristotelian and Stoic philosophies. This eclectic system helped form the basic tenets of Neoplatonism and Gnosticism. It was a philosophico–religious system that stressed the One or Divine Reality from which all other realities emanate; personal religion, and a direct intuition of the Divine or a type of direct revelation to the extent that its followers were sometimes depicted as philosopher–prophets; a return to asceticism, and a dualistic concept of the universe.

Sixth, Middle Platonism and Neoplatonism, which are considered separately as having the greatest influence upon Christian thought. Middle Platonism was predominant in the first and second centuries (80 BC–220 AD) and Neoplatonism was the final attempt of paganism to challenge Christianity from the third to the sixth centuries (c. 250–529).[190]

The era of Greek philosophy properly ended in 529 AD when Emperor Justinian closed the last pagan philosophical school at Athens. Further, in 642 AD the Arabs conquered Alexandria, the intellectual center of Greek philosophy, and brought their Islamic religion and philosophy into Northern Africa. These historical incidents marked the end of formal pagan philosophy. Although the sixth century properly marked the end of Greek philosophy, it continued to be a major influence in Christian thought and theology.

Neoplatonism and Gnosticism surfaced in the early Christian tendencies toward asceticism and monasticism with their contempt for the body, deriving from a dualism between, and separation of, the material and the spiritual. Elements of Greek philosophy greatly influenced the thought of the greatest Church Fathers such as Clement of Alexandria, Origen and Augustine.

The influence of Aristotle and Plato overshadowed Medieval Scholastic Theology and the Protestant Reformers. Neoplatonism lived on in the Renaissance, the Protestant Reformation, Puritanism and is evidenced in much of modern evangelical Christianity with its legalistic tendencies.

Middle Platonism

This revival of Platonism flourished from 80 BC to 220 AD and exerted a great influence on the Christianity of the first two centuries.[191] Middle Platonism was an attempt to revive and systematize Platonic thought to meet the religious demands of the day. The result was an eclecticism with Neopythagorean, Aristotelian, Stoic and even Jewish elements. Religious concerns dominated the system and reflected the contemporary religious atmosphere, notably the early Christianity of the first two centuries.

The major issues included: first, the transcendence of God, who was all but incomprehensible and indescribable except in negative terms. The Platonic "forms" now became thoughts in the Divine Mind. Second, the theory that Creation was achieved through intermediaries

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[190] The pervading religious character of Neopythagoreanism, Middle Platonism and Neoplatonism must be noted. These to a great extent became or were a reaction to Christianity. All had elements of religion, mysticism and even some even magic as an attempted answer to the power and influence of the Christian religion and its claims.

[191] For a further discussion of Middle Platonism, Cf. Colin Brown, *Op. cit*., pp. 84–85; Frederick Coppleston, *Op. cit.,* I, pp. 456; Sinclair B. Ferguson, et. al., *Loc. cit*.; J. D. Douglas, Gen. Ed., *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church*, p. 787.

such as the λόγος, or "World–Soul," and a host of lesser deities, or good and evil "demons" (Gk. δαίμων an inferior deity, good or evil). Thus, Middle Platonism was a philosophico–theological system which stood in opposition to, and yet at given points close to Christianity. Middle Platonism was closely aligned to the religious system of Gnosticism and entered Christian circles through that medium on a local level in the latter part of the first century.[192]

Some of the prominent Middle Platonic Philosophers included Albinus, Numenius, Plutarch and Celsus. Celsus produced a thorough critique against Christianity entitled Ἀληθης Λόγος, "The True Word, or The True Doctrine," which was evidently very influential. Eighty years later Origen replied with a line–by–line refutation.

The Christian faith was defended against Middle Platonic thought by the early Church Fathers or Christian writers known as "The Apologists." This system, however, also influenced some of these Apologists, notably such writers as Justin Martyr. Middle Platonism also greatly influenced the Christian philosophical theologians of Alexandria, including Clement and Origen.

Neoplatonism

Neoplatonism was the last attempt of intellectual paganism and Greek philosophy to challenge Christianity from the third to the sixth centuries (c. 250–529). The historian Philip Schaff summarizes the system and the situation:

> This system presents the last phase, the evening red, so to speak, of the Grecian philosophy; a fruitless effort of dying heathenism to revive itself against the irresistible progress of Christianity in its freshness and vigor. It was a pantheistic eclecticism and a philosophico–religious syncretism, which sought to reconcile Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy with Oriental religion and theosophy, polytheism with monotheism, superstition with culture, and to hold, as with convulsive grasp, the old popular religion in a refined and idealized form.[193]

Neoplatonism was thus both a redefining and revising of earlier Platonic thought and a concerted effort against Christianity.

The major personalities were Ammonius Saccas of Alexandria (d. 243), Plotinus, the great developer of the system (204–269), and Porphyry of Tyre (d. 304), who wrote against Christianity and was considered by some of the early Church Fathers to be its greatest enemy. The apology of Porphyry, *Against the Christians*, attacked the Scriptures, pointing out alleged contradictions and seeking to refute Divine inspiration. He argued against prophecy and opposed the allegorical interpretation of Origen. He charged the Lord Jesus Christ and his Apostles with inconsistencies and fraud. Several of the Church Fathers, including Methodius, Eusebius and Apollinarius wrote apologies against him.

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[192] There are references to an incipient Gnosticism in Col. 2; 2 Pet. 2 and Jude. The Gospel of John was evidently written in part as an apology against Cerinthian Gnosticism which denied the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the First Epistle of John against Docetic Gnosticism, which denied His true humanity and His physical body.

[193] Philip Schaff, *Op. cit.*, II, pp. 96–97. See also Anthony Flew, *A Dictionary of Philosophy*, p. 244; W. L. Reese, *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion*, pp. 385–386. For a further discussion of Neoplatonism, see Philip Merlan, "Neoplatonism," *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* V, pp. 473–476.

Philosophy and The Church Fathers

Early Christianity and Primary Concerns

Christianity during the first and the beginning of the second century was primarily concerned with evangelism and the more practical issues of individual and corporate Christian life, experience, and doctrinal orthodoxy. The major external issue was Roman State persecution.

It was left to the early Christian writers who lived after the Apostolic Era to systematize their faith into a theological system from the Scriptures and present it in a consistent and cogent form that met the doctrinal and intellectual challenges of their day.

Internal and External Issues

Internally, doctrinal questions, errors and heresies, such as Gnosticism, Monarchianism, Patripassianism, and Sabellianism, led to the beginnings of the development of a systematic or dogmatic theology. Externally, these early Christian scholars had to defend the faith against the challenge of paganism in the form of Greek philosophy. To do so intelligently and consistently, they had, to a given extent, meet their opponents on their own ground and speak to them in their own terms.

Speculation and Reaction

The development of early Christian Theology was greatly influenced by contemporary Greek philosophy and pseudo–Christian systems. This often led to the subordination of Scripture and gave prominence to philosophical speculation and reaction. For example, the early Church Fathers were almost universal in their declaration concerning the alleged free will of man because they reacted against the dualism and determinism of the Gnostic systems.

The Allegorical Approach to The Interpretation of Scripture

The subject of the allegorical approach to Scripture is addressed in Chapter VII. The information in this chapter is additional and demonstrates the effect of both philosophy and allegorizing on the thinking and theology of the early Church Fathers.

The most far–reaching error and most notable influence of Greek philosophy and pagan thinking came through the appropriation of the allegorical method of interpretation, which by the second century began to corrupt Christian thought. This synthesis of Greek philosophy and biblical interpretation was derived from Philo the Jew of Alexandria (c. 20 BC–50 AD). He sought to discern deeper truths and spiritual implications behind the more obvious or literal sense of the text. This confused application with interpretation at the very least, and imported irrationalism into the interpretation of Scripture at the very worst.

Allegorical interpretation had been used by Greek philosophers for centuries when dealing with earlier philosophical writings. Philo was a Jewish philosopher in a Hellenistic society, and used this same principle or method in treating the Old Testament Scriptures in attempting to demonstrate that Judaism was superior to Hellenism. He sought to synthesize Greek philosophy and the Hebrew

religion by allegorizing the Old Testament Scriptures. His writings had a pronounced influence upon early Christian intellectuals, who espoused the allegorization of Scripture.[194]

This approach seeks a deeper meaning than the literal or common and ordinary usage of the language (the *usus loquendi*). Any method or system is only in the mind of the interpreter. Such allegorizing of Scripture is necessarily arbitrary, fanciful, and often irrational. This approach became the predominant method of interpretation until the Protestant Reformation. It was largely an attempt by the Apologists to make the Old Testament a "Christian Book" by spiritualization, and so confused Old Testament typology with allegory. The later polemicists adopted this method and applied it to the New Testament to buttress their peculiar doctrinal views. Thus, by the middle of the third century, the allegorical approach had effectively separated Christianity from the very text of Scripture.

This allegorical method of interpretation was adopted by Clement of Rome (c. 90–100), Justin Martyr (c. 150) and used extensively by such Church Fathers as Origen (c. 184–254) and Augustine (354–430).

Farrar points to the first instance in the Patristic writings:

> …Clement of Rome [c.90–100]. This ancient bishop…is the first…who endows Rahab with the gift of prophecy, because by the scarlet cord hung out of her window she made it manifest that redemption should flow by the blood of the Lord to all them that believe and hope in God. As the pictorial fancy of a preacher, such an illustration would be harmless; but when it is offered as the explanation of an actual prophecy it is the earliest instance of the overstrained Allegory, which was afterwards to affect the whole life of Christian exegesis.[195]

The development of the allegorical approach may be noted in examples taken from the Church Fathers, who finally applied it to the New Testament as well:

Clement of Alexandria (c. 155–220) taught at least five possible meanings in any given passage: first, the historical sense, or actual and literal. Second, the doctrinal sense, or moral, religious and theological. Third, the prophetic sense, or prophetic and typological. Fourth, the philosophical sense, or finding meaning in natural objects and historical persons, following the psychological method of the Stoics. Finally, the mystical sense, or the symbolism of deeper truths. An example of Clement's approach to Scripture is noted in the following:

> …[Clement] commenting on the Mosaic prohibition of eating the swine, the hawk, the eagle, and the raven, observes: "The sow is the emblem of voluptuous and unclean lust of food…The eagle indicates robbery, the hawk injustice, and the raven greed"…Clement of Alexandria maintained that the laws of Moses contain a four–fold significance, the natural, the mystical, the moral, and the prophetical.[196]

Origen (c. 155–254) held that, as the nature of man is composed of body, soul and spirit, so the Scriptures possess a corresponding three–fold sense: the literal, the moral and the spiritual. Augustine (354–430) "justified the allegorical interpretation by a 'gross misinterpretation' of 2 Cor. 3:6. He made it mean that the spiritual or allegorical interpretation was the real meaning of the

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[194] Philo the Jew (c. 20 BC–50 AD) of Alexandria seems to have been the first to combine Greek philosophy with an interpretation of Scripture. By the extended use of allegory, he sought to find a deeper meaning than the literal or obvious meaning of the text.

[195] F. W. Farrar, *History of Interpretation*, p. 166.

[196] Milton S. Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics,* pp. 163–164.

Bible; the literal interpretation kills."[197] He was forced into such an approach by his polemic encounters with the Manichaeans and the Donatists. Thus, he justified the use of force by the civil authorities to "compel" dissenters to return to the Catholic Church by interpreting the parable of the great supper to the "Church" (Cf. Lk. 14:16–24, esp. v. 23). This approach survives to the present and has been is responsible for a great misinterpretation of Scripture throughout the history of Christianity.[198]

Many of the early Church Fathers had been schooled in contemporary Greek philosophy and so used its form and method as vehicles for defending the faith, including the allegorical method of interpretation. Thus, even while trying to answer the challenges of the intellectual pagan world, Christianity itself came to incorporate into its theology and methodology many philosophical elements which would forever modify it.[199]

Opposing Patristic Attitudes Toward Philosophy

There were two opposing attitudes toward Greek philosophy on the part of the early Church Fathers. Some were diametrically opposed to it and others endorsed it and used it in their attempts to further the faith. This inclusion of or opposition to philosophy was largely dependent on one's education or training and spiritual pilgrimage. Most of the better–educated fathers were or had been philosophers, rhetoricians or lawyers.

Those trained as philosophers or educated in the philosophical schools were generally favorable. Justin Martyr (d. 165) might be called the first Christian philosopher, as he was a philosopher before his conversion to Christianity and made great use of philosophy in his defense of Christianity. Clement of Alexandria (c. 150–215), Origen (c. 185–254) and Augustine (354–430) all made much use of a philosophical approach to truth and its defense.

Tertullian (c. 155–220) was hostile toward Greek philosophy and asked, "What has the Christian in common with the philosopher? Jerusalem with Athens?"[200] Tertullian, however, was a lawyer and his writings inescapably betray his legal background.

Thus, as noted previously, theology and philosophy became inevitably intertwined from the mid–second century and continue to be so throughout the history of Christianity. The influence of Greek philosophy led to the continued speculative character of theology and ultimately gave rise to rationalistic or philosophical theology:

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[197] Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation,* p. 35.

[198] See Colin Brown, *Christianity and Western Thought*, I, pp. 63–66; Gordon Clark, *Thales to Dewey*, pp. 195–210; and F. W. Farrar, *Op. cit*.

[199] It must be remembered that philosophy came before theology in the sense that the latter was developed in the environment or context of the former. The Church Fathers of the first five centuries forged out various theological controversies on the anvil of Scripture with the hammer of philosophy. The Ante–Nicene age was given to Anti–trinitarian Controversies. The major Christological, Anthropological, Hamartiological and Soteriological doctrines were debated and formulated in the fourth and fifth centuries of the Nicene era. The various views of the atonement were still being debated and formulated in the Middle Ages. The truth of justification by faith was not fully and finally formulated with proper balance until the Protestant Reformation.

[200] Gordon Clark, *Op. cit.*, p. 215.

…which seeks to employ the best of philosophical methods and techniques for the purpose of gaining as much clarity as possible concerning the major concepts, presuppositions, and tenets of theological commitment, as well as the many connections that exist among them.[201]

[201] Thomas V. Morris, *Our Idea of God: An Introduction to Philosophical Theology*, pp. 15–16.

IX
The Ante–Nicene Church Fathers and Early Christian Literature

Introduction

The term "Church Father" (Gk.: Πατήρ, Lat: *Pater*) originated from the early custom of transferring the concept of "father" to spiritual or ecclesiastical relationships and was used for teachers, priests and bishops. Such terminology arose with the development of ecclesiasticism.

The Church Fathers are properly those Christian writers who lived and wrote during the first eight centuries AD. John of Damascus (c. 675–754) is considered the last of the Church Fathers. Mark the following: first, their writings were substantially orthodox in contrast to the heretical writings of their time and they enjoyed a widespread approval within the Christianity of their day, although there were disputes and differences over individual issues. Most of these Fathers espoused a given amount of error on individual points of doctrine. It would take several centuries to develop a suitable vocabulary which was definitive.

Second, the importance or significance of the Christian literature of the first three centuries is noted in the following: there is a marked contrast with the New Testament writings of the inspired Apostles and these later writings of the Church Fathers, the latter being inherently and greatly inferior to the former. These writings contain all information as to the use and canonization of the New Testament Scriptures by the churches of the first three centuries. This literature is the major source of information as to the character and process of transition from Apostolic Christianity to the "Constantinian change."[202]

Third, by the fourth century their writings were held in high esteem and considered greatly authoritative in doctrinal and interpretive matters, although never equal to the Scriptures themselves. The Church of Rome considers the Church Fathers infallible when unanimous on any given point.

The Church of Rome did not recognize all the Church Fathers as equally authoritative:

> ...the Roman church excludes a Tertullian for his Montanism, an Origen for his Platonic and idealistic views, a Eusebius for his semi–Arianism, also Clement of Alexandria, Lactantius, Theodoret, and other distinguished divines, from the list of "Fathers" (*Patres*), and designates them merely "ecclesiastical writers" (*Scriptores Ecclesiastici*).[203]

Fourth, these Church Fathers may be classified in a general order both with respect to time and language: chronologically, the first great Ecumenical Council at Nicaea in 325 forms the common focal–point. The Church Fathers are properly classified as Ante–Nicene, Nicene, and Post–Nicene Fathers, according to the time–frame of their lives and writings. Linguistically, the Fathers may be classified as Greek Fathers or Latin Fathers. The first Christian writers wrote in Greek. The first of the great Latin Fathers was Tertullian. The transition from Greek to Latin in the West was completed during the first three centuries; the East remained Greek. The long line of Latin Fathers extended to Gregory the Great (Pope Gregory I, d. 604) and the Greek to John of Damascus (d. 754).

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[202] Albert Henry Newman, *Op. cit.,* I, pp. 211–213.

[203] Philip Schaff, *Op. cit.,* II, p. 627.

The historian Schaff comments on the differences in both language and thought:

> The ecclesiastical learning of the first six centuries was cast almost entirely in the mold of the Graeco–Roman culture. The earliest church fathers…used the Greek language, after the example of the Apostles…Not till the end of the second century, and then not in Italy, but in North Africa, did the Latin language also become, through Tertullian, a medium of Christian science and literature. The Latin church, however, continued for a long time dependent on the learning of the Greek. The Greek church was more excitable, speculative, and dialectic; the Latin more steady, practical, and devoted to outward organization; though we have on both sides striking exceptions to this rule, in the Greek Chrysostom, who was the greatest pulpit orator, and the Latin Augustine, who was the profoundest speculative theologian among the fathers.[204]

Fifth, there is a logical and somewhat chronological development of thought among the Ante–Nicene Fathers. The historian A. H. Newman divides this era into four periods: first, the edificatory period of the Apostolic Fathers. Second, the apologetic period. Third, the polemical period. Fourth, the scientific period of the Alexandrian school.[205]

Sixth, the development of doctrine or dogma was progressive. The theological controversies, errors and heresies of the Ante–Nicene age were concerned with the basic tenets of Christian truth. The Christological, Anthropological and Soteriological Controversies would surface in the succeeding ages. For this reason, most of the Ante–Nicene Fathers were advocates of free will as they opposed the dualism and fatalism of Gnosticism and pagan philosophies. It would be left to each succeeding generation of Christian theologians and thinkers to debate, re–think and refine the truth.[206]

Seventh, the Ante–Nicene Fathers may be classified into several groups: (1) The Apostolic Fathers, (2) The Apologists, (3) The Polemicists or Controversialists (4) The Alexandrian School, (5) The Antiochian School, and (6) The North African School.

The Apostolic Fathers

Introduction

These formed the earliest group of Christian writers apart from the inspired Apostles. The name refers to the sub–apostolic or post–apostolic, non–canonical writers of the late first and early second centuries (c. 90–160). These were the leaders, teachers and writers who had direct contact with and were taught by the inspired Apostles themselves.

The writings of the Apostolic Fathers are characterized by pastoral concerns, primitive zeal, piety and love. They were concerned with the practical matters of faith and life rather than theological disputes or philosophical speculation. Some of these early and later Church Fathers have

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[204] A. H. Newman, *Op. cit*. I, p. 626. For an excellent introductory survey of the Church Fathers, see Philip Schaff, *Op. cit*., vols. II, III and IV. For a comprehensive edition of the writings, see Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, Eds., *The Ante–Nicene Fathers*, 10 Vols. and Philip Schaff, Ed., *The Nicene and Post–Nicene Fathers*, 28 Vols.

[205] A. H. Newman, *Op. cit*., I, pp. 212–214, 237–239, 271–272.

[206] See James Orr, *The Progress of Dogma*, in which he seeks to demonstrate that the historical progression and development of dogma corresponds generally to the logical arrangement of systematic theology, referenced in Chapter VII under "Doctrinal Controversies."

been canonized[207] by the Church of Rome and other Churches, e.g., the Greek Orthodox, Anglican and Lutheran. Following is a list of the Apostolic Fathers and their writings:

Clement of Rome

Clement of Rome (Titus Flavius Clemens, c. 30–100). A disciple of Peter and Paul and Presbyter–Bishop at Rome (c. 92–100). He may possibly be the "Clement" mentioned in Phil. 4:3. He wrote an epistle in the name of the Roman church to the Corinthians concerning internal divisions (c. 93–97). This epistle was held with high esteem and read in public services in several churches to the fourth century. He allegedly died as a martyr by drowning during the reign of Trajan (c. 101). Tertullian stated that he was the first successor to Peter.

The Roman Catholic tradition holds Clement to be the successor to Peter as Bishop of Rome. Several later pseudo–writings and legends are attributed to him: *Second Epistle to the Corinthians, Two Encyclical Letters on Virginity, The Apostolical Constitutions and Canons*, The *Pseudo–Clementina*, and *Five Decretal Letters*. He was the first recorded Christian writer to use the allegorical method of interpretation.[208] The Romish Church elevated him to sainthood.

Ignatius of Antioch

Ignatius of Antioch (Ignatius Theophorus) (d. 117). A Presbyter–Bishop of the Church at Antioch in Syria. He wrote seven letters: *To the Ephesians, To the Magnesians, To the Trallians, To the Romans, To the Philadelphians, To the Smyrneans, To Polycarp,* Bishop at Smyrna. These were written on his way to martyrdom in Rome from Syria under Roman guard during the reign of Trajan. Ignatius died by being torn apart and devoured by lions in the Coliseum.[209] In six of his epistles, he attacks a heresy of Gnostic, Judaistic and Docetic features. Alleged references to a developed ecclesiasticism are questionable. Canonized by Rome.

Polycarp of Smyrna

Polycarp of Smyrna (c. 69–160) was an Elder–Bishop at Smyrna, a disciple of the Apostle John, a younger friend of Ignatius and the teacher of Irenaeus. Ancient history presents him as a godly and faithful Christian. Polycarp was burned to death as a martyr during the reign of Antonius Pius about his ninety–first year. He wrote an *Epistle to the Philippians* and *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*, a circular letter. His writings betray no tendency toward an ecclesiastical hierarchy, they oppose Docetic Gnosticism, and are mostly direct and indirect quotations from Scripture.

Papias

Papias (c. 60–130) was a disciple of John the Apostle, friend of Polycarp and Bishop of Hierapolis in Phrygia. He was a *Chiliast* or premillennarian. He published a collection of the oral traditions of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Apostles in five books entitled *Explanation of the Lord's Discourses*, now lost, except for fragments preserved in the writings of Irenaeus and Eusebius.

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[207] To "canonize" is to admit to the list of recognized saints. To "beatify" is to make supremely blessed, a level of adoration less than canonization.

[208] Cf. the quotation by F. W. Farrar concerning Clement of Rome and allegorical interpretation in Chapter VIII.

[209] Ignatius was reputed to have said on the way to the Coliseum, "Today I am going to enjoy the lions. I do hope the lions enjoy me!"

Hermas

Hermas (c. 90–140). The author is known only as the brother of Pius, a pastor of the church at Rome, and from his work, *The Shepherd of Hermas*. It is an allegorical work on Christian morality, a call to repentance and renovation on the part of the churches in view of approaching judgment. It consists of three parts: Five Visions, Twelve Mandates, and Ten Similitudes. This work sheds much light on the beliefs of Jewish Christianity and on the primitive Christianity of a congregation in a Graeco–Roman society. It was included in the *Codex Sinaiticus* and highly valued by early Christians.

Barnabas

An unknown writer (c. 90–140), traditionally, but incorrectly held to be Barnabas, the mentor of the Apostle Paul, known only through his *Epistle of Barnabas*, a doctrinal dissertation in two parts: Part I seeks to prove that the Jews (i.e., the adherents of Judaism) cannot understand the Old Testament or the Covenant; such is only for Christians. Part II is a catechetical discourse on the "The Two Ways." The writing was considered canonical by some early Christians in Alexandria, and the author was greatly influenced by the allegorical method of interpretation. This work is not to be confused with the pseudo–writing, *The Gospel of Barnabas*, which is of Medieval origin.

The Epistle to Diognetus

The Epistle to Diognetus is a very important but anonymous writing of the early to mid–second century that sought to vindicate the Christian doctrine and life for a heathen inquirer—a very early example of Christian apologetics. It is comprised of three questions and answers: What is the nature of Christian worship and how does it differ from other forms of worship? What is the nature of Christian charity? Why has Christianity appeared so late in human history? The only remaining mss. was destroyed in a fire in 1870 at Srasbourg during the Franco–Prussian War. It had previously been printed.

The Didache

The Didache, or The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles (Dating varies from c. 70–165). It is the oldest and simplest Jewish Christian manual of church order, and oldest surviving example of a Christian catechism. The book contains 16 chapters in four parts: first, a summary of moral instruction in the form of a parable of the ways of life and death, based on the Decalogue and the Royal Commandment. Second, Directions for observing the ordinances of baptism, the Lord's Supper, and fasting. Third, Directions on discipline and church officers. Fourth, An exhortation in view of the return of the Lord and the resurrection. *The Didache* formed the basis of several works of the next centuries, notably the fourth century *Apostolic Constitutions*.

Sixtus of Rome

Sixtus of Rome (c. 119–128). He was the sixth Presbyter–Bishop of the Church at Rome, known formally as Sixtus I. He is the traditional (?) author of a collection of 430 moral and religious maxims written in Greek, translated into Latin and read extensively in the Latin Church.

The Apologists

Introduction

The term "Apologist" denotes one who defends a certain position.[210] The Apologists were Christian writers of the second and third centuries (c. 120–220) who sought to defend the Christian Faith against misrepresentation and attack by Judaism and paganism. Mark the following: first, these were men of higher learning and culture than the earlier Apostolic Fathers. Most of these writers were either philosophers or rhetoricians by training. The Apologists were more theological, systematic and philosophical than their forebears in the faith, although they manifested the same fervent spirit and earnestness.

Second, they naturally accommodated the form, method and terminology of their pagan contemporaries and used it to defend the Christian faith. It is with these writers that Greek philosophy began to insert its influence into Christian thought.

Third, the writings of the apologists are of great historical value, as: they contain major arguments for the validity of Christianity that have value for every generation. They contain a faithful representation of early Christianity lived in the very face of the enemy. They accurately depict the character of contemporary paganism in its intellectual assaults against Christianity.

Fourth, the Apologists may be divided into two classes: first, according to their language, or the Greek and Latin Fathers.

> Here at once appears the characteristic difference between the Greek and Latin minds. The Greek apologies are more learned and philosophical, the Latin more practical and juridical in their matter and style. The former labor to prove the truth of Christianity and its adeptness to the intellectual wants of man; the latter plead for its legal right to exist, and exhibit mainly its moral excellency and salutary effect upon society. The Latin also are in general more rigidly opposed to heathenism, while the Greek recognize in the Grecian philosophy a certain affinity to the Christian religion.[211]

Second, according to the recipients of their treatises: Some apologies were intellectual appeals for toleration addressed to Roman Emperors and rulers; others were sustained arguments, addressed to pagan philosophers or Judaistic writers in answer to their arguments against Christianity.

Fifth, the major charges against Christianity were often absurd and without substance, e.g., cannibalism, from a superstitious and perverted view of the Lord's Supper; licentiousness in lifestyle, etc. Those of more substance included "atheism," as Christians did not worship the gods of the State; the lack of social and intellectual standing; the novelty or newness of Christianity among the religions of the Empire; the alleged absurdity of its doctrines, e.g., regeneration, the resurrection, etc.; alleged contradictions between the Old and New Testaments and among the Gospel records; the Virgin Birth of the Lord Jesus Christ and his shameful death by crucifixion, etc.

The apologists sought to answer these objections by setting forth the truth of the spirituality of God; the truths of Christian love, holiness of life and chastity; the purity of Christ's life and

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[210] The term "apology" derived from the Gk. ἀπολογεῖα, to speak from a certain position, and so defend it, a verbal defense (Phil. 1:7; 1 Pet. 3:15).

[211] Philip Schaff, *Op. cit.*, II, pp. 105–106.

teachings and the transforming power of Christianity. They demonstrated that Christianity was the oldest religion in the history of the world, and that it was the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies. This approach gave a centrality to the Old Testament, which was largely interpreted allegorically.[212]

Sixth, some of the Early Church Fathers wrote both against paganism and also against various heresies and errors, and so may be variously classified as either Apologists or Polemicists. Such writers would include Tertullian, Methodius, Arnobius, Minucius Felix and Lactantius, who are considered under the North African school. The following is a list of the major Apologists and their works:

Quadratus of Athens

Quadratus, bishop of Athens (c. 117–138) was "a disciple of the Apostles," and wrote an Apology (c. 124–126) to the Emperor Hadrian, which has been lost. All that is known about him is a quotation by Eusebius. He is counted among the "Seventy Apostles" by the Eastern Church.

Aristides of Athens

Aristides of Athens [Marcianus Aristedes] (c. 138–161) was a converted philosopher and a contemporary of Quadratus. He who wrote a defense of Christianity to Emperor Antoninus Pius which contained three parts: first, a declaration of the nature of the one true God. Second, a scathing exposure of pagan mythological systems in contrast to Christianity. Third, an appeal to persecutors and opposers of Christianity in view of coming Divine judgment. He was canonized by the Romish Church.

Aristo of Pella

Aristo of Pella (c. 140) was a Jewish Christian who wrote a Dialogue between Jason and Papiscus concerning Christ, a defense of Christianity against Judaism, which has been lost. He was a source for Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History.

Justin Martyr

Justin Martyr (Flavius Justinus) of Samaria (c. 100–165) was a converted philosopher and became the first learned Christian thinker and theologian. He had studied all the leading philosophies of his day, seeking a vision of God. He was finally converted through a conversation with an aged Christian he providentially met while on a walk by the seaside. Justin became an itinerant evangelist and missionary and held no regular church office, retaining the garb of the philosopher. He traveled widely and was finally beheaded at Rome at the instigation of Crescens, a Cynic philosopher.

Justin wrote two Apologies against paganism: *The First Apology* (c. 150) contains sixty–eight chapters, and was addressed to the Emperor Antonius Pius, his son Verissimus, and the philosopher Lucius. It contains three parts: first, as Christians are innocent of alleged crimes, they should not be condemned without a fair hearing. Second, various arguments for the truth of Christianity. Third, a description of the worship of Christians. *The Second Apology* (c. 153) contains

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[212] For an introduction to the Apologists, Cf. Philip Schaff, *Op. cit.,* II, pp. 104–120, 708 and A. H. Newman, *Op. cit.,* I, pp. 237–239.

twenty–five chapters, and was addressed to the same Emperor concerning the calumnies of the Cynic philosopher Crescens and the unjust treatment of Christians.

His other major work is his *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*, containing 142 chapters and presented in the form of a Socratic dialogue. It has three parts: first, he refutes the opinions of the Jews concerning the law of Moses. Second, he presents a vindication of the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Third, the calling of the Gentiles and the constitution of the church were predicted and prefigured in the Old Testament. Justin's polemic works, *Against All Heresies*, *Against Marcion*, and writings to the Greeks, etc., have all been lost. Several spurious works have been wrongly attributed to him.

The theology of Justin martyr reveals the influence of Neoplatonic philosophy and the allegorical interpretation of Philo. His soteriology would be considered as Pelagian. His ecclesiology reveals the simplicity of New Testament offices, a regenerate church membership, and the baptism of believers only.

Tatian of Assyria

Tatian of Assyria (c. 110–172) was a philosopher before his conversion and afterward became a pupil of Justin Martyr. In later life he was influenced to a given extent by Gnosticism and asceticism. He wrote an *Apology to the Greeks*, in which he both defended Christianity and ridiculed the mythologies and philosophies of paganism with much vehemence. His *Diatessaron,* or *Harmony of the Four Gospels*, is important for showing the existence and ecclesiastical use of the Four Gospels by the middle of the second century.

Athenagoras of Athens

Athenagoras of Athens (c. 161–180) was a "Christian Platonic philosopher," who was converted while seeking to refute the Scriptures. He wrote an apology entitled *Intercession in Behalf of the Christians* to the Emperor Marcus Aurelius, which has been termed "the best defense of Christianity produced in that age."[213] In this work he refuted the three major charges against Christians: atheism, cannibalism, and incest. In his work, *On the Resurrection of the Body*, he defended the truth of the resurrection against pagan philosophy.

Theophilus of Antioch

Theophilus of Antioch (d. 190) was the sixth leader from the Apostles of the Church in Syrian Antioch. He was evidently well–read in the Greek classics, possessed considerable philosophical ability, and was a powerful writer. All of his polemical and exegetical works have been lost except three books to Autolycus, in which he sought to convince him of the falsity of paganism and the truth of Christianity.

Melito of Sardis

Melito of Sardis (d. 190) was Bishop of Sardis in Lydia. He was evidently a gifted writer, praised by other early writers such as Tertullian. He wrote twenty works, all of which have been lost, except for a few fragments. He was one of the very few Church Fathers who was versed in the Hebrew language. In the remains of his works, there are three important issues: first, he provides the first list of the Hebrew Canon of Scriptures, which omitted the Apocrypha. He traveled to Palestine

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[213] James Donaldson, *Critical History*, as quoted by Philip Schaff, *Op. cit.*, II, p. 732.

in 170 to affirm the Hebrew Canon and to question the inclusion of the Apocryphal Books, which were contained in the LXX. Second, he wrote that the persecutions of that age originated more from popular violence than from imperial edict. Third, Christians were at that time bold enough to assert that Christianity was a blessing to the Roman Empire.

Apollinarius of Hierapolis

Apolinarius (Claudius Apollinarius) of Hierapolis in Phrygia (c. 160–180) was the author of many works now lost and was highly esteemed by later Church Fathers and historians. He wrote a defense of Christianity to the Emperor Aurelian, arguing the Emperor's own experience with the "Thundering Legion" [*Legio duodecima Fulminata*] in the Roman army whose prayers won him a great victory over the Quadi, a Germanic tribe. He died a martyr.

Hermias the Philosopher

Hermias the philosopher (c.160–200) is unknown except for his work, *Mockery of Heathen Philosophers* on the nature of the body, the soul and the world, in which he sought to disprove the various philosophical systems by demonstrating their contradictions and absurdities. He held that all philosophical systems came from the apostasy of angels. His approach used cynicism and a skeptical approach.

Miltiades

Miltiades (c. 150–200) was an apologist mentioned by Eusebius the church historian as the author of several Apologies to the Rulers, against the Jews, and against the Greeks, all now lost. He may have been a converted Jew.

Hegessipus

Hegesippus (c. 180) was a Jewish Christian and an antiquarian or chronicler, writing memoirs of his travels to prove the purity and catholicity of the church against the various sects of Gnosticism. He wrote apologies against the Gnostics and Marcion. He was a source for Eusebius.

Dionysius of Corinth

Dionysius of Corinth (c. 180) was a Bishop at Corinth and a person of considerable influence. He wrote seven epistles to various churches. His writings served as sources for Eusebius and Jerome. He was canonized by the Roman Church.

The Polemicists

Introduction

The Polemicists were the writers of the late Second and Third Centuries who refuted the heresies of pseudo–Christianity.[214] As the Apologists defended the faith against attacks from without Christianity, the Polemicists defended the truth from within the ranks of professing Christianity. Mark the following: first, the major internal threat to the truth of Christianity in the first three centuries was Gnosticism, an admixture of Christianity, Judaism, Greek philosophy and Oriental mysticism. It gained many adherents and sought to modify or corrupt every tenet of Christian truth. The polemicists wrote mainly against such Gnostic error.

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[214] Polemics, the study of doctrinal differences and controversies, derives from the Greek noun πόλεμος, "war," or the adjective πολέμικος, "war–like," and so "war, battle, combat, quarrel, or dispute."

Second, Gnosticism sought to build a comprehensive and coherent system with its religious speculations. The polemicists saw the necessity, not only of demonstrating the absurdity of the Gnostic systems, but of accurately stating doctrinal truth in a systematic fashion. Thus, with the polemicists began the development of a systematic or dogmatic theology.

Third, the Apologists were generally individuals who were converted from heathenism and had a background in philosophy; the polemicists were generally individuals who had grown up within Christianity and thus were more refined and therefore less crude or rudimentary in their doctrinal statements.

Fourth, the Apologists sought to prove the truth and antiquity of Christianity against the onslaughts of paganism and Judaism, and so gave prominence to the Old Testament. The Gnostics and others within the ranks of professing Christianity repudiated the Old Testament, making the New Testament and its teachings the center of controversy. This centrality of the New Testament, and the Gnostic tendencies toward allegorizing Scripture, caused some of the Polemicists to recognize the evils of the allegorical method of interpretation, although this method would continue to exist and exert a great influence in Christian thought.

Fifth, the need for a unified stand against errors and heresies gave rise to the concept of the orthodox or Catholic Church, i.e., the universal, common or orthodox faith and teaching as expressed through the churches.[215]

Sixth, among the Ante–Nicene Fathers there are those who may be classified variously as apologists or polemicists because of the varied nature of their writings. These include such writers as Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Cyprian, etc. The major polemical writers were Irenaeus, Hippolytus and Gaius of Rome:

Irenaeus

Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons (c. 115–202) was born and reared in Smyrna in Asia Minor, where as a youth he was a disciple of Polycarp. He received a liberal education in the Greek classics and was well–studied in all the Early Church Fathers, from whom he quoted extensively in his own writings. He removed to Rome, then to Gaul [ancient pagan France] as a missionary. Upon the martyrdom of Pothinus, he became Bishop of Lyons. Irenaeus was active as a mediator in several disputes and was the greatest leader in Catholic Christianity in latter part of the second century. He was the most orthodox of all the Ante–Nicene Fathers.

His major written work is *Against Heresies*, a five–book defense of Christianity against Gnosticism: Book I is an historical account of various Gnostic sects and by contrast a declaration of the Christian faith set forth in a series of propositions. Book II is a philosophical polemic against Valentinian Gnosticism, proving the unity of God and disproving the Platonic theory of the correspondence between the world of ideas or forms and the visible world. Book III is a refutation of Gnosticism from the Old and New Testament Scriptures. Book IV is a refutation of Gnosticism from the words of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself in His recorded sayings. Book V is a vindication of the resurrection against the Gnostic teaching of the inherent evil of matter, with some remarks on premillennarianism.

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[215] A. H. Newman, *Op. cit.,* I, pp. 246–248; Philip Schaff, *Op. cit.*, II, p. 747.

The other works of Irenaeus include: *The Epistle to Florinus, On the Unity of God and the Origin of Evil; On the Ogdoad*, against the Valentinian system of *aeons* and the mystic meaning of the number "eight;" *On Schism*, concerning the Montanist and *Quartodeciman* (concerning the celebration of Easter as either the very day of the Jewish Passover or the following Sunday) Controversies. Eusebius mentions other works now lost: *Against the Greeks, On Apostolic Preaching, Book on Various Disputes, On the Wisdom of Solomon.*

Hippolytus

Hippolytus (c. 170–236). Little is known about the life of this man, except that he was a Presbyter, then a rival Bishop at Rome, and finally, a martyr. He was also the last prominent writer in the Roman church to use the Greek language. Philip Schaff writes:

> This famous person has lived three lives, a real one in the third century as an opponent of the popes of his day, a fictitious one in the middle ages as a canonized saint, and a literary one in the nineteenth century after the discovery of his long lost work against heresies. He was undoubtedly one of the most learned and imminent scholars and theologians of his time. The Roman church placed him in the number of her saints and martyrs, little suspecting that he would come forward in the nineteenth century as an accuser against her.[216]

Hippolytus opposed the Noetian heresy (an early form of Sabellianism that held the Father and Son to be identical) of the Roman Bishop Zephyrinus and his successor Callistus. He set himself up as a rival bishop over a schismatic church. He was finally exiled to Sardinia and martyred during the reign of Maximinus the Thracian. He opposed the laxness of discipline in the catholic churches and anticipated the Novatian schism of following decades.

His writings include dogmatic, polemical and exegetical works. He "was the most learned divine and the most voluminous writer of the Roman Church in the third century; in fact, the first great scholar of that church…"[217] His principal work was the *Philosophumena*, or *Refutation of All Heresies*, one of the most important works of the Ante–Nicene age. It reveals much about ancient heresies, church doctrine, the history of philosophy and the conditions of the churches during that time. Other works include: *On the Universe*, a polemic against Platonism; a work on Antichrist; a commentary on The Apocalypse, and various lost works, e.g., a work on the *Charismata*.

Gaius of Rome

Gaius of Rome (c. late second–early third century). Little is known of this writer, except that he was a Presbyter in Rome during the Episcopate of Zephyrinus and wrote a Dialogue against Proclus and Montanism. He denied the Pauline authorship of Hebrews, and allegedly rejected the canonicity of the Gospel of John and the Apocalypse.

The Alexandrian School

Alexandria was the great cosmopolitan center of Egypt and the ancient world, a blend of the Occidental and Oriental. It was a great commercial center, the seat of Jewish and Greek learning and the intellectual center of the world for the first five centuries of the Christian era. It possessed the greatest library of the ancient world. It had been the home of Philo the Jew and of the allegorical

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[216] *Ibid.*, pp. 758–759.

[217] *Ibid.,* pp. 763–764.

method of interpretation, which was imported into Judaism by Philo and into Christianity by Aristobulus and Origen. It was the birthplace of Neoplatonic philosophy and Gnosticism.

The catechetical or theological school at Alexandria was under the headship of a long list of eminent individuals: Pantaenus, Clement, Origen, Heraclas, and Didymus. This school was destined to exert a powerful influence on early Christianity. Here was developed a Christian Platonic philosophy, an intellectual Christianity, as the true possessor of knowledge in opposition to the false knowledge and fantasies of Gnosticism. Here the allegorical method of interpretation was refined and reduced to a system. Alexandria produced the greatest Christian philosophers, the first biblical and systematic theologians and textual critics, and the greatest Bible commentators of the Ante–Nicene age. Here theology was developed into a system and a science.[218] The great Christian scholars associated with this school include: Clement, Origen, Gregory Thaumaturgus, Dionysius the Great, and Julius Africanus.

Clement of Alexandria

Clement (Titus Flavius Clement) of Alexandria (c.155–220) has been called "The first known Christian scholar." He was a native of Athens, highly–educated in philosophy and literature, and had traveled widely before his conversion. He became a presbyter in the Alexandrian church and then succeeded Pantaenus as superintendent of the Alexandrian school (c. 190).

Clement was the real father of the Alexandrian Theology. He possessed a great speculative mind and taught Christianity as the true philosophy and the true knowledge. He sought to systematize Christianity. He also wrote the first Christian hymn that has been preserved apart from Scripture, "A Hymn to Christ."

His principal works constitute a trilogy: *Protrepticos* (Exhortation to Conversion), *Paidagogos* (The Tutor), and *Stromateis* (Miscellanies). In addition he wrote *Hupotuposeis* (Outlines of Scripture Interpretation), and a small treatise on *Who is the Rich Man Who will be Saved?* (on the right use of wealth).

Origen

Origen (Origenes Admantius) (c. 184–254) was born to Christian parents in Alexandria and was the son of a martyr. At age eighteen he became the superintendent of the Catechetical school in Alexandria. In early adult life he emasculated himself, taking the admonition of Matt. 19:12 literally.

His genius was unsurpassed among the early Church Fathers. Schaff writes: "…one of the most remarkable men in history for genius and learning, for the influence he exerted on his age, and for the controversies and discussions to which his opinions gave rise.[219]

> Origen was the greatest scholar of his age, and the most gifted, most industrious, and most cultivated of all the Ante–Nicene fathers. Even heathens and heretics admired or feared his brilliant talent and vast learning. His knowledge embraced all the departments of philology, philosophy, and theology of his day. With this he united profound and fertile thought, keen

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[218] See Philip Schaff, *Op. cit.,* II, pp. 777–781; A. H. Newman, *Op. cit.,* I, pp. 271–272.

[219] Philip Schaff, *Op. cit*., II, p. 786.

> penetration, and glowing imagination. As a true divine, he consecrated all his studies by prayer, and turned them, according to his best convictions, to the service of truth and piety.[220]

Newman follows: "He was the most learned man and one of the profoundest thinkers in the ancient church...and probably exerted more influence on the doctrinal development of the church than any other man."[221]

He sought to become a universal scholar and submit all his learning and abilities to the cause of Christ. He became a pupil of Ammonius Saccas, the father of Neoplatonism. He traveled widely about the Mediterranean world, and mastered the Hebrew language to better understand the Old Testament Scriptures. Many great and eminent individuals came to sit under his teaching and were converted from pagan philosophy and Gnosticism. He personally taught Julia Mammaea, the mother of Emperor Alexander Severus and others of royalty and fame.

While on a journey to Caesarea, he was invited to preach, and was later ordained by two bishops. This, together with his self–mutilation and doctrinal speculations, resulted in his excommunication by Demetrius, the Bishop of Alexandria. Demetrius was doubtless largely motivated out of jealousy. Origen then returned to Caesarea where he established another school and remained for the rest of his life, serving God as a teacher and an adviser in several religious disputes. He was arrested and tortured during the Decian persecution. He later died of his injuries at age sixty–nine.

Origen was a voluminous writer. One of his opponents numbered his written works at six thousand. Jerome in the fifth century stated that Origen wrote more than other men can read. His Biblical works were numerous, the *Commentaries* covering almost all the books of the Bible. His critical works, the *Hexapla* and the *Tetrapla*, gave him the distinction of being the first biblical exegete and textual critic. His polemic and apologetic works were of the highest order. He also wrote several dogmatic works, the best known is the *De Principiis*, the first attempt at a systematic theology. There were also many homiletical and practical works.

Origen was the first to refine and reduce the allegorical method of interpretation into a system. He held heretical opinions on certain doctrines, e.g., he did not believe in a literal resurrection, held to a universalism or final restoration of all things, and was greatly influenced in his theology by Neoplatonic and Gnostic thought. Some attribute tohom the foundation of the doctrine of purgatory. His critics were numerous, including Methodius (Eubulius), Bishop of Olympus and Patara.

Gregory Thaumaturgus

Gregory Thaumaturgus ("The Wonder Worker") (c. 213–270) was a pagan lawyer at Neocaesarea in Pontus who became a convert of Origen at Caesarea in Palestine, and remained his disciple for eight years, returning to labor with great zeal as a missionary, then Bishop at Neocaesarea.

His most important writing is his *Panegyric*, a eulogy on Origen that is "…not only one of the most eloquent discourses in all the literature of the age, but gives us a view of the character of Origen and his methods of teaching and of bringing his influence to bear upon young men, that we

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[220] *Ibid.*, p. 790.

[221] A. H. Newman, *Op. cit.*, I, p. 281.

should not otherwise have possessed.[222] His other works include a *Declaration of Faith*, a *Metaphrase of the Book of Ecclesiastes*, and a *Canonical Epistle* containing directions for penance and discipline.

Dionysius of Alexandria

Dionysius of Alexandria ("Dionysius The Great") (c. 200–264) was a pagan philosopher, then a convert and pupil of Origen, superintendent of the catechetical school, and finally Bishop of Alexandria. He possessed an irenic spirit in the controversies over the *lapsi*, but wrote against Sabellianism. Only fragments of his works remain.

Julius Africanus

Julius Africanus (Sextus Julius Africanus) (c. 160–240) was a Christian philosopher, an older friend of Origen and the first Christian chronographer and universal historian. He was commissioned by the Emperor Severus to organize the public library in Rome. In his five–volume *Chronographia*, he sought to synchronize sacred and secular history. This formed the basis for the later church history by Eusebius. He also wrote *Cesti*, a 24–volume encyclopedia on a variety of subjects.

Heraclas, Theognostos, Pierius, Pamphilus, Peter and Hieracas were minor divines of the Greek church in the Ante–Nicene age.[223]

The Antiochian School

Lucian of Antioch (d. 311) was a presbyter and a martyr during the Diocletian persecution. He was a critical scholar. He seemed to be fairly orthodox in his Christology and the creed that bears his name is trinitarian. The Arians and Nestorians both claimed a close affinity with Lucian.

Lucian is the reputed founder of the Antiochian School of Theology, which was more prominent in the fourth century during the Nicene era. Later leaders and the real founders were both former leaders in the Antioch Church: *Diodorus*, Bishop of Tarsus (c. 379–394) and *Theodorus*, Bishop of Mopsuestia, who was its best theologian and biblical commentator (c. 393–428). *John Chrysostom* was its greatest preacher (c. 347–407). Schaff writes:

> The Antiochian School was not a regular institution with a continuous succession of teachers, like the Catechetical School of Alexandria, but a theological tendency, more particularly a peculiar type of hermeneutics and exegesis which had its center in Antioch. The characteristic features are, attention to the revision of the text, a close adherence to the plain, natural meaning according to the use of the language and the condition of the writer, and justice to the human factor. In other words, its exegesis was grammatical and historical, in distinction from the allegorical method of the Alexandrian School.[224]

Newman follows with:

> Antioch did not so early [as Alexandria] become a seat of Christian learning, but from c. 270 onward, under Lucian, it came into rivalry with Alexandria as a center of theological thought and influence. In the great Christological Controversies of the fourth and following centuries Alexandria and Antioch were always antagonists, Alexandria representing a mystical

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[222] *Ibid*., pp. 287–288.

[223] Philip Schaff, *Op. cit*., II, pp. 806–808.

[224] *Ibid*., p. 816.

> transcendentalism and promoting the allegorical interpretation of the Scriptures; Antioch insisting on the grammatico–historical interpretation of the Scriptures and having no sympathy with mystical modes of thought.[225]

The North African School

Introduction

The earliest Church Fathers and writers were Greek and wrote in Greek. With Tertullian, the Western Church began the transition to Latin. Because the first prominent writers lived and labored in North Africa, the Western or Latin Church has been identified as the North African School. Schaff writes:

> The Western church in this period exhibits no such scientific productiveness as the Eastern. The apostolic church was predominantly Jewish, the Ante–Nicene church, Greek, the post–Nicene, Roman. The Roman church itself was first predominantly Greek, and her earliest writers——Clement, Hermas, Irenaeus, Hippolytus——wrote exclusively in Greek. Latin Christianity begins to appear in literature at the end of the second century, and then not in Italy, but in North Africa, and not in Rome, but in Carthage, and very characteristically, not with converted speculative philosophers, but with practical lawyers and rhetoricians.[226]

The two greatest Ante–Nicene representatives of this school were Tertullian and Cyprian, both of Carthage.

Tertullian

Tertullian (Quintus Septemius Florens Tertullianus) (c. 160–220) was the son of a Roman proconsular centurion and educated in liberal arts, rhetoric and law, attaining considerable fame before his conversion. He was converted in mid–life and may have become a presbyter in the church at Carthage. In his later he life joined with the Montanist movement (c.190), becoming its chief advocate and theologian. He possessed an ascetic tendency and a fiery, yet sagacious personality. Schaff writes:

> …[Tertullian] is the father of the Latin theology and church language, and one of the greatest men of Christian antiquity…few writers have impressed their individuality so strongly in their books as this African father. In this respect, as well as others, he resembles St. Paul and Martin Luther.[227]

His authority was so strong and influence so great, that through his writings, the Montanist views infiltrated the dominant church. Thirty–one of his writings have survived. His writings may be classified as four–fold: apologetical works against heathen and Jews. Polemic or anti–heretical works, mainly against the Monarchians and Gnostics. In his precise polemical work against Monarchianism, he laid the foundation for orthodox Trinitarian theology. He was the father of the *traducianist* theory of the origin of the human soul (i.e., that the soul is derived from the parents by the process of procreation). He did more than any other single writer to overthrow Gnosticism. Ethical, practical and ascetic works. Montanist tracts against Catholicism.

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[225] A. H. Newman, *Op. cit*., I, p. 297.

[226] Philip Schaff, *Op. cit*., II, p. 819.

[227] Ibid.

Minucius Felix

Minucius Felix lived either prior to or after Tertullian. He was a Lawyer in Rome and probably of North African descent. He never became a member of the clergy. His single writing is an apologetic work, *Octavius*, which is directed to pagan readers. This work shows a close resemblance to the *Apologeticus* of Tertullian, and it is evident that they are interdependent.

Cyprian

Cyprian (Thascius Caecilius Cyprianus) (c. 200–258) was a native of Carthage, born into a wealthy and cultured family. His father was a Roman officer. He became a brilliant rhetorician. He was converted in mid–life and only two years later made Bishop of Carthage. His appointment lead to a schism in the church and he became embroiled in the Novatian controversy. He had retired from the city of avoid persecution during the Decian era and also took a lenient view toward the *lapsi* and the *libellatici* (those who purchased certificates from the civil authorities stating that they had sacrificed to idols when they had not). He excommunicated Novatus from the church at Carthage, and supported the election of Cornelius at Rome, opposing the stricter party of Novatian. After a decade as bishop, he was martyred under the reign of Valerian. Concerning his character and significance, Schaff writes:

> As Origen was the ablest scholar, and Tertullian the strongest writer, so Cyprian was the greatest bishop of the third century. He was born to be a prince in the church. In executive talent, he even surpassed all the Roman bishops of his time; and he bore himself towards them, also as frater...in the spirit of full equality. Augustine calls him…"The catholic bishop and catholic martyr."…His stamp of character was more that of Peter than either of Paul or John.
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> His peculiar importance falls not so much in the field of theology, where he lacks originality and depth, as in church organization and discipline...Cyprian directed his polemics against schismatics…In him the idea of the old catholic hierarchy and episcopal autocracy, both in its affinity and in its conflict with the idea of the papacy was personally embodied.…[228]

His writings include various tracts, eighty–one epistles to various churches and leaders, and a series of moral and apologetic works.

Novatian

Novatian (mid–third century) was the second rival bishop or "anti–pope" of Rome, Hegesippus being the first. He was the founder of the schism bearing his name, resulting from the Decian persecution and the treatment of the *lapsi*. He represented the strict–discipline party. The church at Rome was split by this schism, and Novatian was elected bishop by the strict–party minority. Schaff gives a description of the Roman church at this point in time:

> At that time the Roman congregation numbered forty presbyters, seven deacons, seven sub–deacons, forty–two acolytes, besides exorcists, readers, and janitors, and an "innumerable multitude of the people," which may have amounted perhaps to about 50,000 members.[229]

Novatian wrote several works on theological, polemical and practical subjects. His writings betray a dependence on the allegorical method of interpretation.

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[228] *Ibid.*, pp. 845–846.

[229] *Ibid.*, p. 850.

Commodian

Little is known of the life of this third century writer, except that he was probably a presbyter and poet in North Africa. He was converted to Christianity in his advanced years, and was a Patripassian in Christology and a Chiliast in eschatology. His works are comprised of two poems, *Instructions for the Christian Life*, and *Apologetic Poem against Jews and Gentiles*. The former consists of eighty poems in acrostic form. In the latter work, all mankind are urged to repent in view of the approach end of the world.

Arnobius of Sicca

Arnobius (d. c. 327) was a teacher of rhetoric and was first an enemy, then an apologist for Christianity. He wrote an Apology of Christianity, or *The Case Against the Pagans* in seven books as a response to Diocletian's persecution of the Christians. Lactantius was said to be one of his pupils.

Victorinus of Pettau

Victorinus of Pettau [Petovia] (d. 303) was a rhetorician, Bishop of Panonia, and a martyr during the Diocletian persecution. He was the first Latin exegete and commentator. He was one of the earliest Fathers to write against chiliasm. He also wrote a polemic work, *et multa alia*, or "Against All Heresies." He was later canonized by the Roman Church.

X
The Nicene Fathers

The Nicene and Post–Nicene Fathers, as the Ante–Nicene Fathers before them, held to variety of errors, and what today would even be considered heresies. They were seeking to establish a theology which would be consistent and coherent. They needed and were struggling to develop a coherent vocabulary, and were also saddled with an allegorical approach to Scripture and a philosophical foundation which hindered them. That they overcame most barriers and were able to defend the essence of the faith is in itself remarkable.

The Nicene and Post–Nicene Church Fathers are usually considered together, as the era in which they lived [the fourth through eighth centuries] and the Christological controversies in which they were engaged overlapped to a given degree. After settling the foundational Trinitarian or Arian issues (late third to late fourth century), controversies arose over the two natures in the one Person of Christ: *Apollinarianism* (c. 361–381), which denied the true humanity of Christ, condemned at the Council of Constantinople (381); *Eutychianism* (c. 380–451), which taught the fusion of the two natures in Christ, condemned at the Council of Chalcedon (451); *Nestorianism* (c. 328–451), which seemed to unduly separate the hypostatic union of the two natures of Christ into two persons, condemned at the Councils of Ephesus in 431 and Chalcedon, 451.

Monophysitism, which taught that Christ had a composite nature rather than two distinct natures, was condemned at the Council of Chalcedon in 451, but remained among the Oriental Orthodox Churches, separating them from the Western and Eastern Churches. *Monothelitism* (638–681), a development of the monophysite controversy, held that Christ had but one will and thus demeaned his true humanity. There were two views: either the human will was merged with the Divine will so that only the Divine will acted, or the two wills were fused into one. Formulated in 638, it was condemned at the Third Council of Constantinople in 681.

The Church Fathers who were outstanding and considered the great teachers of the Church during the Nicene and the early Post–Nicene eras of the Arian Controversy and the conclusion of the Trinitarian debates include the following Greek and Latin Fathers:

The Greek Fathers

Eusebius of Caesarea

Eusebius of Caesarea [Eusebius Pamphili] (c. 265–339) is known as "The Father of Church History" and "The Christian Herodotus."[230] He was probably born in Palestine. In his youth he became a student and close associate of Pamphilus, founder of the theological school at Caesarea. At the latter's death by martyrdom in 309, Eusebius took his name as an honor—*Eusebius Pamphili*. During his sojourn in Egypt, he was imprisoned and later accused of being a

[230] Herodotus (c. 484–425 BC) is known as "The Father of History." He was the first historian known to collect his materials systematically and critically, and then to arrange them into a historiographic narrative.

lapsi, as he bore no scars or disfigurement from his incarceration in contrast to others who had been imprisoned with him.[231]

He was made Bishop of Caesarea c. 314 and represented the moderate [Origenist and semi–Arian] majority party at the Council of Nicaea. (He was a close friend and advisor to the Emperor, and lauded him in his *Historia Ecclesiastica*, which strangely did not cover the Council of Nicaea, but ended at 325). At the Council, he sat at the right hand of honor beside Constantine. He had previously favored Arius, but stood apart from him at the Council when the latter's views were set clearly forth, and he opposed Athanasius, believing that he represented a Sabellian position. It was Eusebius who gave out a compromising creed to the Council, to which several key terms were then added to secure the orthodox party.

He gave his own interpretation to the ὁμοούσιον, which was more Origenist and semi–Arian than Nicene. He took part in the condemnation of Athanasius at a council in Tyre in 335, and was the chief prosecutor of Marcellus of Ancyra, a Sabellian, at a synod in Constantinople (336). He declined the Patriarchate of Antioch in 331, preferring to live the rest of his life in quietness and self–denial.

His writings were diverse. The major works: *Chronicon*, a history of the world to 303,[232] and *Historia Ecclesiastica*, the first church history. His apologetic works include: *Contra Hieroclem*, against a pagan governor of Bithynia; *Praepara evangelica*, explaining why Christians accepted the Hebrew tradition; *Demonstrata evangelica*, proving Christianity by the Old Testament; and *Theophania*, on the incarnation. Among his other literary works are a collection of Origen's letters, a biography of Pamphilus, a *Life of Constantine*, *De Martyribus Palestinae*, an account of the Diocletian persecution; *Eclogae Propheticae*, a general introduction to Christological passages of the Old Testament; *Contra Macellum*, against Marcellus of Ancyra; *Onomasticon*, a biblical topography; and various biblical commentaries.[233]

Philip Schaff describes the character of Eusebius:

> The only satisfactory solution of this apparent inconsistency is to be found in his own indecision and leaning to a doctrinal latitudinarianism….On the important point of the *homoousion* he never came to a firm conviction. He wavered between the old Origenistic subordinationism and the Nicene orthodoxy….Religious sentiment compelled him to acknowledge the full deity of Christ; fear of Sabellianism restrained him….Theological acumen he constitutionally lacked….With his theological indecision is connected his weakness of character. He was an amiable and pliant court–theologian, and suffered himself to be blinded and carried away by the splendor of the first Christian emperor, his patron and friend.[234]

Athanasius of Alexandria

Athanasius of Alexandria [Athanasius the Great, Athanasius Apostolic, Athanasius I] (c. 298–373) was an Egyptian by birth, but was a Greek by education. He became a theological

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[231] See Schaff, Op. cit., p. 875.

[232] The *Chronicon* was later expanded to 325, but with no mention of the Arian controversy or the Council of Nicaea.

[233] A complete listing and discussion of the works of Eusebius may be found in Philip Schaff, *Nicene and Post–Nicene Fathers,* Second Series, I, pp. 26–45.

[234] Philip Schaff, *Loc. cit*.

giant and the leading figure in the Arian controversy. He was dark–skinned as an Egyptian, and was also of a small stature. His enemies derogatorily called him "the black dwarf."[235] He was educated at the famous Catechetical School of Alexandria under the Bishop Alexander, who very early saw his potential.

He was not a spokesman at the Council of Nicaea, but attended as a deacon and secretary to Bishop Alexander. However, his notes, circulars and encyclicals written on behalf of Alexander had a deciding effect on the proceedings and final decisions.

With the death of Alexander in 328, Athanasius was made Bishop of Alexandria by popular demand at age thirty–three, although he was not of canonical age. It should be noted that the Bishop of Alexandria was at the same time the Metropolitan[236] of Egypt, Libya and Pentapolis, giving him tremendous power and influence. He immediately became the focal point of the Arian and semi–Arian attack. The successors to Constantine were either Arians or semi–Arians, and his position and safety were in constant peril.

He was banished under Constantius (337–361), but re–instated by Julian the Apostate (361–363), then banished again under Valens, another Arian Emperor (363–378). At this time the aged Athanasius hid for four months in the tomb of his father. This was his fifth and final banishment.[237] Valens finally rescinded the edict of banishment and Athanasius, after writing his final apologetic against Apollinarianism, died in 373 after a bishopric of forty–six years. He was almost universally lauded by his contemporaries and subsequent Church Fathers. He was later canonized by the Roman Church.

The volume of his writings is impressive. His major works are: *Contra Gentes*, a refutation of paganism; *de Incarnatione*, an exposition of the incarnation and work of Christ; *De Decretis* and *Exposito Fidei*, doctrinal works. Apologetical, polemical and historical works include: *Apologia Contra Arianos*, *ad Episcopos Aegypti*, and *de Synodis*. Many other works and letters can be found in the series, *The Nicene and Post–Nicene Fathers*, Series 2, IV.[238]

Philip Schaff notes concerning his character:

> …*Athanasius contra mundum, et mundus contra Athanasium*,[239] is a well–known sentiment which strikingly expresses his fearless independence and immoveable fidelity to his

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[235] Justo Gonzales, *Op. cit*. p. 173.

[236] The Metropolitan Bishops were the most powerful and influential persons within Christendom at the time, ruling over vast regions and all the lower clergy, including the other ruling and monarchical bishops.

[237] During one exile, he fled to Rome and there solidified his connection and influence with the Western Church, which was Nicene in its doctrine and opposed to the Arianism and semi–Arianism of the Eastern Church. Even there he was forced to flee once again with the change of emperors.

[238] Philip Schaff, Ed., *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post–Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church.* Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974. 28 vols.

[239] *Athanasius contra mundum, et mundus contra Athanasium*. "Athanasius against the world; the world against Athanasius." During the Arian controversies, in which the emperor and the majority of the bishops and clergy stood against him, one declared to him, "Athanasius, the world is against you!" To which he replied, "Then, Athanasius against the world!"

> convictions….The solitary Athanasius, even in exile, and under the ban of council and emperor, was the bearer of the truth, and, as he was afterwards named, the 'father of orthodoxy.'[240]
>
> Athanasius, like many great men (from David to Paul to Napoleon and Schleiermacher), was very small of stature, somewhat stooping and emaciated by fasting and many troubles, but fair of countenance, with a piercing eye and a personal appearance of great power even over his enemies. His omnipresent activity, his rapid and his mysterious movements, his fearlessness, and his prophetic insight into the future, were attributed by his friends to divine assistance, by his enemies to a league with evil powers.[241]

S. Mikolaski describes him as:

> …Of small stature but keen mind….He was a clear–minded and skilled theologian, a prolific writer with a journalist's instinct for the power of the pen, and a devout Christian—which endeared him to the large Christian public of Alexandria and the vast majority of the clergy and monks of Egypt….He was hounded through five exiles embracing seventeen years of flight and hiding, not only among the monks of the desert, but often in Alexandria where he was shielded by the people. G. L. Prestige declares that almost single–handedly Athanasius saved the Church from pagan intellectualism, that 'by his tenacity and vision in preaching one God and Savior, he had preserved from dissolution the unity and integrity of the Christian faith.'[242]

Basil of Caesarea

Basil of Caesarea [St. Basil the Great] (c. 330–379) was the first of the "Three Cappadocians"—Basil, his younger brother, Gregory of Nyssa, and their close friend, Gregory of Nazianzen.[243] He was born into a wealthy and pious family whose ancestors were martyrs. His education was of the highest order, first under his own father, a rhetorician, then at the school at Constantinople, and finally at the University of Athens. It was there that he met his life–long friend, Gregory of Nazianzen and also the future emperor, Julian [the Apostate]. He sought to harness his classical education to the truth of Christianity.

He forsook his very successful life as a rhetorician for the cenobitic monastic life. He found that although he could escape the city and its evils, he could not forsake himself. In 364 Basil was made a presbyter against his will, in part due to the oppression of the Arians, and in 370, at the death of Eusebius, he was elected Bishop of Caesarea and Metropolitan of all Cappadocia. He then devoted himself to the cause of the poor and to the Arian and *Pneumatomachian*[244] controversies. He saw to the social needs of the people, and built a large complex of hostels for the poor which housed a hospital and clergy houses. This project was so comprehensive that it was called "Newtown," and later, Basilead.

The writings of Basil are numerous for one who died so early. There are two dogmatic works: *Adversus Eunomium* and *De Spiritu Sanctu*. Three homiletic works: *In Hexaemeron*,

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[240] Schaff, *Op. cit*., p. 886.

[241] *Ibid*., p. 888.

[242] Samuel J. Mikolaski, "Athansius," *New International Dictionary of the Christian Church*, p. 81.

[243] Ancient Cappadocia was the region of Eastern Asia Minor [Modern Turkey] bound by the Taurus mountains to the south, the Euphrates River to the east, by Lyconia and Galatia to the west and Pontas to the north. "The three Cappadocians were characterized by saying that St Basil was the arm which acted, St Gregory the mouth which spoke and St Gregory of Nyssa the head which did the thinking."

[244] The Pneumatomachians, lit: "fighters against the Spirit," were a fourth century group which denied the deity of the Holy Spirit. Their teachings were attacked by all three Cappadocians.

various homilies and a commentary on Isaiah 1–16. Five ascetic works: *Tractatus praevii*, *Praemium de Judicio Dei* and *Dei Fide* and *Regulae breius tractate*. Three areas of Homilies: Dogmatic, Moral and Panegyric. Series of pastoral letters on a variety of subjects: Historic, Dogmatic, Moral, Disciplinary, Consolatory, Commendatory and Familiar, and, finally various Liturgical works.[245]

Basil had always been physically weak and sickly, and died in his fiftieth year, worn out with his work and through ascetic self–denial. Schaff describes Basil thus: "…two of his brothers, Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa, and Peter, Bishop of Sebaste, and his sister, Marcina the Younger,[246] are, like himself, among the saints of the Eastern Church."[247]

> Basil is distinguished as a pulpit orator and as a theologian, and still more as a shepherd of souls and a church ruler….In classical culture he yields to none of his contemporaries, and is justly placed with the two Gregories among the very first writers Among the Greek Fathers. His style is pure, elegant, and vigorous….He at first, from fear of Sabellianism, recoiled from the strong doctrine of the *homoousia*; but the persecution of the Arians drove him to a decided confession.[248]

G. L. Carey writes concerning Basil:

> When Emperor Valens visited the province eager to impose Arianism upon a defiant Catholic Church, he was outclassed by the eloquent, forceful arguments of a dignified Basil….
>
> …he showed determination to uphold the Nicene doctrine…but his chief contribution in this field was in fact his towering personality and popularity which made him an ideal mediator between East and West. Through his conciliatory influence, together with that of Gregory of Nazianzen and Gregory of Nyssa, the confusion over terminology was eventually resolved.[249]

Gregory of Nyssa

Gregory of Nyssa (c. 330–395) was the younger brother of Basil and mutual friend of Gregory of Nazianzen—one of the "Three Cappadocians." As his elder brother, Gregory was weak in bodily constitution, and he was more given to contemplation and meditation than action. Basil rebuked him for taking secular work as a rhetorician. In his penitence, he retired to a monastery until, somewhat unwillingly, Basil worked to elect him Bishop of Nyssa in 371. As he supported the Nicene Creed, he was deposed by a synod of Arian bishops in 376, but was re–instated in 378 upon the death of the Arian Emperor Valens. Julian the Apostate, the last pagan Roman Emperor, re–instated all the bishops Valens had deposed to wreak havoc in the churches. As his fame and influence spread he traveled and was called upon to help heal church schisms.

At the Council of Constantinople in 381, Gregory took a leading role and delivered the inaugural address and also the funeral oration for Melitius of Antioch, the first President of the

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[245] A full listing of these is given in Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, Eds., *Nicene and Post–Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, VIII, pp. xiii–lxxvii.

[246] Marcina is named "the Younger," to distinguish her from her grandmother. Marcina was given to the ascetic and monastic life and encouraged her two brothers to give themselves to the same life of devotion, self–denial and separation from society.

[247] Schaff, *Op. cit*., p. 894.

[248] Schaff, *Op. cit*., p. 902.

[249] G. L. Carey, "Basil The Great," *New International Dictionary of the Christian Church*, p. 110.

Council. He evidently, as one of the greatest theologians of the time, had a deciding influence there. His greatest influence, however, was in his writings. He died in a monastic setting. At the Seventh General Council of the Church [Second Council of Nicaea, 787], he was given the title, "Father of Fathers."

The following is a summary of remarks on Gregory's life and influence taken from Philip Schaff:

> He was weakly and timid, and born not so much for practical life, as for study and speculation. He formed his mind chiefly upon the writings of Origen, and under the direction of his brother, whom he calls his father and preceptor….
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> …As Gregory labored zealously for the Nicene Creed, he drew the hatred the Arians…Now other trials came upon him. His brothers and sisters died in rapid succession. He delivered a eulogy upon Basil, whom he greatly venerated….
>
> The wealth of his intellectual life he deposited in his numerous writings, above all in his controversial doctrinal works….
>
> Gregory was more a man of thought than of action. He had a fine metaphysical head, asnd did lasting service in the vindication of the mystery of the Trinity land the incarnation, and in the accurate distinction between essence and hypostasis. Of all the church teachers of the Nicene age he is the nearest to Origen. He not only follows his sometimes utterly extravagant allegorical method of interpretation, but even to a great extend falls in with his dogmatic views….[He]…adopts…the doctrine of the final restoration of all things…Unbelievers must indeed pass through a second death, in order to be purged from the filthiness of the flesh. But God does not give them up…[250]

It can be noted that although Gregory followed Origen in some issues, such as universalism and purgatory, he held strongly to the Nicene faith. "He was among the first to distinguish between *ousia* and *hypostasis*. The former he used to express essence and the latter the distinctive peculiarity which was equivalent to πρόσωπον, 'person.'"[251]

An entire volume is given to Gregory's writings in the Second Series of *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post–Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, V, pp. 1–548. These are arranged into the following: Dogmatic treatises, sixteen in number, including *Against Eunomius*, *Answer to Eunomius*, *On the Hoy Spirit against Macedonius*, *On the Holy Trinity*, and *On "Not Three Gods."* Ascetic and Moral Works: *On Virginity*, *On Infants' early Deaths* and *On Pilgrimages*. Philosophical works: *On the Making of Man* and *On the Soul and the Resurrection*. An Apologetic work: *The Great Catechism*, which is a manual of Theology. Oratorical works: *On Melitius* and *On the Baptism of Christ*. A series of letters, eighteen in number. There are other minor writings.

Gregory of Nazianzen

Gregory of Nazianzen

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[250] Schaff, *Op. cit.*, pp. 904–908.

[251] G. L. Carey, "Gregory of Nyssa," *Op. cit.*, p. 436.

The Latin Fathers

Lactantius

Hilary of Poitiers

Ambrose

XI
Heresies and Errors of The Ante–Nicene and Nicene Eras

Introduction

There are three theological terms that must be defined and historically correlated to properly comprehend the doctrinal issues of the Ante–Nicene age: Error, Dogma and Heresy:

- "Error," from the Latin *errorare*, "to err." and thus "a wandering, a going astray, a missing the way." An error is a wrong belief or an incorrect opinion.
- "Dogma," from the Gk. δοκέω [*dokeo*], "to believe, think, seem, have an opinion," and thus "dogma," from the rel. part. τά δεδογμένα, "what seems to be right, a principle, doctrine, decree, official ordinance or edict." The Latinized *dogma* means "doctrine." Theologically and historically, dogma refers to the official or orthodox doctrines of Christianity or a given religious body as expressed in its creeds and confessions of faith.
- "Heresy," from the Gk. n. ἁιρεσις or the vb. αἱρετίζω in the mid. voice, "to take or choose for one's self, an opinion." Theologically and historically, heresy is a religious belief opposed to or a rejection of the orthodox doctrines or dogma of a given church or religious body.

The historical correlation of these terms is very significant. Technically, one can be in error, i.e., wander or go astray from the truth or be wrong or incorrect and not be heretical if there is no dogma or established orthodox teaching on a given doctrine. Therefore, the difference between error and heresy relates historically to the dogma or orthodox doctrine of Christianity. Most of the early Church Fathers were heretical in their doctrinal views in major areas by later standards, but, as there existed at that time no dogma or established orthodox teaching in given areas, they were simply in error. They were yet formulating their doctrinal system and did not have the great advantage of an existing systematic theology. This historical relation must be kept in mind lest they be judged too severely or by a subsequent standard.

Ante–Nicene Heresies

The early heresies were forms of pseudo–Christianity or false religions that incorporated forms of Christian teaching into their systems. The three major heresies were the Jewish Christian sects, Gnosticism, and Manichaeism.

Christian Jewish Sects

Jewish Christians were either eventually assimilated into Gentile Christianity, or remained separate and developed into various sects. The Judaizers of the Apostolic era grew more separated from Gentile Christians after the destruction of Jerusalem. Between the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70–72 and the revolt of Bar Kochba in 132–135, Judaism experienced a revival, greatly furthering the separation of Jewish and Gentile Christians. Pharisaic, Essene and Gnostic influences combined to produce four sects in the second to fourth centuries: The *Nazarenes*, The *Ebionites*, the *Elkesaites*, and the *Mandaeans*. These groups largely existed in a state between Judaism and Christianity.

Note: for a discussion of the Jewish Christian Sects, see the following Church histories: Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, pp. 576–578; *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, pp. 287–288; J. D. Douglas, *Op. cit*., p. 326; A. H. Newman, *Op. cit*., I, pp. 174–180; Philip Schaff, *Op. cit*., II, pp. 428–442; H. M. Gwatkin, *Op. cit*., II, pp. 1–18; John Lawrence Von Mosheim, *Historical Commentaries*, I, pp. 396–405, 408–409; J. H. Kurtz, *Church History*, I, pp. 120–126; Augustus Neander, *History of the Christian Religion and Church,* I, pp. 341–365. Also the following histories of doctrine: Louis Berkhof, *History of Doctrines*, pp. 47–49; George P. Fisher, *History of Christian Doctrine*, pp. 48–51; Reinhold Seeburg, *The History of Doctrines*, I, pp. 87–91; W. G. T. Shedd, *History of Christian Doctrine,* I, pp. 106–112; Walter A. Elwell, Ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, pp. 139–140.

These groups faded into obscurity by the end of the fourth century, and most of the remaining remnants were lost in the advance of Islam.

The Nazarenes

The Nazarenes were separatist legalistic Christian Jews, who magnified the law of Moses, believed in the Messiahship of Jesus, were Chiliastic, and renounced the Pauline Epistles and theology. These did not, however, require the Gentiles to keep the law. The Nazarenes settled in the area of Syria after the destruction of Jerusalem and eventually dwindled into an insignificant sect.

The Ebionites

The largest sect of the Jewish Christians were the Ebionites, who took their name from the Hebrew word for "poor" (אִיבוֹנ, and not from their reputed founder, "Ebion"). This sect spread from Judea throughout the eastern part of the Roman Empire. They are generally classified as the *earlier* and *later* Ebionites, or the *Pharisaic* and *Essenic* Ebionites.

The Ebionites were legalists, holding to the perpetual validity of the Mosaic Law, and to the necessity of circumcision and legal obedience for salvation. They held Jesus to be the Messiah, but denied his divinity and virgin birth. They believed, with Gnosticism and Dynamic Monarchianism, that Jesus was a mere man; that he allegedly received the Messianic calling at his baptism in the form of a higher spirit, but this spirit left him before the crucifixion and He died as a mere man. They considered the apostle Paul to be heretical because of his soteriology and alleged abandonment of the Law. The Ebionites held to a magical form of baptismal regeneration. Some Ebionites were extremely ascetic; others were influenced by Gnostic speculations. Often the names "Nazarene" and "Ebionite" were used without distinction.

The Elkesaites

The Elkesaites were named after their founder, Elkesai. They were Jews who were influenced largely by the Christianity of the Judaizers, the asceticism of the Essenes and the speculations of the Gnostics. They held to the major tenets of the Ebionites, but were largely permeated with Gnostic mysticism and theosophy. Mani, the founder of Manichaeism, was reared in an Elkesaite community.

The Mandaeans

These were known variously as Mandaeans (from *Manda*, knowledge), Sabians (from *sabi*, to baptize, wash), and were an admixture of Judaism, Christianity and paganism. A small sect existed to modern times in Iraq.

Gnosticism

The greatest internal threat to the Christianity of the first three centuries came from Gnosticism, an eclectic or syncretic religio–philosophical system with varied beliefs and schools of thought which infiltrated the early churches.

> Note: For a thorough study of Gnosticism, see the following church histories: Schaff, *Op. cit.,* II, pp. 442–496; Newman, *Op. cit.*, I, pp. 180–193; Gwatkin, *Op. cit.,* II, pp. 19–72; J. H. Kurtz, *Op. cit.,* I, pp. 98–119; Neander, *Op. cit.,* I, pp. 366–478; Mosheim, *Op. cit.,* I, pp. 405–496; F. F. Bruce, *The Spreading Flame,* pp. 245–252. Cf. the following dictionaries: McClintock and Strong, *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature,* III, pp. 890–896; Everett Ferguson, *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity,* pp. 371–376; J. D. Douglas, *Op. cit.,* pp. 416–418; James, Orr, Ed., *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia,* II, pp. 1240–1248. Cf. the following histories of doctrine: Louis Berkhof, *Op. cit.,* pp. 49–55 and Reinhold Seeburg, *Op. cit.,* pp. 91–104. See also the following standard works: Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion*; and Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism*.

Definition and Description. The term "Gnosticism" derived from the Gk. γνῶσις [*gnosis*], or "knowledge" that allegedly derived from direct Divine revelation. As a religio–philosophical system, it substituted an esoteric knowledge for faith, and sought to transform the truth of Christianity into a religious philosophy and mystic wisdom.

The beginning of the Christian era was a time of religious and intellectual ferment, with various systems vying for the increasing void left by the old pagan religions. Gnosticism and Biblical Christianity were the major contenders. Seeburg notes:

> In order to understand Gnosticism, it is necessary above all to bear in mind the syncretism of that period in the church. The religious unrest of the age eagerly absorbed all possible religious ideas and sought to generalize and harmonize them. Preference was given in this process especially to the oriental wisdom. It was by no means the aim merely to satisfy the thirst for knowledge, but it was sought to realize the upper world in personal experience through religious revelation and through the formulas and forms of the mysteries, and at the same time to secure a sure path for the soul in its ascent to the upper world at death.
>
> As the Gnostic religion addressed itself to this undertaking, so Christianity seemed to be seeking——in parallel lines and successfully—to accomplish the same task. And this tendency found support in the universality of Christianity, in the idea that the latter as the absolute religion was to be everything to all men and bring all religions to their consummation. This Gnosticism sought to achieve. It sought to elevate Christianity to the position of the universal religion, by combining in it all the tendencies and energies of the age, thus adapting it to the comprehension of all and satisfying the needs of all. Thus, revelation was to be combined with the wisdom of the world, and Christianity by this means become a world religion. It was the first attempt…to bring the world into subjection to the church by interpreting Christianity in harmony with the wisdom of the world.[252]

Gwatkin writes along the same lines:

> …the movement as a whole is older than the Gospel, and has no necessary connection with Christianity. It is the sort of eclecticism which grows up in every age of religious ferment …Ancient Eclecticism was at first heathen or Jewish and only takes the particular form of Gnosticism at the point where it begins to be influenced by the Christian belief that the redemption is through Christ. Gnosticism may therefore be provisionally described as a number of schools of philosophy, Oriental in general character, but taking in the idea of a redemption

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[252] Reinhold Seeburg, *Op. cit.*, pp. 93–94.

through Christ, and further modified in different sects by a third element which may be Judaism, Hellenism or Christianity.

Here it is to be noted that the Gnostics took over only the idea of a redemption through Christ, not the full Christian doctrine, for they made it rather a redemption of the philosophers from matter than a redemption of mankind from sin.[253]

Schaff describes Gnosticism as follows:

Gnosticism is…the grandest and most comprehensive form of speculative religious syncretism known to history. It consists of Oriental mysticism, Greek philosophy, Alexandrian, Philonic, and Cabalistic Judaism, and Christian ideas of salvation, not merely mechanically complied, but, as it were, chemically combined…

Gnosticism is a heretical philosophy of religion, or, more exactly, a mythological theosophy, which reflects intellectually the peculiar, fermenting state of that remarkable age of transition from the heathen to the Christian order of things.[254]

Latourette also describes the Gnostic system, adding a word about its infiltration into Christianity:

This pagan Gnosticism was protean, taking many forms and drawing from a wide variety of sources. Into one or another of its varieties entered contributions from Orphic and Platonic dualism, other schools of Greek thought, Syrian conceptions, Persian dualism, the mystery cults, Mesopotamian astrology, and Egyptian religion. It was highly syncretistic. When combined with elements of Christianity, Gnosticism proved so attractive that, while no accurate figures are obtainable, the suggestion has been made that for a time the majority of those who regarded themselves as Christians adhered to one or another of its many forms.[255]

Thus, as Christianity was defending itself from outward assaults in the forms of Judaism, pagan philosophy and state persecution, it also had to defend itself from Gnostic influence and tendencies within which sought to modify its character, pervert its doctrine, and strangle its life.

The History of this system. According to Christian writers and early tradition, Simon Magus was the father of Gnosticism (Acts 8:5–24). Whatever its historical origin, a form of incipient Gnosticism did exist by the middle of the Apostolic era.[256] From the second to the fourth centuries Gnosticism infiltrated the churches in its more fully developed forms. By the sixth century only a few distinct traces remained. Gnostic teaching and influence would linger on in Manichaeism and in certain aspects of traditional Christianity. Many modern movements, such

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[253] H. M. Gwatkin, *Op. cit.,* pp. 20–21.

[254] Schaff, *Op. cit.,* pp. 448–450.

[255] Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity,* p. 123.

[256] The "Colossian Heresy" was evidently an early form with a possible Judaic emphasis. See the Christology of the Colossian epistle in chapters one and two and esp. 2:9 in the context of philosophy and wisdom, 2:8–9, 23; See the references to the worship of angels and asceticism in 2:15–23; Cf. the reference to true holiness and full knowledge, ἐπίγνωσις, in the context of licentiousness in 3:1–10. Gnostic tendencies and licentiousness are the probable subjects in 2 Peter 2:1–22 and in Jude. It seems certain that the Gospel According to John was written later than the other Gospels and is in part an apology against Cerinthian Gnosticism which denied the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. Cf. especially the Prologue in 1:1–18 and the terms Λογός and πληρῶμα borrowed from Platonic thought. The Johannine Epistles were written against the Docetic Gnostics who denied the true humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ and considered him a phantom being (Cf. 1 Jn. 4:2–3).

as Theosophy and the New Age with its radical environmentalism, feminism, and autosoteriology, are in part the revival of Gnostic teachings.[257]

The general teachings of Gnosticism. There were various schools of thought within the Gnostic systems. There were, however, certain general or common elements: the search for a system and the attempt to synthesize all truth into one religio–philosophical system for the world. An ontological dualism between spirit and matter, and between eternal male and female principles. Matter was viewed as inherently evil. A dualism also existed between the one true God and the God of the Old Testament, or the *Demiurge*. God was considered remote and inaccessible, separate from creation. The *Demiurge*, a subordinate deity, angel or *aeon* created the universe or matter, which was inherently evil.

Between God and the material universe were intermediary beings or *aeons*, one of which was the "Christ" or Λόγος. The combined powers or energies of these *aeons* comprised the "Fullness" or πληρῶμα. Christologically, the Gnostics were generally divided: The Cerinthians and others held that Jesus was a mere man. The Christ or Logos came upon him at his baptism and left before the crucifixion. He then died as a mere man [Dynamic Monarchianism]. Doceticism, holding that all matter was inherently evil, denied the true humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ, and held that he only had the appearance of a man.

Mankind were divided into three classes: "carnal" (σάρκικοι)," "soulish" or "natural (ψυχικοι/), and "spiritual" (πνευμάτικοι). The "spiritual," or πνευμάτικοι had within them a Divine spark that must be redeemed from the evil of matter and returned to the πληρῶμα. Gnosticism consistently and necessarily denied the resurrection of the dead, as redemption was from matter, which necessarily included the body. Reality was guided by an impersonal determinism; none but the "spiritual" were to be redeemed.[258]

Salvation or redemption was through esoteric knowledge (γνῶσις), which existed beyond mere faith and derived from Divine revelation. Associated with such knowledge or mysteries were symbolic rituals, mystic ceremonies, magic incantations, visions and revelations. Many volumes of Gnostic literature circulated throughout the Greco–Roman world of the second to fourth century to attract the popular, educated mind.

Gnosticism rejected Judaism and the Old Testament, and the New Testament, except for some Gospel fragments and the Pauline Epistles. The morality and ethic of Gnosticism produced two opposing tendencies: first, presupposing the inherent evil of matter, one tendency was toward an extreme asceticism, abstinence from marriage and sex. Second, presupposing the ontological dualism between spirit and matter, licentiousness was held to have no effect upon the "spiritual" and sexual orgies were often practiced as a liberating or purifying rite. Both of these tendencies may be found in the warnings issued in the later Epistles of Paul, 2 Peter, Jude and John's Epistles.

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[257] Cf. Peter Jones, *The Gnostic Empire Strikes Back*, for a description of the New Age movement as a revival of ancient Gnosticism.

[258] It was against such Gnostic determinism or fatalism that the early Church Fathers reacted with a tendency toward a strong belief in free will. The doctrine of saving grace was not an issue until the Augustinian—Pelagian debate of the fifth century. The whole compass of salvation by grace with its attendant doctrines was not openly an issue until the Sixteenth Century Protestant Reformation.

Schools of Gnostic Systems. Because of the eclectic and syncretic nature of the Gnostic systems, any attempt to consistently classify them proves difficult. They have been classified according to geographical locality as the Egyptian or Alexandrian and the Syrian; according to their relatively predominant doctrines into three forms: Heathen, Jewish, and Christian; or from an ethical and moral perspective into three: the speculative and theosophical, the ascetic and practical and the antinomian and libertine.

The major schools and characteristics may be summarized as follows: the Simonians (named after Simon Magus) held to an early, crude, form of Gnosticism and were immoral in principles and practice. The Nicolaitans, mentioned in the Book of Revelation, were a licentious sect (Rev. 2:6, 15). The Cerinthians of the late first and early second centuries derived from Ebionism and Alexandrian Gnosticism. Basilides was an Alexandrian Gnostic adherent and produced the first well–developed system. Valentinus of Alexandria (d. 160) was the founder of the most profound and influential of the Gnostic systems. He established a formal school which exerted a wide influence throughout the Roman Empire and beyond.

Marcion was a reformer of the second century who allegedly sought to restore the truth to Christianity. He became the most practical and dangerous among the Gnostics. His dualism was concentrated more on the contrast between God and the devil, law and grace, Judaism and Christianity. Marcion was antinomian in doctrine, but personally practiced a rigorous asceticism. His Christology was docetic. He rejected the entire Old Testament and developed his own modified New Testament canon, consisting of eleven books. He was the first "higher" or destructive biblical critic. His followers practiced a baptism for the dead. Some Marcionites existed to the seventh century.

Tatian of Assyria, a disciple of Justin Martyr and an apologist for the Christian Faith, turned to ascetic and Gnostic tendencies in his later life after Justin's martyrdom. His followers, existing to the fifth century, were known as Encratites, Hydroparastatae, or Aquarians, because they abstained from wine and used water in their observance of the Lord's Supper, and practiced a rigid asceticism.

Various other Gnostic schools or sects included the: *Ophites*, or serpent–worshippers; the *Sethites*, who considered Seth as the first "spiritual" man; the *Peratae*, or transcendentalists, who were astrologists and mystic tri–theists; the *Cainites*, who took the name of Cain and honored all the infamous in history; the followers of *Saturninus*, who held to a dualism between God and Satan and were docetic in their Christology; The followers of *Carpocrates*, who were given to the practice of magical arts and licentiousness; the followers of *Justin* the Gnostic, whose distinctives were founded on an sexually–based allegory of the book of Genesis. There were in addition to these many other minor sects among the Gnostics.

The Gnostic influence on Christianity. Although varied, corruptive and insidious in its influence, Gnosticism failed to overcome and engulf biblical Christianity and synthesize it into an syncretic world religion. There was, however a two–fold influence upon Christianity:[259] first, a Negative Influence. The transition from primitive, New Testament Christianity to the Christian religion of the third and fourth centuries, was due largely to the catalystical nature of Gnosticism. Traditional Christianity, which has always reached beyond *Sola Scriptura* in a pragmatic way,

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[259] Cf. Berkhof, *Loc. cit.*; Gwatkin, *Op. cit.,* p. 68; Newman, *Loc. cit.*

has never freed itself from the taint of Gnostic tendencies. Second, Roman Catholicism reflects the influence of ancient Gnosticism with its philosophy of a hidden or unapproachable God who must be approached through intermediaries such as angels, saints and Mary. Maryolatry finds its source in the Gnostic idea of Sophia, or wisdom as the original dualistic female principle and the Mother of God.

The Romish emphasis on asceticism and the rise of monasticism have Gnostic roots. The mystery of the sacraments, transubstantiation, and the fondness for liturgy are largely rooted in Gnostic mysteries and ceremonies. The division of men into upper and lower classes or orders as to spirituality finds its basis in this ancient heresy. The worship of images in the Western Church can be traced to the influence of Gnosticism.

The Gnostics renounced the Old Testament. The idea of the Romish priesthood derived from an "Old Testament mentality" and the influence of Judaism and Oriental mysticism (i.e., the Babylonian mystery cult). The idea of vestments with their esoteric significance derived from Gnostic influence.

Deism–Existentialism–Neoorthodoxy–Theosophy–New Age. Gnostic tendencies can be noted in the nature of Deism with its doctrine of an unknowable or remote God. The schools of rationalistic or destructive biblical criticism originated with the arbitrary Gnostic approach to Scripture. Existentialism and Neoorthodoxy, with their denial of an objective revelation and pervasive subjectivism parallel Gnostic principles. Theosophy, with its doctrine of direct revelation or higher, immediate knowledge of the Spirit world and a line of savior–revealers, is directly related to Gnosticism.

The modernistic denials of the Deity of the Lord Jesus, his virgin birth, vicarious death and physical resurrection, and the idea that man possesses a "spark of the divine" within him are all Gnostic in principle. The present New Age movement with its radical environmentalism, feminism, and autosoteriology is but Gnosticism re–born. The modern attempt through the ecumenical and environmental movements to synthesize Christianity with ethnic elements into a one–world religion is nothing less than Gnosticism.

Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism. Even Fundamentalist and Evangelical Christianity are tainted with Gnostic tendencies: The dualism between God and the devil as an answer to the origin of evil and the doctrine of predestination, which in effect makes Satan equal to God; the dualism of and contrast between Law and Gospel ands antinomian tendencies; the idea that sin resides in matter or the material rather than the human personality or mind and heart; the Dispensational teaching and division of men into three classes as "carnal," "soulish," and "spiritual;" the "'Higher Life' Movement," which classifies and separates believers; the "carnal Christianity" heresy of "easy–believeism" that separates Christians into two classes or levels, and teaches that one may live in sin and yet be saved, i.e., that spirituality has no relationship to the lifestyle. All these may be traced to this early heresy, which reflect the religious thinking of man by nature.

A Positive Influence on Christianity. Although devastating in many ways, Gnosticism also had a very positive influence on early Christianity: first, Christian writers were raised up to face the intellectual and religious challenge posed by Gnosticism. To defeat it they were forced to formulate definitive doctrinal statements concerning God, creation, the Deity of Christ, his virgin birth, the resurrection of the dead, etc., which became the basis for systematic and dogmatic theology and the first creeds and confessions of faith. Second, confronted with the

many apocryphal (from Gk. ἀπόκρυφος, "hidden, secret") Gnostic writings, Christian scholars had to define the canon of Scripture. Third, the early Church Fathers were driven to the Scriptures and to exegesis for their theology and began to write both commentaries on the Scriptures and doctrinal treatises defending the faith. Thus, Greek philosophy from without and Gnosticism from within necessarily called forth the intellectual and doctrinal aspects of Christianity.

Manichaeism

History of Mani. Manichaeism began in Persia in the mid–third century with the teachings of Mani, a person of great talent and zeal. He grew up in an Elkesaite community and had an early background in Ebionism and Gnosticism. In his early adulthood he allegedly had religious visions commanding him to develop a universal religion. Through his evangelizing, traveling to and studying in India and China, Manichaeism became an admixture of Zoroastrianism, Theosophy, Buddhism and Gnosticized Christianity. Mani was supported and protected by Shopur I, king of Persia, then by his successor. Under Bahram I, however, at the instigation of the Zoroastrian magicians he was arrested and finally martyred, either by crucifixion or being flayed and his skin stuffed and hung on display to terrify his followers.

Schaff notes the nature and significance of this attempt at a universal religion. It was

> …the latest, the best organized, the most consistent and dangerous form of Gnosticism, with which Christianity had to wage a long conflict. Manichaeism was not only a school, like the older forms of Gnosticism, but a rival religion and a rival church. In this respect it resembled Islam. . . both claimed to be divine revelations, both engrafted pseudo–Christian elements on a heathen stock…[and both considered their founder and first leader to be a great prophet sent from God].[260]

A listing of the major features of Manichaeism: an absolute dualism between light and darkness. A docetic Christology. An esoteric knowledge that led to redemption from "darkness" and matter through self–mortification and extreme asceticism. Mani claimed to be the Paraclete (not the Holy Spirit, but another supreme teacher) promised by Jesus. A hierarchical organization of the supreme leader, Mani, apostles, bishops and teachers. A major division of followers into two classes: The "elect" or "perfect," and the helpers or auditors. The perfection of the elect consisted of a three–fold seal: *of the mouth*, i.e., purity in words and diet; *of activity*, i.e., renunciation of all earthly property and labor; *of sensual activity*, i.e., abstinence from any gratification of sensual desire. Pictoral representations of doctrine. This influence would be evidenced in the pictoral representations of our Lord, Mary, etc., in later Roman Catholicism.

The influence of Manichaeism. This religion spread to the east as far as China and to the West as far as Spain. It was most influential in North Africa and the eastern part of the empire. As it moved west, it assumed a more Christian character and attracted many with its mysteries and alleged deeper truths. Augustine, the greatest Latin Church Father of the Imperial age, was for nine years a Manichaean before his conversion. Manichaeism was severely persecuted along with Christianity prior to Constantine and also afterward by "Christian" Emperors. It was predominant in the fourth and fifth centuries, and contributed to the ascetic and sacerdotal tendencies in Christianity.

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[260] Philip Schaff, *Op. cit.,* II, p. 500.

Manichaeism allegedly resurfaced during the Middle Ages in various "heretical" groups, who have been characterized as dualistic in their beliefs. Among them have been classed the Paulicians, Albigenses and the Cathari. There may have been extreme sects among these groups, but two things must be remembered: first, Manichaeism became a favorite heretical term for guilt by association throughout the Middle Ages and into the Reformation. E.g., Martin Luther was accused by Rome of Manichaeism to discredit him. The same was probably true of the Paulicians, Albigenses and Cathari, as they appear in history as closely related to the Waldenses, who were unquestionably orthodox. Second, *The Key of Truth*, the doctrinal confession of the ancient Paulicians (Armenian Christians), was discovered in the late nineteenth century and revealed them to have been very orthodox in their faith.[261]

Arianism: The Trinitarian Controversy

Ante–Nicene Errors

The Development of Theology

As previously noted in the discussions under the headings: *Early Christianity and Greek Philosophy* and the introductory remarks concerning the terms: *Error, Heresy*, and *Dogma* under *Heresies and Errors of the Ante–Nicene Age*, Ante–Nicene Christianity was developing a theology in answer to internal and external challenges. *The errors within Christianity seem to have derived, not only from speculative thought or theoretical, abstract theological thinking, but also from the practical aspects and consistency of the Christian life and worship.*

The formulation of systematic or dogmatic theology was a gradual process. This was true, especially of Catholic Christianity, which became the official state church and religion of the Empire.[262] This gradual process of error, reaction, extremes, and controversies is summarized in the following survey:

A Historical Survey[263]

The second century was the age of apologetics and the defining of the fundamental ideas of Christianity (Paganism and Gnosticism). The third and fourth centuries were given to theological controversies, specifically trinitarian in nature, and so anticipating the later Christological and pneumatological controversies (Dynamic and Modalistic *Monarchianism*, E.g., *Arianism*, which

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[261] For a thorough discussion of Manichaeism, See Mosheim, *Op. cit.,* II, pp. 251–403; Gwatkin, *Op. cit.,* II, pp. 69–72; Newman, *Op. cit.,* I, pp. 194–197; Schaff, *Op. cit.,* II, pp. 498–508.

[262] During the era of transition (100–313), there was, as previously noted, a gradual separation of Catholic and primitive Christianity. This separation was first due to differences in church order and discipline, then later included issues of a more theological nature (i.e., in areas of salvation, baptism and the nature of the church). *By the time of the Constantinian change, one must recognize that there began to exist two church histories: A history of the Catholic state church system and a history of the remnants of primitive Christianity*. The Scriptural orthodoxy of the Pre–Reformation groups that existed apart from the State Church can be traced from their own confessions and manuals of doctrine. This is especially true of the Waldenses and Paulicians.

[263] This summary is parallel to the introductory summary given in Chapter VII under "Doctrinal Controversies."

denied the absolute Deity of Christ, Semi–Arianism, or subordinationism; and *Macedonianism* or *Pneumatomachianism*, which denied the personality of the Holy Spirit).

The early fifth century was concerned with Anthropological and hamartiological issues (The Augustinian–Pelagian controversy, over sin and grace, predestination and human freedom). The later fifth, sixth and seventh centuries were the time of the greater Christological controversies (*Apollinarianism*, which denied the true human spirit of Christ; *Nestorianism*, which taught an unscriptural separation of the human and Divine natures; *Eutychianism*, which confounded the two natures of Christ, denied His true, full humanity and so destroyed any true work of atonement; *Monophysitism*, a revival of Apollinarianism, denying the human nature of Christ; *Monothelitism*, which held that Christ had only one will, the Divine, denying His human will).

During the Middle Ages, various soteriological controversies over the atonement persisted and during the Protestant Reformation such doctrines as justification by faith were truly and exhaustively considered. Early, Medieval, and late modern Christianity have demonstrated a greater eschatological interest than any other era.[264]

The prevalent errors of the Ante–Nicene age were: The Allegorical approach to the interpretation of Scripture, the rise of ecclesiasticism, the anti–trinitarian controversies, asceticism, the worship of martyrs and relics and the beginnings of universalism and purgatory.

The Allegorical Approach to the Interpretation of Scripture. The greatest and most far–reaching error within early Christianity is that which literally divorced it from the text of Scripture. The allegorical approach confused interpretation with application. This has been previously discussed in Chapter VII under "Doctrinal Controversies" and Chapter VIII under "Early Christianity and Greek Philosophy."

Ecclesiasticism. The rise of ecclesiasticism has previously been discussed at length in Chapter VII and examined under the various aspects of: The distinction between clergy and laity, The rise of the episcopacy, The rise of sacerdotalism, The rise of sacramentalism and Catholic unity.

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[264] James Orr, *Op. cit.* pp. x–xxviii. The work by James Orr reveals the systematic development of doctrine in connection with Church History. E.g., *Chiliasm,* or belief in a thousand year literal kingdom in the Early Churches. A revival of the Chiliastic idea in the 6,000 years since creation led to the preaching of Peter the Hermit and the Crusades to free Jerusalem from Islamic dominion and prepare for the coming of the Lord. The modern Charismatic and other religious movements are at least in part based on the presupposition that our Lord is to return by the turn of the century and thus there is to be a revival of the charismatic gifts just prior to that event.

Such views are in part based on 1 Cor. 13:8–10 and especially "that which is perfect," (τὸ τέλειον), allegedly referring to the return of our Lord. If He is intended, the masc. would have been used (ὁ τέλειος); if referring to the coming (ἡ παρουσία), the fem. The answer seems to lie in the context itself (v. 8–13). τό τέλειον is neut. and commonly refers to maturity. According to the context, the spiritual gifts exercised under immediate inspiration were for the infancy or immaturity of Christianity. When the mature state was reached (i.e., the completion of the canon of Scripture and the establishment of Christianity doctrinally, historically, socially, and experimentally), there was no further need for such supernatural manifestations.

Anti–Trinitarianism. It was not until the third century that the trinitarian controversies began.[265] Shedd notes: "The early history of the Doctrine of the Trinity shows that Christian faith may exist without a scientific and technical expression of it. This ability comes in only as those heresies arise which necessitate the exact and guarded statements of systematic theology."[266]

Errors respecting the nature, character, and triunity of God derived, not so much from speculative thought, as from practical Christianity and worship, and the person of Christ. There are two fundamental biblical truths which every true Christian believes: The truth that there is but one God (Scriptural Monotheism), and the truth of the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ (Scriptural Christology), or that he is to be worshipped as God. The correlation of these two fundamental Scriptural truths led to the Trinitarian Controversies: If God is one, and Christ is Divine, do we have two Gods (ditheism) (or possibly three Gods—tritheism—as the Holy Spirit must at least be considered as equal to Christ); or, If God is one, then is Christ less than Absolute Deity? It is to be noted that these early controversies centered on the Person of Christ and later would include the Deity and personality of the Holy Spirit.

Historically and theologically, these various controversies are summarized by one term, *Monarchianism.*[267] Monarchianism derived its meaning from the Greek term *monarchia* (μοναρχία, "one rule or power"), and emphasized the unity of the Divine Being, or the truth of one God. There were two approaches to safeguard the unity of the Divine Being that led to error and eventual heresy concerning the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ:

The first was *Dynamic Monarchianism*, the denial of the absolute Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, or the view that Jesus was not God manifest in the flesh, the eternal Son of God incarnate, but a mere man who received Divine power (δύναμις, hence "dynamic").

Dynamic Monarchianism generally held that Jesus was a mere man who received power from God at his baptism, an anointing of the Christ or Λόγος (an impersonal principle present in all men, but operative in an unusual way in Jesus). Jesus progressively and gradually became Divine.

This view was close to *Ebionism*, and held in general by *Cerinthian Gnosticism*, The *Alogi* (Those who denied the Johannine Λόγος and rationalistically dealt with the New Testament canon to exclude those portions dealing with the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ), Theodotus of Byzantium, Theodotus the "Money–Changer" or "Banker" (whose followers were called *Melchizedekians*, because they taught that Melchizedek was the mediator between God and the angels and higher than Christ, who was merely the Mediator between God and men), Artemon the Syrian, Archelaus, a bishop in Persia, and Paul of Samosata, Bishop of Antioch (condemned at a synod at Antioch in

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[265] For a thorough discussion of the anti–trinitarian controversies, See Philip Schaff, *Op. cit.*, II, pp. 565–583; A. H. Newman, *Op. cit.,* I, pp. 197–202; Samuel Green, *Op. cit.*, pp. 136–138; W. G. T. Shedd, *Op. cit.*, I, pp. 246–305; Louis Berkhof, *Op. cit.,* pp. 81–97; George P. Fisher, *Op. cit.,* pp. 98–104; Everett F. Harrison, *Op. cit.,* pp. 26, 361, 396–397, 465; Everett Ferguson, *Op. cit.,* pp. 610–612; J. D. Douglas, *Op. cit.*, pp. 13–14, 670–671; Mosheim, *Op. cit.*, II, pp. 209–242; Neander, *Op. cit.*, I, pp. 571–630; Kurtz, *Op. cit.*, I, pp. 174–182; James Orr, *Op. cit.,* pp. 73–102.

[266] W. G. T. Shedd, *Loc. cit.*

[267] There are a variety of names and terms associated with these early controversies: dynamic Monarchianism, modalistic Monarchianism, adoptionism, Patripassianism, Melchizedekianism, nominal Trinitarianism, Sabellianism, subordinationism, humanitarianism, etc. The controversies can be very generally condensed into two opposing views: Dynamic Monarchianism and Modalistic Monarchianism.

269, but protected by Queen Zenobia of Palmyra, and not finally deposed until 272 by the Emperor Aurelian).

This view was also known generally as *Adoptionism* (i.e., Jesus was the "adopted" Son of God, rather than the eternal Son of God), *Subordinationism* (i.e., that Jesus was less than God), and *Humanitarianism* (i.e., that Jesus was merely human). Historically, Dynamic Monarchianism prepared the way for later Arianism, Nestorianism, Socinianism, Unitarianism, and Russellism ("Millennial Dawnists" or "Jehovah's Witnesses").

The second form was *Modalistic Monarchianism*, or the view that because God is one, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are but three manifestations or *modes* of one person. (from the Latin *modus,* "a quantity, measure," then "way, manner, method") Modalistic Monarchianism generally held that God was One Person in three manifestations or modes. This was an attempt to hold the full Deity of Christ, but at the expense of the triunity of the Godhead.

In the Western Empire this view was known as *Patripassianism* (lit: The "Father suffered"), because if God the Father and God the Son were one and the same Person or identical, then the Father suffered on the cross.[268]

In the Eastern Empire Modalistic Monarchianism was known as *Sabellianism*, after its major representative, Sabellius, who taught a successive trinity of revelation (i.e., that God was the Father in creation and the Law or Old Dispensation; that he was the Son as the Mediator and Redeemer; and that he was the Holy Spirit in the New Dispensation.). Other representatives of this view included Noetus of Smyrna, Epigonus, Cleomones, Beryllus of Bostra, and Callistus, a Bishop of Rome.

Modalistic Monarchianism has been echoed by those who have denied the triunity of the Godhead, such as the modern Apostolic Church or the United Pentecostals [also known as "Jesus Only" churches]. There are also some who deny the *Ontological Trinity*, and claim the Trinity of the Godhead exists only with regard to creation, i.e., the *Economic Trinity.* These deny the eternal Sonship of Christ and hold that he is only the "Son" in relation to creation or his present exaltation.

The major opponents of Monarchianism were Novatian, Tertullian, Hippolytus, Origen and the unknown author of the *Little Labyrinth* [a refutation of Artemon].

Asceticism and Monasticism

The tendency toward and the practice of both asceticism and monasticism began very early in Christianity. A basic study of these phenomena must include: Basic terms and definitions, the goal or object in view, the causes or reasons for such practices, sources, their early history, and their subsequent effect upon Christianity.[269]

The basic terms and definitions of Asceticism. The word *asceticism* derived from the Gk. ἀσκέως ἀσκήσις, meaning "exercise, practice, training or self–discipline." The term was

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[268] When Praxeas, an early promoter of this doctrine, convinced Victor, Bishop of Rome, to ban the Montanists for their alleged spiritual gifts and accept Patripassianism, Tertullian wrote that he had "put to flight the Paraclete; and crucified the Father."

[269] For a discussion of asceticism and monasticism, Cf. the following: Schaff, *Op. cit.*, II, pp. 378–414; Newman, *Op. cit.,* I, pp. 51, 175, 184–186, 196, 203–205; Everett f. Harrison, *Op. cit.*, pp. 68–69, 361; Everett Ferguson, *Op. cit.*, pp. 46, 104–107, 612–619, 673–674.

transferred from the physical and mental training of athletes to the life–style of the philosophical schools and religious sects. Thus, it connoted rigorous bodily self–denial in various forms.

Ascetics are generally designated as the *ubstinentes*, or those who abstained from wine, meat, and other foods; and the *continentes*, or those who abstained from marriage and sexual activity. Within the latter group, some had "spiritual marriages," i.e., marriages without sexual contact. Common to both groups were usually the distinctions of poverty and simplicity of life–style with often an extreme denial of bodily comforts. A further term that was used to designate certain groups of early Christian ascetics was *Encratite*, from the Gk. ἐνκρατεία, which meant "continence," or "self–control."

The basic terms and definitions of monasticism. The word–group derived from the Gk. μόνος, meaning "alone," hence, μόναχός, "a solitary one," or *monk.* The Gk. μονηστήριον, or the individual hermit's cell or cave, and later the cloister, became the *monastery.*

Monasticism is generally divided into two distinct forms: *anchoritic monasticism*, from the Gk. ἀναχωρήτης, "to retire, a hermit, recluse," and *cenobitic monasticism*, from the Gk. κοινόβιον [κοινωνία and βίος] or "communal life."

The Goal of Asceticism and Monasticism. The goal was separation from the world and spirituality or closeness to God. When does spiritual separation from the world become asceticism? When mortification of the deeds or members of the body becomes mortification of the body itself (Rom. 8:12–13; Col. 3:5). Matter or material things are considered to be inherently evil (Rom. 14:14; 1 Tim. 4:1–5). Sin ceases to be a matter of the inner personality and becomes associated with the body or merely outward entities (Jer. 17:9).

The reasons for or the causes of asceticism and monasticism are varied: first, the culture of the Greco–Roman era seemed to possess an ascetic mentality. This was evidenced in pagan religious practices and almost every school of philosophy. Second, the persecution of Christians often caused them to both give up their worldly possessions and comforts and flee into the desert or wilderness to survive. Third, many alleged "converts" were merely "baptized pagans" by the middle of the third century onwards, and spiritual laxity in the churches caused many to absent themselves from even Christian society and find solace in ascetic and monastic practices. Finally, a misunderstanding of the Scriptures. There is a scriptural asceticism associated with a heightened spirituality, but such is only temporary in nature and non–contradictory in principle.

The Sources of Asceticism and Monasticism. The sources are also varied: first, most pagan religions of the Greco–Roman era held to some form of asceticism, mysticism and occultism, especially for their priests or leaders. Second, many of the pagan philosophical schools held to ascetic practices as a way of life, notably the Stoics, Cynics and Neopythagoreans. Third, Neoplatonic thought and Gnosticism were major catalysts for much asceticism in early Christianity through their dualistic tenet that all matter was inherently evil. Tatian, an early Church Father, was seduced into the Gnostic teachings and established an ascetic following, the first *Encratites.* Fourth, the strong ascetic tendencies of Manichaeism, as it sought to become the synthesis of world religions. Fifth, Judaism, especially among the Pharisees and then the later Essene or Qumran communities, the Nazarenes, the Ebionites and the Elkesites. These began with a legalistic approach to asceticism.

Sixth, early Christianity. Many of the early Church Fathers possessed an ascetic mentality, including such influential personalities as Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria and

Origen. Later leaders, including Athanasius, who fled to the desert and the monastic sects after he was unwillingly made Bishop of Alexandria, Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nyssa, brothers, who were greatly influenced by the monasticism of their elder sister, Macrina. It was a chief characteristic of the Montanist movement because of their eschatalogical orientation (the imminent end of the world). Finally, Biblical. An ascetical philosophy was derived from a misunderstanding of the Scriptures: Sexual abstinence was commanded by God before the giving of the Law (Ex. 19:15); The law of the Nazarite (Numb. 6:1–21); The record of prayer and fasting on the part of both Old Testament and New Testament personalities such as Elisha, Daniel, Our Lord and the Apostles; John the Baptist was an ascetic (Matt. 3:1–4); Both our Lord and the Apostle Paul advocated celibacy for spiritual reasons (Matt. 19:12, 29; 1 Cor. 7: 32; 9:27); The command of the Apostle Paul for Timothy to *"endure hardness,"* 2 Tim. 2:3., etc.[270]

The Early History of Asceticism and Monasticism. Ascetic practices paralleled the Apostolic Age and the Ante–Nicene Era. Monasticism is the logical progressive expression of asceticism. The Jewish Essenes had their *cenobitic* communities by the Dead Sea and in Egypt. Christian monasticism began during the Decian persecution (249–251) when many believers fled into the deserts and wilderness areas. Early monastics included Anthony, an Egyptian (c. 251–356) and Pachomius, the traditional founder of cenobitic monasticism (c. 292–346).

Early monasticism changed with the formation of the State church under Constantine. During the era of persecution, the martyr was the Christian hero. After that era, the monk or ascetic–monastic, the interior martyr, living the life of self–denial and separation from the world, became the spiritual hero of Christianity. The monastic movement spread from the East to the West very early and by the end of the fourth century, there were monasteries in Italy and France, and in Britain by the sixth century. The first western order was organized by Benedict of Nursia (480–540).

The subsequent effect upon Christianity has been great and varied. Asceticism has repeatedly surfaced in almost every form of Christianity. The practice of celibacy led quickly to the degradation of women in Christianity that would characterize State religion to the time of the Protestant Reformation. Monasticism became one of the great institutions of the Middle Ages and the proto–type and precursor to the modern University. Asceticism continues in principle in all legalistic and ritualistic Christianity in which the physical is substituted for the spiritual.

The Veneration of Martyrs and Relics

Definition and Description. The word "martyr" derives from the Gk. μάρτυς, "witness," or the vb. Μαρτυρέω, to "witness" or "testify." Martyrs were those who sealed their testimony to the Christian faith with their blood. Two groups of sufferers were distinguished: Confessors, who lived through their ordeal or examinations, and martyrs, who did not, but voluntarily gave up their lives for the faith. The great age of the martyrs extended from the New Testament or Apostolic Era to the Edict of Milan (313). "Relics" [Lat: *reliquiae*, "remains"] included the remains, bones, or objects associated with the martyrs. "Veneration" (Lat: *venerare*, "to worship") meant looking upon such relics as something exalted or hallowed, paying honor to them by an act of reverence.

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[270] Misunderstandings arose when Christians failed to see that such practices were not an end in themselves, that there were no patent rules, and that these were exceptions, not the general rule for true, spiritual Christianity. The Apostle Paul wrote against ascetic practices concerning diet and other matters (e.g., Col. 2:16–23; 1 Tim. 4:1–5).

Sources. The veneration of martyrs and relics finds its source in paganism, Jewish tradition and early Christian tradition. Pagan religions, myths and philosophy had their hero worship, political martyrs (e.g., Odysseus and Socrates), and household gods. This veneration or hero worship was transferred to the traditional Christianity of the second to early fourth centuries. The Jews of the Maccabean era had their military heroes and religious martyrs. Judaism taught a celestial reward for its pious martyrs. Early Christian tradition set the martyrs apart and attached great significance to their deaths and remains. See below.

The Beliefs of Martyrology. Martyrology became prominent in the second century with the martyrdom of Polycarp (c. 160). By the end of the Era of Transition, the theology of martyrs or Martyrology held to the following: first, martyrdom was a special grace ordained by God. Second, the sufferings of a martyr were in imitation of and a participation in the sufferings of Christ. Third, the Holy Spirit filled and inspired the martyrs with holy eloquence. Fourth, because the martyrs possessed the special grace of the Holy Spirit, they had the power to forgive sins and to intercede for the penitent. Fifth, at death, martyrs entered immediately into heaven and presence of God, unlike other believers, who would only enter at the resurrection, remaining until then in an intermediate state. Sixth, martyrdom was a "baptism by blood," and so was spoken of in sacramental terms. Seventh, the anniversary of a martyr's death was celebrated, as it was his or her "heavenly birthday." This celebration, borrowed from paganism and its hero–worship, included (rather than the pagan family meal) the celebration of the Eucharist and a *panegyric* or proper, formal eulogy of the martyr's life and death. Finally, relics of the martyrs were regarded as possessing power over demons and power to heal.

As the age of the martyrs passed, there was a greater shift to interior martyrdom, or asceticism and monasticism, as a substitute for the ordeal of death. The worship of saints and relics was the next logical step after the veneration of martyrs and their relics. At the Council of Gangra in 340, those who despised the relics of the martyrs were decreed excommunicated.[271]

Universalism, Purgatory and Penance

The eschatalogical thinking of Origen caused him to anticipate ἀποκατάστασις, or the restoration of all things. In this, he became the father of universalism, or the ultimate restoration of all creation and the ultimate salvation of all men.

Clement and Origen of the Alexandrian school, following elements of Platonic thought, viewed the wicked in the fires of purification, and punishment as remedial, rather than eternal and punitive. Cyprian followed with thoughts of a purifying fire after death. The Romish dogma of purgatory would be finally developed in the time of Gregory the Great (c. 590).

The idea of penance follows that of baptismal regeneration. What was to be done about post–baptismal sins? Some of the early Fathers held that there was no pardon for post–baptismal sins; others, that there was at least one penance. Penance was held to be a good work and replaced the truth of repentance as the gift of free grace.[272] Except among those pre–Reformation evangelical

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[271] Cf. Everett Ferguson, *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, pp. 575–579, 778–779; Schaff, *Op. cit.,* II, pp. 82–84; J. D. Douglas, *Op. cit.,* pp. 638–639.

[272] Cf. Everett Ferguson, *Op. cit.*, pp. 62–63, 310–311, 418, 700–701, 708, 711; Seeburg, *Op. cit.*, I, pp. 159, 197.

groups that existed apart from Rome, the truth of repentance would be lost until the Protestant Reformation.

XII
The Canon of Scripture

The English Bible contains sixty–six books: thirty–nine in the Old Testament and twenty–seven in the New Testament. These books are held to be canonical, i.e., these sixty–six books, and these alone are believed to be the very Word of God inscripturated. Orthodox Christians hold the Bible to be the inspired, infallible, inerrant Word of God in written form.[273]

The Significance of the Canonicity of Scripture

Essential Questions

The issue of canonicity raises vital, essential questions: If the Bible is the very Word of God inscripturated, How did it get from God to us? If it is inspired, what is the relation between inspiration and canonicity? What exactly is canonicity? If only sixty–six books out of the many hundreds or thousands of religious and Christian writings are the inscripturated Word of God, who determined this? Did early Christianity establish the canon of Scripture, or did the canon of Scripture determine the character and authority of early Christianity? Was canonicity decreed by early Church Councils, or did early Church Councils appeal to the canon of Scripture for their authority?[274] What process was used to determine the canonical books from those that were spurious and non–authoritative? Is it possible that some non–canonical books are included in our Bible and that some canonical books have been omitted or lost? When and how was the process of canonization completed in the history of early Christianity?

The significance of the canon is stated by Schaff:

> The question of the source and rule of Christian knowledge lies at the foundation of all theology….
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> …This source and this rule of knowledge are the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Covenants. Here at once arises the inquiry as to the number and arrangement of the sacred

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[273] For a thorough discussion of the canon of Scripture, Cf. the following: Norman Geisler and William E. Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible*, pp. 127–207; R. Laird Harris, *The Inspiration and Canonicity of the Bible*, pp. 87–152; E. J. Young, *"The Canon of the Old Testament,"* and Herman Ridderbos, *"The Canon of the New Testament,"* in Carl F. H. Henry, Ed., *Revelation and the Bible*, pp. 153–168 and 187–201. See also Philip Schaff, *Op. cit.,* II, pp. 516–524.

[274] The Roman Catholic Church commonly teaches that the infallible Church produced the canon of Scripture. This statement is based on the assumption that the "Church" of the first three centuries was the Roman Catholic Church. However, the Vatican Council of 1870 officially states:

> And these books of the Old and New Testaments are to be received as sacred and canonical, in their integrity, with all their parts, as they are enumerated in the decree of the said Council [of Trent], and are contained in the ancient Latin edition of the Vulgate. These the Church holds to be sacred and canonical, not because, having been composed by mere human industry, they were afterwards approved by her authority, nor merely because they contain revelation, with no admixture of error; but because, having been written by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, they have God for their author, and have been delivered as such to the Church herself. (*Dogmatic Decrees of the Vatican Council concerning the Catholic Faith and the Church of Christ. AD 1870*, as quoted in Philip Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom*, II, pp. 241–242.).

> writings, or the canon in distinction both from the productions of enlightened but not inspired church teachers, and from the very numerous and in some cases still extant apocryphal works …which were composed in the first four centuries, in the interest of heresies or for the satisfaction of idle curiosity, and sent forth under the name of an apostle or other eminent person.[275]

Christian Theism Presupposed

The existence and validity of a scriptural canon necessarily presupposes Christian theism. Only if it is presupposed that the self–revealing triune God of Scripture has spoken, and that this revelation has been inscripturated under Divine superintendence, can the issues of canonicity be settled in a positive manner. The important terms concerning the Bible as the written Word of God are "inspiration," "authority," "infallibility," "inerrancy," "sufficiency," "canonicity" and "illumination." Upon the presuppositions of Christian theism, the Scriptures are self–authenticating as the inspired, infallible, inerrant, and therefore authoritative Word of God inscripturated (Heb. 1:1–2; 2 Pet. 1:20–21; 2 Tim. 3:16). Thus, the Bible itself defines and determines canonicity.[276]

Terms and Definitions

There are three major issues that need definition and explanation: the definition of inspiration and its relation to the authority and canon of Scripture, the meaning of the term *canon*, and the various classes of religious writings contained in or excluded from Scripture.

Inspiration

The great truth of Divine revelation is that God has spoken to men (Heb. 1:1–3). He has not only spoken to men, but he has spoken in understandable terms. The great truth of inspiration is that this revelation is preserved and protected as the very Word of God inscripturated. Inspiration is the supernatural influence exerted on the sacred writers by the Spirit of God, by virtue of which their writings are the very Word of God. Thus, Divine inspiration extends to the very writings themselves [πᾶσα γραφὴ θεόπνευστος]. Any view of Divine inspiration which does not pertain to the very text itself as inspired, is both inadequate and defective.

The Divine inspiration of the Scriptures[277] is both *verbal* (extending to the very words, grammatical intricacies and syntax, etc.) and *plenary* (fully, equally inspired throughout). Inspiration is "...a supernatural influence exerted on the sacred writers by the Spirit of God, by virtue of which their writings are given Divine trustworthiness."[278] An extended explanation is given by H. S. Miller:

> Inspiration...is the inbreathing of God into men, thus qualifying them to receive and communicate Divine truth... God speaking through the Holy Spirit through men to men. It is the work of God through the Spirit in men, enabling them to receive and give forth Divine truth without error. It makes the speaker and writer infallible in the communication of this truth,

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[275] Philip Schaff, *Op. cit.*, II, p. 516.

[276] E. J. Young, *Op. cit.*, pp. 155–156.

[277] The Latin is *inspiro*, to breathe into, but the Greek terminology from 2 Tim. 3:16 is πᾶσα γραφὴ θεόπνευστος, sing., i.e., "Every [nuance of the words, grammar and syntax] of Scripture is God–breathed," or spirated. The Biblical doctrine of Divine inspiration deals with the very writings themselves, and does not end with the human authors.

[278] B. B. Warfield, *Revelation and Inspiration,* pp. 77–78.

whether this truth was previously known or not. It causes the message to go beyond human power and become Divinely authoritative.[279]

Translations and Versions

There is a distinct difference between a translation and a version. A strict translation begins with the original language and, while expressing itself in another language, keeps as closely as possible to the text in the original language with its grammatical intricacies, syntax and idioms—even to the sacrifice of style. A version differs from a translation in that it is a version of a previous translation in a second language, uses the grammar, syntax and idioms of that second language and makes much greater allowances for smoothness of reading and expression of thought. In short, a translation holds more closely the original language while a version holds more closely to the second language.

To the extent that a given translation or version expresses the thought and truth of the original language, such a translation or version is the authoritative Word of God. This necessarily takes into consideration the idiomatic expressions of a language, the incapacity of some secondary languages to express the fullness of the original, and a determined faithfulness to the grammar, syntax, context and theology of the text.

Note: Many modern "versions" are wholly inadequate, as they are not based on any given text, but are in reality paraphrases, and some have actually changed the meaning of the text and so altered its doctrinal teaching. There is no substitute for a knowledge and study of the original languages. Those who dispense with a knowledge of the original languages are restricted at best to a second–hand knowledge of the Scriptures.

Note: The early Centuries of Christianity witnessed the transition from Greek to Latin by the end of the second century, and with this transition, a necessary restriction from the original language to translations [*Old Latin*, c. 200 AD, the Syriac *Peshitta*, etc.). The developing theological terminology was also shifted. The later Western Church Fathers were mostly limited to the Latin and also imbibed fully on the allegorical method of interpretation, which would alter Christian doctrine of over a thousand years.

Authority

Because the Scriptures are the very inspired Word of God inscripturated, they are authoritative, i.e., authority derives from inspiration. The term "authority" derives from the Latin *auctor*, "originator" or "author." The authority of Scripture derives from the self–disclosing or self–revealing triune God of Scripture. The Bible is the authoritative Word of God because it is just that—the very Word of God inscripturated.

Man as the image–bearer of God is Divinely and instinctively preconditioned to receive authoritative Divine revelation both in creation [natural revelation] and in God's Word [special revelation] (Psa. 19:1–6; Jn. 14:6; Rom. 1:18–20; Col. 2:3; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 3:16–17; 2 Pet. 1:20–21). Both are sufficient to hold him inexcusable (Rom. 1:18–20; 2:11–16; 2 Pet. 3:3–5). The Scriptures are self–authenticating or self–attesting, i.e., they witness to themselves by virtue of their coherency [non–contradictory nature], the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ, the witness and power of the Holy Spirit and their power to transform lives.

The authority of Scripture is *necessary*. Man needs special revelation [a direct and authoritative word from God] to lead him to truly and rightly know God, be reconciled to him and

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[279] H. S. Miller, *Op. cit.,* p. 17.

live in the context of his revealed will. The authority of Scripture is *comprehensive*. It encompasses the whole of life and reality. The authority of Scripture is *executive*. The Word of God comes to us as mandate or command—his "Law–Word"—not merely suggestion or information—we must read, study, submit and conform to it as such. The authority of Scripture is *legislative*. It is to be our rule of both faith and practice. The authority of Scripture is *judicial*. It is the ultimate and absolute standard of what is right or wrong, revealing the moral self–consistency of God.

Further, the authority of Scripture is *perpetual*. It is never "old fashioned" to believe and obey the Bible. "It is written" means "It stands written with full and undiminishing authority." See Question 1. The authority of Scripture is *ultimate*. Because the Scriptures derive from God himself, there is no other criterion or authority to which they can be subjected or by which they may be judged. Thus, using the facts of history, science or various arguments to credential Scripture is inherently to give such evidence more authority than the Scripture itself.

Canonicity is the recognition of this authority. Mark the statement by Norman Geisler and William Nix:

> The first link in the chain of revelation "From God to Us" is inspiration, which is concerned with *what* God did, namely, that he breathed out [*spirated*] the Scriptures. The second link in the chain is canonization, which relates to the question of *which* books God inspired. Inspiration indicates how the Bible received its *authority*, whereas canonization tells how the Bible received its *acceptance.* It is one thing for God to give the Scriptures their authority, and quite another for men to recognize that authority. Canonization, then, concerns the recognition and collection of the God–inspired, authoritative books of the sacred Scriptures.[280]

Canon and Canonicity

The word "canon" is derived from the Gk. κανῶν*,* and originally signified a measuring staff or straight rod. It was probably a derivative of the Heb. קָנֶה, *reed*, an Old Testament term for a measuring rod (Ezk. 40:3; 42:16). In pre–Christian Greek it also had the connotation of a rule or standard by which a thing is measured. This usage occurs in the New Testament several times (e.g., Gal. 6:16).

The metaphorical use as standard or norm is found in the early Church Fathers from the time of Irenaeus. They referred to the κανῶν [Rule] of Christian teaching which they called "the κανῶν [Rule] of the Truth," or "the κανῶν [Rule] of Faith." By the time of Athanasius (c. 350), the term "canon" was applied to the Bible, both as the Rule of faith and practice and as the body of inspired and authoritative truth.

Classification of Writings

Both the Old and New Testaments existed as unique within a larger body of literature. Even within the body of sacred writings, there were books that were questioned. The Old and New Testaments each had or existed within four classes of writings: first, the *Homologoumena*. (Gk. ὁμολογοῦμενα, "saying the same thing"). These were books that were accepted or acknowledged by all. The Old Testament *Homologoumena* contained thirty–four books. The New Testament *Homologoumena* contained about twenty books: The four Gospels, Acts, The Epistles of Paul, 1 Peter and 1 John.

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[280] Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix, *Op. cit.,* p. 127.

Second the *Antilegomena*. (Gk. ἀντιλεγόμενα, "speaking against"). These were the books disputed for various reasons, but later received into the canon of Scripture. The existence of such *Antilegomena* demonstrates the care and concern the early churches exercised in their recognition of Scripture. The Old Testament *Antilegomena* contained five books: Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Ezekiel and Proverbs. The New Testament *Antilegomena* contained seven disputed books: Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, 2 John, 3 John, Jude and Revelation.

Third, the *Apocrypha*. (Gk. ὁ ἀπόκρυφος, "that which is hidden, concealed, secret, esoteric"). These were books that were accepted by some, but never included in the canon of Scripture. The Old Testament *Apocrypha* was comprised of books written after the close of prophetic inspiration that lacked authenticity and authority. It contains fourteen books, which were included in the Septuagint (LXX) or Greek Old Testament. The Roman Catholic Church has declared eleven of these Apocryphal books to be canonical. The Protestants, as the early Christians, hold to the Hebrew canon of thirty–nine books, omitting the Apocrypha.

Fourth, the *Pseudopigrapha*. (Gk. ψευδοπίγραφα, "false writings").[281] These were spurious books or forgeries that claimed prophetic or apostolic authorship and were universally rejected. The Old Testament *Pseudopigrapha* contained twenty–six books. The New Testament *Apocryphal* and *Pseudopigraphical* books number in the hundreds. These were rejected as forgeries and non–authoritative, their contents often contradicting Scripture or containing fantasies. Some of the writings of the early Church Fathers belong to this group and were considered as edifying, but not accepted as inspired Scripture.

Determining Factors

What led to the formation of the canon of Scripture? There were various determining factors:

The Necessity of a Scriptural Canon. A fixed, authoritative body of Divine truth was and is essential to Christianity. Without such, no parameters could exist for faith or practice. The need for a recognized canon or body of Divine, authoritative truth arose from the following: first, the existence of both written and oral tradition. The Christians of the early to mid–second century had either heard the apostles personally or had been taught by those who had. There existed, not only the Apostolic writings, but a whole body of oral traditions and sayings allegedly from both the Lord himself and the Apostles which maintained a great influence over Christian faith and practice.[282] The oral traditions were in great danger of being changed by time. The truth had to be established by the written Word, all the written Word and only the written Word.

Second, a consistent evangelistic and missionary effort. Versions of the Scriptures were made in the early second century and onward (e.g., Old Syriac or *Peshitta*) in various languages. There was an urgent need to define the body or library of inspired writings.

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[281] *Ibid.*, pp. 162–178, 195–207; H. S. Miller, *Op. cit.,* pp. 106–121, 142–149.

[282] Before the writing of the New Testament books, Divine truth had been revealed in the Old Testament Scriptures. The Life and teaching of our Lord had been preserved by oral tradition and was vouchsafed through catechizing [repetitive oral instruction]. Cf. Luke 1:1–4. Luke's Gospel record was written to enfoce the truth that Theophilus had already received through catechizing ["has been instructed" is κατεχήθης]. For this type of necessary oral, repetitive instruction, See. also Acts 18:25; Gal. 6:6; 2 Tim. 1:13; 2:2. In Acts 21:21, 24, the term refers to word–of–mouth information.

Third, intellectual assaults against Christianity from pagan Greek philosophy. The early Christians appealed to the Scriptures for their arguments and proof of the Divine origin of Christianity. Appeal to Scripture logically placed the writings of the Old Testament prophets and the New Testament Apostles on the same level. Melito of Sardis (c. 170) journeyed to Palestine to affirm the Old Testament canon of the Hebrew text, as there existed some question as to the canon because the LXX contained the Apocrypha. The Hebrew canon was then established for Christians. As the Old Testament canon was established and upheld by the witness of the Lord Himself and the Apostles, it was left to the early Christians to recognize the writings that would comprise the New Testament canon.

Fourth, the abundance of heretical literature that sought to pervert Christianity. Many books were written by Gnostics and others who perverted the truth. Appeal to authoritative writings necessitated a fixed canon of Divine truth.

Fifth, sectarians began to make changes in various apostolic writings to suit their peculiar views. Many books were also forged under the names of the apostles.

Sixth, the canon of Marcion the Gnostic (c. 140). Marcion was the first "higher critic," and established the first "New Testament canon" on Gnostic principles. He excluded everything except the Gospel of Luke in a mutilated form and ten Epistles of Paul. Reaction to the canon of Marcion hastened the formation of the New Testament canon.

Seventh, persecution. Early Christians took great precautions to protect the Scriptures during periods of persecution when the government demanded that all the sacred Christian writings be confiscated and destroyed. Those writings recognized as Scripture were protected at the risk of lives while other writings might be given up under duress.

The Tests of Canonicity

How did the early Christians recognize certain books as Scripture and reject others? The criterion was not antiquity, as though books written in a given period were considered scriptural. Many books were in existence which were contemporary or even antedated some Scripture, e.g., *The Book of the Wars of the Lord* (Numb. 21:14), *The Book of Jasher* (Josh. 10:13), An Epistle by Paul (1 Cor. 5:9), *1 Clement* was written during the lifetime of the Apostle John. The answer lies in the application of various principles gathered from early Christian writings which detail the process used by the early Christians and churches:

First, *is the book authoritative?* Does it possess Divine authority? This includes either immediate prophetic or apostolic authorship, or authorship by an amanuensis or understudy and close companion of an apostle who wrote or interpreted under his authority and influence (e.g., Peter and Mark, or Paul and Luke, Paul and Tertius). God inspired the Scriptures through the Prophets and Apostles.

> When the Word of God was written it became Scripture and, inasmuch as it had been spoken by God, possessed absolute authority. Since it was the Word of God, it was canonical. That which determines the canonicity of a book, therefore, is the fact that the book is inspired of God.[283]

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[283] E. J. Young, *Loc. cit.*

Second, is the book authentic? Does it agree with the rest of Divine revelation and with the rule or Analogy of Faith?[284] Does it contradict the truth in any way?

Third, is the book dynamic, i.e., does it possess the power of God to evangelize and edify? Does it manifest the witness of the Spirit?

Fourth, is the book recognized by the Fathers? Is it quoted or referred to as Scripture and undisputed?

Fifth, is the book received by the people of God? Does it have universal acceptance? Is it a book that is to be read in all the churches? Some later works, as the *Epistles of Clement, Barnabas, Hermas*, et. al., were read in some churches for a time, but were eventually discarded. There was a great and recognizable distinction between the apostolic writings and those of the early Fathers.

The History of The Canon

The recognition of the New Testament canon was a gradual process, due to state persecution, the existence of oral Christian tradition, the slowness of copying the Scriptures by hand, the relative isolation of churches throughout the empire, and the existence of other early Christian writings.

The earliest recognition of New Testament writings as Scripture comes from the Apostle Peter in referring to the writings of Paul, implying the existence of a canon or body of New Testament truth at that time (2 Pet. 3:14–16).

> [14] Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless. [15] And account *that* the longsuffering of our Lord *is* salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; [16] As also in all *his* epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as *they do* also the other scriptures [τὰς λοιπὰς γραφὰς], unto their own destruction.

The closest Church Fathers to the Apostles, i.e., the writers to 170 AD refer to the apostolic writings as Scripture and held them as being far superior to their own writings and wholly authoritative: Clement of Rome (95), Ignatius of Antioch (117), Polycarp (118), Papias (140), Justin Martyr (150).

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[284] The "Analogy of Faith" refers to the perspicuity of Scripture, i.e., Scripture is self–interpreting. The more obscure passages are understood by clearer passages. This presupposes that the Scriptures, as the very Word of God inscripturated, are not self–contradictory, but complementary. The Analogy of Faith is the expression of the total or inclusive, unified teaching of Scripture as it bears on any one given point of doctrinal truth.

> NOTE: The terminology "Analogy of Faith" was originally based on a misunderstanding of Rom. 12:6, "...according to the proportion of faith" [κατὰ τὴν ἀναλογίαν τῆς πίστεως], i.e., the measure of personal faith—not going beyond what God has given by way of personal gifts of ministry and faith personally or individually receives. The term "faith" was taken by the Church Fathers in an objective sense as the doctrinal teaching of Scripture rather than a subjective sense of personal, experimental faith. Thus, the "Analogy of Faith" came to have its present meaning. It has become an acceptable theological term, although it was misappropriated from Rom. 12:6.

By the year 170, the New Testament canon was completely recognized, with the exception of 2 Peter. The Antilegomena had finally been recognized as Scripture and the objections answered. The *codex Barococcio* (206) includes 2 Peter, but omits Esther and Revelation, implying that by the early third century the question of the canon was almost completely settled.

The Eastern or Greek Orthodox Church had fully recognized the full or present canon by the letter of Athanasius in 367. The Western or Latin Church recognized the full canon by the Council of Hippo in 393 and the Council of Carthage in 397.

The subsequent history of the canon remained relatively unchanged until the Council of Trent recognized the Old Testament Apocrypha as Scripture for the Church of Rome in 1545–1547. Luther rejected James on his Christocentric principle of the canon and its alleged disagreement with the Pauline writings. The rise of modern rationalistic criticism in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries called for a reconsideration of canonicity. Neoorthodoxy has lately raised the issue again with its doctrine that the Scriptures are a mere vehicle for the Word of God, and not the very Word of God inscripturated.

A Summary of The Era of Transition

This Era of Transition lasted 213 years and witnessed greater changes in Christianity than any other time–period except the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century. Christianity was transformed from a persecuted, predominantly Jewish sect to the predominantly Gentile, favored religion of the Empire.[285]

Christianity permeated the Roman Empire and extended beyond from Britain to India, from the northern Germanic tribes south into the continent of Africa. It had largely transformed the cultures of the ancient world and signaled the demise of the old pagan religions. Christianity gained the intellectual respect of and then superiority over the ancient pagan philosophies. No pagan writer could equal the greatest Church Fathers of the Ante–Nicene age. The canon of Scripture was fully recognized. Copies, translations and versions were dispersed throughout the Empire and beyond.

By its conflict and close association with the ancient world, Christianity itself experienced a great transformation: as the purity and simplicity of Apostolic or New Testament Christianity became changed by innovation, tradition, worldliness, and pagan influences, two distinct trends became evident: first, a return to or continuance in New Testament principles, as noted among the Montanists, Novatians, Donatists and others; and second, a transition to a sacerdotal and ecclesiastical system that mirrored the Roman Empire. This Catholic majority would under Constantine become the Roman Catholic or state church.

As Christianity sought to challenge the intellectual world and develop its own theology, it was from the beginning influenced and modified by Greek thought. Philosophy and theology were joined together in a permanent and necessary relationship. The philosophical element gave to Christian theology its speculative nature.

The allegorical approach to Scripture largely separated Christianity from the *text* of Scripture itself. This approach confused application with interpretation. The loss of the grammatico–historical method of interpretation meant fanciful and arbitrary interpretations. This approach would dominate state Christianity until the time of the Protestant Reformation.

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[285] Cf. Robert A. Baker, *Op. cit.,* p. 25, and A. H. Newman, *Op. cit.,* I, pp. 291–302.

Various errors and heresies developed because of the influence of pagan intellectual and religious thought. Some of these erroneous and heretical principles would permanently affect Christianity. The canon of Scripture was largely recognized during the Ante–Nicene Era, a remarkable fact, given the persecution of the Roman State, the existence and abundance of heretical literature, the lack of extant copies, and the remoteness of many churches.

XIII
The Council of Nicaea

The Council of Nicaea, called by the Roman Emperor Constantine in May, 325, was the first Ecumenical Council of institutionalized Christendom. The reference sources for this chapter include the following:

General Church Histories: J. H. Kurtz, *Church History*, I, pp. 317–326; Latourette, Kenneth Scott, *A History of Christianity,* pp. 151–164; Augustus Neander, *General History of the Christian Religion and Church*, II, pp. 404–466; A. H. Newman, *A Manual of Church* History, I, pp. 323–333; Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church,* II, pp. 618–637; Henry C. Sheldon, *History of the Christian Church,* I, pp. 420–428; Williston W. Walker, *A History of the Christian Church,* pp. 114–123.

History of the Early Church: Jacob Burckhardt, *The Age of Constantine the Great*, 400 pp.; Henry Chadwick, *The Early Church*, pp. 125–135; W. H. C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity*, pp. 492–501; Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, Gen. Eds., *The Ante–Nicene Fathers*. 11 Vols.

History of Doctrine and Historical Theologies: Louis Berkhof, *The History of Christian Doctrines*, pp. 87–97; William Cunningham, *Historical Theology*, I, pp. 267–306; George P. Fisher, *History of Christian Doctrine*, pp. 134–147; Justo L. Gonzales, *A History of Christian Thought*, I, pp. 261–271; J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, pp. 280–289; Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, I, pp. 172–227; Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, I, pp. 24–29; II, pp. 29–30; Reinhold Seeberg, *The History of Doctrines*, I, pp. 201–218; W. G. T. Shedd, *A History of Christian Doctrine*, I, pp. 306–372.

Dictionaries of Church History: Jerald C. Brauer, *The Westminster Dictionary of Church History*, pp. 598–599; J. D. Douglas, Gen. Ed., *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church*, p. 706; Everett Ferguson, Ed., *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity* pp. 648–651.

Church histories, histories of doctrine and historical theologies treat the Council of Nicaea in the context of the Trinitarian Controversies—pointedly the Arian Controversy—its origin, development, the Council of Nicaea (325) and the aftermath, which reached to the Council of Constantinople (381). To gain a general understanding of this Council, the following must be considered: the development of a defensive theology and its suitable vocabulary, the precursors and persons of interest, the ecclesiastical and imperial politics of the Council and the historical, doctrinal and political aftermath.

The Development of Theology

From the very beginning, Christianity has been embroiled in controversy. As revealed religion which has the exclusive claim to truth, Christianity has had to defend God's Word and its doctrinal teaching against both internal errors and heresies and external attacks from pagan religion and philosophy. In the New Testament, our Lord corrected Jewish traditions which had obscured the truth (e.g., Matt. 5:17ff; 15:1–6). The Apostles had to refute the claims of the Judaizers (e.g., Acts 15:1ff) and the early Valentian (e.g., Jn. 1:1–18) and Docetic (1 Jn.; 2 Pet.; Jude) Gnostics. Paul faced the pagan philosophers at Athens (Acts 17:16–34). This chapter is concerned with the Arian or Trinitarian Controversy of the third and fourth centuries.

The basic issues of the nature and necessity of theology are considered in Chapter VII under "Doctrinal Controversies." The concerns in this chapter are focused on two issues: the nature and defensive character of theology in the early centuries of Christendom and the lack of a sufficient doctrinal and theological vocabulary.

The Christianity of the New Testament and Apostolic Era was doctrinally determined by our Lord and the inspired Apostles in their preaching and writings.[286] The main thrust was on Christianity's transforming power and missionary nature. The central message was that of the gospel of grace through the person and redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ to be received through faith. The truths of Christian doctrine were clearly taught sufficient for salvation, worship, evangelism and the establishment and life of the churches.

As Christianity dealt with Judaism, Gnosticism and extremes or errors within and with paganism and Greek philosophy without—and without the inspired Apostles for definitive guidance after 100 AD—it had to defend itself by stating its beliefs in terms more precise than those of Scripture. "The theologians of the Christian Church were slowly driven to a realization that the deepest questions which face Christianity cannot be answered in purely biblical language, because the questions are about the meaning of biblical language itself."[287]

This last truth both necessitates and deserves explanation. A given truth may be gathered from a variety of scriptural passages, each passage giving prominence to one aspect of truth or another. To properly and adequately grasp this truth without contradiction or error, however, the inclusive scriptural teaching pertaining this given truth ["the analogy of faith"] must be distilled into a single statement which is definitive and coherent or non–contradictory. This is doctrine, and by necessity it is much more precise than any given single passage of Scripture because it allegedly contains the entirety of the truth in concise terms. This doctrinal statement must be expressed in acceptable, suitable theological language to convey the truth without misunderstanding. Often truths had to be set forth in both a positive and negative form to avoid misunderstanding and fear of extremes tending toward Monarchianism or Arianism. The technical terms themselves had to convey a given meaning which was universally understood and could not be changed, i.e., the establishment of a dogma.

Further, all of the doctrinal teaching of Scripture must be arranged into a coherent whole as a doctrinal system which is able to be believed, proclaimed, lived and defended—this is the science of theology. This process is necessary because the Scriptures were not written as a Systematic Theology, but as progressive Divine revelation in a historical framework.

Theology in the post–Apostolic age of the second and third centuries developed under the burdens of an allegorical approach to interpretation that separated it from the very text of Scripture [exact exegesis and a historico–grammatical hermeneutic],[288] and adopted philosophical terminology provided by Aristotelian and Platonic philosophy to express itself. Some of the Antiochian School, however, still maintained a grammatical approach. This led to various controversies as extremes presented themselves and had to be countered. Were the bishops defending the God of Scripture or the Supreme Being of the philosophers? Were non–

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[286] 2 Tim. 3:16, πᾶσα γραφὴ θεόπνευστος… Note the sing. Every statement, word, grammatical and syntactical nuance of Scripture is God–breathed. Divine inspiration extends to the very writings themselves. See 2 Pet. 1:20–21.

[287] R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy, p. xxi, as quoted by Robert Letham, The Holy Trinity in Scripture, History, Theology and Worship, p. 111.*

[288] Exegesis answers the question: "what does the text say?" Hermeneutic answers the question: "What does the text mean?" Both are basic and essential.

biblical, philosophical terms legitimate in seeking to comprehend the nature of God the Father and the Son and their relation to each other?

Mere human language, even with its borrowed technical philosophical terms, which mirrored Aristotelian and Platonic thought, proved insufficient to bring about agreement: was God One [monotheism] or Three [tri–theism]? Was the Lord Jesus Christ Divine or human, or a Λόγος midway between Divinity and humanity? If very God, then the tendency was toward Sabellianism [modalistic Monarchianism and its associated errors]. If less than very God, or even possibly a creature, then the tendency was toward Arianism [dynamic Monarchianism and its associated errors].

Thus, in the Arian or Trinitarian Controversy, which called forth the Council at Nicaea, there were various errors or extremes which the Emperor Constantine sought to reconcile and to forge a theological terminology which would consistently express the truth, reality and equality of the Father and the Son and their relation to each other. As R. P. C. Hanson noted, "There was not as yet any orthodox doctrine [of the Trinity] for if there had been the controversy would hardly have lasted sixty years before resolution."[289]

The Precursors and Persons of Interest

There were several pressing and divisive issues which prompted the calling of the Council: first and foremost was the Arian division and controversy. Second, the dating and observance of Easter, as the Eastern Church of Asia Minor held to the time of the Jewish Passover [fourteenth of Nisan] and the Western Church to the following Sunday as the day of the resurrection. Inherent in this debate was the prominence of the Roman Bishop who asserted the power of a pope with alleged apostolic authority from Peter and Paul. A division developed between the Eastern and Western Churches, with the Bishop of Rome threatening to excommunicate the Eastern Churches. Third, the Meletian schism in Alexandria.[290] This was concerned with the restoration of the *lapsi* during the last great state persecution. The Meletians were against readmission. By 325 there were twenty–eight Bishops in this schismatic church. Finally, there was a need to harmonize qualifications and functions within the "Church" in matters of discipline.

The questions raised concerning the Oneness of God and the relation of Christ the Λόγος to the Father and to creation had long divided Eastern or Greek Christendom, which was characterized by philosophical and theological speculation. The Western or Latin Church, evidently more practical, was settled on Christ being of the same substance or essence [Lat: *substantia*, "being, essence"] with the Father due to the influence of Tertullian and others.[291] "Tertullian was the first to assert clearly the tri–personality of God, and to maintain the substantial unity [ὁμοούσιον] of the Three Persons. But even he did not reach a clear doctrine of the Trinity."[292] "…the early Church Fathers…had no clear conception of the Trinity."[293]

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[289] *Op. cit.*, pp. xviii–xix, as quoted by Robert Letham, *Loc. cit.*

[290] There were two Meletian schisms: one in Alexandria, centering on Meletius, Bishop of Lycopolis (c. 311–325) over restoring the lapsed, and a later one centering on Meletius, Bishop of Beroea (c. 360–) in Antioch over Arianism.

[291] See Williston Walker, *Op. cit.*, p. 114.

[292] Louis Berkhof, *Op. cit.*, p.87.

In the Eastern or Greek Church the influence of Origen (c. 184–254), the greatest of the Alexandrian Catechetical School, held sway from the third to the fifth century. He was a prolific writer and was given to allegorical interpretation and philosophical speculation. His teaching on the Father and the Son as the personification of the Λόγος and their relationship gained great acceptance and was used by both sides in the Arian Controversy. He taught both "the eternal generation of the Son" and also that the Son was subordinate to the Father. It is alleged that he referred to the Son as a creature and as θέος δεῦτερος, which became a stepping stone for Arius, as it implied that the Son was of a different but only similar substance [ὁμοίουσιον] distinct from the Father.

Arius (256–336) through whom the controversy would rise to a crisis, was of the Alexandrian Catechetical School, a student of Dionysius of Alexandria (d. 264, a student of Origen), who preached and taught against Sabellianism [modalistic Monarchianism] and thus emphasized subordinationism. Arius also became a student of Lucian of Antioch (c. 240–312), a martyr, who was evidently influenced by Monarchianism.[294] Arius, a presbyter in the Alexandrian Church, "…tall, handsome, ascetic, earnestly religious, an eloquent preacher,"[295] charged his Bishop, Alexander, with Sabellianism. In contrast Arius taught that "the Son had a beginning, but God is without beginning," that "there was a time when he [the Son] was not" [ἦν πότε ὅτε οὐκ ἦν],[296] making the Son a mere creature through whom the Λόγος principle was manifest—a throwback to his dynamic Monarchian background. This controversy resulted in a synod at Alexandria and finally a great division in the Eastern Church, where the majority were Origenists or semi–Arians.

Arianism may be summarized as follows: first, Arius's relation to Origen. Both called the Son a creature. For Origen, subordination existed within the Godhead [ontological subordination]; for Arius, the Son was created and external to God. Origen saw the relation of the Son to the Father within the Divine essence; for Arius, the Son was a product of the Father's will, created before creation. Origen held that Christ had a human soul; Arius held that the incarnate Christ had no human soul, only a human body. Origen held to the "eternal generation of the Son," "that there was never a time when he was not." Arius held that the Son was a creature and not eternal, i.e., that "there was a time when he was not."[297]

Second, the leading tenets of Arianism were that God was not always "Father," for there was not always a "Son." The Son or Λόγος is a creature, made out of non–existence. The Son is variable, i.e., mutable by nature, and only stable by the gift of God. The Son's knowledge of himself and God is imperfect. The Son was the instrument through whom God created the world. The Trinity, such as it is, is of unlike hypostatses [Gk: ὑποστάσις; Lat: *subsistentia*]. Any unity is merely moral, not ontological, a mater of will, not essence.[298]

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[293] *Ibid*.

[294] Lucian's teachings would also later surface in the Apollinarian and Adoptionist Controversies over the person of Christ in the fifth century. See Williston Walker, *Op. cit*., pp. 114, 144.

[295] Latourette, *Op. cit*., p. 153.

[296] See Bengt Hägglund, *Op. cit*., p.75.

[297] Letham, *Op. cit*., p. 114.

[298] *Ibid*., p. 113.

The interest of Emperor Constantine was for the peace and unity of the empire: one empire; one religion. He had previously intervened and controlled the Council of Arles (314) in the Donatist controversy with imperial dictate. Now he tried to resolve the differences between the orthodox party, the Arians and semi–Arians in the East. He first sent his close ecclesiastical advisor, Bishop Hosius of Cordova of the Latin or Western Church, to settle the matter by "composing their differences and forgiving one another." This failed. Compromise is the language of politics, not religion. Constantine was then forced to call for a universal council representing all of Christendom.

Persons of interest in this Council included Constantine, who was neither theologian nor philosopher, but a military genius, shrewd politician and emperor. He wanted unity and peace within the empire, and thus needed a unified state church. He perceived that Christianity was the one stabilizing entity within the empire. Arius, who was backed by Eusebius of Nicomedia and the Arians were a small minority. His major opponent was Bishop Alexander of Alexandria and his deacon, Athanasius, who would become the main protagonist against Arianism and the great champion of the Nicene and orthodox doctrine. The orthodox were also a minority. Eusebius of Caesarea, the early church historian, headed the vast majority of the bishops, who were Origenists, and largely semi–Arians. Bishop Hosius of Cordova was the Emperor's counselor and ecclesiastical advisor, and represented the Western or Latin Church.

The Ecclesiastical and Imperial Politics of The Council

Nicaea was the first Ecumenical Council of Christendom.[299] No such General or Universal Council has ever brought an enduring peace to the "Catholic Church." Some regional Councils or Synods have restored unity in particular areas, but those designated as "Ecumenical" have failed, and have only resulted in hardening previous divisions or creating new ones. The only positive contribution has been at times a clarifying of doctrinal points.[300] The Council of Nicaea would largely fail, and the Arian Controversy which occasioned it would only increase with imperial intervention and contradiction by both Constantine and his successors until the Council of Constantinople in 381. Further, this latter Council would only serve to give rise to the Christological Controversies of the fifth through seventh centuries, which were concerned with the two natures of Christ in one Person.

This Ecumenical Council was called by the Emperor for May, 325, and to be held at Nicaea in Bythinia [the modern Turkish city of Isnik], in the region of Nicomedia on the southern coast of the Black Sea at one of the Emperor's residences.

The attempt at compromise, understanding and forgiveness through Constantine's personal envoy, Bishop Hosius of Cordova, had failed. The Eastern part of the empire was in turmoil, and Constantine needed reconciliation and unity within the state church for the stability, unity and peace of the empire. He called for all 1,800 bishops of the "Catholic Church," and paid the traveling and maintenance expenses of all the attending bishops, their deacons and clerks. The provisions were lavish.

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[299] "Ecumenical" derives from the late Latin "pertaining to the universal church," in turn derived from the Gk. οἰκουμένη, "the inhabited earth."

[300] See K. S. Latourette, *Op. cit.*, p. 157.

The total number of bishops who attended numbered between 220 and 318. The Roman Bishop, Sylvester, did not attend due to his advanced age, but was represented by two presbyters. Only five or six Latin or Western Bishops and their entourages appeared. The remainder were Eastern Bishops from the Greek Churches, where this controversy was raging.

What an august group gathered at Nicaea that May! Many had been tortured and maimed during the last great Roman State Persecution, which had ended only twelve years before. They bore the scars and some even the loss of limbs from their tortured past. Some had spent years in privation and others in monastic hiding. Now they came together—most of them visibly and personally meeting the others for first time—and all at the expense of the Empire.

The Bishops gathered and the Emperor entered afterward with great pomp and ceremony, bejeweled and august in person and demeanor. He presided over the Council, with his trusted advisor, Bishop Hosius of Cordova, heading the discussions. After an introductory address by the Emperor, a creed presented by the Arians was soundly rejected. The discussions are said to have been at times heated and violent. Athanasius, the deacon of Bishop Alexander, came to the fore in these debates. He would be become, in the next decades, the champion of the Nicene doctrine.

Eusebius of Caesarea finally offered a creed which was reportedly used in his church as a baptismal confession. This creed, with some modifications, was accepted. Constantine urged the inclusion of the deciding term, ὁμοούσιον, "of the same substance or essence," with other key but somewhat ambiguous philosophical terms ὐσία [Lat: *substantia*] and ὑποστάσις. These terms had been used previously in the Western or Latin Church to define and describe the issues of Christ's Deity and his relation to the Father.

Note: This traditional view concerning the source of the creed has been challenged by modern scholarship, as noted by J. Pelikan:

> The basis of the creed of Nicaea was not, as scholars believed for a long time on the basis of the letter of Eusebius describing the Council of Nicaea, the baptismal creed of his church in Caesarea; the most that modern research has been able to determine is that this was 'some local baptismal creed, or Syro–Palestinian provenance' and that 'to go beyond this and attempt to identify the underlying formula would be a unprofitable exercise.'[301]

He continues by stating that it is less important to search for the origin than it is to study the additions made to this creed by the Council.[302]

The Council ended its deliberations concerning Arianism with anathematizing[303] any who held to Arian doctrine. Arius and two other Bishops refused to sign the Creed: Theonas of Marmarica in Lybia and Secundus of Ptolemais.[304] To them the Creed seemed to be Sabellian. At first, Eusebius of Caesarea refused to sign, then capitulated, as did all the semi–Arian majority, through fear or compromise. All these continued to teach their semi–Arian doctrines, interpreting the Creed according to their own doctrinal system.[305] Thus there was at best a mere outward conformity which would foment and periodically boil over for the next sixty–six years.

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[301] Jarsolav Pelikan, *Op. cit.*, I, p. 201.

[302] *Ibid.*, pp. 201–202.

[303] Gk: ἀνάθεμα, "accursed, devoted to destruction," Ecclesiastical Lat: "excommunicated."

[304] A. Neander, *Op. cit.*, I, pp. 420–421.

[305] *Loc. cit.*

The Easter controversy was settled in favor of the Western observance of the Sunday following the Passover,[306] and the Meletian schism, which included many of the Novatian schism, was allegedly settled in favor of a lax policy for re–admitting the *lapsi*. The Meletians and Novatians continued, however, for another century with their more strict convictions.

The canons or rules for the administration and discipline of the church were twenty in number. These dealt with the ordination of bishops, the relation of the bishops to Christ and the Church, rules for dealing with those excommunicated, for the restoration of the *lapsi*, rules for the morals of the clergy and the prohibition of usury by the clergy.

This Council lasted two months, when the bishops were sent home by the Emperor after a final, lavish banquet. Constantine issued an imperial decree which demanded the death penalty for disobedience to the Creed of the Council, banished Arius and his close followers, had all of his writings burned and deposed Eusebius of Nicomedia and several other bishops who had supported Arius. Both the doctrines and those who held them were anathematized.

The Historical, Doctrinal and Political Aftermath

The Council of Nicaea had made some progress in using various terminology which would eventually become universally accepted toward Trinitarian doctrine and dogma. But it had also drawn the doctrinal lines of a forced orthodoxy through imperial edict. For the next sixty–six years, until the Council of Constantinople in 381, the Arian Controversy would dominate ecclesiastical division and imperial politics.

After two years (c. 327), Arius was reinstated by Constantine, under the influence of Eusebius of Caesarea. Athanasius (d. 373) rose to prominence as the great defender of the Nicene Creed and orthodoxy. Through the varied political changes under Constantine's three sons and successors, he was exiled five times for his doctrinal stand. He would die eight years before the Nicene orthodox victory in 381. Constantine II succeeded his father in 337, but died in 340. The Empire was divided between the two remaining sons, Constans in the West and Constantius in the East.

The Nicene–Arian issue became an Empire–wide controversy: the Nicene orthodox West against the semi–Arian East. Eusebius of Nicomedia was re–instated and elevated to the Bishopric of Constantinople in the East, and had Athanasius banished. He fled to Rome. A rival Emperor arose in the West, Constans was murdered and Constantius remained as the sole ruler of the empire. Athanasius was again banished. At the Synod of Sirmium (357), the Nicene formula, with its definitive terms, was all but abolished.

Constantius died in 361 and his cousin, Julian ["Julian the Apostate] (361–363) was elected Emperor. His heathenism was of a mystical, philosophical character. He was killed in a battle with the Persians in 363—the last pagan Roman Emperor. The next four Emperors were professing "Christians:" Jovian (363–364), Valentinian I (364–375) in the West and Valens (364–378), his brother, in the East cared little for religious affairs. The latter had Athanasius exiled for the fifth and final time. At the death of Valens, his nephew, Gratian (378–383) was made Emperor. Gratian preferred the West, and made Theodosius (379–395), an able general and

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[306] See W. H. C. Frend, *Op. cit.*, pp. 341–343.

administrator, Emperor of the East. Together they issued an edict which conformed to the Nicene formula. There was to be one religion for the empire—the Christian religion.

After the death of Athansius, the Arian controversy, which had now taken to itself the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the Macedonian controversy, was left to the "Three Cappadocians:" Basil of Caesarea, his brother, Gregory of Nyssa and Gregory of Nazienzen. The final conclusion of the Trinitarian controversy would take place at the Council of Constantinople in 381 under Emperor Theodosius. The Council stood for the Nicene orthodox faith.[307]

The Nicene Creed

The Nicene Creed [Gk: σύμβολον τῆς Νίκαιας; Lat: *Symbolum Nicaenum*] was the first Creed [Lat: *credo*, "I believe"][308] to be universally held by imperial decree.[309] The first version of this creed was formulated at the Council of Nicaea, but was later revised and completed at the Council of Constantinople in 381 as the *Niceno–Constantinopolitan Creed*. It is this latter Creed which was and is recited as the "Nicene Creed." Further, there are variations from the Greek original to the Latin, English and other versions.

The Nicene Creed of 325

The original Nicene Creed of 325 reads as follows in the Greek text:

Πιστεύομεν εἰς ἕνα θεὸν Πατέρα παντοκράτορα, πάντων ὁρατῶν τε και ἀοράτων ποιητήν.

Πιστεύομεν εἰς ἕνα κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν, τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ, γεννηθέντα ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς μονογενῆ, τοὐτέστιν ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ Πατρός, θεὸν ἐκ θεοῦ ἀληθινοῦ, γεννηθέντα, οὐ ποιηθέντα, ὁμοούσιον τῷ Πατρί

δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα ἐγένετο, τά τε ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ καὶ τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς

τὸν δι' ἡμᾶς τοὺς ἀνθρώπους καὶ διὰ τὴν ἡμετέραν σωτηρίαν κατελθόντα καὶ σαρκωθέντα καὶ ἐνανθρωπήσαντα,

παθόντα, καὶ ἀναστάντα τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ, καὶ ἀνελθόντα εἰς τοὺς οὐρανούς,

καὶ ἐρχόμενον κρῖναι ζῶντας καὶ νεκρούς.

Καὶ εἰς τὸ Ἅγιον Πνεῦμα.

Τοὺς δὲ λέγοντας, ὅτι ἦν ποτε ὅτε οὐκ ἦν, καὶ πρὶν γεννηθῆναι οὐκ ἦν, καὶ ὅτι ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων ἐγένετο, ἢ ἐξ ἑτέρας ὑποστάσεως ἢ οὐσίας φάσκοντας εἶναι, [ἢ κτιστόν,] τρεπτὸν ἢ ἀλλοιωτὸν τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ, [τούτους] ἀναθεματίζει ἡ καθολικὴ [καὶ ἀποστολικὴ] ἐκκλησία.

The Nicene Creed of 325 as it reads in the English:

We believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of all things visible and invisible;
And in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten from the Father, only–begotten,
that is, from the substance of the Father,

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[307] For a summary of the era between the Council of Nicaea and that of Constantinople, see Williston Walker, *Op. cit.*, pp. 117–128; Phillip Schaff, *Op. cit.*, III, pp. 632–638; and K. S. Latourette, *Op. cit.*, pp. 157–164.

[308] Σύμβολον, "a mark, badge, watchword, test." For a definition and discussion of a Symbol or Creed, see Philip Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom*, I, pp. 3–8. He notes that Protestantism, in contrast to Romanism, subordinates all Creeds and Confessions of Faith to the Scriptures.

[309] The first was the alleged "Apostles' Creed" [*Symbolum Apostolicum*] mentioned for the first time in a letter by Ambrose in a Council to Pope Sircius c. 390. This Creed is Catholic and of a much later date; it was not Apostolic.

God from God, light from light, true God from true God,
begotten not made, of one substance with the Father [ὁμοούσιον τῷ Πατρι],
through Whom all things came into being, things in heaven and things on earth,
Who because of us men and because of our salvation came down,
and became incarnate and became man, and suffered,
and rose again on the third day, and ascended to the heavens,
and will come to judge the living and dead,
And in the Holy Spirit.
But as for those who say, There was when He was not, and, Before being born He was not,
and that He came into existence out of nothing,
or who assert that the Son of God is of a different hypostasis or substance,
or created, or is subject to alteration or change
—these the Catholic and apostolic Church anathematizes.

The Niceno–Constantinopolitan Creed of 381

The Niceno–Constantinopolitan Creed of 381 has replaced the original Nicene Creed, and so is given more attention, as it has been recited in Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox and some Protestant Creeds throughout church history from the fourth century. It reads as follows in the Greek liturgical text:

Πιστεύω εἰς ἕνα Θεόν, Πατέρα, Παντοκράτορα, ποιητὴν οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς, ὁρατῶν τε πάντων καὶ ἀοράτων.

Καὶ εἰς ἕνα Κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν, τὸν Υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ τὸν μονογενῆ, τὸν ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς γεννηθέντα πρὸ πάντων τῶν αἰώνων·

φῶς ἐκ φωτός, Θεὸν ἀληθινὸν ἐκ Θεοῦ ἀληθινοῦ, γεννηθέντα οὐ ποιηθέντα, ὁμοούσιον τῷ Πατρί, δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα ἐγένετο.

Τὸν δι' ἡμᾶς τοὺς ἀνθρώπους καὶ διὰ τὴν ἡμετέραν σωτηρίαν κατελθόντα ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν καὶ σαρκωθέντα

ἐκ Πνεύματος Ἁγίου καὶ Μαρίας τῆς Παρθένου καὶ ἐνανθρωπήσαντα.

Σταυρωθέντα τε ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἐπὶ Ποντίου Πιλάτου, καὶ παθόντα καὶ ταφέντα.

Καὶ ἀναστάντα τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ κατὰ τὰς Γραφάς.

Καὶ ἀνελθόντα εἰς τοὺς οὐρανοὺς καὶ καθεζόμενον ἐκ δεξιῶν τοῦ Πατρός.

Καὶ πάλιν ἐρχόμενον μετὰ δόξης κρῖναι ζῶντας καὶ νεκρούς, οὗ τῆς βασιλείας οὐκ ἔσται τέλος.

Καὶ εἰς τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ Ἅγιον, τὸ κύριον, τὸ ζῳοποιόν,

τὸ ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς ἐκπορευόμενον,

τὸ σὺν Πατρὶ καὶ Υἱῷ συμπροσκυνούμενον καὶ συνδοξαζόμενον,

τὸ λαλῆσαν διὰ τῶν προφητῶν.

Εἰς μίαν, Ἁγίαν, Καθολικὴν καὶ Ἀποστολικὴν Ἐκκλησίαν.

Ὁμολογῶ ἓν βάπτισμα εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν.

Προσδοκῶ ἀνάστασιν νεκρῶν.

Καὶ ζωὴν τοῦ μέλλοντος αἰῶνος.

Ἀμήν.

This “Nicene Creed” of 381 as it reads in the Latin liturgical text:

Credo in unum Deum,
Patrem omnipoténtem,
Factórem cæli et terræ,

Visibílium ómnium et invisibílium.
Et in unum Dóminum Iesum Christum,
Fílium Dei Unigénitum,
Et ex Patre natum ante ómnia sæcula.
Deum de Deo, lumen de lúmine, Deum verum de Deo vero,
Génitum, non factum, consubstantiálem Patri:
Per quem ómnia facta sunt.
Qui propter nos hómines et propter nostram salútem
Descéndit de cælis.
Et incarnátus est de Spíritu Sancto
Ex María Vírgine, et homo factus est.
Crucifíxus étiam pro nobis sub Póntio Piláto;
Passus, et sepúltus est,
Et resurréxit tértia die, secúndum Scriptúras,
Et ascéndit in cælum, sedet ad déxteram Patris.
Et íterum ventúrus est cum glória,
Iudicáre vivos et mórtuos,
Cuius regni non erit finis.
Et in Spíritum Sanctum, Dóminum et vivificántem:
Qui ex Patre Filióque procédit.
Qui cum Patre et Fílio simul adorátur et conglorificátur:
Qui locútus est per prophétas.
Et unam, sanctam, cathólicam et apostólicam Ecclésiam.
Confíteor unum baptísma in remissiónem peccatorum.
Et expecto resurrectionem mortuorum,
Et vitam ventúri sæculi. Amen.

Finally, this later "Nicene Creed" of 381 as it reads in the English liturgical text:

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth,
and of all things visible and invisible.
And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only–begotten Son of God,
begotten of the Father before all worlds;
God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God;
begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father,
by whom all things were made.
Who, for us men for our salvation, came down from heaven,
and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary,
and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate;
He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again,
according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven,
and sits on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again,
with glory, to judge the quick and the dead;
whose kingdom shall have no end.
And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life;
Who proceeds from the Father [and the Son];

who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified;
who spoke by the prophets.
And I believe one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins;
and I look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

> Note: It is the later or revised version of the Nicene Creed (381), not the Creed of 325, which has been and is held and recited today. The Nicene Creed of 325 only mentions the belief in the Holy Spirit. The Nicene Creed of 381 devotes a section to the Holy Spirit and his procession from the Father and the Son, reflecting the intervening Pneumatological controversy [Macedonianism, of the Pneumatomachians], asserting both the distinct Person and Deity of the Holy Spirit. Thus the Trinitarian doctrine was established as dogma.
>
> The Greek original uses the plural "we" rather than the singular "I," as do the Latin and English versions. Other versions have similar variations. The Latin added *Deum de Deo* ["God of God"] before the phrase "Light of Light" and later added the word *Filióque* ["and from the Son"] to the statement that the "Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father." The Creed of 381 confirmed the belief and dogma of Catholic ecclesiastical universalism and baptismal forgiveness of sins. Some historical scholars argue that the Creed of 381 was not a revision of the Creed of 325, but derived from other sources.[310]

Thus ends this introductory survey of early church history. This short span of 225 years witnessed more drastic and lasting changes than any other era—changes which characterize Christendom to this day. Negatively: the forsaking of the–historico–grammatical interpretation for an allegorical approach to Scripture, the departure from the relative simplicity of New Testament Christianity to an ecclesiastical hierarchy which mirrored the Roman Empire with its concept of a state church system, a sacerdotalism which obliterated the truth of the Christian pastor or elder, an identification of "the Church" and its local nature with the Kingdom of God as a universal entity, apart from which there was no salvation, a confusion of the reality of baptism and the Lord's Supper with their symbolism into a sacramentarian mentality and baptismal regeneration. Positively: the beginning of a theological vocabulary which enabled early Christendom to dogmatically state the truths of the Trinity and other essential matters.

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[310] See K. S. Latourette, *Op. cit.*, p.164.

Bibliography for Further Study

Note: The beginning student of church history should begin with one or two one–volume general Church Histories [e.g., Earle Cairns, Robert Baker, Williston Walker, etc.], a Dictionary of Church History for reference, and a very basic History of Doctrine [i.e., Louis Berkhof] to gain a basic grasp of the general flow of Church History and the major issues involved. He can then progress to the multi–volume Histories. He should also make an outline and fill it in until he eventually possesses his own detailed chronology of Church History.

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