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C. S. Lewis: There is a strange idea abroad that in every subject the ancient books should be read only by the professionals, and that the amateur should content himself with the modern books. . . .

Now this seems to me topsy-turvy. Naturally, since I myself am a writer, I do not wish the ordinary reader to read no modern books. But if he must read only the new or only the old, I would advise him to read the old. . . . It is a good rule, after reading a new book, never to allow yourself another new one till you have read an old one in between. If that is too much for you, you should at least read one old one to every three new ones. . . .

We all, therefore, need the books that will correct the characteristic mistakes of our own period. And that means the old books. . . . We may be sure that the characteristic blindness of the twentieth-century—the blindness about which posterity will ask, “But how *could* they have thought that?”—lies where we have never suspected it. . . . None of us can fully escape this blindness. . . . The only palliative is to keep the clean sea breeze of the centuries blowing through our minds, and this can be done only by reading old books.

(C. S. Lewis, cited from *The Quotable Lewis*, ed. Jerry Root and Wayne Martindale [Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1989], 509)

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John Piper (speaking of Lewis): He has made me wary of chronological snobbery. That is, he has shown me that “newness” is no virtue and “oldness” is no fault. Truth and beauty and goodness are not determined by when they exist. Nothing is inferior for being old, and nothing is valuable for being modern. This has freed me from the tyranny of novelty.

(John Piper, *The Pastor as Scholar*, 34–35)

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{ LECTURE 1 }

WHY STUDY CHURCH HISTORY?

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Introduction:

- A love for church history is not about loving history, it is about loving the church. We generally love the history of the things we love. If you love the church, you will love church history.
- A love for church history is especially important in an independent church context, because it demonstrates the fact that although your local church may be very young, it enjoys a rich and ancient heritage.
- A love for church history does not represent a challenge or competition to a love for Scripture. In fact, the more I have studied the history of the church the more I have grown to appreciate the power and authority of the Word of God—because I have seen that power vividly illustrated in the testimonies of generations of believers. Scripture alone is the authority for all we believe and do; but history provides wonderful affirmation of the truthfulness of those foundational biblical truths.
- A love for church history bears rich fruit in the lives of those who study it. It is especially valuable for contemporary church leaders. I have articulated some of those benefits below.

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With that in mind, here are ten reasons why pastors ought to be passionate about church history:

1. Because most modern evangelicals are clueless about church history.

- Most American evangelicals know very little about the history of Christianity. Even in Reformed circles, a knowledge of church history usually only goes back to the Reformation.
- But the history of the gospel spans back long before that. The 1,500 years between Pentecost and the Reformation include many significant people and events, whom God used in strategic ways to advance His kingdom purposes. And the centuries since are equally rich.
- The church today has a great deal to learn from the early church; and we do ourselves a great disservice if we simply choose to remain ignorant.

Carl Trueman: I was asked last week why some evangelicals convert to Eastern Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism. Reasons vary, I am sure, but I commented that one theme I have noticed over the years is the fact that evangelicalism lacks historical roots. That is not to say that it has no *history*; rather it is to say that a *consciousness of history* is not part of the package. Rock band worship, Beautiful People everywhere (miserable middle aged plain people need not apply), and history nowhere in sight unless it is a reference in the sermon to an early Coldplay album. On that level, I can understand why people looking for something serious, something with a sense of theological and historical gravitas, simply give up on evangelicalism and start looking elsewhere. Some adults want a faith that is similarly adult, after all.

[Source: Carl Trueman, “Teaching Historical Sense to a Sophisticated and Discerning Lady (Aged 7)” *Reformation 21* (January 21, 2013). Online at: <http://www.reformation21.org/blog/2013/01/teaching-historical-sense-to-a.php>]

- In the Old Testament, we see God using Israel’s history to teach them spiritual truths (cf. Deut. 6:21–25). The Holy Spirit saw fit to inspire both Old Testament books of history, and a book of church history in the New Testament (Acts). We are missing a wonderful opportunity to challenge, instruct, and encourage our people if we neglect the history of the church.
- **Preaching Tip:** A great way to introduce your people to church history is through sermon illustrations. Anecdotes or good quotes from church history can be both timeless (since they involve those whose lives are complete) and fresh (because they often involve personalities that Protestant congregations are not thoroughly familiar with) When combined with biblical illustrations they can have a very powerful impact.
- Of course, when using illustrations from church history, it is important to make sure the historical anecdote is accurate. There are many embellishments and half-truths that should be avoided. Also, preachers should be careful to avoid “hero worship.”

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2. Because God is at work in history. Conversely, history is a testimony to God’s sovereign providence.

- It really is *His story*, in the sense that everything is working according to His plans, and He is orchestrating all of it for His eternal glory (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:20–28).

Isaiah 46:9–10: “Remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the

beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose.’”

- Tracing themes (like the defense of the doctrine of the Trinity or the history of the English Bible) are wonderful ways to showcase the providence of God in church history. Biographies of faithful men from history similarly highlight that same truth.
- Also, tracing the spread of the gospel through the centuries provides a vivid illustration of the way in which God has sovereignly used missionaries to fulfill the Great Commission.
- **Pastoral Tip:** One of the greatest theological truths you can teach your people is to rest in the sovereignty of God. The Scriptures are filled with examples of men and women who trusted God and lived accordingly (Hebrews 11).
- Church history, likewise, consists of wonderful examples of faithful Christians whose lives are testimonies to the providential care of their heavenly father. This is especially true of believers who were faithful in the face of great persecution, suffering, or other challenges.

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3. Because the Lord Jesus said He would build His church. To study church history is to watch His promise unfold.

- The church is established on the gospel truth that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God (Matt. 16:15–18). The church’s unconquerable history is evidence that He is indeed who He claimed to be.

Matthew 16:15–18 — He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” And Jesus said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.” (cf. Eph. 2:19–22)

John MacArthur: “No matter how liberal, fanatical, ritualistic, apathetic, or apostate its outward adherents may be, and no matter how decadent the rest of the world may become, Christ will build His church. Therefore, no matter how oppressive and hopeless their outward circumstances may appear from a human perspective, God’s people belong to a cause that cannot fail” (John MacArthur, *Matthew 16–23*, 35).

- The head of the church is Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:21–22; Col. 1:18). And the authority in the church is His Word (cf. Col. 3:16). Church history testifies to the fact that God’s Word never fails.

Isaiah 40:8 — The grass withers, the flowers fades, but the Word of our God stands forever.

- Evangelical Christians, throughout all of history, are those who have submitted themselves to the headship of Christ, the authority of His Word, and the true gospel proclaimed in Scripture. As a result, they live for God’s glory.
- The Reformers reiterated those principles as: *solus Christus*, *sola Scriptura*, *sola fide*, *sola gratia*, and *soli Deo Gloria*. But those principles go back long before the Reformation.
- **Pastoral Tip:** It is important to help your people understand the essential doctrines that define true Christianity (over against false forms of it), as well as being able to show them that those essential doctrines did not start at the Reformation.
- The fundamentals of the faith find their foundation in the New Testament, and can be traced in the lives of genuine believers throughout the entirety of church history.

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4. Because church history is our history as members of His body.

- When we study the history of the church, we are not merely studying people, places and events, we are studying the history of the Bride of Christ. And we are part of that bride.

Ephesians 5:25–27 — Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.

- So when we study church history, we come to see who we are, where we’ve come from, and how we fit into flow of God’s kingdom work in the world. We are studying our spiritual family tree.
- The Lord Jesus Himself cares deeply about His bride (cf. Revelation 1–3), and we should too.

- **Pastoral Tip:** One of the great ways to remind ourselves that we are part of a body of believers that spans the centuries is through singing hymns, occasionally explaining the history behind the hymns so that people comprehend that historic significance.

Carl Trueman: Deliberately mine the historic tradition of psalmody and hymnody for worship. Not that anything written by anyone still alive is to be excluded. Far from it. But try to make sure the songs of worship reflect the chronological sweep of the church's life, from the Book of Psalms onwards. Make people aware that praise did not begin six months ago.

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5. Because the truth has been preserved and passed down through history.

- When we study church history we not only confirm the fact that what we believe today is what the apostolic church believed; but we also see how the truth was preserved throughout history.

From Christ to the Apostles: John 15:26–27 — “When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, *that is* the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me, and you *will* testify also, because you have been with Me from the beginning.

From the Apostles to Their Disciples: 2 Timothy 2:2 — “The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”

To Future Generations of Non-Eyewitnesses: 1 Peter 1:8 — “Though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory.” (cf. 2 Peter 1:19–21)

- The study of church history reminds us that we are standing on the shoulders of generations of the faithful men who have come before us.
- **Preaching Tip:** Many Christian leaders from church history were Bible scholars and commentators. We would be wise to glean from their wisdom as we study and teach the Scriptures. After all, their commentaries and sermons represent years of meditating on the text and walking with God.
- While recognizing that church history is not authoritative, citing an expositor or theologian from church history (especially if that person is well-known) in support of your exegetical conclusions gives your congregation confidence that your view is not new.

- **Also**, in developing your church’s doctrinal statement, it is good to consult some of the historic creeds that have been used throughout history (such as the London Confession of 1689). These documents should not be regarded as authoritative in and of themselves; but they do serve as helpful summarizations of biblical truth.

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6. Because, just as we are encouraged by the history of truth, we are also warned by the history of error. This enables us to be equipped as apologists.

- The New Testament is full of warnings about false teaching, both refuting it in the first century and warning that it would come in the centuries that followed. When we study church history, we not only learn the history of the truth but also the history of error. We see where the cults originated; and we have the benefit of seeing orthodoxy defended and the truth being preserved.

Acts 20:28–30 — Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.

1 Timothy 4:1 — But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, *men* who forbid marriage *and advocate* abstaining from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth. (cf. 2 Tim. 4:3; Jude 17–18)

- The New Testament calls all Christians, and elders especially, to be able to defend the faith.

Titus 1:8–10 — [An elder must be] “holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.”

1 Peter 3:15 — “Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence”

- This defense is primarily built on the Scriptures. But church history also serves as a valuable (albeit secondary) apologetic tool.

For example:

- Knowing a little church history quickly silences silly allegations against Christianity (like those made by *The Da Vinci Code*).
- Knowing a little church history is especially helpful in witnessing to Roman Catholics, Muslims, Mormons, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and members of other pseudo-Christian cults.
- Knowing a little church history is even helpful in defending key areas of doctrine—showing that a contemporary evangelical understanding of Scripture has not deviated from the teachings of the apostolic church.
- **Preaching Tip:** Sermons often address issues of apologetic significance, and church history becomes a helpful ally in such messages, as pastors defend biblical truth and demonstrate where heresies originated in church history.
- Whether it is the Roman Catholic Church, the Mormons, or the Muslims, understanding church history is crucial to giving a comprehensive response to false doctrine.
- If the text you are preaching points to a larger doctrine, church history is often an important component of that discussion. For example, discussions about the Trinity, the canon, believer’s baptism, Protestant theology, and even eschatology, may raise questions in your congregation’s mind about church history.

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7. Because we have much to learn from those who walked with God (cf. Hebrews 11)

- Hebrews 12:1 mentions “so great a cloud of witnesses” to the faithfulness of God that believers are called to follow after. While the author of Hebrews was specifically referring to Old Testament saints (cf. Hebrews 11), the testimonies of all who have come before us provide a powerful encouragement to remain faithful ourselves.

Hebrews 12:1–3 — Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

- The Lord was clear from the outset that His followers would face persecution (John 15:18–20). The annals of church history are filled with the testimonies of those who were faithful to suffer for their Savior.

- Faithfulness to the Lord, to His Word, and to His people is what defines a hero of the faith. And church history offers us many such faithful men and women to choose from. Their lives should inspire, motivate, and encourage us as we run the race with endurance.
- **Pastoral Tip:** I have heard seasoned pastors talk about identifying a “mentor” from church history, whose life you can study and emulate. But whether you select just one mentor, it is imperative that you include Christian biography as part of your personal reading. I would recommend reading at least one church history biography every year. You will be greatly encouraged and inspired to continued faithfulness by that simple practice.

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8. Because we likewise have much to learn from those who failed at various points.

- It is an old cliché, but often true: those who don’t know history are doomed to repeat the mistakes of the past.
- In church history, we see examples of all kinds of spiritual failure. There are those who fell into heresy, those who gave way to corruption, those who denied the faith, and those who fell morally. The lives of such individuals serve as a warning for us.

2 Corinthians 10:6 – 12 — “Now these things happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved. Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, ‘The people sat down to eat and drink, and stood up to play.’ Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day. Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents. Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall.

- Church History is proof that spiritual failure can come quickly with devastating results.

Galatians 1:6–9 — I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is *really* not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!

- There are powerful lessons that we can learn from things like the influx of paganism into Roman Christianity, the rise of the papacy, the Crusades, the development of liberalism,

and so on. As pastors, learning those lessons through history helps guard us from having to learn them through our own experiences.

- **Pastoral Tip:** Not all of the historical biographies you read have to be positive. Sometimes it is helpful to read a book that critically engages with some form of error or failure. Iain Murray’s *Evangelicalism Divided* or George Marsden’s *Reforming Fundamentalism* are excellent examples of this type of resource.

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9. Because history helps us understand the resources, opportunities, and freedoms that we enjoy now.

- Often we take for granted the blessings that we enjoy as American Christians living in the modern age.
- The study of church history reminds us of the great sacrifices made and challenges faced by previous generations of believers. It increases our thankfulness for what we have, and it motivates us to be good stewards of the incredible opportunities that God has afforded us.
- The history of the English Bible, for example, reminds us to be thankful that we have a personal copy of God’s Word in our own language.
- The history of missions makes us grateful for advancements in travel and technology, while simultaneously inspiring us to do more in our effort to reach the world for Christ.
- The history of persecution emboldens us in our evangelism, as we witness the faithfulness of the martyrs and recognize how unique the freedoms we enjoy really are.
- **Pastoral Tip:** You can instill this kind of appreciation in your people by continually pointing them to good books and church history resources. Make sure your church book store is stocked with this type of material. If possible, do regular book giveaways to encourage people to imbibe these kinds of resources.

Carl Trueman: Give away free books as part of your regular ministry and make sure you include books on church history. Further, make sure you do such book giveaways for the children as often as for the adults. At [our church] we do one for adults and one for children every month. It is good to get them young and introduce them to the history of the church.

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10. Because history helps twenty-first century pastors have a right perspective about their own place in the church age.

- It is important to realize that we are part of church history. We are part of the current generation of believers, and we have a responsibility to faithfully guard the truth and pass it on to those who come after us.
- Studying church history helps us recognize that we are part of something much bigger than ourselves, our local congregation, or even the evangelical movement as it exists today; the history of Christianity spans two millennia, of which we are but a momentary blip.
- Studying church history also opens our eyes to the fact that every generation of believers is greatly affected by the time and culture in which they live, such that they themselves do not even realize the affects. We can then, in turn, ask ourselves what affect our culture has on our own application of biblical truth.
- Studying church history helps us remember that Christ is the Lord of the church in every age; and to remind ourselves of what a great privilege it is to minister in His service.
- **Pastoral Tip:** It is often helpful, when first cultivating an interest in this topic, to begin by reading a concise overview of church history. Doing so provides a framework and a context for more other books (like biographies) that focus on a specific period of time.
- Those interested in a brief survey of church history may be interested in Christopher Catherwood’s short book, *Church History: A Crash Course for the Curious*. Longer church history textbooks (like those by Nicholas Needham or Bruce Shelley) are also excellent places to start. Steven Lawson’s *Pillars of Grace* and Gregg Allison’s *Historical Theology* are also great resources that approach church history topically.

* **Note** that there are limits on our study of church history:

1. **Selection:** Church history, in its truest sense, would include the history of every member of the invisible church. We are only able to discuss a few members of the visible church—men who have distinguished themselves in some way to us.
2. **Objectivity:** We all come to history with preconceived ideas. While we do our best to uncover the facts, we naturally view those facts through the lens of our faith. (Note the difference between *pre-modern*, *modern*, and *post-modern* approaches to history.)
3. **Pride:** The temptation might be to think that “modern” is better; that we have nothing to learn from history. But the truth is we have much to learn.

{ ADDENDUM }

CHURCH HISTORY AND PREACHING

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Church history has great homiletical and didactic value when used appropriately in preaching.

Uses

• **Illustrations**

Anecdotes or good quotes from church history can be both timeless (since they involve those whose lives are complete) and fresh (because they often involve personalities that Protestant congregations are not thoroughly familiar with)

- When combined with biblical illustrations they can have a very powerful impact.
- **Cautions:**
 - Make sure the historical anecdote is accurate. There are many embellishments and half-truths that should be avoided.
 - Make sure to give enough explanation of the historical context to help those in the audience who are unfamiliar with history.
 - Be careful to avoid “hero” worship.

• **Commentary**

Many Christian leaders from church history were Bible scholars and commentators. We honor their memory when we consult them as exegetical sources (and take their explanations seriously).

- Citing a person from church history (especially if that person is well-known) in support of your exegetical conclusions gives your congregation confidence that your view is not new.
- **Cautions:**
 - Make sure you are citing the person correctly, and not taking a church history quote out of context.

- Recognize that anyone you cite will have some points on which you do not agree. You need to be careful whom you promote to your people.

- **History of Doctrine**

If the text you are preaching points to a larger doctrine, church history is often an important component of that discussion.

- For example, discussions about the Trinity, the canon, believer's baptism, Protestant theology, and even eschatology, may raise questions in your congregation's mind about church history. If possible, it is helpful to anticipate and answer those questions in your sermon.
- **Cautions:**
 - We must always underscore the fact that church history, though affirming is never authoritative. History is always subject to Scripture.
 - We must recognize, also, that there are often opposing viewpoints represented in church history. (This again underscores the importance of emphasizing the authority of Scripture over history.)

- **Apologetics**

Church history gives us wonderful apologetic material (especially in response to cult groups), as we demonstrate that evangelical principles go all the way back to the Apostles.

- Whether it is the Roman Catholic Church, the Mormons, or the Muslims, understanding church history is crucial to giving a comprehensive response to false doctrine.
- **Cautions:**
 - Again, we must recognize that church history is not our ultimate authority. A defense of evangelical principles must start with Scripture.
 - We must be careful to maintain a proper distinction between primary and secondary areas of doctrine.
 - We must be careful not to interpret the men of church history anachronistically—i.e. reading our own theological controversies back into their timeframe.

{ LECTURE 2 }

FROM PENTECOST TO PATMOS: *The Apostolic Church*

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I. **Church History according to the Book of Acts (covering A.D. 30–60)**

A. The Church in Jerusalem (Acts 1–7)

- Between the Resurrection and Pentecost (Acts 1)

Simon Kistemaker: The resurrection, appearances, and ascension of Jesus presumably took place in the spring of A.D. 30. Subsequently, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost occurred ten days after Jesus' ascension. (*Acts*, 14)

- Pentecost; apostles receive the Spirit (Acts 2)
- Post-Pentecost preaching, persecution and revival (Acts 3–4)
- Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1–11)
- Apostles on trial again (Acts 5:12–42)
- Deacon's chosen; Stephen arrested (Acts 6)
- Stephen preaches and is martyred (Acts 7)

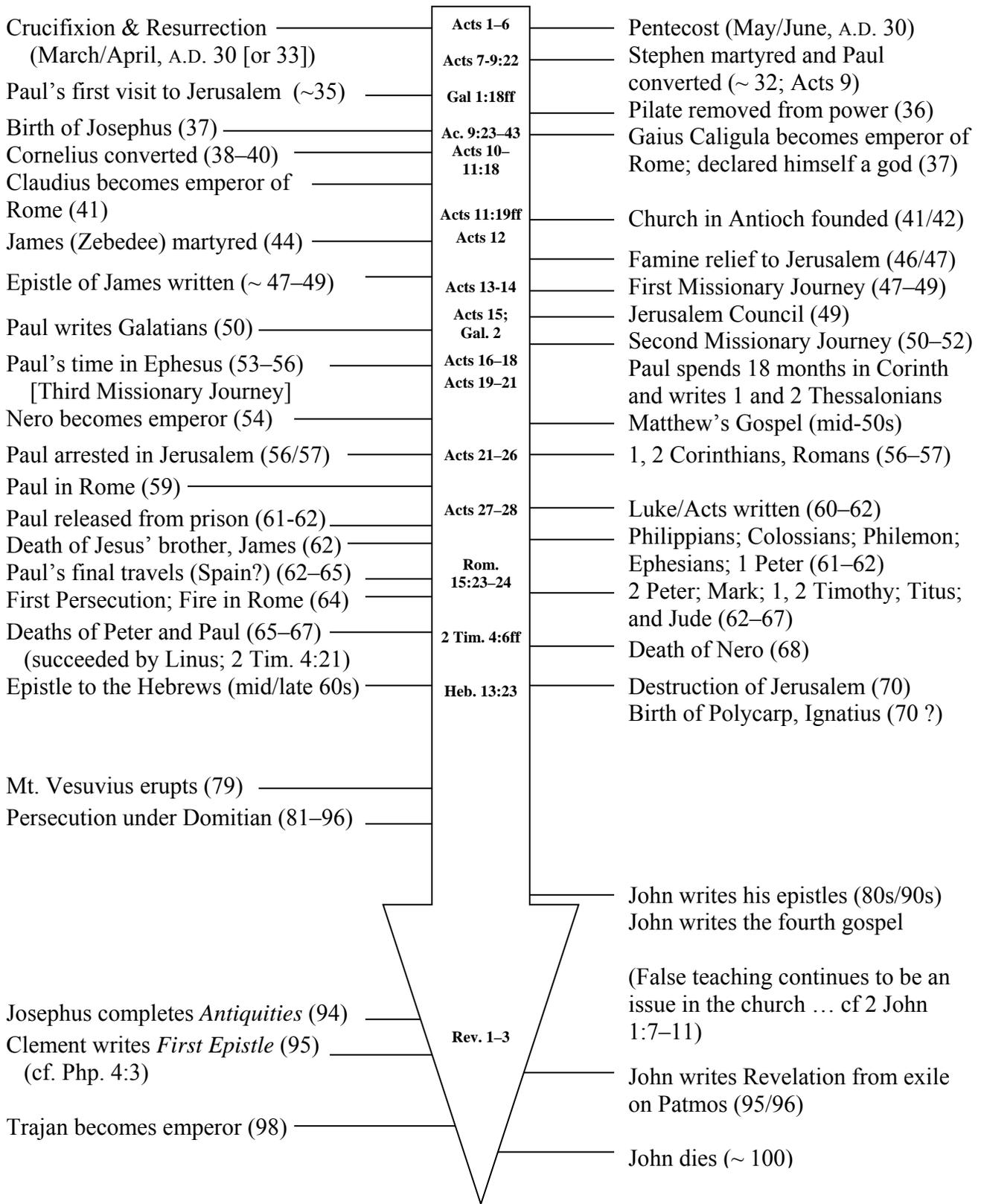
B. The Church Expands to Samaria (Acts 8)

- Saul persecutes the Church (vv. 1–3)
- Philip takes the Gospel to Samaritans who receive the Spirit (vv. 4–25)
- Philip takes the Gospel to an Ethiopian eunuch (vv. 26–40)

C. The Church Expands to the Gentiles and the Ends of the Earth (Acts 9–28)

- Saul is converted (Acts 9)
 - According to Galatians 2:1, Paul went up (from Syrian Antioch) to the Jerusalem Council 14 years after his first visit to Jerusalem. If the Jerusalem Council took place in A.D. 49 (as is commonly agreed), then Paul's first trip to Jerusalem took place around A.D. 35.
 - After his first (secret) trip to Jerusalem (Gal. 1:19–20), Paul ministered in Damascus and other parts of Syria (cf. Gal. 1:21). After "many days" (Acts 9:23), he escaped from Damascus, probably in A.D. 37.

Simon Kistemaker: Paul's escape over the city walls of Damascus [gives us] tentative chronological evidence ([Acts] 9:23–25; II Cor. 11:32–33). Aretas IV, king of the Nabataeans, ruled Damascus for a few years from a.d. 37 to 40. . . . This fact seems to suggest that Damascus was ruled by the Nabataeans beginning in A.D. 37, consequently, we surmise that Paul escaped from Damascus in that year. (*Acts*, 14)



Chronological Order of the NT Books

NT Book	Author	Place Written	Date and Circumstances
James	James (Jesus' half-brother)	Jerusalem	45–48 — following the martyrdom of James the brother of John, but likely before Jerusalem Council
Galatians	Paul	Unknown	49–50 — written shortly after the Jerusalem Council to the churches of Southern Galatia (some scholars take a later date in the mid-50s with the recipients in Northern Galatia)
1 Thessalonians	Paul	Corinth	51 — written during Paul's 2 nd missionary journey, after he planted the church in Thessalonica
2 Thessalonians	Paul	Corinth	51–52 — written several months after his first letter to the Thessalonians
1 Corinthians	Paul	Ephesus	55 — written during Paul's 3 rd missionary journey to the church at Corinth (a response to their questions)
2 Corinthians	Paul	Philippi	55–56 — written several months after 1 Cor. and also after the "severe letter" (2:4)
Romans	Paul	Corinth	56 — written during Paul's 3 rd missionary journey to Christians living in Rome
Matthew	Matthew	Jerusalem (?)	Mid to late 50s — written as an apologetic to the Jews regarding Jesus as the King
Luke	Luke	Rome	60 — written to Theophilus shortly before the book of Acts was written
Ephesians	Paul	Rome	61 — written during Paul's first Roman imprisonment; possibly a circulating letter
Colossians	Paul	Rome	61 — written during Paul's first Roman imprisonment; to those in Colosse
Philemon	Paul	Rome	61 — personal letter written to Philemon about runaway slave Onesimus
Acts	Luke	Rome	61 — follow-up to his Gospel; ends abruptly with Paul's first imprisonment (so likely written then)
Philippians	Paul	Rome	62 — written toward the end of Paul's first Roman imprisonment
1 Timothy	Paul	Macedonia	65 — written during Paul's 4 th missionary journey (cf. 1 Tim. 1:3)
Titus	Paul	While moving	65 — written during Paul's 4 th missionary journey (Titus 1:5)
1 Peter	Peter	Rome (Babylon)	65 — written as Nero's persecution was beginning to break out against Christians
2 Peter	Peter	Rome	67 — written to the same readers as 1 Peter, to warn against false teachers within the church
2 Timothy	Paul	Rome	67–68 — written shortly before Paul's death, during his second imprisonment
Jude	Jude (Jesus' half-brother)	Jerusalem	67–69 — most likely written before destruction of Jerusalem (since not mentioned in the book)
Hebrews	Unknown	Rome	67–69 — written toward the end of Nero's persecution, possibly by Paul
Mark	Mark	Rome	68–69 — written by Mark who recorded the memoirs of Peter regarding the life of Christ
John	John	Ephesus	Late 80s — written as a supplement to the Synoptic Gospels by the Apostle John, brother of James
1–3 John	John	Ephesus	90–95 — written from Ephesus, where John had relocated (from Jerusalem) two decades earlier
Revelation	John	Patmos	95–96 — written toward the end of Domitian's reign from John's exile on the Isle of Patmos

* Adapted from *The MacArthur Study Bible* and from Robert Thomas's New Testament Introduction class notes

- In Galatians 1:18, Paul records that prior to his first (secret) journey to Jerusalem (in A.D. 35), he spent 3 years in Arabia being discipled by the Risen Christ. This puts Paul's conversion back to around A.D. 32, just a couple years after Pentecost.
- Thus, Stephen's martyrdom and the events of Acts 1–8 must have taken place in the first couple years of church history.
- After Paul escaped from Damascus, he spent some more time in Jerusalem (in A.D. 37–38). This time his appearance was public, not secret (Acts 9:26–29). But the Jews, again, were trying to kill him. So the apostles sent Paul to Caesarea and then to Tarsus.
- Cornelius, a Gentile, is converted and receives the Spirit (Acts 10–11:18)
 - From Caesarea, a Gentile named Cornelius, contacted Peter. (The timing of these events is not explicit in Luke's text, but it may be that Paul's time in Caesarea had something to do with this.)
 - If Luke's record is chronological, the account of Cornelius would have probably taken place in the late 30s. (The account comes between Paul's visit to Jerusalem in Acts 9 [around A.D. 37] and the martyrdom of James in Acts 12 [around A.D. 44].)
- Church at Syrian Antioch is Established (Acts 11:19–26)
 - Luke backs up (chronologically) to give the history of the church at Antioch
 - Christians from Jerusalem were scattered after persecution broke out (led by Paul) following the martyrdom of Stephen (around A.D. 32) (11:18)
 - They went and planted churches (which were primarily Jewish Christian) in places like Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch (11:19)
 - But some of the Christians from Cyprus and also Cyrene (cf. Mark 15:21 w/ Romans 16:13; Acts 2:10) came to Syrian Antioch and were preaching Christ to the Gentiles (11:20) (presumably after the conversion of Cornelius, so probably late 30s and early 40s)
 - A large number of Gentiles were converted (early 40s) (11:21)
 - The news of this got back to Jerusalem, so they sent Barnabas to check things out (11:22) (probably around 42–43)
 - Barnabas was greatly encouraged by the ministry there, and many more Gentiles came to Christ (11:23–24) (mid 40s)
 - So Barnabas went to find Saul (whom he had befriended when Saul visited Jerusalem around A.D. 37) (11:25). Saul was still in Tarsus.
 - Barnabas returns to Antioch with Saul, and the two have a profitable ministry there for an entire year (11:26) (around A.D. 45).

Henry T. Sell: Antioch was the third city in population (500,000) and influence in the Roman Empire, ranking next to Rome and Alexandria. Seleucus Nicator, Alexander's greatest general, built the city in 300 B.C., and gave to it his father's name, Antiochus. It was the capital of Syria, at the time Christianity entered its gates. It was situated about 300 miles north of Jerusalem, on the Orontes River, with Selucia as its seaport at the mouth of the river and sixteen miles distant. It traded with all parts of the world; caravans coming to it even from India and Persia; its ships sailed to every seaport on the Mediterranean sea. This trade brought great gain to the city. The population was of all kinds and all nationalities, Romans, Greeks, Syrians, Jews, freemen, slaves, the ignorant and the cultured. It was a centre of art and literature. (*Studies in Early Church History*, electronic edition)

John MacArthur: Neither the salvation of the Ethiopian eunuch nor that of Cornelius and his household prepared the Jerusalem believers for the widespread Gentile conversions in Antioch. When the news about them reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, they decided to send a representative to investigate. Accordingly, they sent Barnabas off to Antioch. Barnabas first appeared in chapter 4, when he sold some property to meet the needs of other believers. Through his influence, Paul was finally accepted by the Jerusalem church (Acts 9:27). He was a leading teacher in the church and a loving, gentle, generous man, in keeping with his name, which means "son of encouragement."

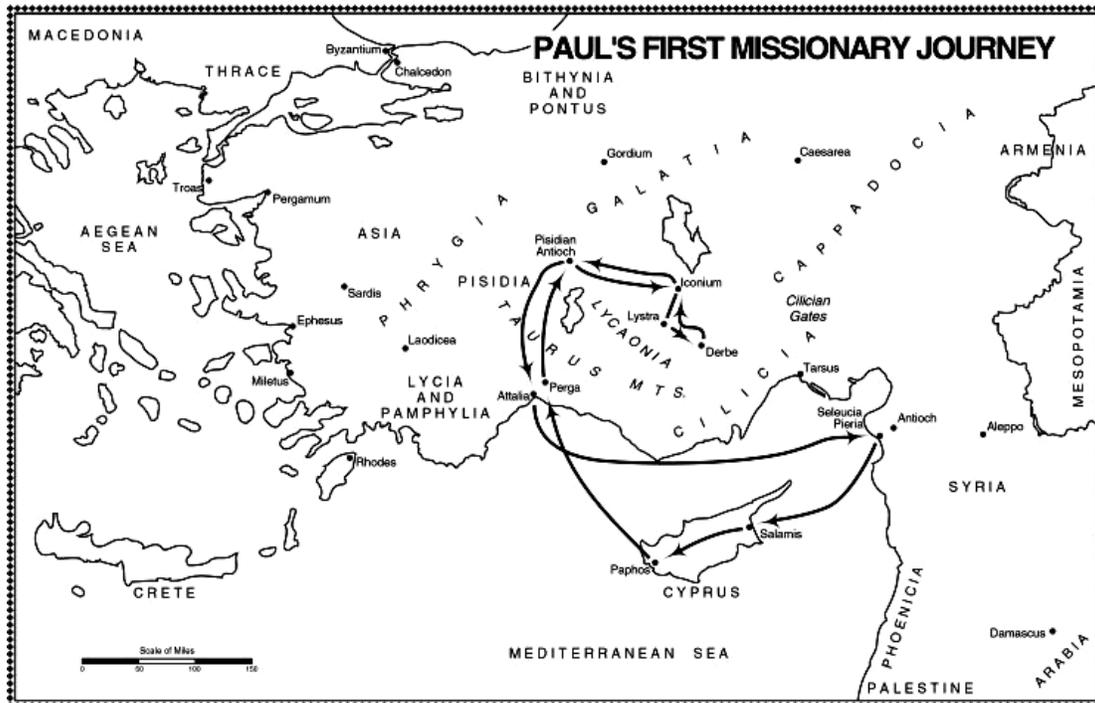
The choice of a representative was crucial. Sending a rigidly legalistic individual could have spelled disaster. Barnabas, however, had the qualifications needed for the job. Verse 24 further describes him as a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. He possessed the necessary spiritual qualities for one who was to discern what was happening.

Barnabas was also the right man to send because, like some of the founders of the Antioch church, he was a Cypriot Jew (4:36–37). He would not be perceived as an outsider but as one of them. (*Acts*, MTNC, 1:312)

- Barnabas and Saul are sent out from Antioch to bring famine relief to those in Judea (Acts 11:27–30) (around A.D. 46)

Simon Kistemaker: The information we glean from writers in the first few centuries of the Christian era seems to suggest that the famine took place in the second half of the fifth decade, A.D. 46. In that year, Queen Mother Helena from Adiabene (a state east of the Tigris River in ancient Assyria) and her son, King Izates, both converts to Judaism, came to Jerusalem. When they became aware of a severe famine in that city, they brought grain from Egypt and figs from Cyprus for the famine-stricken people of Jerusalem. Likewise, the Christians in Antioch extended their loving concern to fellow believers of the mother church in Jerusalem by commissioning Barnabas and Saul (Paul) to bring them relief (11:29–30). (*Acts*, 15)

- Brief recap to discuss the martyrdom of James and the imprisonment of Peter; the death of Herod (Acts 12)
- Paul's First Missionary Journey (Acts 13–14) (A.D. 47–49)
 1. Cyprus (13:4–12)
 2. Pisidian Antioch (13:13–52)
 3. Iconium (14:1–7)
 4. Lystra (14:8–18)
 5. Return to Syrian Antioch (14:19–28)



(Map from John B. Polhill, *Acts NAC* [Nashville: Broadman, 1992])

- The Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) (A.D. 49/50)
 - The Conflict (vv. 1–5) – Is circumcision (and by extension other aspects of law-keeping) necessary for salvation?

John Polhill: The debate in Jerusalem revolved around the issue of *how* Gentiles were to be accepted into the Christian fellowship. . . . For all intents and purposes, a Gentile proselyte to Judaism *became a Jew*, not only in religious conviction but in life-style as well. That was the question the conservative group of Jewish Christians raised: Should not Gentiles be required to become Jews in order to share in the Christian community? It was a natural question. The first Christians were all Jews. Jesus was a Jew and the Jewish Messiah. God had only one covenant people—the Jews. Christianity was a messianic movement within Judaism. Jews had always demanded of all Gentile converts the requirements of circumcision and rituals of the Torah. . . . These were the two issues that were faced and resolved in Jerusalem: (1) whether Gentile converts should submit to Jewish proselyte requirements, especially to circumcision and (2) how fellowship could be maintained between Jewish and Gentile Christians. (*Acts*, NAC, 321)

- Paul's Third Missionary Journey (Acts 18:23–21:16) (A.D. 53–56)
 1. Apollos mentioned (Acts 18:24–28)
 2. Paul at Ephesus (Acts 19)
 3. Various places in Macedonia (20:1–6)
 4. Troas (20:7–12)
 5. Miletus; Paul meets with Ephesian elders (20:13–38)
 6. Journey to Jerusalem (21:1–16)



(Map from John B. Polhill, *Acts NAC* [Nashville: Broadman, 1992])

- Paul's Jerusalem and Caesarean Trials (Acts 21:17–26:32) (A.D. 56/57–58)
 1. Paul in Jerusalem (21:17–23:22)
 2. Paul before Felix (23:23–24:27)
 - Two years according to Acts 24:27
 3. Paul before Festus (25:1–12)

John MacArthur: Felix's brutal term in office had culminated in the ruthless subduing of a riot in Caesarea. When the outraged Jews sent a delegation to Rome to protest Felix's actions, Emperor Nero recalled the governor to Rome in disgrace. Festus soon arrived in Judea to replace him. Unlike Felix, who was a former slave, Festus was a member of the Roman nobility. Little is known of his brief term as governor (he died about two years after taking office). Since the first-century Jewish historian Josephus described him as better than his predecessor (Felix) and his successor (Albinus), he appears to have been an able leader. (*Acts*, MTNC, 2:326)

4. Paul before Agrippa (25:13–32)

John MacArthur: The last in the line of Herods who figured prominently in New Testament history, Agrippa II ruled the northern part of Palestine during the Roman occupation. His father, Agrippa I, was the Herod who killed James, arrested Peter, and met an untimely end, being eaten by worms after failing to give God glory (Acts 12:1–23). His great-uncle, Herod Antipas, figured prominently in the gospels (Luke 3:1) as the ruler who executed John the Baptist (Mark 6:14–29), sought Jesus’ life (Luke 13:31–33), and later tried Him (Luke 23:7–12). His great-grandfather was Herod the Great, who ruled at the time of Jesus’ birth (Matt. 2:1–19; Luke 1:5) and murdered the children of Bethlehem in an effort to kill the newborn King. . . .

Although he did not rule Judea, Agrippa had been granted control of the temple treasury and the right to appoint the high priest. The Romans considered him an expert on Jewish affairs, as did Paul (26:3). Agrippa tried to prevent the Jewish revolt, but when it broke out in A.D. 66, he sided with the Romans and thus became a traitor to his people . (Acts, MNTC, 2:326)

- Paul’s journey to Rome (27:1–28:15) (A.D. 58/59)
- Paul’s first imprisonment in Rome (28:16–31) (A.D. 59/60–62)
 1. Paul describes his own imprisonment (Eph. 3:1; 4:1; 6:20; Php. 1:13, 14, 17; Col. 4:8; Philemon 1, 9, 10, 13)
 2. Tychicus ministers to Paul (Eph. 6:21–22; Col. 4:7–8; cf. Acts 20:4)
 3. Onesimus sent back to Philemon (Col. 4:9; Philemon 10)
 4. Archippus ministers to Paul (Col. 4:17; Philemon 2)
 5. Luke is with Paul (Col. 4:14; Philemon 24; cf. Acts 20:7ff)
 6. Timothy is with Paul (Php. 1:1; 2:19; Col. 1:1; Philemon 1)
 7. Those of Caesar’s household (Php. 4:22 with 1:13)
 8. Paul is confident of his future release (Php. 1:19–20)

II. The First-Century Church History after the Book of Acts (A.D. 60–100)

A. The 60s

- Paul writes “Prison Epistles” during his first Roman imprisonment (A.D. 60–62)
- Luke completes the Book of Acts during Paul’s first Roman imprisonment (A.D. 61/62)
- James, the half-brother of Jesus, martyred in Jerusalem around A.D. 62

- Paul's Fourth Missionary Journey (A.D. 62–66) ... based on references in the pastorals that do not fit with the Acts account, and on Paul's anticipation that he would be released from his first imprisonment (Php. 1:19).
 - Ephesus and Macedonia (1 Tim. 1:3)
 - Troas and Miletus (2 Tim. 4:13, 20)
 - Crete (Titus 1:5)
 - Spain (Romans 15:23–24); also references from Clement of Rome [A.D. 95] and the Muratorian Fragment [A.D. 180–200])
- Paul writes "Pastoral Epistles" to Timothy (pastor at Ephesus) and Titus (church planter on Crete) (A.D. 62–66)
- Peter writes his epistles to encourage suffering believers and to warn of false teachers in the church; Jude also written around this time (A.D. 62–66)
- Great Fire in Rome (A.D. 64), begins intense persecution under Nero
 - Fire started on the night of July 18 to July 19, 64, in a section of the city where there were shops selling flammable goods
 - According to the historian Tacitus (56–117), the fire burned for five days, destroying three of the fourteen Roman districts and causing severe damage to an additional seven. Only four districts were unaffected.
 - The cause of the fire is unknown, though Suetonius and Cassius Dio suggest that Nero himself was behind it (arson). Tacitus suggests that Christians confessed to starting the fire, but such confessions could have been induced by torture. Also, accidental fires were not uncommon. Rome would again burn significantly in 69 (under Vitellius) and in 80 (under Titus)
 - Nero was probably (according to Tacitus) in Antium at the time of the fire (though popular legend claims he was fiddling while watching Rome burn, based on Nero's love to perform with the lyre)
 - Nero rushed back to Rome after hearing news of the fire and immediately organized relief efforts. After the fire was over, Nero built a beautiful new palace in part of the city that had burned. This was partially what fueled rumors that Nero himself had started the fire.
 - Thus, to deflect the blame, Nero charged the Christians with the fire, and began persecuting them in horrendous ways.
 - According to Tacitus: "Consequently, to get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from

whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judaea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their centre and become popular. Accordingly, an arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty; then, upon their information, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of firing the city, as of hatred against mankind. Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths. Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burnt, to serve as a nightly illumination, when daylight had expired” (*Annals* XV.44).

- Early Christian tradition views Nero as responsible for the deaths of both Peter and Paul. Because of his tortuous treatment of them, some early Christians thought Nero was the Antichrist.

Henry T. Sell: The numbers of the Christians in the city [of Rome] at this time must have been considerable even to attract the attention of the emperor and the multitude. Tacitus says that those who confessed (that they were Christians) were first seized and then on their evidence “a huge multitude” were convicted. It is the phrase “huge multitude” which arrests attention at once, but Tacitus is a careful historian and in spite of all attempts to minimize its force by those who declare the Christians could have been but few at this time, it undoubtedly has a large basis of fact. Paul had come to Rome three years before and had dwelt there for two years. When it is recalled what he had done in Ephesus—and in many other cities—in converting so many that the whole city was stirred about the gospel which he preached it is not strange that, though a prisoner, he made his influence felt throughout the city in converting great numbers to Christ. Then, too, Paul shows by his letter to the Romans that there were many Christians in the city before he came, so that their “faith is spoken of throughout the whole world” (Romans 1:8) (*Studies in Early Church History*, electronic edition)

- Paul’s second imprisonment (A.D. 66/67)
- Paul executed under Nero (cf. 2 Tim. 4:6–18) (before Nero’s death in A.D. 68)
- Mark writes down the “memoirs of Peter” (A.D. 62–68)
- Peter executed under Nero (before Nero’s death in A.D. 68)
- Book of Hebrews written (A.D. 68–69), Timothy released from prison (Hebrews 13:23)

B. The Last 30 Years (70–100)

- The destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70)
 - Anti-Roman Zealots had occupied Jerusalem since A.D. 66
 - The Roman army, lead by future emperor Titus, besieged the city in 70 and after several skirmishes successfully took the Antonia Fortress, from which the rest of the city was quickly subdued
 - In the process of the fighting the Temple was burned to the ground (probably unintentionally)
 - After fully regaining control of the city (on September 7, 70), the Romans continued to pursue those rebels who had fled
 - Masada, the final Zealot stronghold, fell in 73

Philip Schaff: The Christians of Jerusalem, remembering the Lord’s admonition, forsook the doomed city in good time and fled to the town of Pella in the Decapolis, beyond the Jordan, in the north of Peraea, where king Herod Agrippa II., before whom Paul once stood, opened to them a safe asylum. An old tradition says that a divine voice or angel revealed to their leaders the duty of flight. There, in the midst of a population chiefly Gentile, the church of the circumcision was reconstructed. Unfortunately, its history is hidden from us. But it never recovered its former importance. When Jerusalem was rebuilt as a Christian city, its bishop was raised to the dignity of one of the four patriarchs of the East, but it was a patriarchate of honor, not of power, and sank to a mere shadow after the Mohammedan invasion (*History of the Christian Church*, electronic edition).

Henry T. Sell: The year 70 A.D. marked the close of an old and the beginning of a new and sad era for the Jews. In that year Jerusalem and its Temple were destroyed. In the fearful scenes which took place some may have remembered that the Jewish multitude had cried out, when Jesus was before Pilate and he wished to release Him, “His blood be on us, and on our children” (Matthew 27:25). Jesus had foretold the ruin of the city (Matthew 23:37–39; 24) and had wept over it (Luke 19:41–44; 23:28–31). With the fall of the Holy City and Temple it was now no longer possible to keep the Jewish law. This was a powerful argument for the Christians which the Jews were unable to answer. But in many respects, while the conflict was practically coming to an end, the hatred of the Jews for the Christians was intensified, henceforth the Christian in the eyes of the Jew was not merely a rival but a traitor, and the Gentile Christian was one who enjoyed the gains of treason at the Jew’s expense. (*Studies in Early Church History*, electronic edition).

- The Writings of John (A.D. 80–95)
 - At some point (probably after A.D. 63), John moved from Jerusalem to Ephesus (it would have been after Paul had ministered in Ephesus and written to Timothy about his ministry in Ephesus, since John is not mentioned)

- It may have been the deaths of Peter and Paul that motivated John to come to Asia Minor and help give oversight to those churches
- The destruction of Jerusalem in 70 made it impossible for any Christian leaders to stay there, though John may have left before those events

Philip Schaff: If it were not for the writings of John the last thirty years of the first century would be almost an entire blank. They resemble that mysterious period of forty days between the resurrection and the ascension, when the Lord hovered, as it were, between heaven and earth, barely touching the earth beneath, and appearing to the disciples like a spirit from the other world. But the theology of the second and third centuries evidently presupposes the writings of John, and starts from his Christology (*History of the Christian Church*, electronic edition).

- John's letters indicate that sound doctrine (as opposed to false doctrine) continued to be a major concern during this time in the church's development (as insipid forms of Gnosticism were starting to gain influence — cf. 1 John 4:1–3; 2 John 1:7–11)
- John's Gospel provided additional information about Jesus to supplement the Synoptic Gospels
- The first three chapters of Revelation give valuable insights into the state of the church (at least in Asia Minor) in the last decade of the first century
- Persecution under Domitian (A.D. 81–96) had resulted in John's exile to the Isle of Patmos (in the mid-90s) from Ephesus
- According to church tradition, John died a natural death (back in Ephesus) during the reign of Trajan, sometime after A.D. 98

C. Throughout these decades, faithful men had been raised up to follow in the apostles' footsteps

- Paul had charged Timothy to entrust the truth to faithful men, who could entrust it to others also (2 Tim. 2:2)
- Church tradition suggests that Linus followed Peter as the pastor in Rome (cf. 2 Tim. 4:21); also Clement, the fourth pastor in Rome, may possibly be mentioned in Philippians 4:3
- Elders and church leaders had been established in all of the churches Paul (and the other apostles) had planted (cf. Titus 1:5); so now those leaders worked to faithfully fulfill the ministry they had inherited from the apostles
- The apostolic era was the foundation age of the church (Eph. 2:20) during which the New Testament was completed, being the teachings of Christ

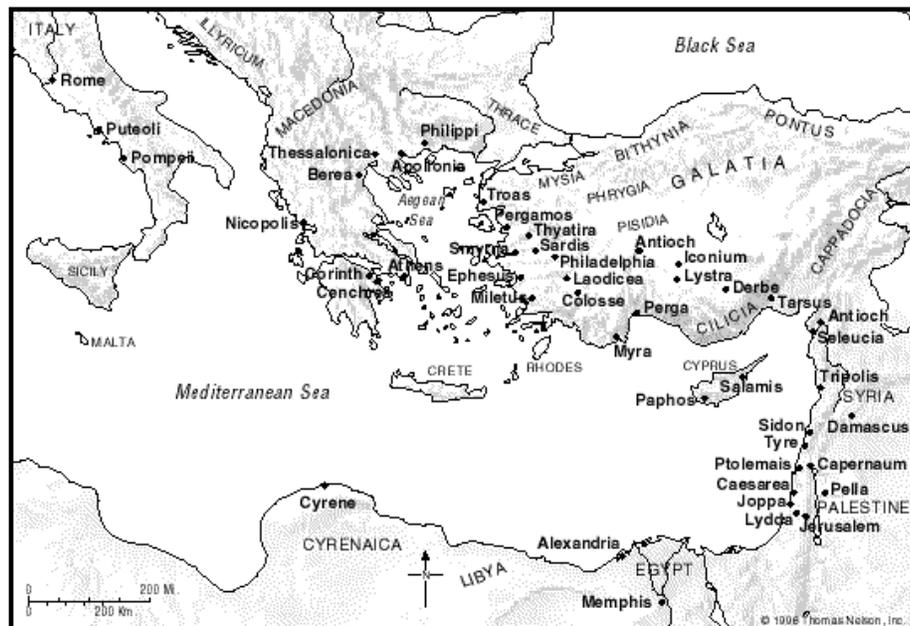
through His Spirit to His authorized representatives (cf. John 14–16; 2 Pet. 3:15).

- Polycarp and others (such as Papias) are referenced as disciples of the apostle John
- Clement of Rome (the fourth pastor of the church at Rome and author of *The First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians*) was a contemporary of the apostle John

D. Not everything that was happening is recorded for us in Scripture

- Church tradition suggests that some of the other apostles were busy preaching the Gospel in other parts of the world
- Andrew and Philip supposedly preached in Greece and Asia Minor; Matthew in Ethiopia, Persia, or Macedonia; Thomas in India; Bartholomew in Armenia; James the son of Alphaeus in Syria; Thaddaeus in Edessa; and Simon the Zealot in Persia, North Africa, or Britain.

Cities with Churches by A.D. 100



(Map from *The MacArthur Study Bible*, note on 1 Thess. 2)

What Happened to the Twelve Disciples in Church History?		
<i>(Parts of this chart adapted from Robert C. Walton, <i>Chronological and Background Charts of Church History</i>)</i>		
Name	Biblical Information	Church Tradition
Peter	Apostolic spokesman for the early church; he is the focus of the first section of the book of Acts; wrote two NT epistles	Was crucified upside down in Rome under the reign of Nero; late tradition suggest he visited Britain and Gaul
Andrew	In Jerusalem at Pentecost	Supposedly preached in Scythia, Asia Minor, and Greece; eventually crucified at Patras in Achaia
James, Son of Zebedee	In Jerusalem at Pentecost, and presumably until his execution by Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12)	
John	Associated with Peter early in Acts (at Temple and in Samaria); exiled to Patmos at the end of his life; wrote a Gospel, three epistles, and the book of Revelation	Relocated from Jerusalem to Ephesus probably in the mid to late 60s; early opponent of Gnosticism; died a natural death in Ephesus around 100
Philip	In Jerusalem at Pentecost; not the same Philip as in Acts 8	Supposedly crucified in Hierapolis in Asia Minor
Matthew	In Jerusalem at Pentecost; wrote a Gospel	Conflicting traditions place him in Macedonia, Persia, Parthia, and Ethiopia
Thomas	In Jerusalem at Pentecost	Is supposed to have preached in Babylon; strong tradition speaks of ministry (and ultimately martyrdom) in India
Bartholomew	In Jerusalem at Pentecost	Accompanied Philip to Hierapolis; martyred after ministry in Armenia
James, Son of Alphaeus	In Jerusalem at Pentecost	Often confused with James the brother of Jesus; possibly ministered in Syria; crucified
Thaddaeus	In Jerusalem at Pentecost	Often confused with Jude, the brother of Jesus; ministered in Edessa
Simon the Zealot	In Jerusalem at Pentecost	Variously connected with Persia, Egypt, Carthage, and Britain
Judas Iscariot	Committed suicide after his betrayal of Jesus	

How much stock should we put in some of these traditions?

Justo Gonzalez: It is certain that some of the apostles—particularly Peter, John, and Paul—did travel proclaiming the Gospel and supervising the churches that had been founded, either by them or by others. Perhaps other apostles, such as Thomas, did likewise. But most of the traditions regarding apostolic travels date from a later period, when it was believed that the apostles divided the world among themselves, and when the church in each country or city sought to claim apostolic origins. In truth, most of the missionary work was not carried out by the apostles, but rather by the countless and nameless Christians who for different reasons—persecution, business, or missionary calling—traveled from place to place taking the news of the Gospel with them. (*The Story of Christianity*, 30)

Eusebius’s account of the martyrdom of Peter and Paul under Nero (*Church History*, 2.25):

When the government of Nero was now firmly established, he began to plunge into unholy pursuits, and armed himself even against the religion of the God of the universe. To describe the greatness of his depravity does not lie within the plan of the present work. As there are many indeed that have recorded his history in most accurate narratives, every one may at his pleasure learn from them the coarseness of the man’s extraordinary madness, under the influence of which, after he had accomplished the destruction of so many myriads without any reason, he ran into such blood-guiltiness that he did not spare even his nearest relatives and dearest friends, but destroyed his mother and his brothers and his wife, with very many others of his own family as he would private and public enemies, with various kinds of deaths. But with all these things this particular in the catalogue of his crimes was still wanting, that he was the first of the emperors who showed himself an enemy of the divine religion.

The Roman Tertullian is likewise a witness of this. He writes as follows: “Examine your records. There you will find that Nero was the first that persecuted this doctrine, particularly then when after subduing all the east, he exercised his cruelty against all at Rome. We glory in having such a man the leader in our punishment. For whoever knows him can understand that nothing was condemned by Nero unless it was something of great excellence.”

Thus publicly announcing himself as the first among God’s chief enemies, he was led on to the slaughter of the apostles. It is, therefore, recorded that Paul was beheaded in Rome itself, and that Peter likewise was crucified under Nero. This account of Peter and Paul is substantiated by the fact that their names are preserved in the cemeteries of that place even to the present day. . . .

And that they both suffered martyrdom at the same time is stated by Dionysius, bishop of Corinth, in his epistle to the Romans, in the following words: “You have thus by such an admonition bound together the planting of Peter and of Paul at Rome and Corinth. For both of them planted and likewise taught us in our Corinth. And they taught together in like manner in Italy, and suffered martyrdom at the same time.” I have quoted these things in order that the truth of the history might be still more confirmed.

Other Early Christian Leaders in Church Tradition:

John MacArthur: A brief survey of ancient Christian tradition reveals that Peter, Andrew, Philip, and James the son of Alphaeus were all crucified; Bartholomew was whipped to death and then crucified; James the son of Zebedee was beheaded, as was Paul; Thomas was stabbed with spears; Mark was dragged to death through the streets of Alexandria; and James the half-brother of Jesus was stoned by order of the Sanhedrin. Others, including Matthew, Simon the Zealot, Thaddeus, Timothy, and Stephen, were also killed for their unwavering commitment to the Lord. (*John 12–21*, MNTC, 188)

- John Mark (author of the Gospel of Mark)
 - His mother’s home was a meeting place for Christians (Acts 12:12 – 17)
 - He accompanied Paul on his first missionary journey, and later was the center of the controversy between Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15:37–40); he was a cousin of Barnabas (Col. 4:10)
 - Later with Peter in Rome (1 Pet. 5:13); wrote down Peter’s memoirs (according to Papias and numerous other church fathers)
 - Reconciled to Paul at some point before Paul’s death; sent by Paul to Colosse (Col. 2:4) and later ministered to Paul in Rome (Phm 24; 2 Tim. 4:11)
 - After Paul’s death, ministered in the Pentapolis in North Africa and then in Alexandria, Egypt – where Coptic tradition teaches that he founded a church
 - Inhabitants of Alexandria were offended that Mark tried to convert them from following their traditional Egyptian idols; around A.D. 68, he was tied to horses and drug to death throughout the streets of Alexandria
- Luke (author of the Gospel of Luke)
 - A Greek physician from Antioch (cf. Col. 4:14)
 - Traveled with Paul during parts of Paul’s missionary journeys (Acts; Phm. 24)
 - Was with Paul in Rome to the end of Paul’s life (2 Tim. 4:11)
 - According to the *Anti-Marcionite Prologue to the Gospel of Luke* (written somewhere between the 2nd and 4th centuries):

Luke, a native of Antioch, by profession a physician. He had become a disciple of the apostles and later followed Paul until his [Paul's] martyrdom. Having served the Lord continuously, unmarried and without children, filled with the Holy Spirit he died at the age of 84 years [in Thebes, the capital of Boeotia].
- Apollos
 - According to Jerome, Apollos left Corinth because of the terrible divisions in the church there, and went to minister in Crete
 - After Paul’s letters changed the atmosphere in Corinth, Apollos returned there to be the church’s pastor

{ ADDENDUM }

WERE THE APOSTLES UNIQUE TO THE FIRST-CENTURY CHURCH,
OR ARE THERE STILL APOSTLES IN THE CHURCH TODAY?

Note: The following comes from a three-part article originally posted on the *Pulpit* blog.

Peter, Paul, and Murray?

(By Nathan Busenitz)

Forgive the cute title, but it underscores an important question in the cessation/continuation debate — namely: *Are there still apostles in the church today?* In other words, could someone today (perhaps a guy named “Murray”) be an apostle in the same vein as Peter or Paul?



At the outset, we should note that by “apostles” we do not simply mean “sent ones” in the general sense. Rather, we are speaking of those select individuals directly appointed and authorized by Jesus Christ to be His immediate representatives on earth. In this sense, we are speaking of “capital A” apostles – such as the Twelve and the apostle Paul.

It is these type of “apostles” that Paul speaks of in Ephesians 2:20; 3:5; 4:11 and in 1 Corinthians 12:29–30. This is important since, especially in Ephesians 4 and in 1 Corinthians 12–14, Paul references apostleship within the context of the charismatic gifts. If “apostleship” has ceased, it gives us grounds to at least consider whether or not some of the other offices/gifts have ceased as well. If the apostles were unique, and the period in which they ministered was unique, then perhaps the gifts that characterized the apostolic age were also unique.

The question then is an important one, underscoring the basic principle of the cessationist paradigm – namely, the uniqueness of the apostolic age and the subsequent cessation of certain aspects of that age.

There are at least five reasons why I believe there are no longer any apostles in the church today (and in fact have not been since the death of the apostle John). We’ll unpack these reasons over the next several days.

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1. The Qualifications Necessary for Apostleship

First, and perhaps most basically, the qualifications necessary for apostleship preclude contemporary Christians from filling the apostolic office.

In order to be an apostle, one had to meet at least three necessary qualifications: **(1)** an apostle had to be an eyewitness of the resurrected Christ (Acts 1:22; 10:39–41; 1 Cor. 9:1; 15:7–8); **(2)** an apostle had to be directly appointed by Jesus Christ (Mark 3:14; Luke 6:13; Acts 1:2, 24; 10:41; Gal. 1:1); and **(3)** an apostle had to be able to confirm his mission and message with miraculous signs (Matt. 10:1–2; Acts 1:5–8; 2:43; 4:33; 5:12; 8:14; 2 Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:3–4). We might also note that, in choosing Matthias as a replacement for Judas, the eleven also looked for someone who had accompanied Jesus throughout His entire earthly ministry (Acts 1:21–22; 10:39–41).

Based on these qualifications alone, many continuationists agree that there are no apostles in the church today. Thus, Wayne Grudem (a continuationist) notes in his *Systematic Theology*, “It seems that no apostles were appointed after Paul, and certainly, since no one today can meet the qualification of having seen the risen Christ with his own eyes, there are no apostles today” (p. 911).

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2. The Uniqueness of Paul’s Apostleship

But what about the apostle Paul?

Some have contended that, in the same way that Paul was an apostle, there might still be apostles in the church today. But this ignores the uniqueness with which Paul viewed his own apostleship. Paul’s situation was not the norm, as he himself explains in 1 Corinthians 15:8–9. He saw himself as a one-of-a-kind anomaly, openly calling himself “the last” and “the least” of the apostles. To cite from Grudem again:

It seems quite certain that there were none appointed after Paul. When Paul lists the resurrection appearances of Christ, he emphasizes the unusual way in which Christ appeared to him, and connects that with the statement that this was the “last” appearance of all, and that he himself is indeed “the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle” (Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 910).

He later adds:

Someone may object that Christ could appear to someone today and appoint that person as an apostle. But the foundational nature of the office of apostle (Eph. 2:20; Rev. 21:14) and the fact that Paul views himself as the last one whom Christ appeared to and appointed as an apostle (“last of all, as to one untimely born,” 1 Cor. 15:8), indicate that this will not happen (*Systematic Theology*, 911, n. 9)

Because Paul’s apostleship was unique, it is not a pattern that we should expect to see replicated in the church today.

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3. Apostolic Authority and the Closing of the Canon

It is our belief that, if we hold to a closed canon, we must also hold to the cessation of the apostolic office.

We turn again to Dr. Grudem for an explanation of the close connection between the apostles and the writing of Scripture:

The New Testament apostles had a unique kind of authority in the early church: authority to speak and write words which were “words of God” in an absolute sense. To disbelieve or disobey them was to disbelieve or disobey God. The apostles, therefore, had the authority to write words which became words of Scripture. This fact in itself should suggest to us that there was something unique about the office of apostle, and that we would not expect it to continue today, for no one today can add words to the Bible and have them be counted as God’s very words or as part of Scripture. (Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 905–906)

Hebrews 1:1–2 indicates that what God first revealed through the Old Testament, He later and more fully revealed through His Son. The New Testament, then, is Christ’s revelation to His church. It begins with His earthly ministry (in the four gospels), and continues through the epistles – letters that were written by His authorized representatives.

Thus, in John 14:26, Christ authorized His apostles to lead the church, promising them that the Helper would come and bring to their remembrance all that Jesus had taught them. The instruction they gave the church, then, was really an extension of Jesus’ ministry, as enabled by the Holy Spirit (cf. Eph. 3:5–6; 2 Pet. 1:20–21). Those in the early church generally understood apostolic instruction as authoritative and as being on par with the OT Scriptures (cf. 1 Thess. 2:13; 1 Cor. 14:37; Gal. 1:9; 2 Pet. 3:16).

To cite from Grudem again, “In place of living apostles present in the church to teach and govern it, we have instead the writings of the apostles in the books of the New Testament. Those New Testament Scriptures fulfill for the church today the absolutely authoritative teaching and governing functions which were fulfilled by the apostles themselves during the early years of the church” (Ibid., 911).

The doctrine of a closed canon is, therefore, largely predicated on the fact that the apostles were unique and are no longer here. After all, if there were still apostles in the church today, with the same authority as the New Testament apostles, how could we definitively claim that the canon is closed? It doesn’t seem that we could.

But *since* there are no longer apostles in the church today, and *since* new inscripturated revelation must be accompanied by apostolic authority and approval, it is not possible to have new inscripturated revelation today. The closing of the canon and the non-continuation of apostles are two concepts that necessarily go hand-in-hand.

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4. The Foundational Role of the Apostles

Closely related to the above is the fact that the apostles were part of the foundation period of the church (Eph. 2:20). Since (following the construction metaphor) the foundation stage precedes the superstructure, it is appropriate to infer that the apostles were given to the church for its beginning stages. As Grudem writes, “God’s purpose in the history of redemption seems to have been to give apostles only at the beginning of the church age (see Eph. 2:20)” (Ibid., 911, n. 9).

Our interpretation of “foundation” (as a reference to past period within the church’s history) is strengthened by the evidence from the earliest church fathers. The foundation stage was something the fathers referred to in the past tense, indicating that they understood it as past.

Thus, Ignatius (c. 35–115) in his *Epistle to the Magnesians*, wrote (speaking in the past tense):

“The people shall be called by a new name, which the Lord shall name them, and shall be a holy people.” This was first fulfilled in Syria; for “the disciples were called Christians at Antioch,” when Paul and Peter were laying the foundations of the Church.

Irenaeus (c. 130–202) in *Against Heresies*, echoes the past tense understanding that Peter and Paul laid the foundations of the Church (in 3.1.1) and later refers to the twelve apostles as “the twelve-pillared foundation of the church” (in 4.21.3).

Tertullian (c. 155–230), in *The Five Books Against Marcion* (chapter 21), notes the importance of holding to apostolic doctrine, even in a post-apostolic age:

No doubt, *after the time of the apostles*, the truth respecting the belief of God suffered corruption, but it is equally certain that during the life of the apostles their teaching on this great article did not suffer at all; so that no other teaching will have the right of being received as apostolic than that which is at the present day proclaimed in the churches of apostolic foundation. (Emphasis added)

Lactantius (c. 240–320), also, in *The Divine Institutes* (4.21) refers to a past time in which the foundations of the church were laid:

But the disciples, being dispersed through the provinces, everywhere laid the foundations of the Church, themselves also in the name of their divine Master doing many and almost incredible miracles; for at His departure He had endowed them with power and strength, by which the system of their new announcement might be founded and confirmed.

Other examples could also be added from the later Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers. Chrysostom, for instance, would be another such source (from his *Homilies on Ephesians*).

Our apologies for the extended survey of historical literature, but our point is simply this: The earliest church fathers, from just after the apostolic era, understood the work of the apostles to constitute a unique, “foundational” stage of the church. The fact that they reference this in the past tense, as something distinct from their own ministries, indicates that they understood that the apostolic age had passed, and thus the foundation stage was over.

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5. The Historical Testimony of Those Following the Apostles

In our previous point, we contended that the apostles were given for the foundation stage of the church (Eph. 2:20), and that the early church recognized this foundation stage as a specific time-period that did not continue past the first century.

But it is important to go one step further, and note that the earliest church fathers saw the apostles as a unique group of men, distinct from all who would follow after them.



(A) Those who came after the apostles did *not* view themselves or their contemporaries as apostles.

According to their own self-testimony, those that followed the apostles were not apostles themselves, but were the “disciples of the apostles” (*The Epistle of Mathetes to Diognetus*, 11; *Fragments of Papias*, 5; cf. *The Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians*, 6; Ignatius, *Against Heresies*, 1.10), the elders and deacons of the churches.

Thus, Clement (late first century) in his *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 42, notes that:

The apostles have preached the Gospel to us from the Lord Jesus Christ; Jesus Christ [has done so] from God. Christ therefore was sent forth by God, and the apostles by Christ. Both these appointments, then, were made in an orderly way, according to the will of God. Having therefore received their orders, and being fully assured by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, and established in the word of God, with full assurance of the Holy Ghost, they went forth proclaiming that the kingdom of God was at hand. And thus preaching through countries and cities, they appointed the first-fruits [of their labors], having first proved them by the Spirit, to be bishops and deacons of those who should afterwards believe.

Ignatius, for instance, purposely avoided equating himself with the apostles. Thus, he wrote, “I do not issue commands on these points *as if I were an apostle*; but, as your fellow-servant, I put you in mind of them” (*The Epistle of Ignatius to the Antiochians*, 11; emphasis added).

(B) Those who followed the apostles viewed apostolic writings as both unique and authoritative.

Moreover, in keeping with our third point (from yesterday), it was “the doctrine of the apostles” (cf. *The Epistle of Ignatius to the Magnesians*, 13; *The Epistle of Ignatius to the Antiochians*, 1) that was to be guarded, taught, and heeded. Thus, the “memoirs of the apostles” were held as canonical and authoritative within the early church (cf. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 2.2.5; Victorinus, *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, 10.9). Along these lines, Justin writes:

And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things (*The First Apology of Justin*, 67).

The doctrine and writing of the apostles was unique, having been written by the authoritative representatives of Christ Himself.

(C) Those who followed the apostles saw the apostolic age as a unique and unrepeated period of church history.

The fathers saw the “times of the apostles” as a distinct, non-repeateable period of church history (cf. Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, 3.36.54; *Reply to Faustus*, 32.13; *On Baptism*, 14.16; *et al*). Thus, Chrysostom wrote on the uniqueness of fellowship during the apostolic age:

I wish to give you an example of friendship. Friends, that is, friends according to Christ, surpass fathers and sons. For tell me not of friends of the present day, since this good thing also *has past away* with others. But consider, *in the time of the Apostles*, I speak not of the chief men, but of the believers themselves generally; “all,” he says, “were of one heart and soul. and not one of them said that aught of the things which he possessed was his own... and distribution was made unto each, according as any one had need.” (Acts 4:32, 35.) There were *then* no such words as “mine” and “thine.” This is friendship, that a man should not consider his goods his own, but his neighbor’s, that his possessions belong to another; that he should be as careful of his friend’s soul, as of his own; and the friend likewise. (*Homily on 1 Thess. 1:8-10*; emphasis added)

Chrysostom looked back to the deep affection that characterized the apostolic era to provide a contrast to the relative lovelessness of the church in his day. In so doing, he underscores the fact that he understood the apostolic age to be long past. One additional passage might be cited in this regard:

I know that ye open wide your mouths and are amazed, at being to hear that it is in your power to have a greater gift than raising the dead, and giving eyes to the blind, doing the same things *which were done in the time of the Apostles*. And it seems to you past belief. What then is this gift? charity. (*Homily on Heb. 1:6-8*; emphasis added)

Many more examples from church history could be given. Eusebius’s whole history is based on the progression of church history from the “times of the apostles” (*Ecclesiastical History*, Book 8, introduction). Basil, in his work *On the Spirit*, points to previous leaders from church history (specifically Irenaeus) as those “who lived near the times of the Apostles” (29.72). Tertullian (whom we cited yesterday) spoke of events that occurred “after the times of the apostles” (*The Five Books Against Marcion*, 21).

Historical Conclusions

Consistently, the fathers (from the earliest times) mark the apostolic age (and the apostles themselves) as unique. Their writings were unique and authoritative. Those that followed them

were not considered to be apostles. Nor were the times that followed seen as equivalent to the times of the apostles.

Thus we conclude, once again, with Grudem:

It is noteworthy that no major leader in the history of the church – not Athanasius or Augustine, not Luther or Calvin, not Wesley or Whitefield – has taken to himself the title of “apostle” or let himself be called an apostle. If any in modern times want to take the title “apostle” to themselves, they immediately raise the suspicion that they may be motivated by inappropriate pride and desires for self-exaltation, along with excessive ambition and a desire for much more authority in the church than any one person should rightfully have. (*Systematic Theology*, 911)

A Final Note

Throughout these posts we have leaned heavily on the work of Wayne Grudem (specifically, his *Systematic Theology*). This has been intentional for two reasons: (1) he makes excellent, biblically-sound arguments (and we appreciate everything he writes, even if we don’t always agree with his conclusions); and (2) he is a well-known and respected continuationist.

It is significant, in our opinion, that (as a continuationist) he argues so convincingly for the cessation of the apostolic office and the uniqueness of the apostolic age – since this is the very premise upon which the cessationist paradigm is built.

While the cessation of the apostolic gift/office does not ultimately *prove* the cessationist case, it does strengthen the overall position – especially in passages like 1 Corinthians 12:28–30, Ephesians 2:20 and 4:11, where apostleship is listed in direct connection with the other charismatic gifts and offices.

{ LECTURE 3 }

THE DISCIPLES OF THE APOSTLES: *The Apostolic Fathers*

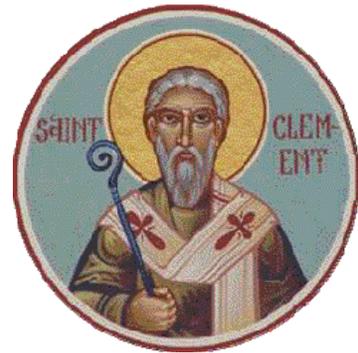
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“These things entrust to faithful men, who will be able to entrust others also.”

INTRODUCTORY NOTE: Although scholars do not always agree on the specific dates, the general consensus includes the following individuals in this category: Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch, Barnabas of Alexandria, Papias of Heiropolis, Polycarp of Smyrna, and the authors of *The Didache*, *The Shepherd of Hermas*, and *The Letter to Diognetus*. The early date of these Fathers and their writings is what makes them so significant. Outside of the New Testament itself, they furnish the earliest testimony of church life—echoing the initial understanding of apostolic teaching.

Clement of Rome (c. 30–d. 100)

- The fourth pastor at the church of Rome (from around 90–100); followed after Peter, Linus, and Cletus (according to Roman tradition)
- He was born before Christ died and died around the same time as the Apostle John
- Probably mentioned in Philippians 4:3; if so, then he was a coworker with Paul; probably mentioned also in *Shepherd of Hermas*
- A disciple of both Peter and Paul (from their time in Rome); according to tradition, martyred under Emperor Trajan
- He wrote a letter to the Corinthians around 95. This is generally considered to be the oldest Christian document we have outside of the New Testament. It was written while the apostle John was still alive.
 - That Clement wrote this letter is affirmed by Eusebius (*Hist. Eccl.*, 3. 15), Origen (*Comm. in Joan.*, 1. 29), and others.
 - Eusebius (*Hist. Eccl.*, 3. 16) says this about this letter: “There is one acknowledged Epistle of this Clement [whom he has just identified with the friend of St. Paul], great and admirable, which he wrote in the name of the Church of Rome to the Church at Corinth, sedition having then arisen in the latter Church. We are aware that this Epistle has been publicly read in very many churches both in old times, and also in our own day.”
- Scholars generally agree that the *Second Epistle of Clement* was written later and is not his work.



Polycarp of Smyrna (c. 69–c. 155)

- Disciple of John; friend of Ignatius; companion of Papias; teacher of Irenaeus
- One extant letter, *Letter to the Philippians*
- Is a connecting link between first and second century
- Smyrna is mentioned in Rev. 2:8–13
- Stabbed to death at 86 years old and then his body burned at the stake; later writing entitled, *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*, details his death

According to this account:

- When he was found, he fed dinner to the Roman guards who had come to arrest him. He then asked for an hour in prayer, which they permitted him to have. Yet his prayer was so fervent and passionate that his captors regretted even being involved in his apprehension.
 - Appearing before a Roman proconsul, Polycarp stood firm. The proconsul even urged him to deny Christ, “Swear, and I will release you—reproach Christ.”
 - But Polycarp’s faith was undeterred: “Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He never once wronged me; how then shall I blaspheme my King, Who has saved me?” When it was clear that Polycarp would not recant, he was sentenced to be burned at the stake.
- **Key Quote:**

“I know that through grace you are saved, not of works, but by the will of God, through Jesus Christ.” (*The Epistle of Philippians*)

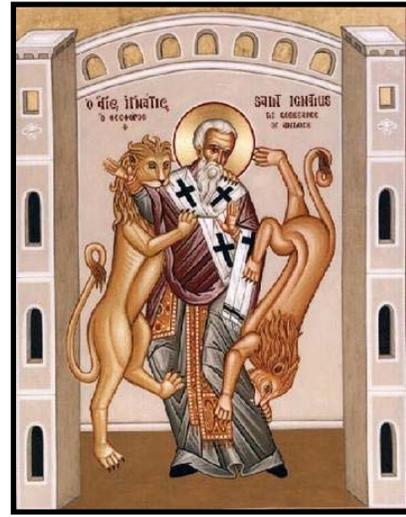
Ignatius of Antioch (d. between 98–117)

- Bishop of the church in Syrian Antioch; according to tradition, he was the third pastor in Antioch and was appointed by Peter himself to the position
- Wrote at least seven authentic letters to various churches; he was a disciple and contemporary of the Apostle John



- Killed as a martyr in Rome, in the Coliseum
- Promoted single-bishop form of church government, and the replacement of the Sabbath with the Lord's Day
- **Key Quotes:**

Regarding salvation: “His cross, and his death, and his resurrection, and the faith which is through him, are my unpolluted muniments; and in these, through your prayers, I am willing to be justified” (Epistle to Philadelphians).



Regarding the Lord's Day: Be not seduced by strange doctrines nor by antiquated fables, which are profitless. For if even unto this day we live after the manner of Judaism, we avow that we have not received grace.... If then those who had walked in ancient practices attained unto newness of hope, no longer observing Sabbaths but fashioning their lives after the Lord's day, on which our life also arose through Him and through His death which some men deny ... how shall we be able to live apart from Him? ... It is monstrous to talk of Jesus Christ and to practise Judaism. For Christianity did not believe in Judaism, but Judaism in Christianity — *Ignatius to the Magnesians* 8:1, 9:1-2, 10:3, Lightfoot translation.

First to use the term “catholic” [*katholikos* or “universal”] church:

Wherever the bishop appears, there let the people be; as wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church. It is not lawful to baptize or give communion without the consent of the bishop. On the other hand, whatever has his approval is pleasing to God. Thus, whatever is done will be safe and valid. — *Letter to the Smyrnaeans* 8, J.R. Willis translation.

Regarding martyrdom: I am writing to all the Churches and I enjoin all, that I am dying willingly for God's sake, if only you do not prevent it. I beg you, do not do me an untimely kindness. Allow me to be eaten by the beasts, which are my way of reaching to God. I am God's wheat, and I am to be ground by the teeth of wild beasts, so that I may become the pure bread of Christ.— *Letter to the Romans*

Papias (c. 60–c. 130)

- Wrote *Interpretations of the Sayings of the Lord* (now lost); only extant writings come from Irenaeus and Eusebius
- Was ridiculed by Eusebius for believing in a literal millennial kingdom
- Noted that Mark wrote his gospel from Peter; and that Matthew wrote his gospel in Hebrew
- **Key Quotes:**

On his relationship to John: I will not hesitate to add also for you to my interpretations what I formerly learned with care from the Presbyters and have carefully stored in memory, giving assurance of its truth. For I did not take pleasure as the many do in those who speak much, but in those who teach what is true, nor in those who relate foreign precepts, but in those who relate the precepts which were given by the Lord to the faith and came down from the Truth itself. And also if any follower of the Presbyters happened to come, I would inquire for the sayings of the Presbyters, what Andrew said, or what Peter said, or what Philip or what Thomas or James or what John or Matthew or any other of the Lord's disciples, and for the things which other of the Lord's disciples, and for the things which Aristion and the Presbyter John, the disciples of the Lord, were saying. For I considered that I should not get so much advantage from matter in books as from the voice which yet lives and remains.

On the writing of the Gospels: Mark having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately whatsoever he remembered. It was not, however, in exact order that he related the sayings or deeds of Christ. For he neither heard the Lord nor accompanied Him. But afterwards, as I said, he accompanied Peter, who accommodated his instructions to the necessities [of his hearers], but with no intention of giving a regular narrative of the Lord's sayings. Wherefore Mark made no mistake in thus writing some things as he remembered them. For of one thing he took especial care, not to omit anything he had heard, and not to put anything fictitious into the statements. Matthew put together the oracles [of the Lord] in the Hebrew language, and each one interpreted them as best he could.

On premillennialism (from Eusebius): The same person, moreover, has set down other things as coming to him from unwritten tradition, amongst these some strange parables and instructions of the Saviour, and some other things of a more fabulous nature. Amongst these he says that there will be a millennium after the resurrection from the dead, when the personal reign of Christ will be established on this earth.” (Exposition of the Oracles of the Lord - Fragment VI).

SELECT READINGS FROM THE APOSTOLIC FATHERS

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The First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians

(Translation by J. B. Lightfoot with English wording updated slightly)

Chapter 31

- (1) Let us therefore cling to His blessing, and let us see what are the ways of blessing. Let us study the records of the things that have happened from the beginning.
- (2) Why was our father Abraham blessed? Was it not because he wrought righteousness and truth through faith?
- (3) Isaac with confidence, as knowing the future, was led as a willing sacrifice.
- (4) Jacob with humility departed from his land because of his brother, and went to Laban and served; and the twelve tribes of Israel were given to him.

Chapter 32

- (1) If any man will consider them one by one in sincerity, he shall understand the magnificence of the gifts that are given by Him.
- (2) For of Jacob are all the priests and Levites who minister unto the altar of God; of him is the Lord Jesus as concerning the flesh; of him are kings and rulers and governors in the line of Judah; yea and the rest of his tribes are held in no small honor, seeing that God promised saying, *Thy seed shall be as the stars of heaven.*
- (3) They all therefore were glorified and magnified, not through themselves or their own works or the righteous doing which they wrought, but through His will.
- (4) And so we, having been called through His will in Christ Jesus, are not justified through ourselves or through our own wisdom or understanding or piety or works which we wrought in holiness of heart, but through faith, whereby the Almighty God justified all men that have been from the beginning; to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Chapter 33

- (1) What then must we do, brethren? Must we idly abstain from doing good, and forsake love? May the Master never allow this to befall us at least; but let us hasten with urgency and zeal to accomplish every good work.

(2) For the Creator and Master of the universe Himself rejoices in His works.

(3) For by His exceeding great might He established the heavens, and in His incomprehensible wisdom He set them in order. And the earth He separated from the water that surrounds it, and He set it firm on the sure foundation of His own will; and the living creatures which walk upon it He commanded to exist by His ordinance. Having before created the sea and the living creatures therein, He enclosed it by His own power.

(4) Above all, as the most excellent and exceeding great work of His intelligence, with His sacred and faultless hands He formed man in the impress of His own image.

(5) For thus says God, *Let us make man after our image and after our likeness. And God made man; male and female made He them.*

(6) So having finished all these things, He praised them and blessed them and said, *Increase and multiply.*

(7) We have seen that all the righteous were adorned in good works. Yea, and the Lord Himself having adorned Himself with worlds rejoiced.

(8) Seeing then that we have this pattern, let us conform ourselves with all diligence to His will; let us with all our strength work the work of righteousness.

Chapter 34

(1) The good workman receives the bread of his work with boldness, but the slothful and careless dares not look his employer in the face.

(2) It is therefore needful that we should be zealous unto well doing, for of Him are all things:

(3) since He forewarns us saying, *Behold, the Lord, and His reward is before His face, to recompense each man according to his work.*

(4) He exhorts us therefore to believe on Him with our whole heart, and to be not idle nor careless unto every good work.

(5) Let our boast and our confidence be in Him: let us submit ourselves to His will; let us mark the whole host of His angels, how they stand by and minister unto His will.

(6) For the scripture says, *Ten thousands of ten thousands stood by Him, and thousands of thousands ministered unto Him: and they cried aloud, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; all creation is full of His glory.*

(7) Yea, and let us ourselves then, being gathered together in unity with intentness of heart, cry unto Him as from one mouth earnestly that we may be made partakers of His great and glorious promises.

(8) For He says, *Eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and it has not entered into the heart of man what great things He has prepared for them that patiently await Him.*

Chapter 35

(1) How blessed and marvelous are the gifts of God, dearly beloved!!

(2) Life in immortality, splendor in righteousness, truth in boldness, faith in confidence, temperance in sanctification! And all these things fall under our apprehension.

(3) What then, do you think, are the things being prepared for them that patiently await Him? The Creator and Father of the ages, the All holy One Himself knows their number and their beauty.

(4) Let us therefore contend, that we may be found in the number of those that patiently await Him, to the end that we may be partakers of His promised gifts.

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The Shepherd of Hermas

(Translation by Roberts and Donaldson with English wording updated slightly)

- The *Shepherd of Hermas* was written mid-second century. Some scholars categorize it with the apocalypses of NT apocrypha, because it is apocalyptic in style and full of allegory and symbolism.

FOURTH VISION

CONCERNING THE TRIAL AND TRIBULATION THAT ARE TO COME UPON MEN.

(1) Twenty days after the former vision I saw another vision As I walked alone, I prayed the Lord to complete the revelations which He had made to me through His holy Church, that He might strengthen me, and give repentance to all His servants who were going astray, that His great and glorious name might be glorified because He promised to show me His marvels. And while I was glorifying Him and giving Him thanks, a voice, as it were, answered me, “Doubt not, Hermas;” and I began to think with myself, and to say, “What reason have I to doubt—I who have been established by the Lord, and who have seen such glorious sights?” I advanced a little, brethren, and, lo! I saw dust rising even to the heavens. . . . I saw a mighty beast like a whale, and out of its mouth fiery locusts proceeded. But the size of that beast was about a hundred feet, and it had a head like an urn. I began to weep, and to call on the Lord to rescue me from it. Then I remembered the word which I had heard, “Doubt not, O Hermas.” Clothed, therefore, my brethren, with faith in the Lord, and remembering the great things which He had taught me, I boldly faced the beast. Now that beast came on with such noise and force, that it could itself have destroyed a city. I came near it, and the monstrous beast stretched itself out on the ground, and showed nothing but its tongue, and did not stir at all until I had passed by it. Now the beast had four colors on its head—black, then fiery and bloody, then golden, and lastly white.

(2) Now after I had passed by the wild beast, and had moved forward about thirty feet, lo! A virgin met me, adorned as if she were proceeding from the bridal chamber, clothed entirely in white, and with white sandals, and veiled up to her forehead, and her head was covered by a hood. And she had white hair. I knew from my former visions that this was the Church, and I became more joyful. She saluted me, and said, “Hail, O man!” And I returned her salutation, and said, “Lady, hail!” And she answered and said to me, “Has nothing crossed your path?” I said, “I was met by a beast of such a size that it could destroy peoples, but through the power of the Lord and His great mercy I escaped from it.” “Well did you escape from it,” she said, “because you cast your care on God, and opened your heart to the Lord, believing that you can be saved by no other than by His great and glorious name. On this account the Lord has sent His angel . . . and has shut up its mouth, so that it cannot tear you. You have escaped from great tribulation on account of your faith, and because you did not doubt in the presence of such a beast. Go, therefore, and tell the elect of the Lord His mighty deeds, and say to them that this beast is a type of the great tribulation that is coming. If then you prepare yourselves, and repent with all your heart, and turn to the Lord, it will be possible for you to escape it, if your heart be pure and spotless, and you spend the rest of the days of your life in serving the Lord blamelessly. Cast your cares upon the Lord, and He will direct them. Trust the Lord, you who doubt, for He is all-powerful Woe to those who hear these words, and despise them: better were it for them not to have been born.”

The Epistle of Barnabas

(Translation by J. B. Lightfoot with English wording slightly updated)

- The *Epistle of Barnabas* (or Pseudo-Barnabas) was written around 130 from Alexandria, Egypt. It was not written by the NT Barnabas. The book is highly allegorical, in keeping with the allegorical method inherited from the Jews of Alexandria. It distances Christianity from Judaism, especially with regard to strict adherence to the Mosaic Law.

Chapter 1

(1) I bid you greetings, sons and daughters, in the name of the Lord that loved us, in peace.

(2) Seeing that the ordinances of God are great and rich unto you, I rejoice with an exceeding great and overflowing joy at your blessed and glorious spirits; so innate is the grace of the spiritual gift that you have received.

(3) Wherefore also I the more congratulate myself hoping to be saved, for that I truly see the Spirit poured out among you from the riches of the fount of the Lord. So greatly did the much-desired sight of you astonish me respecting you.

(4) Being therefore persuaded of this, and being conscious with myself that having said much among you I know that the Lord journeyed with me on the way of righteousness, and am wholly constrained also myself to this, to love you more than my own soul (for great faith and love dwells in you through the hope of the life which is His)—considering this therefore, that,

(5) if it shall be my care to communicate to you some portion of that which I received, it shall turn to my reward for having ministered to such spirits, I was eager to send you a trifle, that along with your faith you might have your knowledge also perfect.

(6) Well then, there are three ordinances of the Lord; the hope of life, which is the beginning and end of our faith; and righteousness, which is the beginning and end of judgment; love shown in gladness and exultation, the testimony of works of righteousness.

(7) For the Lord made known to us by His prophets things past and present, giving us likewise the first fruits of the taste of things future. And seeing each of these things severally coming to pass, according as He spoke, we ought to offer a richer and higher offering to the fear of Him. But I, not as though I were a teacher, but as one of yourselves, will show forth a few things, whereby ye shall be gladdened in the present circumstances.

Chapter 2

(1) Seeing then that the days are evil, and that the Active One himself has the authority, we ought to give heed to ourselves and to seek out the ordinances of the Lord.

(2) The aids of our faith then are fear and patience, and our allies are long-suffering and self-restraint.

(3) While these abide in a pure spirit in matters relating to the Lord, wisdom, understanding, science, knowledge rejoice with them.

(4) For He hath made manifest to us by all the prophets that He wants neither sacrifices nor whole burnt offerings nor oblations, saying at one time;

(5) What to Me is the multitude of your sacrifices, says the Lord I am full of whole burnt-offerings, and the fat of lambs and the blood of bulls and of goats desire not, not though you should come to be seen of Me. Or who required these things at your hands? You shall continue no more to tread My court. If you bring fine flour, it is in vain; incense is an abomination to Me; your new moons and your Sabbaths I cannot away with.

(6) These things therefore He annulled, that the new law of our Lord Jesus Christ, being free from the yoke of constraint, might have its oblation not made by human hands.

(7) And He says again unto them; *Did command your fathers when they went forth from the land of Egypt to bring Me whole burnt offerings and sacrifices?*

(8) Nay, this was My command unto them, Let none of you bear a grudge of evil against his neighbor in his heart, and love you not a false oath.

(9) So we ought to perceive, unless we are without understanding, the mind of the goodness of our Father; for He speaks to us, desiring us not to go astray like them but to seek how we may approach Him.

(10) Thus then speaks He to us; *The sacrifice unto God is a broken heart, the smell of a sweet savor unto the Lord is a heart that glorifies its Maker.* We ought therefore, brethren, to learn accurately concerning our salvation, lest the Evil One having effected an entrance of error in us should fling us away from our life.

Chapter 3

...

(6) To this end therefore, my brethren, He that is long-suffering, foreseeing that the people whom He had prepared in His well-beloved would believe in simplicity, manifested to us beforehand concerning all things, that we might not as novices shipwreck ourselves upon their law.

* * * * *

The Didache

(Translation by Charles H. Hoole with English wording slightly updated)

- *The Didache* or *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* was not discovered until the nineteenth century. It was considered canonical by some in the early church, and is an early catechetical work dating from between 90 and 160. Along with *First Clement*, it is a very important early church document.

Chapter 1

1:1 There are two paths, one of life and one of death, and the difference is great between the two paths.

1:2 Now the path of life is this -- first, you shall love the God who made you, your neighbor as yourself, and all things that you would not want done to you, do not do unto another.

1:3 And the doctrine of these maxims is as follows. Bless them that curse you, and pray for your enemies. Fast on behalf of those that persecute you; for what reward is there if you love them that love you? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? But love them that hate you, and you will not have an enemy.

1:4 Abstain from fleshly and worldly lusts. If anyone gives you a blow on your right cheek, turn unto him the other also, and you shall be perfect; if any one compels you to go a mile, go with him two; if a man takes away your cloak, give him your coat also; if a man takes from you what is yours, ask not for it again, for neither are you able to do so.

1:5 Give to everyone that asks of you, and ask not again; for the Father wishes that from his own gifts there should be given to all. Blessed is he who gives according to the commandment, for he is free from guilt; but woe unto him that receives. For if a man receives while being in need, he shall be free from guilt; but he who receives when not in need, shall pay a penalty as to why he received and for what purpose; and when he is in tribulation he shall be examined concerning the things that he has done, and shall not depart from there until he has paid the last farthing.

1:6 For of a truth it has been said on these matters, let your almsgiving abide in your hands until you know to whom you have given.

Chapter 2

2:1 But the second commandment of the teaching is this.

2:2 You shall not kill; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not corrupt youth; you shall not commit fornication; you shall not steal; you shall not use soothsaying; you shall not practice sorcery; you shall not kill a child by abortion, neither shall you slay it when born; you shall not covet the goods of your neighbor;

2:3 you shall not commit perjury; you shall not bear false witness; you shall not speak evil; you shall not bear malice;

2:4 you shall not be double-minded or double-tongued, for to be double tongued is the snare of death.

2:5 Your speech shall not be false or empty, but concerned with action.

2:6 You shall not be covetous, or rapacious, or hypocritical, or malicious, or proud; you shall not take up an evil design against thy neighbor;

2:7 you shall not hate any man, but some you shall confute, concerning some you shall pray, and some you shall love beyond your own soul.

Chapter 3

3:1 My child, flee from everything that is evil, and from everything that is like to it.

3:2 Do not be wrathful, for wrath leads unto slaughter; do not be jealous, or contentious, or quarrelsome, for from all these things slaughter ensues.

3:3 My child, do not be lustful, for lust leads unto fornication; do not be a filthy talker; do not be a lifter up of the eye, for from all these things come adulteries.

3:4 My child, do not be an observer of omens, since it leads to idolatry, nor a user of spells, nor an astrologer, nor a travelling purifier, nor wish to see these things, for from all these things idolatry arises.

3:5 My child, do not be a liar, for lying leads unto theft; do not be covetous or conceited, for from all these things thefts arise.

3:6 My child, do not be a complainer, since it leads unto blasphemy; do not be self-willed or evil-minded, for from all these things blasphemies are produced;

3:7 but be meek, for the meek shall inherit the earth;

3:8 be longsuffering, and compassionate, and harmless, and peaceable, and good, and fearing always the words that you have heard.

3:9 You shall not exalt yourself, neither shall you put boldness into your soul. Your soul shall not be joined unto the lofty, but you shall walk with the just and humble.

3:10 Accept the things that happen to you as good, knowing that without God nothing happens.

Chapter 4

4:1 My child, you shall remember both night and day him that speaks unto you the Word of God; you shall honor him as you do the Lord, for where the teaching of the Lord is given, there is the Lord;

4:2 you shall seek out day by day the favor of the saints, that you may rest in their words;

4:3 you shall not desire schism, but shall set at peace them that contend; you shall judge righteously.

...

4:7 You shall not doubt to give, neither shall you complain when giving; for you should know who is the fair distributor of the reward.

4:8 You shall not turn away from someone who is in need, but shall share with your brother in all things, and shall not say that things are your own; for if you are partners in what is immortal, how much more in what is mortal?

4:9 You shall not remove your heart from your son or from your daughter, but from their youth you shall teach them the fear of God.

4:10 You shall not command with bitterness your servant or your handmaid, who hope in the same God as yourself, lest they fear not in consequence the God who is over both; for he comes not to call with respect of persons, but those whom the Spirit has prepared.

4:11 And you servants, submit yourselves to your masters with reverence and fear, as being the type of God.

4:12 You shall hate all hypocrisy and everything that is not pleasing to God;

4:13 you shall not abandon the commandments of the Lord, but shall guard that which you have received, neither adding thereto nor taking there from;

4:14 you shall confess your transgressions in the Church, and shall not come unto prayer with an evil conscience. This is the path of life.

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{ ADDENDUM }

THE GROWTH OF CHRISTIANITY IN THE EARLY CENTURIES A.D.

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1. To the Northwest (Europe)



- The book of Acts describes the initial spread of the gospel to Greece, Italy, and even mentions Spain. The gospel spread quickly into parts of modern-day France and Germany, and even reached Britain relatively early. (According to some traditions, the apostle Andrew is said to have first brought the gospel to Scotland.)
- The majority of this class will focus on the spread of Christianity into Europe, and eventually North America (next semester).

2. To the Southwest (Africa)

- Acts 2 notes that Egyptians and Cyrenians were among the crowds at Pentecost, and Acts 8 explains that an Ethiopian Court official was converted under the ministry of Philip.

- In **North Africa**, Christianity flourished along the Mediterranean coast. The Christians there suffered severe persecution until A.D. 311, when Constantine issued the Edict of Milan.
- In **Egypt**, Christianity flourished until the rise of Islam in the seventh century. Alexandria became one of the most important centers of Christian thought. The main language was Coptic, which is why the church in Egypt became known as the Coptic Church.
- In **Nubia** (modern-day Sudan), Christianity was introduced by Christian monks and traders in the fifth and sixth centuries. As a result, the ruling class in Nubia eventually converted to Christianity.
- In **Aksum** (modern-day Ethiopia), the rulers converted to Christianity in the fourth century as a result of Christian traders who brought the gospel to that region. Of course, the gospel was probably first brought to Ethiopia in the first century by the court official mentioned in Acts 8.

3. **To the East (Asia)**

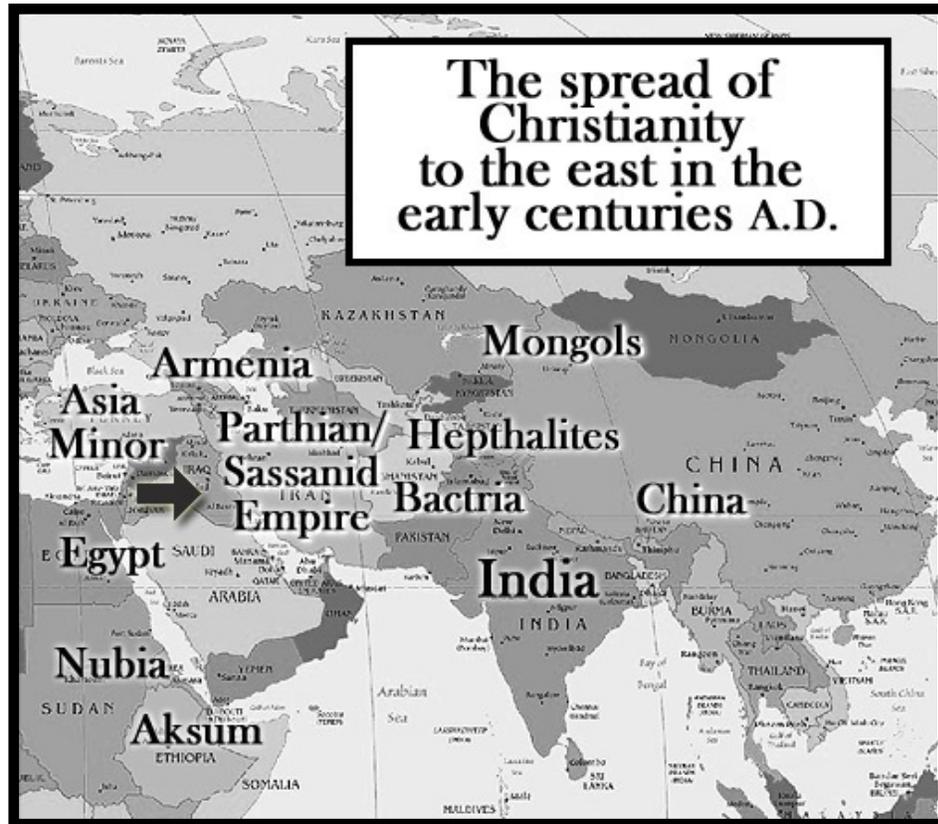
- Christianity began in the Middle East and spread east from there.
- In **Syria** and **Turkey**, the church in Antioch was the first predominantly Gentile Church (Acts 11). The apostle Paul was from Tarsus, a city in modern-day Turkey.
- The church in **Armenia** was (according to tradition) founded by two of the apostles: Thaddaeus and Bartholomew between A.D. 40–60. Armenia officially adopted Christianity as its national religion in 301, making it the first Christian nation.
- Christianity was reportedly taken to **Georgia** (next to Armenia) by the apostles Simon and Andrew. It became the official religion in 327. (By contrast, Rome did not adopt Christianity as the state-religion until 380, under Theodosius I.)
- Christianity spread eastward into the **Parthian Empire** (modern-day Iraq and Iran), under the initial efforts of the apostle Thomas. It continued to grow there, such that the Christians of Mesopotamia and Iran sent bishops to the Council of Nicea in 325.
- Christianity also existed under the **Sassanid Empire**, which replaced the Parthian Empire, though believers were sometimes persecuted—in part because Christianity at that time was associated with political Roman state.

- The earliest known reference to Christian communities in **Central Asia** (modern-day Afghanistan and Pakistan) is from a writing by Bardaisan (a Gnostic) around 196, which mentions Christians in **Bactria**.
- Thomas is also reported to have taken Christianity to **India**, where the Indo-Parthian king Gondophares was converted and baptized.
- In 424, the church in **Persia** (the Assyrian Church) formally separated from the western Syrian Church which was under Roman (Byzantine) supervision.
- The Assyrian Church continued to expand east, and by 650 there were at least 20 Assyrian dioceses east of the Oxus river (which runs along the borders of Afghanistan and Pakistan).
- From around 498, there are records indicating that the **Hephthalites** (who inhabited modern-day Afghanistan and Pakistan) were somewhat receptive to Christianity.
- Also, the **Mongols** were proselytized by Assyrian Christians beginning about the seventh century.
- Christianity is generally thought to have been introduced into **China** during the Tang Dynasty (which started in the early seventh century).
- However, there are indications that churches may have been established in China much earlier (perhaps the early 400s).
- A stone stele was discovered in China in the 1600s (see picture). It dates back to 781, and describes the fact that flourishing communities of Christians were present in the Tang dynasty in the 700s.



Portion of the Chinese text on the Nestorian Stele at Hsi-an-fu, commemorating the propagation of the "Luminous Religion" (i.e. Christianity) in the Middle Kingdom.

- Below is a map noting some of the regions (in Africa and Asia) that were influenced by Christianity in the early centuries of church history.



For Further Study:

- Because this class primarily focuses on the history of the church in the West, students who are interested in studying the history of the church in Africa or Asia may find the following resources helpful:
 - *The Kingdom of God in Africa: A Short History of African Christianity* (by Mark Shaw)
 - *A History of Christianity in Africa: From Antiquity to the Present* (by Elizabeth Isichei)
 - *A History of Christianity in Asia*, 2 volumes (by Samuel Moffett)
 - *The Lost History of Christianity* (by Philip Jenkins)

{ LECTURE 4 }

THE HISTORY OF HERESY:
Ancient Errors and the Roots of Modern Cult Groups

* * * * *

Early Christian Cults

Ebionism (first century)

- Theological descendants of the Judaizers, who taught that Christians were required to follow the Mosaic Law
- Saw themselves as distinct from Pauline Christians and Gnostic Christians; though later Ebionite groups were influenced by Gnosticism
- First mentioned in the second century; apparently connected to Judaizers who defected from the Jerusalem Church after the Jerusalem Church relocated to Pella
- Most of what we know about them comes from the early church fathers, who wrote polemics against them (because they were considered heretical)
- According to Justin Martyr, the Ebionites believed that the Law of Moses was obligatory for all Christians. Ireneaus was the first to use the term “Ebionite” to describe this group.
- Origen suggests that the name comes from the Hebrew word “evyon” which means “poor.”
- They denied the deity of Jesus, the Trinity, the Virgin Birth, and the death of Jesus as an atonement for original sin
- Believed that Jesus was adopted as the son of God when he was anointed with the Holy Spirit at his baptism, and therefore could become the messianic king-priest of Israel
- Held to an altered “Gospel according to the Hebrews” which has traditionally been associated with a Hebrew version of the Gospel of Matthew.

Gnosticism (second and third centuries)

- Taught that the material realm was evil; only spiritual is good
- Pursuit of mysticism or “special knowledge” as the central goal of life

- Depicted creation as a mythological struggle between competing forces of light and dark (dualism)
- Believed in a supreme and unknowable monadic divinity; and the introduction by emanation of further divine beings, which are nevertheless identifiable as aspects of the God from which they proceeded
- The progressive emanations are often conceived metaphorically as a gradual and progressive distancing from the ultimate source, which brings about an instability in the fabric of the divine nature

What Was Gnosticism? (from Bryan Litfin, *Getting to Know the Church Fathers*):

[p. 38] – The term “Gnostic” is derived from the Greek word for knowledge, *gnosis*. Gnosticism was not a coherent or uniform set of beliefs. Rather, it was an array of movements that shared many common tendencies and features. Central to Gnosticism is the belief that the sect’s sacred texts and teachers could provide access to secret “knowledge” about how the universe really operates. . . . [O]ne aspect of Gnosticism [was] its teaching known as “docetism”. Docetism is the belief (held by virtually all Gnostics) that Jesus did not really come to us in the flesh, but only seemed to come in a physical body. His flesh was actually a ghostly apparition.

[p. 85] – What exactly did the Gnostics believe? Their myths seem so ridiculous to us today that we can scarcely believe anyone would ever have embraced them. But we must acknowledge that for many ancient people, Gnosticism offered an attractive alternative to orthodox Christianity. Spiritual seekers were drawn to its seeming intellectualism and mysterious insights into the cosmos. [For example,] the Valentinian Gnostics believed there was a heavenly “Fullness” which consisted of thirty angelic beings called Aeons. The Aeons always came in male-female pairs. . . . These conjugal pairs emitted lower Aeons, and the last of these emissions was Sophia (Wisdom). But Sophia became passionate, and wickedly longed for the highest Father apart from her own consort. Though she was eventually healed from her grievous action, her evil “Thought,” which had given rise to her sin, was cast out of the Fullness like an aborted fetus. This shapeless Thought took on a personified form named Mother Achamoth. She was in a hopeless state until the “Christ” came to her and enabled Achamoth to bring forth substances from within herself. One of the beings she brought forth was the Demiurge. He was the ignorant creator of the entire physical world in which we live. In many Gnostic accounts, the Demiurge was equated with Yahweh, the Jewish God of the Old Testament, who foolishly thought he was the one true God. Only the enlightened Gnostics “knew” he was actually a corrupted being, far inferior to the goddess Sophia. . . .

In order to give secret wisdom to the spiritual Gnostics, the Demiurge (Yahweh) is said to have given birth to a son who was filled with the spiritual seed of Mother Achamoth. This son was the “Christ” who passed through Mary without taking a body from her. He was just like water flowing through a tube. The Gnostics often said the “Christ” inhabited the body of the man Jesus of Nazareth, but his body was not made of real flesh. . . . The docetic Christ who possessed the illusion of a body came into the world to teach spiritual precepts that only the enlightened Gnostics would be able to comprehend. Through the purging action of his revealed knowledge, the Gnostics would eventually make their way up into the Fullness as purified spirits.

Mormonism – Modern-Day Gnosticism?

* * * * *

Harold Bloom, *The American Religion* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 99, 123:

The God of Joseph Smith is a daring revival of the God of some of the Kabbalists and Gnostics, prophetic sages who, like Smith himself, asserted that they had returned to the true religion. . . . Mormonism is a purely American Gnosis, for which Joseph Smith was and is a far more crucial figure than Jesus could be. Smith is not just 'a' prophet, another prophet, but he is the essential prophet of these latter days, leading into the end time, whenever it comes

Lance S. Owens, “Joseph Smith: America’s Hermetic Prophet,” (online article, <http://www.gnosis.org/ahp.htm>):

Harold Bloom's coupling of Joseph Smith to the Gnostic tradition has aroused animated disagreement among students of Mormonism and Gnosticism alike. . . . Nonetheless, Smith did apparently espouse themes familiar to Gnosticism-- prominent among them being his affirmation of the reality and necessity of continuing, individual revelation as the source of salvific knowledge. Joseph Smith and his religion eschewed theology in favor of the dynamic process of revelation. The result was best summarized in what Bloom remarked to be “one of the truly remarkable sermons ever preached in America,” a discourse delivered by the Prophet on April 7, 1844. Known as the King Follett Discourse, it was Joseph’s last major address to his church, presented just ten weeks before his death at age 38.

“There are but very few beings in the world who understand rightly the character of God,” he began. “If men do not comprehend the character of God, they do not comprehend their own character.” Within humankind there is an immortal spark of intelligence, taught the Prophet, a seed of divine intellect or light which is “as immortal as, and coequal with, God Himself.” God is not, however, to be understood as one and singular. Turning to Hebrew and an oddly Kabbalistic exegesis of the first three words of Genesis (an exegesis probably taken directly from the Zohar), Smith pronounced there are a multitude of Gods emanated from the First God, existing one above the other without end. He who humankind calls God was Himself once a man; and man, by advancing in intelligence, knowledge—consciousness—may be exalted with God, become as God.

Marcionism (second century)

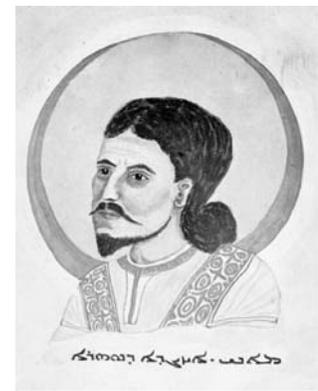
- Started around A.D. 144 through the teachings of Marcion of Sinope
- Marcionism taught that the teachings of Christ (Marcion differentiated between Christ and the human Jesus) were incompatible with God of the Old Testament.
- Marcion held to a canon that included ten books from Paul and one gospel (the Gospel of Marcion), but he rejected the Hebrew Old Testament and the other books of the New Testament.
- As a result, he saw a clear distinction between the law and the gospel, the flesh and the spirit, works and faith, and so on.
- He taught that the God of the Old Testament (whom he viewed as righteous and wrathful) was not same as the God of the Gospel who is love and mercy.
- He was the son of a bishop, and was later excommunicated by his father for his heretical views
- Marcionites viewed the God of the Old Testament negatively and derisively, believing him to be angry, malicious, and sadistic.
- Marcion further taught that Christ was not the Jewish Messiah, but rather a spiritual entity sent by a previously unknown God—called the Stranger God, or the Alien God.
- Christ essentially came to undo what the evil “god” of the Old Testament had done.



Marcion of Sinope

Manichaenism (third century)

- Manichaenism was founded in the third century by Mani, who reportedly was born in Babylon, in western Persia (modern-day Iraq/Iran)
- Characterized by dualism (in part, because it was highly influenced by Zoroastrianism)
- Mani taught that there were two realms: light and darkness. The realm of light was good and peaceful, while the realm of darkness was evil and in chaos.
- The current state of the universe was explained as an



Mani

attack by the realm of darkness on the creation of an emanation from the realm of light.

- Manichaenism was very ecumenical, seeking to include all faiths under one umbrella.
- Mani taught that there is no omnipotent good power; but rather a dualistic struggle between good and evil.
- In each person, the good part (the soul of light) warred against the evil part (the body of darkness). Salvation comes from identifying oneself with one's soul.

Monarchianism (second century)

- Monarchianism (also known as Monarchism) teaches that God exists a singular ruler. It thus conflicted with the doctrine of the Trinity, and was rejected as heretical by the church in the second century.
- Two versions of monarchianism included Modalism and Adoptionism. These were various attempts to explain the relationship between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—while still maintaining the oneness of God's Person.
- Modalism (or Sabellianism) teaches that God is one person who appears in different modes at different times and for different purposes. These modes (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) have appeared at various times throughout history. This view has also been called Patripassianism because it taught that God the Father suffered and died on the cross.
- Adoptionism teaches that Jesus is not co-eternal with the Father, but rather was adopted by God (and granted divine status). Jesus became the Son of God on account of His perfect life and works. He was adopted by the Father at the time of His baptism, or in some views at the moment of His ascension.

Montanism (second century)

- Mid second-century movement, known as the “New Prophecy;” it was named after its founder, Montanus. Its most famous proponent was the church father, Tertullian, who converted to Montanism toward the end of his life.
- The Montanists believed their prophecies were new revelation that fulfilled the teachings of the Apostles
- They encouraged ecstatic prophesying and taught strange doctrines through prophecy

- The Montanists taught that Christians who fell from grace could not be redeemed or restored to the church
- The prophets of Montanism spoke in the first person on God's behalf, rather than in the third person. For example, Montanus prophesied, "I am the Father, the Word, and the Paraclete" (according to Didymus, *De Trinitate*, III, xli)
- The Montanists emphasized a strict version of holiness, church discipline, and apocalyptic living. They emphasized chastity, including forbidding remarriage. (Their emphasis on holiness was largely what appealed to Tertullian about their movement.)
- Some early church leaders claimed that the Montanists were modalists, but Tertullian denied this charge.

Other schismatic movements:

Novatianism (third century)

- These followers of Novatian taught that Christians who had been baptized but had subsequently denied the faith during persecution could not be forgiven or restored to the church.
- These lapsed Christians, known as the *lapsi*, were received by the mainstream church. Novatian set himself up as a rival bishop in Rome, and as a result he and his followers were excommunicated.
- He is considered an "anti-pope" by the Roman Catholic Church.
- Novatian's followers were known as *Novationists* by the orthodox church. But they referred to themselves as the "katheroi" or "pure," because they separated themselves from the lax standards of the mainstream church, which they thought had grown corrupt.

Donatism (fourth century)

- Similar to the Novationists, the Donatists disagreed with the mainstream church over whether or not believers who defected under the persecution of Diocletian should be restored to the church.
- The Donatists rejected priests who were more accepting of the spiritual defectors. Some of them (including priests) had even turned on fellow Christians or allowed sacred documents to be burned. The Donatists referred to such people as "traditors" ("people who had handed over") because of their defection.
- The primary opponent was Augustine, who taught that priests should be respected for their office even if their personal character was questionable.

Summary Chart (parallels Phil Johnson’s article below):

Name	Century	Primary Error	Historical Proponents	Nature/ Character	Modern Traces
Judaizers	1st	Attacked justification; added works to grace as necessary for salvation	legalistic former-Jews in the early church	legalistic; blended OT Judaism with Christianity	7 th -Day Adventists; Roman Catholics
Gnostics	2nd	Attacked the humanity of Christ; denied that Jesus really came in the flesh	various early heretics; gnostic gospels	mystical; blended paganism with Christianity	most New-Age religions; Mormonism
Arians	4th	Attacked the deity of Christ; denied the doctrine of the Trinity	Arius and his followers	anti-Trinitarian; denied the full deity of Christ	Jehovah’s Witnesses
Pelagians	5th	Attacked the primacy and sufficiency of God’s grace in salvation	Pelagius, Coelestius, and their followers	man-centered; denied depravity; elevated free will above divine sovereignty	Charles Finney and his followers
Socinians	16th	Attacked both the doctrine of salvation and the doctrine of Christ	Lelius and Faustus Sozzini	rationalistic; a combination of the worst of all heresies	Theological Liberals; Open Theists; Unitarians

{ ADDENDUM }

THE HISTORY OF HERESY
Five Errors that Refuse to Die

by Phil Johnson

Introduction: In this seminar, we will look at five major heresies that have plagued the church again and again throughout history. Here are the five heretical groups we'll talk about: *the Judaizers, the Gnostics, the Arians, the Pelagians, and the Socinians*. We will deal with these in chronological order:

1. LEGALISM

The relationship of Christianity to the law of Moses has always posed some very difficult problems. A heretical brand of legalism, practiced by the Judaizers, posed a major and continual threat to the New Testament church even while Scripture was still being written. The apostles' war with legalism permeates the book of Acts and most of the epistles.

The Judaizers claimed that in order to become a Christian, Gentile converts needed to be circumcised and obey all the ceremonial and civil laws of Moses. This was a very compelling system for people who had grown up in Judaism, because they were conditioned from their infancy to view Gentile practices as unholy, unclean, and morally abhorrent.

The culmination of the legalism controversy, and the first major defeat for the Judaizers, took place in Acts 15. Notice what transpires here: "The apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter" (v. 6). There was much disputing (v. 7), and then Peter rose up and recounted what had occurred at the conversion of Cornelius (vv. 7–10). And Peter very clearly takes Paul's side (vv. 10–11): "Why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they."

Peter has honed in on the crucial issue: salvation by the grace of God. This is what was at stake. This first great controversy was a *soteriological* conflict. The issue was the gospel, and the doctrine of justification by faith in particular. That's why the apostle Paul wrote and preached so earnestly against the doctrines of the Judaizers: they were nullifying the very heart of the gospel message. If a person had to be circumcised in order to become a Christian, then that ritual work was a prerequisite for justification, and justification would not be by faith *alone*.

Scripture clearly teaches that we don't have to perform any religious ceremonies or legal obedience as a prerequisite to our justification. None of the works of the law can earn us any merit in God's eyes. All the merit that is necessary has been acquired for us by Christ. It is freely imputed to all who believe. As Roman 4:5-6 says, "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. . . . God imputeth righteousness without works."

That's the gospel in a single statement. That's what the legalism of the Judaizers obscured. And that's why the apostle Paul fought this heresy with every ounce of energy he had.

2. GNOSTICISM

Gnosticism is at the opposite end of the spectrum from the heresy of the Judaizers. The legalism of the Judaizers was a synthesis of Pharisaical Judaism and Christianity. Gnosticism was a blend of pagan philosophy with Christianity. The Judaizers stubbornly clung to the past; the Gnostics radically broke with the past.

So in many ways the error of the Gnostics is exactly the opposite of the Judaizers' heresy. As so often happens, the church swung from one extreme to the other. When the false teaching of the Judaizers met with resistance, it was as if Satan simply pushed the pendulum to the opposite extreme, and the result was Gnosticism.

Ancient Gnosticism is as hard to define as the modern New Age movement. Both are complex, not simple. Both suggest that Divine wisdom is hidden in a mystery revealed only to enlightened followers.

And it is this idea that gave Gnosticism its name. It's from the Greek word *gnosis*, which means "knowledge." Here is the central idea of all forms of Gnosticism: ***Gnostics believe that the key to saving truth lies in a hidden knowledge beyond what is revealed to us in Scripture.*** According to Gnosticism, "salvation" is a question of possessing the secret knowledge.

Christian varieties of Gnosticism did not really come into full form until sometime in the second century. And Gnosticism had the ability to mutate into new forms. As one version of Gnosticism would decline, another would arise to take its place. So Gnosticism continued as a very strong threat to the church for several centuries.

When Gnosticism first assaulted the church, Christianity survived only by confronting the heresy head on. Men such as Iranaeus, Tertullian, Ignatius, and Justin Martyr were willing to fight for sound doctrine—even to the point of laying down their lives for it.

There are three major errors common to almost all forms of Gnosticism: *dualism*, *syncretism*, and *docetism*.

- o *dualism* is the idea that everything in the universe is reducible to two fundamental realities

- o *syncretism* is the merging of two different systems of belief

- o *docetism* is a heresy that claimed Christ only *appeared* to be human

Though Gnosticism involves all kinds of errors, including soteriological ones, it introduced the problem of Christological error into the church. The epistles of John are written chiefly to answer

incipient forms of Gnosticism, and the apostle John attacked the error primarily on Christological grounds.

3. ARIANISM

The history of Arianism is a case study in how heresy often arises from within the church. Arianism spread by quiet infiltration and gained strength through the personal charisma of the false teachers. It took advantage of a climate of tolerance. It developed to massive proportions before *anyone* rose up to oppose it. This is Satan's favorite tactic, disguising himself as an emissary of light.

Arianism was a flat-out attack on the deity of Christ. The Arians claimed Jesus Christ was a created being, higher than humanity, but less than truly God.

The gnostics had attacked the doctrine of Christ from the fringe of Christendom. Gnostic heretics were generally outsiders, people unafraid to attack the apostolic tradition and apostolic teaching. Their approach was to draw people *away* from the church and into their little factions. Arianism took a different approach, bringing the false doctrine right into the church. The Arian goal from the very beginning was to get the church to place the stamp of orthodoxy on their false doctrine.

Arius was the heretic who invented this doctrine. He devised a view of Christ that made Him a created being, neither divine nor truly human, but a mediator between God and humanity. According to Arius, Christ was a sort of demigod, the firstborn of all creation—higher than other angelic creatures, godlike—but a *creature* nonetheless. This is exactly the same doctrine held by modern Jehovah's Witnesses. And Arius used the very same arguments they use.

The Nicene Creed was the church's response to Arianism, but it marked the beginning, not the end, of the controversy in the church. After their doctrine was condemned by the council, the Arians pleaded for tolerance, broad-mindedness, and acceptance at the grass-roots level, and they succeeded to an amazing degree in infecting the church worldwide with their doctrine.

Emperor Constantine became frustrated when the Nicene Council was not successful in quelling the Arian controversy, and he became friendly with the Arians. Within the next fifty years or so, virtually all the leading bishops of the church embraced Arianism. Only one man stood against them: Athanasius. He refused to give up the fight against heresy. When people pointed out that the whole world was against him, he replied that he was against the world.

Over the long haul, Athanasius's arguments won out, because he employed Scripture so skillfully and so persuasively to demonstrate the error of the heresy. But the episode is a classic example of why Scripture, not majority opinion, ought to be the church's first and last test of every doctrine.

4. PELAGIANISM

The next great heresy in the church was Pelagianism. This error returned to the issue of *soteriology*.

It is a fact of history that every major error that has ever assaulted the Christian faith fits under one or both of two categories: they are either *Christological* or *soteriological*. Other forms of error have arisen, but all the truly dangerous heresies have attacked on one or both of these two fronts.

That's because heresy is most serious when it results in a different gospel or a different christ. The true church has always recognized that those who worship a false christ or preach a false gospel are not true Christians (Galatians 1:8–9; 2 John 10–11). It is as simple as that.

Pelagianism represented *a different gospel* of the most sinister kind. The first major proponent and the man who lent his name to this doctrine was Pelagius. His main opponent was Augustine.

The conflict between Pelagius and Augustine involved some of the very same issues Calvinists and Arminians argue over, and the history of this heresy shows how vitally important those issues are.

Pelagius was motivated by a concern to elevate human free will, because he was (wrongly) convinced that was the only way to preserve human responsibility. Augustine defended the sovereignty of God, because he (rightly) knew that was the only way to preserve the centrality of divine grace in salvation.

Probably the most notable aspect of Pelagianism is *its denial of original sin*. The Pelagians denied that Adam's sin resulted in any guilt or corruption to the rest of the human race. Pelagius believed that the human will must be free from all fetters or else people are not responsible for what they do.

Pelagianism insists that if people are born sinners by nature—if sin is something we inherit—it would be unjust for God to hold individual sinners responsible for their sin.

Pelagianism therefore said the human will must be totally free—inclined to neither good nor evil—or else our choices cannot be free. And if our choices are not free, then we cannot be held responsible for what we do.

Pelagianism inevitably results in the purest form of works-salvation. Deny the fallenness of humanity, and you have in effect denied the need for divine grace.

Augustine saw this problem from the very outset, and he responded to the Pelagians by demonstrating *from Scripture* that the human will is not free in the sense Pelagianism taught; our wills are hopelessly bound by sin (Romans 8:7–8). Sinners are utterly helpless to change for the better apart from the working of divine grace in their hearts (Jeremiah 13:23).

The Council of Ephesus in 431 condemned Pelagianism as utterly heretical. But as is true with every one of the major heresies we are discussing, the ruling of a council was not enough to end

the threat of this false doctrine. Pelagianizing influences continued for the next hundred years. There emerged a modified Pelagianism, known as semi-pelagianism—which is virtually identical to modern Arminianism—and that doctrine was condemned by the Council of Orange in 529.

Still, Pelagianizing influences continued to assault the church. By the sixteenth century, the Roman Catholic Council of Trent adopted a soteriology that is in effect semi-Pelagian.

In the Protestant Reformation, it was the Reformers who sided with Augustine in affirming the sovereignty of God, the necessity of divine grace, and the utter inability of fallen man to contribute to his own salvation. Roman Catholicism, especially from the Council of Trent on, has taught a kind of watered-down semi-Pelagianism.

Pelagian and semi-Pelagian influences have affected Protestantism, too, and continue to do so today.

5. SOCINIANISM

Socinianism is the culmination of heresy—an amalgamation of all the other heresies—and it is without a doubt the most widespread of all the heresies in our generation. Modern theological liberalism is nothing more than a variety of Socinianism.

The heresy of Socinianism was born almost immediately after the start of the Protestant Reformation. It takes its name from two Italians: *Laelius* and *Faustus* Socinus. They were disaffected with Roman Catholicism and originally identified with the Reformers, but unlike the true Reformers, the Socinians ended up rejecting virtually *everything* about the Catholic religion, including whatever was orthodox.

Since they rejected everything Catholic, the Socinians ended up with a doctrine that embraced virtually every serious error that had ever assaulted the church. Like the legalists and the Pelagians, they taught works-salvation. Like the Gnostics and the Arians, they were anti-Trinitarians. In fact, they denied not only the deity of Christ but also every miraculous element of Scripture. They blended the skepticism of the Sadducees with the humanistic rationalism of the enlightenment era, and that deadly combination is what gave birth to this heresy. Then they threw in the error of universalism to boot.

In effect, Socinianism did away with the authority of Scripture and made human reason the supreme authority.

Worst of all, they destroyed the meaning of the atonement. The Socinian argument against substitutionary atonement was simple: They claimed that the ideas of remission and atonement are mutually exclusive. They said sins can either be forgiven or they can be paid for, but not both. If a price is paid, they said, sins are not really “forgiven.” On the other hand, the Socinians argued that if God is willing to pardon sin, then no atonement-price should be necessary.

The subtlety of that argument still confuses many people. But it is completely contrary to what

Scripture teaches about grace, atonement, and divine justice. Hebrews 9:22 demolishes the Socinian argument: “Without shedding of blood [there] is no remission [of sins].”

Why are these heresies important? Every cult and every false doctrine extant today has something in common with one or more of these five false doctrines. Here [below] is a chart that shows the pertinent facts about each of these heresies. Notice especially the column that lists modern proponents of each error. These are only samples. Every major cult and –ism borrows from these five heresies.

If we learn anything from church history, we ought to see how vital biblical discernment is, and we ought to understand how destructive such errors can be. Above all, we ought to gain an appreciation of how courage, persistence, and biblical skill are required to defeat the devil’s doctrines.

{ ADDENDUM }

IDENTIFYING FALSE TEACHERS

What are the Fundamental Doctrines That Heretics Distort or Deny?

[Note: The following is adapted from a message preached in April, 2013]

Proposition:

- The question is this: **What makes a cult a cult?** Or to state that question another way, **What makes a false form of Christianity heretical and false?** What are the marks of cult groups and of apostate forms of Christianity that identify them as false religions—such that we can and should label them as *heresies*, rather than simply classifying them as different denominations?
- In order to answer that question, we are going to look at several passages of Scripture. And as we do, we are going to identify the **three marks of false religion**. (Repeat: *Three Marks of False Forms of Christianity*)
- Conversely, by doing this, we are going to learn how to counter the cults, and how to equip ourselves for conversations we might have with those who are being deceived.

Biblical Background

- Unlike many evangelical leaders in America today, the New Testament writers were not afraid to call false religion what it really is – and to warn people of the deadly destruction that error can cause
- In fact, the New Testament is filled with warning passages about the clear and present danger posed by false teachers – error that must be confronted with boldness and rejected by genuine believers.
- In **Matthew 7:15**, Jesus warned: “Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves.”
- In **Acts 20:28–31**, the apostle Paul similarly instructed the Ephesian elders: ““Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock . . . I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; . . . speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be on the alert. . .”

- Peter told his readers this in **2 Peter 2:1**, “But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves.”
- In **2 John 7**, the apostle John explained that, “Many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist.”
- And **Jude** warned about “certain persons [who] have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ” (Jude 4).

Transition

- As those verses indicate, false forms of Christianity were a threat even in the apostolic age, during the first century of the church. And the apostles were not afraid to use strong language to condemn false teachers: *ravenous wolves, deceivers, antichrists, ungodly persons*, and so on.
- All throughout church history, there have been those seeking to distort the fundamental truths of Christianity.
 - In fact, much of what we cover in the Historical Theology classes here at The Master’s Seminary focuses on the history of heresy, including the rise of false movements like ebionism, docetism, Gnosticism, montanism, marcionism, manichaenism, monarchianism, Arianism, apollonarianism, nestorianism, pelagianism ... and that only covers the first 400 years of church history.
 - Now, as you can tell from those *isms*, heresy comes in a lot of different packages, each with a different label.
 - But the core issues are more or less the same for every heresy.
- So what is that characterizes these false movements, both historically and today? Well, the New Testament articulates three basic doctrinal criteria for us in this regard. *False forms of Christianity can be identified by these three characteristics.*
 - (1) They have a wrong view of salvation;**
 - (2) They have a wrong view of the Scripture;**
 - and (3) They have a wrong view of the Savior.**

- Those three points will serve as our outline this evening ... and we will look at three different passages of Scripture to establish each of those points.

Let's begin with the first:

I. A Wrong View of Salvation

False forms of Christianity are marked by a wrong understanding of salvation. In particular, they attempt to add good works to the gospel of grace. Rather than trusting in Christ alone for salvation, they seek to earn God's favor on their own through some form of self-righteousness works and human effort.

- We see this very issue arising early in the history of the church at the Jerusalem Council in **Acts 15**. Please turn there if you would – Acts 15.
- This passage comes immediately after Paul's first missionary journey (recorded in Acts 13–14), where Paul and Barnabas have been preaching the gospel of grace to the Gentile cities they visited in Asia Minor.
- But when they get back to Antioch, trouble arises. This is where chapter 15 begins. The year is right around A.D. 49.
- Look at **verse 1**.

Acts 15:1 Some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.” **(2)** And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, the brethren determined that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue. **(3)** Therefore, being sent on their way by the church, they were passing through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and were bringing great joy to all the brethren. **(4)** When they arrived at Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them. **(5)** But some of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed stood up, saying, “It is necessary to circumcise them and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses.”

- As you can see from verse 2, this issue caused *great dissension and debate* among the believers in Antioch – so much so that Paul and Barnabas came to Jerusalem and an apostolic council was called.

- On their first missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas had proclaimed a gospel in which salvation could not be earned by keeping the Law of Moses; it came solely by grace through faith in Christ.
- But now, a group of former Pharisees (a group that becomes known in history as the Judaizers) was arguing that faith in Christ is not enough. In addition to faith, they insisted that circumcision (v. 2) and keeping the Mosaic Law (v. 5) were both necessary for salvation.
- Well, this is no small matter. *Is salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone? Or is salvation by faith plus circumcision plus the works of the Law?*
- To resolve this debate, the apostles assembled together ... and what follows is the first church council ... the Jerusalem Council.
- Now, you might be wondering, what was Paul thinking when he came to the Jerusalem Council? Well, he tells us in the second chapter of Galatians. Keep your finger in Acts 15 and turn just for a moment over to **Galatians 2**.
 - Paul wrote Galatians shortly after these events – and in Galatians 2, he gives us some personal insights into what happened in Acts 15.

Gal. 2:1 ... I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also. **(2)** It was because of a revelation that I went up; and I submitted to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but I did so in private to those who were of reputation, for fear that I might be running, or had run, in vain.

- In other words, Paul came to Jerusalem and—before the council met publically—he met with the apostolic leaders privately—explaining to them the gospel he had been preaching to the Gentiles.
- **Galatians 2:9** identifies these leaders as James, Peter, and John. And according to **verse 6**, they agreed with Paul that his gospel was the true gospel. They also acknowledged, in **verse 7**, that in the same way that Peter was to take the gospel to the Jews, so also Paul was to take the gospel to the Gentiles.
- But look at what Paul says about the Judaizers in **verse 4**:

(4) But it was because of the false brethren secretly brought in, who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage. **(5)** But we did not yield in subjection to them for even an hour, so that the truth of the gospel would remain with you.

- So this was very serious. And there was no way Paul was going to compromise on the essence of the gospel. So, he came to meet with the apostles in order to get all of this straightened out.
- *Turn back, then, to Acts 15.*

After Paul had met with the apostolic leaders privately, now comes the public council.

Look at **verse 6**. “The apostles and the elders came together to look into this matter.” And then in the first part of **verse 7**, we see that there is “much debate.”

Then Peter stands up and speaks. Listen to what he says:

Acts 15:7 Peter stood up and said to them, “Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe. **(8)** “And God, who knows the heart, testified to them giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us; **(9)** and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith. **(10)** “Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? **(11)** “But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are.”

Notice what Peter says there ...

- In **verse 7**, he affirms that it is right for Gentiles to hear the gospel and believe
- In **verse 8**, he affirms that the Gentiles have received the Holy Spirit just as the Jewish believers did on the Day of Pentecost
- In **verse 9**, he emphasizes that God has cleansed their hearts by faith
- In **verse 10**, he notes that the Mosaic Law is a burden that is not necessary for salvation;
- And in **verse 11**, he reiterates that all Christians (both Jew and Gentile) are saved through grace

What a clear affirmation of the gospel of grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. And it is in response, specifically, to the Judaizers who wanted a gospel of faith *plus* circumcision *plus* the Mosaic Law.

Now, in verses 12 ff., James and the rest of the Jerusalem Council agree with Peter—noting that Gentile Christians do not need to keep the Mosaic Law.

- In verses 20–21, they do ask Gentile believers to be sensitive to certain things for the sake of Jewish believers who have stricter consciences. And this fits with Paul’s instruction about weaker brothers in Romans 14–15 and in 1 Corinthians 8–9.

But the summary judgment of the Jerusalem Council agrees with Peter’s testimony in verses 7–11. The burden of the Mosaic Law should not be required of Gentile converts ... because salvation is by grace through faith alone, not through works.

The gospel preached by Paul and Barnabas was the true gospel.

Here then, at the first church council, the gospel of grace was clearly affirmed; and the Judaizers were soundly defeated and denounced.

- After this, according to verse 30, Paul and Barnabas went back to Antioch and stayed there for awhile. But at some point, some of the Judaizers began to infiltrate the churches that Paul and Barnabas had planted on their first missionary journey.
- In the very cities where Paul had nearly been killed, the churches he planted were beginning to be confused by the Judaizers ... false teachers who were adding works to the gospel.

- So what does Paul do ... he writes them a letter.
- And what does he say in that letter? Essentially this:

Gal. 1:6 [Dear Friends,] I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting [the One] who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; **(7)** which is really not another [gospel at all]. [I hear that] there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. **(8)** [Look,] even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! **(9)** As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!

- Well, of course, I’m largely quoting from the first chapter of Galatians.
 - The epistle of Galatians was written to the churches that Paul and Barnabas planted on their first missionary journey; and it was written because the Judaizers were starting to cause trouble by undermining the true gospel of grace through faith in Christ alone.
- So, it’s not surprising that the theme of that letter is that the gospel is a gospel of grace, not of works ... and that we are justified by faith and not through the keeping of the Law of Moses.

- That theme, of course, became one of Paul’s primary emphases in the later epistles that he wrote. (Chronologically speaking, Galatians was his first epistle—written around A.D. 50.)
- Six or seven years later, when Paul wrote a letter to the **Romans**, he reiterated the idea that “a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law” (3:28). **In chapter 4**, he presented Abraham as an example of being justified by faith. And in **Romans 5:1** he repeated the fact that because we have “been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”
- Around the year A.D. 60, more than ten years after the Jerusalem Council, Paul wrote **Ephesians 2:8–9** “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.”
- Around that same time, in a letter to the Philippians, Paul reiterated the fact that good works are worthless when it comes to being made righteous in the sight of God. He explained that he did not have “a righteousness of [his] own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith.” **Phil. 3:8–9**
- And then, just a couple years before his death, Paul told **Titus**: “[God] saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us.” **(3:5–7)**
- **Why did the apostle Paul emphasize this theme so much, over his entire ministry in the various letters he wrote to these different churches?**
- It is because he knew that the true gospel was essential to true Christianity. Any other form of the gospel is false; and those who promote such a false gospel are accursed.
- Like the Judaizers of the first century, any group that adds works to the gospel of grace puts itself outside of biblical Christianity.
 - When Mormon doctrine claims that in order to attain “individual salvation” a person must (1) accept Joseph Smith as a true prophet (2) be baptized in a Mormon church (3) regularly attend a Mormon Church (4) be consistent in good works and (5) engage in temple work and rituals ... it makes salvation contingent

on good works (cf. http://reasontobelieve.blogspot.com/2005/02/do-mormons-believe-in-salvation-by_22.html)

- When Jehovah’s Witnesses redefine *grace* so that “grace” is merely the opportunity for men and women to earn salvation through their own good works, they betray the fact that they don’t truly understand grace.
- By adding works to the gospel, such movements frustrate grace. As Paul himself explained in **Romans 11:6**, speaking of salvation: “If it is by grace it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.”
- **As the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15, along with Paul’s comments in Galatians 1:6–9 demonstrate – an initial characteristic of a false religion is a wrong view of salvation.**

II. A Wrong View of Scripture (2 Peter)

In order to demonstrate this, turn to the book of 2 Peter.

- Roughly 15 years after the Jerusalem Council, the apostle Peter wrote two letters to the Christians of Asia Minor. This was shortly before his death, around the mid 60s A.D.
- The first letter (what we call 1 Peter) encouraged his readers to stand firm in the midst of external persecution from the Roman government. Imperial forces, under Emperor Nero’s direction, were violently persecuting Christians; and these believers needed to be encouraged to stand strong in the faith.
- The second letter, written just a few months after the first, encouraged the believers of Asia Minor to also stand firm against the internal attacks of false teachers – doctrinal threats that posed a serious danger.
- In fact, the entirety of Peter’s second epistle is a warning against false teachers.
- **Let’s look first at 2 Peter 2:1** since it shows the concern that was motivating the apostle Peter as he wrote this letter:
 - **2 Peter 2:1** -- But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves.

- Peter is deeply concerned about the threat posed by these false teachers. And what do these false teachers do? Look at **verse 3** – they exploit their hearers with false words ... **verse 12** – they revile where they have no knowledge ... and **verse 18** – they speak out arrogant words.
- Now turn over to **chapter 3:16** ... at the end of his letter Peter is still talking about these false teachers; and he says of them that they *distort the writings of Paul, as they do the rest of the Scriptures to their destruction*.
- Like the false prophets of the Old Testament, these false teachers were speaking falsehood and distorting the Word of God in order to propagate false doctrines that would lead their hearers to eternal ruin.
- Now, what is Peter's antidote to these false teachers? What does he encourage his readers to do in their efforts to combat such heretics?
- He reminds them to stand firm in the true knowledge of God (cf. 1:3). And how are they to do that? By standing firm in the Scriptures.
- Look back at **chapter 1:13** –

(13) I consider it right, as long as I am in this earthly dwelling, to stir you up by way of reminder, (14) knowing that the laying aside of my earthly dwelling is imminent, as also our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. (15) And I will also be diligent that at any time after my departure you will be able to call these things to mind.

- [Peter is calling his readers to remember the truth – not to forget and fall prey to false teaching.]
- [In verses 16–18, Peter recalls his eyewitness account of the Transfiguration; and then he goes on in verse 19]

19 So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts. 20 But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation [the word there would be better translated as, *origination*], 21 for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

- How are the readers of this letter going to hold fast to the true knowledge of God that Peter discussed back in verse 3? By clinging to the Scripture, and by paying attention to the Word of God as one pays attention to a light in the darkness.
 - Like a lamppost on a dark street or a lighthouse in the midst of a storm, so the Word of God guides our hearts and minds in the truth.
- Peter then continues, in chapter 2, to warn about false prophets – spiritual terrorists who are identified by their false teachings and immoral behavior.
- After denouncing them in vivid terms, look where Peter returns in **chapter 3**.
 - **2 Peter 3:1** -- This is now, beloved, the second letter I am writing to you in which I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, 2 that you should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles.
- Did you catch that? Peter points his readers back to the Old and New Testaments. As Christians, we embrace that which was spoken by the holy prophets in the Old Testament, and we submit to that which was revealed by Christ through His apostles—namely, the New Testament. In other words, our safeguard against false teaching is found in the truth of Scripture!
- In countering heresy, Peter comes right back to the Bible. That is what he was reminding his readers to embrace.
- And then at the end of chapter 3, in response to false teachers who were even denying the return of Christ, Peter instructs his readers again to look to the Scriptures. **In verse 15**, they are to listen to the writings of the apostle Paul ... and then in **verse 17**, they are to stand firm against those who would twist the Scriptures.
- In contrast to those who distort the Word of God, Peter ends his letter with this instruction to his readers (**vv. 17–18**).

2 Peter 3:17–18 – You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness, 18 but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

- How do we *grow* in the knowledge of Christ? In his first letter, Peter had already told them how to do that. By desiring the pure milk of the Word.
- False forms of religion, like the false teachers of Peter’s day, are marked by a wrong view of Scripture. They twist, distort, ignore, demote, and deny the Scriptures.
 - For example, the Mormon Church elevates the Book of Mormon, the Pearl of Great Price, and the Doctrines and Covenants above the Bible – and in the process they twist and distort the true Word of God.
 - The Watchtower Society created a brand new version of the Bible – called the New World Translation – for the sole purpose of distorting what the Bible says about the deity of Christ.
 - The Roman Catholic Church exalts human tradition and the magisterium of the church in order to maintain unbiblical teachings about Mary, the sacraments, prayers to the saints, papal authority, and so on.
- In each case, it is a denial of biblical authority and a distorting and twisting of the Scriptures that is at the heart of the problem.

III. A Wrong View of the Savior (1 John 4; 2 John)

- It was around A.D. 49 that Paul addressed the wrong view of salvation held by the Judaizers.
- It was around A.D. 65 that Peter addressed the distorted understanding of Scripture espoused by the false teachers in Asia Minor.
- Then, in the mid-80s A.D., the apostle John responded to a specific threat he saw beginning to infiltrate the church at that time.
 - The threat was a false teaching called **docetism**. Docetism was one of the primary tenets of Gnosticism ... It claimed that the physical world was evil, and that only spiritual realities were good.
 - As docetism began to influence Christianity, false teachers arose who insisted that the **Lord Jesus** did not possess a real, physical body. They said this because, according to docetism, a physical body was regarded as something evil and inferior.

- Hence, these false teachers claimed that Jesus only had the *appearance* of a body. *He did not actually come in the flesh*, they said. *He just made it look like He had come in the flesh.*
- Of course, that kind of teaching is hugely problematic. Why? Because it denies the Incarnation. If Jesus did not take on a real human body, then He did not become Man. And if He did not become Man, then His death on the cross was only an illusion. And at that point, the reality of the gospel itself becomes meaningless.
- The apostle John responded to this error with all of the apostolic zeal that we might expect from one of the “Sons of Thunder.”
- Turn with me to John’s first epistle – the book of 1 John.
- Look at what he says at the very beginning of that letter:

1 John 1:1: “What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and **touched with our hands**, concerning the Word of Life”
- Why was John—right at the beginning of this letter—emphasizing the fact that he had seen and even touched the Lord? Because he was refuting the claims of docetism, which denied that Jesus possessed a real human body.
- Look a little further in 1 John.

1 John 2:22–23: Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son. 23 Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also.
- In other words, false teachers are those who deny the truth about Jesus as the Christ and as the Son of God. To deny the truth about the Son is to deny the Father also.
- Look at chapter 4:

1 John 4:1–3: Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. 2 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; 3 and every spirit that does not confess

Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.

- Those who deny that Jesus came in the flesh – namely, those who embrace the false teachings of Docetism – they represent the Spirit of antichrist. In their denial of the truth about Jesus, they show themselves to be promoters of a false form of religion.
- By contrast, those who believe the truth about the Lord Jesus have eternal life. Look at chapter 5.

1 John 5:10–12: The one who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself; . . . And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. 12 He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.

And then at the end of the chapter, in verse 20:

1 John 5:20 And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

- John ends his letter with that reminder, that true Christianity rests on a true understanding of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Now, we've come to the end of John's first epistle. But the apostle John doesn't stop there. Look at 2 John:

2 John 7–11: 7 For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist. 8 Watch yourselves, that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward. 9 Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son. 10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting; 11 for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds.
- Why did John condemn the promoters of docetism? Because they denied fundamental truths about the nature of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- This is why, a few years later, when the apostle John wrote his gospel, he emphasized the dual nature of Jesus Christ – namely, that the Lord Jesus is both fully God and fully Man.
- *You don't need to turn there, but remember these familiar verses:*

John 1:1 -- In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

That clear statement of Christ's deity is followed a few verses later with this:

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

- Thus, to deny either the deity of Christ or the humanity of Christ is a serious error. The apostle John understood that, which is why he highlighted both truths. And it is also why he so strongly condemned the false teachers who promoted *docetism*.
 - The bigger principle, of course, is simply this ... heretical movements are marked by a wrong view of the Savior.
 - As the apostle John emphasized, you must embrace the truth about Jesus Christ.
- If you have a wrong view of the Lord Jesus you put yourself outside of biblical orthodoxy. And that, of course, is where the cults have placed themselves. The Mormons make Jesus the brother of Satan, and one of many in a long pantheon of gods. The Jehovah's Witnesses demote Jesus to the status of a mere creature, and deny that He is fully God. Even the Roman Catholics, through their idolatrous exaltation of Mary as co-mediator, co-redeemer, Mother of God, and Queen of Heaven, cheapen the exclusive nature of Christ and ultimately undermine an orthodox understanding of the Trinity.
- A right understanding sees Jesus as fully God and fully Man. It views Him as the **Redeemer** – who through His death made salvation possible for all who believe in Him. And it views Him as **Lord**, the Sovereign over His church and the Sovereign over all those who truly belong to Him.

* * * * *

False forms of Christianity, then, can be identified as those groups which have a wrong view of salvation, a wrong view of Scripture, and a wrong view of the Savior.

Really, any false religion meets those same criteria – whether it's Hinduism, Bhuddism, Islam, or any of the heretical groups we have discussed.

- They reject true salvation for a man-centered system of works righteousness.
- They exchange the Bible for some other false authority on which they base their beliefs.
- And they replace a true understanding of Jesus Christ for some warped distortion of who He truly is.

Conclusion

How does all this help us in our own apologetics; and in our own Christian walk.

In light of all of this, how can you prepare yourself to counter any cult?

As we wrap up this discussion, I would like you to turn to one more passage of Scripture. I realize, we've covered a lot of territory tonight, but I want you to turn to one more place:

2 Timothy 3

Here, in the last letter that Paul writes—shortly before his death—he gives some final instructions to Timothy, his son in the faith.

And look at what he says in **2 Timothy 3**. In verses 1–12, he is warning Timothy about the fact that false teachers are coming; and that as a result difficult times will come.

- In **verse 8**, he notes that these false teachers will be like false prophets in the Old Testament who opposed Moses, they oppose the truth.
- In **verse 13**, he summarizes his point: “But evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.”

For us, looking back on Paul's words, after 2000 years of church history – and seeing all the heresies and false teachings and false prophets that have arisen – we can certainly attest to the truthfulness of his point.

So how is Timothy supposed to safeguard himself against false teaching?
Look at verses 14–15:

14 You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them, 15 and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

What are the three areas that Paul highlights there in verse 15? What 3 things did Timothy already learned about which he now needed to continue in?

- **Know the sacred writings** – that is a reference to Scripture
- **The wisdom that leads to salvation through faith** – that is the Gospel
- **Which is in Christ Jesus** – He, of course, is the Savior

When Paul warned Timothy about false teaching, he told his son in the faith that the way he could arm himself against falsehood was by having (1) a right view of the Scripture; (2) a right view of salvation; and (3) a right view of the Savior.

Do you want to prepare yourself for the next conversation you have with your Catholic co-worker? Or, for the next time the doorbell rings and two Mormons or Jehovah's Witnesses are standing on your doorstep?

If so, then ground yourself in a right understanding of salvation; a right understanding of Scripture; and a right understanding of the Savior.

And how do you do that?

Well, the following verses in 2 Timothy 3 answer that question. You dive into your Bible – knowing that it is in the inspired and authoritative Scriptures that God has revealed all that is needed for you to be fully equipped for every good work, including every evangelistic conversation.

Only then you will be ready to cast down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God ... *only then* you will be ready to make a defense for the hope that is in you.

{ LECTURE 5 }

A FAITH WORTH FIGHTING FOR:
The Apologists and Polemical Fathers

* * * * *

The Second-Century Apologists

During the second century, the church experienced great missionary expansion. Initially, the church seemed unprepared to engage in dialogue with Greek philosophy and Hellenistic thought. But soon, Christian leaders rose up to meet the challenge. They worked (1) to defend Christianity against the common misrepresentations and the accusations of the philosophers; (2) to refute the charges of idolatry and polytheism while affirming belief in one God revealed in Jesus Christ; (3) and finally to present the Christian faith in a language and in concepts accessible to educated people. By reading their works, contemporary scholars can determine what the primary pagan objections to Christianity were.

- In some cases, the apologists were not only making a philosophical case for Christianity, but were also making a legal case for it. Thus they appealed to the emperors to stop persecuting the Christian church unjustly.
- The Christians were accused of being:
 1. **Atheists** – because they refused to worship the emperor or the Roman pantheon of pagan gods. The apologists responded by noting that Christians were not atheists, but rather monotheists, and that the monotheism of Christianity was superior to the polytheism of the pagans.
 2. **Sexually Immoral** – because of the seemingly secretive nature of their meetings and because of rumors about what took place at the “love feast.” The apologists responded by appealing to the Christian ideal of purity, the standard of sanctity in marriage, and by clarifying that the “love feast” was in no way sensual.
 3. **Cannibals** – because of a misunderstanding of the Lord’s Supper, in which it was rumored that the Christians drank literal blood and ate literal flesh. The apologists responded by noting the high regard that Christians have for human life and by clarifying the truth about the Lord’s Supper.
 4. **Insurrectionists** – because they refused to worship the emperor, and openly gave their highest allegiance to Christ and not to the Roman government. The apologists responded by noting that, in truth, the Christians were submissive to the government. After all, only the Christians truly understood that God had appointed the emperor in his position of power.

Who were the apologists?

Quadratus is believed to be the earliest of these apologists, followed closely by Aristides. Other apologists include Justin Martyr (c. 100–165), Tatian (110–172), Athenagoras (c. 177), Theophilus (d. 181), Melito (d. 190), and Hegesippus (c. 180). Some scholars include Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and Cyprian in this group.

For our purposes, we will consider five of the leading apologists.

1. Justin Martyr (100–165)

- Also known as Justin of Caesarea, he was an early Christian apologist. He is considered the most important of the second-century apologists; and a large number of his writings have survived.

He was born in Judea to pagan parents. He studied philosophy, but then converted to Christianity. After his conversion, he became a defender of the faith, which he regarded as the true philosophy. He writes, “I fell in love with the prophets and these men who had loved Christ; I reflected on all their words and found that this philosophy alone was true and profitable.”



- One of his primary philosophical arguments was to use the concept of Logos (which was widely known in Roman culture) as a way to point to Jesus Christ as the Son of God.
- The *First* and *Second Apology* were written to demonstrate to the emperor and the Roman senate, given their reputation as fair-minded and educated men, the injustice of persecuting the Christians, since Christianity is the true philosophy.
- In his *Dialogue with Trypho*, Justin argues from Scripture that Jesus is the Messiah and that Christians are the true people of God. Justin’s debate with Trypho is notable, in part, because of the cordial nature with which it was conducted.
- Only fragments remain of his work *On the Resurrection* (which argued for the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ); also his works, *Against Marcion* and *Against All Heresies*, have been lost.
- He was martyred in Rome (around 165) during the reign of Marcus Aurelius. When asked to recant, Justin reportedly said, "No one who is rightly minded turns from true belief to false."

- Key Quotes from Justin Martyr:

Regarding early Christian worship:

On the day called Sunday there is a gathering together in the same place of all who live in a given city or rural district. The memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits. Then when the reader ceases, the president [pastor] in a discourse admonishes and urges the imitation of these good things. Next we all rise together and send up prayers.

When we cease from our prayer, bread is presented and wine and water. The president in the same manner sends up prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability, and the people sing out their assent, saying the 'Amen.' A distribution and participation of the elements for which thanks have been given is made to each person, and to those who are not present they are sent by the deacons.

Those who have means and are willing, each according to his own choice, gives what he wills, and what is collected is deposited with the president. He provides for the orphans and widows, those who are in need on account of sickness or some other cause, those who are in bonds, strangers who are sojourning, and in a word he becomes the protector of all who are in need.

But Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly, because it is the first day on which God, having wrought a change in the darkness and matter, made the world; and Jesus Christ our Savior on the same day rose from the dead.

For He was crucified on the day before that of Saturn (Saturday); and on the day after that of Saturn, which is the day of the Sun, having appeared to His apostles and disciples, He taught them these things, which we have submitted to you also for your consideration. (*First Apology*, 67)

Regarding the distinction between God the Father and God the Son:

Then I replied, “Reverting to the Scriptures, I shall endeavor to persuade you, that He who is said to have appeared to Abraham, and to Jacob, and to Moses, and who is called God, is distinct from Him who made all things, — numerically, I mean, not [distinct] in will. For I affirm that He has never at any time done anything which He who made the world — above whom there is no other God — has not wished Him both to do and to engage Himself with.” (*Dialogue with Trypho*, 56)

Regarding the equation of the OT Angel of the Lord with Christ:

... even so here, the Scripture, in announcing that the Angel of the Lord appeared to Moses, and in afterwards declaring him to be Lord and God, speaks of the same One, whom it declares by the many testimonies already quoted to be minister to God, who is above the world, above whom there is no other. (*Dialogue with Trypho*, 60)

2. Tatian (110–c.172)

- Syrian by birth, Tatian was a student of Justin Martyr.
- Like his teacher, he also embraced Christianity after he failed to find truth in any of the other pagan philosophies.
- Although taught by Justin, his writings are quite different. They reflect a greater degree of asceticism, and a strong dislike for Greek philosophy and Hellenistic culture.
- He believed that church of his day did not go far enough in rejecting the influence of the surrounding society. In fact, he was so extreme, that after Justin's death he returned to the Mesopotamian-Syrian area (from Rome) and began his own Christian Gnostic sect (which was rejected by orthodox Christianity as heretical).
- His followers rejected marriage as adulterous, condemned eating meat in any form, and forbade drinking wine even during the Lord's Supper.
- His *Oratio ad Graecos* (*Address to the Greeks*) attempts to show that paganism is worthless, and that Christianity by contrast is the only reasonable faith.
- His other major work was the *Diatessaron*. It was a harmony of the four New Testament Gospels, and became the standard for Syrian churches until the fifth century.

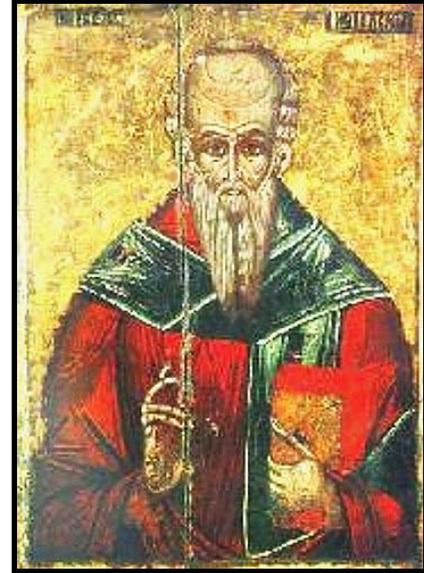


3. Athenagoras of Athens (c. 133–190)

- Not much is known about Athenagoras, though it appears that his writings were relatively well-known and influential in the second century.
- Only two of his writings have survived: an *Apology* or *Embassy for the Christians*, and a *Treatise on the Resurrection*.
- In his *Apology* he pleaded to the emperor for justice on behalf of mistreated Christians. He refuted the idea that Christians were either cannibals or atheists.
- According to Philip of Side (writing around 425), Athenagoras converted to Christianity after he had read the Scriptures in an attempt to refute them. There is some evidence that Athenagoras was a Platonist before he became a Christian.

4. Clement of Alexandria (c. 150–215)

- Titus Flavius Clemens was the head of a Christian training school in Alexandria, Egypt.
- He was the teacher of Origen.
- He was a leading proponent of making use of Greek philosophy in an effort to defend Christianity. He did not see philosophy as contrary to Christianity, but rather as complementary to it. He even asserted a form of Christian Platonism.
- His three most well-known works are his *Exhortation to the Greeks*, the *Instructor*, and the *Miscellanies*.
- Another surviving work from Clement is a treatise on Mark 10:17–31 regarding, “Who is the Rich Man that Shall Be Saved?” It asserts that riches (in and of themselves) are not condemned in Scripture, but rather the misuse of such riches. Such suggests that, by the time of Clement’s tenure in Alexandria, the church was composed of those from both the upper and lower classes.



5. Tertullian (c. 155–230)

- From Carthage, North Africa, in modern-day Tunisia
- He was highly educated as a lawyer in Rome; and is one of the most prolific of the early church fathers.
- He is considered by some to be the “father of the Latin Church” since he was the first notable writer of Latin Christianity
- He introduced the term Trinity to the Christian vocabulary and also probably of the formula "three Persons, one Substance."
- Despite being highly educated, Tertullian was firmly opposed to any marriage of Greek philosophy and Christian teaching (in contrast to Clement of Alexandria).
- He also felt the mainstream church had grown to worldly, which in part explains why eventually he left the orthodox church and joined Montanism.



- Thirty-one of Tertullian's works have survived, together with fragments of more. Some fifteen additional works have been lost.
- Tertullian's writings provide a comprehensive overview of the theological discussions of his day, including apologetics against paganism and Judaism, church polity, polemics, and ethics.

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The Polemical Fathers (late-second and third centuries)

Whereas the apologists were primarily concerned with defending Christianity from external attacks, the polemical fathers focused on defending the faith from internal error.

In some cases, there is clearly overlap between the two categories (as some church fathers participated in both apologetics and polemics).

These two groups of church fathers (the Apologists and the Polemical Fathers), together with the Apostolic Fathers, make up the larger category of Ante-Nicene Fathers. The Ante-Nicene period refers to the time in church history between the end of the Apostolic era and the Council of Nicea (in 325).

For our purposes, we will consider two polemical church fathers, though Tertullian could also be included in this group.

1. Irenaeus (c. 130–202)

- Irenaeus was a bishop in Gaul, in what is now Lyon, France. He was a disciple of Polycarp.
- Aggressively attacked Gnosticism—defending the unity of God against the numerous Aeons of Gnostic teachings
- Irenaeus used the theology of the Logos in a way that was similar to both Justin Martyr and the Apostle John.
- Irenaeus was the first known Christian writer to list all four Gospels as divinely-inspired. This may have been in response to The Gospel of Marcion (an edited-version of the Gospel of Luke).
- Irenaeus most famous work, *Against Heresies*, is a detailed response to Valentinian Gnosticism.



Key Quotes:**On the Four Gospels:**

But it is not possible that the Gospels can be either more or fewer in number than they are. For since there are four zones of the world in which we live, and four principal winds, while the church has been scattered throughout the world, and since the 'pillar and ground' of the Church is the Gospel and the spirit of life, it is fitting that she should have four pillars, breathing incorruption on every side, and vivifying human afresh. From this fact, it is evident that the Logos, the fashioner *demiourgos* of all, he that sits on the cherubim and holds all things together, when he was manifested to humanity, gave us the gospel under four forms but bound together by one spirit." *Against Heresies* 3.11.8

On the Witness of the Apostles:

We have received the disposition of our salvation by no others, but those by whom the Gospel came to us [namely, the Apostles]; which they then preached, and afterwards by God's will delivered to us in the Scriptures, to be the pillar and ground of our faith.

On the content of apostolic tradition:

[The] ancient tradition of the apostles [is] *believing in one God, the Creator of heaven and earth, and all things therein, by means of Christ Jesus, the Son of God; who, because of His surpassing love towards His creation, condescended to be born of the virgin, He Himself uniting man through Himself to God, and having suffered under Pontius Pilate, and rising again, and having been received up in splendor, shall come in glory, the Savior of those who are saved, and the Judge of those who are judged, and sending into eternal fire those who transform the truth, and despise His Father and His advent. Against Heresies* 3.4.1–2

2. Hippolytus (c. 170–236)

- Reportedly a disciple of Irenaeus and a priest in Rome
- He wrote polemical works directed against the pagans, the Jews and heretics. The most important of these polemical treatises is the *Refutation of all Heresies*.
- He came into conflict with the church in Rome and was elected as a rival bishop. He is considered by some Roman Catholics to be the first anti-pope. But when he died (as a martyr), he had been reconciled to the church in Rome.
- Wrote many works (similar to Origen) but most are lost.

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Two Additional Ante-Nicene Fathers of Note

1. Origen (c. 182–251)

- Origen was a Christian scholar, theologian, and one of the most distinguished of fathers of the early Christian Church. He is thought to have been born at Alexandria, and died at Caesarea.
- He was highly influenced by Platonic thought (and an idealism in which material things are not that important, but spiritual things are).
- He is generally credited with propogating (and furthering) the allegorical interpretation of the Bible. His hermeneutic became the standard approach for the catechetical school in Alexandria.
- He was a teacher at the school in Alexandria; and a prolific writer and a respected scholar. He had been the student of Clement of Alexandria.
- He wrote a commentaries on nearly every book of the Bible, and produced a critical version of the Septuagint.
- His work entitled, *De Principiis*, was one of the earliest attempts to systematize Christian doctrine.
- Origen would later be deemed a heretic at the second Council of Constantinople in 553. Some of Origen's followers (known as the Origenists) caused controversy in the church. As a result, some of Origen's stranger views came under scrutiny (including the preexistence of souls and universal salvation). Thus, these Councils declared the views of Origen and his followers to be anathema.

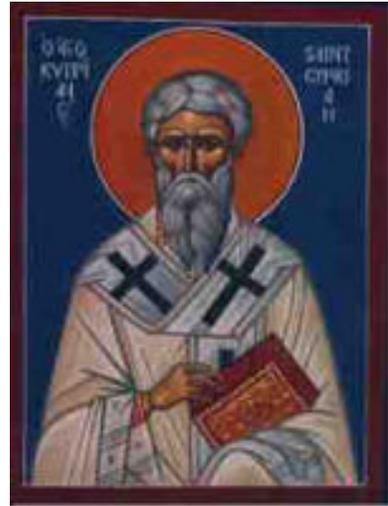


Key Quote:

From the Second Council of Constantinople, declaring Origen a heretic: If anyone does not anathematize Arius, Eunomius, Macedonius, Apollinaris, Nestorius, Eutyches and Origen, as well as their impious writings, as also all other heretics already condemned and anathematized by the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, and by the aforesaid four Holy Synods and [if anyone does not equally anathematize] all those who have held and hold or who in their impiety persist in holding to the end the same opinion as those heretics just mentioned: let him be anathema.

2. Cyprian (200–258)

- Cyprian was a bishop in Carthage, North Africa. He was converted in his forties, and was an admirer of Tertullian.
- He was devoted to celibacy, poverty and the unity of the church; he was persecuted and later beheaded.
- He was more of a politician, administrator and pastor than a theologian.
- Clear articulation of the episcopacy and the authority in the church. This included absolute authority of the bishop and apostolic succession.
- One of the major controversies faced by Cyprian was with regard to whether or not to restore the *lapsi* to the church. (The *lapsi* were those who had denied the faith in order to save their lives during the especially harsh persecution that took place in Carthage during the reign of Emperor Decius. In order to avoid punishment—usually martyrdom—Christians were commanded to sacrifice to the Emperor. In exchange they received a “libellus,” a certificate indicating that they had performed the required sacrifice.)
- Cyprian himself had fled from Carthage during the persecution, an act which some of his opponents interpreted as cowardice. Cyprian, however, said that God had told him to flee by means of a vision.
- Those who disagreed with Cyprian on that issue set up a rival church, under the leadership of Fortunatus. (In Rome, Novatian had also been set up as a rival bishop.)



Key Quotes:

Regarding the necessity to be part of the Church:

He can no longer have God for his Father who has not the Church for his mother; . . . he who gathers elsewhere than in the Church scatters the Church of Christ" (vi.); "nor is there any other home to believers but the one Church" (ix.). (*The Unity of the Church*)

Regarding the division caused by Novatian:

Since the Church alone has the living water and the power of baptizing and cleansing man, he who says that anyone can be baptized and sanctified by Novatian must first show and teach that Novatian is in the Church or presides over the Church.

Evaluating the Second and Third-Century Fathers – *Some food for thought:*

1. **What should we be willing to fight for?** The apologists fought for an accurate representation of Christianity against the false rumors of a pagan society. The polemicists fought for an accurate portrayal of the historic Gospel against false teaching.

Related questions:

- How did the apostles respond to false doctrine?
- What was the standard of truth used by the church fathers?

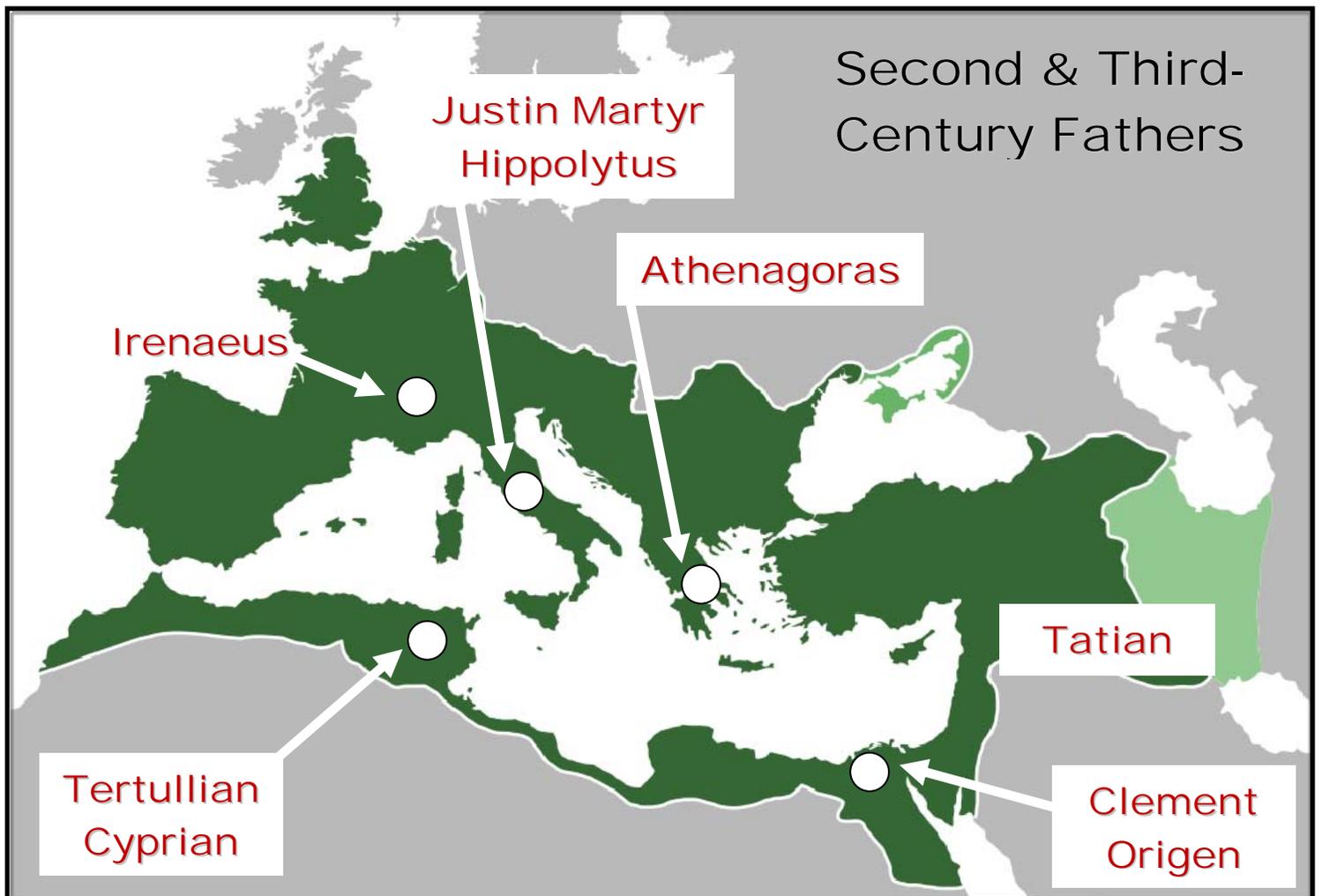
2. **What should we be willing to die for?**

3. **How are we to assess the spiritual condition of men like Tertullian and Origen?**

- a. We don't know the heart; and we must avoid anachronistic accusations
- b. Also, there is a difference between not fully understanding something and rejecting that which has been clearly articulated

4. **What warnings can we take from these men?**

- a. Good intentions don't excuse bad practices (per Origen's hermeneutic)
- b. Don't create a solution that is worse than the problem (per Tatian and Tertullian in their response to the worldliness of the church)
- c. Attempts to over-contextualize are spiritually dangerous (as seen in the Clement's emphasis on Greek philosophy and borne out in some of Origen's Platonic ideas)



{ADDENDUM}

A FAITH WORTH DYING FOR
*The Martyrs of the Early Church***Excursus: FOX'S BOOK OF MARTYRS (Chapter 2)****The First Persecution, Under Nero, A.D. 67**

The first persecution of the Church took place in the year 67, under Nero, the sixth emperor of Rome. This monarch reigned for the space of five years, with tolerable credit to himself, but then gave way to the greatest extravagancy of temper, and to the most atrocious barbarities. Among other diabolical whims, he ordered that the city of Rome should be set on fire, which order was executed by his officers, guards, and servants. While the imperial city was in flames, he went up to the tower of Macaenas, played upon his harp, sung the song of the burning of Troy, and openly declared that 'he wished the ruin of all things before his death.' Besides the noble pile, called the Circus, many other palaces and houses were consumed; several thousands perished in the flames, were smothered in the smoke, or buried beneath the ruins.

This dreadful conflagration continued nine days; when Nero, finding that his conduct was greatly blamed, and a severe odium cast upon him, determined to lay the whole upon the Christians, at once to excuse himself, and have an opportunity of glutting his sight with new cruelties. This was the occasion of the first persecution; and the barbarities exercised on the Christians were such as even excited the commiseration of the Romans themselves. Nero even refined upon cruelty, and contrived all manner of punishments for the Christians that the most infernal imagination could design. In particular, he had some sewed up in skins of wild beasts, and then worried by dogs until they expired; and others dressed in shirts made stiff with wax, fixed to axletrees, and set on fire in his gardens, in order to illuminate them. This persecution was general throughout the whole Roman Empire; but it rather increased than diminished the spirit of Christianity. In the course of it, St. Paul and St. Peter were martyred.

To their names may be added, Erastus, chamberlain of Corinth; Aristarchus, the Macedonian, and Trophimus, an Ephesian, converted by St. Paul, and fellow-laborer with him, Joseph, commonly called Barsabas, and Ananias, bishop of Damascus; each of the Seventy.

The Second Persecution, Under Domitian, A.D. 81

The emperor Domitian, who was naturally inclined to cruelty, first slew his brother, and then raised the second persecution against the Christians. In his rage he put to death some of the Roman senators, some through malice; and others to confiscate their estates. He then commanded all the lineage of David be put to death.

Among the numerous martyrs that suffered during this persecution was Simeon, bishop of Jerusalem, who was crucified; and St. John, who was boiled in oil, and afterward banished to Patmos. Flavia, the daughter of a Roman senator, was likewise banished to Pontus; and a law

was made, "That no Christian, once brought before the tribunal, should be exempted from punishment without renouncing his religion."

A variety of fabricated tales were, during this reign, composed in order to injure the Christians. Such was the infatuation of the pagans, that, if famine, pestilence, or earthquakes afflicted any of the Roman provinces, it was laid upon the Christians. These persecutions among the Christians increased the number of informers and many, for the sake of gain, swore away the lives of the innocent.

Another hardship was, that, when any Christians were brought before the magistrates, a test oath was proposed, when, if they refused to take it, death was pronounced against them; and if they confessed themselves Christians, the sentence was the same.

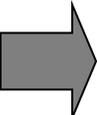
The following were the most remarkable among the numerous martyrs who suffered during this persecution.

Dionysius, the Areopagite, was an Athenian by birth, and educated in all the useful and ornamental literature of Greece. He then travelled to Egypt to study astronomy, and made very particular observations on the great and supernatural eclipse, which happened at the time of our Savior's crucifixion.

The sanctity of his conversation and the purity of his manners recommended him so strongly to the Christians in general, that he was appointed bishop of Athens.

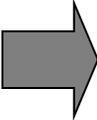
Nicodemus, a benevolent Christian of some distinction, suffered at Rome during the rage of Domitian's persecution.

Protasius and Gervasius were martyred at Milan.

 Timothy was the celebrated disciple of St. Paul, and bishop of Ephesus, where he zealously governed the Church until A.D. 97. At this period, as the pagans were about to celebrate a feast called Catagogion, Timothy, meeting the procession, severely reproved them for their ridiculous idolatry, which so exasperated the people that they fell upon him with their clubs, and beat him in so dreadful a manner that he expired of the bruises two days later.

The Third Persecution, Under Trajan, A.D. 108

In the third persecution Pliny the Second, a man learned and famous, seeing the lamentable slaughter of Christians, and moved therewith to pity, wrote to Trajan, certifying him that there were many thousands of them daily put to death, of which none did any thing contrary to the Roman laws worthy of persecution. "The whole account they gave of their crime or error (whichever it is to be called) amounted only to this-viz. that they were accustomed on a stated day to meet before daylight, and to repeat together a set form of prayer to Christ as a God, and to bind themselves by an obligation-not indeed to commit wickedness; but, on the contrary-never to commit theft, robbery, or adultery, never to falsify their word, never to defraud any man: after which it was their custom to separate, and reassemble to partake in common of a harmless meal."



In this persecution suffered the blessed martyr, Ignatius, who is held in famous reverence among very many. This Ignatius was appointed to the bishopric of Antioch next after Peter in succession. Some do say, that he, being sent from Syria to Rome, because he professed Christ, was given to the wild beasts to be devoured. It is also said of him, that when he passed through Asia, being under the most strict custody of his keepers, he strengthened and confirmed the churches through all the cities as he went, both with his exhortations and preaching of the Word of God. Accordingly, having come to Smyrna, he wrote to the Church at Rome, exhorting them not to use means for his deliverance from martyrdom, lest they should deprive him of that which he most longed and hoped for. "Now I begin to be a disciple. I care for nothing, of visible or invisible things, so that I may but win Christ. Let fire and the cross, let the companies of wild beasts, let breaking of bones and tearing of limbs, let the grinding of the whole body, and all the malice of the devil, come upon me; be it so, only may I win Christ Jesus!" And even when he was sentenced to be thrown to the beasts, such as the burning desire that he had to suffer, that he spake, what time he heard the lions roaring, saying: "I am the wheat of Christ: I am going to be ground with the teeth of wild beasts, that I may be found pure bread."

Trajan being succeeded by Adrian, the latter continued this third persecution with as much severity as his predecessor. About this time Alexander, bishop of Rome, with his two deacons, were martyred; as were Quirinus and Hernes, with their families;

Zenon, a Roman nobleman, and about ten thousand other Christians.

In Mount Ararat many were crucified, crowned with thorns, and spears run into their sides, in imitation of Christ's passion. Eustachius, a brave and successful Roman commander, was by the emperor ordered to join in an idolatrous sacrifice to celebrate some of his own victories; but his faith (being a Christian in his heart) was so much greater than his vanity, that he nobly refused it. Enraged at the denial, the ungrateful emperor forgot the service of this skilful commander, and ordered him and his whole family to be martyred.

At the martyrdom of Faustines and Jovita, brothers and citizens of Brescia, their torments were so many, and their patience so great, that Calocerius, a pagan, beholding them, was struck with admiration, and exclaimed in a kind of ecstasy, "Great is the God of the Christians!" for which he was apprehended, and suffered a similar fate.

Many other similar cruelties and rigors were exercised against the Christians, until Quadratus, bishop of Athens, made a learned apology in their favor before the emperor, who happened to be there and Aristides, a philosopher of the same city, wrote an elegant epistle, which caused Adrian to relax in his severities, and relent in their favor.

Adrian dying A.D. 138, was succeeded by Antoninus Pius, one of the most amiable monarchs that ever reigned, and who stayed the persecutions against the Christians.

The Fourth Persecution, Under Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, A.D. 162

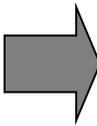
Marcus Aurelius, followed about the year of our Lord 161, a man of nature more stern and severe; and, although in study of philosophy and in civil government no less commendable, yet, toward the Christians sharp and fierce; by whom was moved the fourth persecution.

The cruelties used in this persecution were such that many of the spectators shuddered with horror at the sight, and were astonished at the intrepidity of the sufferers. Some of the martyrs were obliged to pass, with their already wounded feet, over thorns, nails, sharp shells, etc. upon their points, others were scourged until their sinews and veins lay bare, and after suffering the most excruciating tortures that could be devised, they were destroyed by the most terrible deaths.

Germanicus, a young man, but a true Christian, being delivered to the wild beasts on account of his faith, behaved with such astonishing courage that several pagans became converts to a faith which inspired such fortitude.

Polycarp, the venerable bishop of Smyrna, hearing that persons were seeking for him, escaped, but was discovered by a child. After feasting the guards who apprehended him, he desired an hour in prayer, which being allowed, he prayed with such fervency, that his guards repented that they had been instrumental in taking him. He was, however, carried before the proconsul, condemned, and burnt in the market place.

The proconsul then urged him, saying, "Swear, and I will release thee;--reproach Christ."

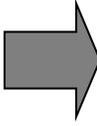


Polycarp answered, "Eighty and six years have I served him, and he never once wronged me; how then shall I blaspheme my King, Who hath saved me?" At the stake to which he was only tied, but not nailed as usual, as he assured them he should stand immovable, the flames, on their kindling the fagots, encircled his body, like an arch, without touching him; and the executioner, on seeing this, was ordered to pierce him with a sword, when so great a quantity of blood flowed out as extinguished the fire. But his body, at the instigation of the enemies of the Gospel, especially Jews, was ordered to be consumed in the pile, and the request of his friends, who wished to give it Christian burial, rejected. They nevertheless collected his bones and as much of his remains as possible, and caused them to be decently interred.

Metrodorus, a minister, who preached boldly, and Pionius, who made some excellent apologies for the Christian faith, were likewise burnt. Carpus and Papilus, two worthy Christians, and Agatonica, a pious woman, suffered martyrdom at Pergamopolis, in Asia.

Felicitatis, an illustrious Roman lady, of a considerable family, and the most shining virtues, was a devout Christian. She had seven sons, whom she had educated with the most exemplary piety.

Januarius, the eldest, was scourged, and pressed to death with weights; Felix and Philip, the two next had their brains dashed out with clubs; Silvanus, the fourth, was murdered by being thrown from a precipice; and the three younger sons, Alexander, Vitalis, and Martial, were beheaded. The mother was beheaded with the same sword as the three latter.



Justin, the celebrated philosopher, fell a martyr in this persecution. He was a native of Neapolis, in Samaria, and was born A.D. 103. Justin was a great lover of truth, and a universal scholar; he investigated the Stoic and Peripatetic philosophy, and attempted the Pythagorean; but the behavior of our of its professors disgusting him, he applied himself to the Platonic, in which he took great delight. About the year 133, when he was thirty years of age, he became a convert to Christianity, and then, for the first time, perceived the real nature of truth.

He wrote an elegant epistle to the Gentiles, and employed his talents in convincing the Jews of the truth of the Christian rites; spending a great deal of time in travelling, until he took up his abode in Rome, and fixed his habitation upon the Viminal mount.

He kept a public school, taught many who afterward became great men, and wrote a treatise to confuse heresies of all kinds. As the pagans began to treat the Christians with great severity, Justin wrote his first apology in their favor. This piece displays great learning and genius, and occasioned the emperor to publish an edict in favor of the Christians.

Soon after, he entered into frequent contests with Crescens, a person of a vicious life and conversation, but a celebrated cynic philosopher; and his arguments appeared so powerful, yet disgusting to the cynic, that he resolved on, and in the sequel accomplished, his destruction.

The second apology of Justin, upon certain severities, gave Crescens the cynic an opportunity of prejudicing the emperor against the writer of it; upon which Justin, and six of his companions, were apprehended. Being commanded to sacrifice to the pagan idols, they refused, and were condemned to be scourged, and then beheaded; which sentence was executed with all imaginable severity.

Several were beheaded for refusing to sacrifice to the image of Jupiter; in particular Concordus, a deacon of the city of Spolito.

Some of the restless northern nations having risen in arms against Rome, the emperor marched to encounter them. He was, however, drawn into an ambuscade, and dreaded the loss of his whole army. Enveloped with mountains, surrounded by enemies, and perishing with thirst, the pagan deities were invoked in vain; when the men belonging to the militine, or thundering legion, who were all Christians, were commanded to call upon their God for succor. A miraculous deliverance immediately ensued; a prodigious quantity of rain fell, which, being caught by the men, and filling their dykes, afforded a sudden and astonishing relief. It appears that the storm which miraculously flashed in the face of the enemy so intimidated them, that part deserted to the Roman army; the rest were defeated, and the revolted provinces entirely recovered.

This affair occasioned the persecution to subside for some time, at least in those parts immediately under the inspection of the emperor; but we find that it soon after raged in France, particularly at Lyons, where the tortures to which many of the Christians were put, almost exceed the powers of description.

The principal of these martyrs were Vetius Agathus, a young man; Blandina, a Christian lady, of a weak constitution; Sanctus, a deacon of Vienna; red hot plates of brass were placed upon the tenderest parts of his body; Biblias, a weak woman, once an apostate. Attalus, of Pergamus; and Pothinus, the venerable bishop of Lyons, who was ninety years of age. Blandina, on the day when she and the three other champions were first brought into the amphitheater, she was suspended on a piece of wood fixed in the ground, and exposed as food for the wild beasts; at which time, by her earnest prayers, she encouraged others. But none of the wild beasts would touch her, so that she was remanded to prison. When she was again produced for the third and last time, she was accompanied by Ponticus, a youth of fifteen, and the constancy of their faith so enraged the multitude that neither the sex of the one nor the youth of the other were respected,

being exposed to all manner of punishments and tortures. Being strengthened by Blandina, he persevered unto death; and she, after enduring all the torments heretofore mentioned, was at length slain with the sword.

When the Christians, upon these occasions, received martyrdom, they were ornamented, and crowned with garlands of flowers; for which they, in heaven, received eternal crowns of glory.

It has been said that the lives of the early Christians consisted of "persecution above ground and prayer below ground." Their lives are expressed by the Coliseum and the catacombs. Beneath Rome are the excavations which we call the catacombs, which were at once temples and tombs. The early Church of Rome might well be called the Church of the Catacombs. There are some sixty catacombs near Rome, in which some six hundred miles of galleries have been traced, and these are not all. These galleries are about eight feet high and from three to five feet wide, containing on either side several rows of long, low, horizontal recesses, one above another like berths in a ship. In these the dead bodies were placed and the front closed, either by a single marble slab or several great tiles laid in mortar. On these slabs or tiles, epitaphs or symbols are graved or painted. Both pagans and Christians buried their dead in these catacombs. When the Christian graves have been opened the skeletons tell their own terrible tale. Heads are found severed from the body, ribs and shoulder blades are broken, bones are often calcined from fire. But despite the awful story of persecution that we may read here, the inscriptions breathe forth peace and joy and triumph. Here are a few:

"Here lies Marcia, put to rest in a dream of peace."

"Lawrence to his sweetest son, borne away of angels."

"Victorious in peace and in Christ."

"Being called away, he went in peace."

Remember when reading these inscriptions the story the skeletons tell of persecution, of torture, and of fire.

But the full force of these epitaphs is seen when we contrast them with the pagan epitaphs, such as:

"Live for the present hour, since we are sure of nothing else."

"I lift my hands against the gods who took me away at the age of twenty though I had done no harm."

"Once I was not. Now I am not. I know nothing about it, and it is no concern of mine."

"Traveler, curse me not as you pass, for I am in darkness and cannot answer."

The most frequent Christian symbols on the walls of the catacombs, are, the good shepherd with the lamb on his shoulder, a ship under full sail, harps, anchors, crowns, vines, and above all the fish.

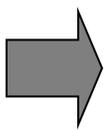
The Fifth Persecution, Commencing with Severus, A.D. 192

Severus, having been recovered from a severe fit of sickness by a Christian, became a great favorer of the Christians in general; but the prejudice and fury of the ignorant multitude prevailing, obsolete laws were put in execution against the Christians. The progress of Christianity alarmed the pagans, and they revived the stale calumny of placing accidental misfortunes to the account of its professors, A.D. 192.

But, though persecuting malice raged, yet the Gospel shone with resplendent brightness; and, firm as an impregnable rock, withstood the attacks of its boisterous enemies with success. Tertullian, who lived in this age, informs us that if the Christians had collectively withdrawn themselves from the Roman territories, the empire would have been greatly depopulated.

Victor, bishop of Rome, suffered martyrdom in the first year of the third century, A.D. 201. Leonidus, the father of the celebrated Origen, was beheaded for being a Christian. Many of Origen's hearers likewise suffered martyrdom; particularly two brothers, named Plutarchus and Serenus; another Serenus, Heron, and Heraclides, were beheaded. Rhais had boiled pitch poured upon her head, and was then burnt, as was Marcella her mother. Potainiena, the sister of Rhais, was executed in the same manner as Rhais had been; but Basilides, an officer belonging to the army, and ordered to attend her execution, became her convert.

Basilides being, as an officer, required to take a certain oath, refused, saying, that he could not swear by the Roman idols, as he was a Christian. Struck with surpsie, the people could not, at first, believe what they heard; but he had no sooner confirmed the same, than he was dragged before the judge, committed to prison, and speedily afterward beheaded.



Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons, was born in Greece, and received both a polite and a Christian education. It is generally supposed that the account of the persecutions at Lyons was written by himself. He succeeded the martyr Pothinus as bishop of Lyons, and ruled his diocese with great propriety; he was a zealous opposer of heresies in general, and, about A.D. 187, he wrote a celebrated tract against heresy. Victor, the bishop of Rome, wanting to impose the keeping of Easter there, in preference to other places, it occasioned some disorders among the Christians. In particular, Irenaeus wrote him a synodical epistle, in the name of the Gallic churches. This zeal, in favor of Christianity, pointed him out as an object of resentment to the emperor; and in A.D. 202, he was beheaded.

The persecutions now extending to Africa, many were martyred in that quarter of the globe; the most particular of whom we shall mention.

Perpetua, a married lady, of about twenty-two years. Those who suffered with her were, Felicitas, a married lady, big with child at the time of her being apprehended, and Revocatus, catechumen of Carthage, and a slave. The names of the other prisoners, destined to suffer upon this occasion, were Saturninus, Secundulus, and Satur. On the day appointed for their execution,

they were led to the amphitheater. Satur, Saturninus, and Revocatus were ordered to run the gauntlet between the hunters, or such as had the care of the wild beasts. The hunters being drawn up in two ranks, they ran between, and were severely lashed as they passed. Felicitas and Perpetua were stripped, in order to be thrown to a mad bull, which made his first attack upon Perpetua, and stunned her; he then darted at Felicitas, and gored her dreadfully; but not killing them, the executioner did that office with a sword. Revocatus and Satur were destroyed by wild beasts; Saturninus was beheaded; and Secundulus died in prison. These executions were in the 205, on the eighth day of March.

Speratus and twelve others were likewise beheaded; as was Andocles in France. Asclepiades, bishop of Antioch, suffered many tortures, but his life was spared.

Cecilia, a young lady of good family in Rome, was married to a gentleman named Valerian. She converted her husband and brother, who were beheaded; and the maximus, or officer, who led them to execution, becoming their convert, suffered the same fate. The lady was placed naked in a scalding bath, and having continued there a considerable time, her head was struck off with a sword, A.D. 222.

Calistus, bishop of Rome, was martyred, A.D. 224; but the manner of his death is not recorded; and Urban, bishop of Rome, met the same fate A.D. 232.

The Sixth Persecution, Under Maximus, A.D. 235

A.D. 235, was in the time of Maximinus. In Cappadocia, the president, Seremianus, did all he could to exterminate the Christians from that province.

The principal persons who perished under this reign were Pontianus, bishop of Rome; Anteros, a Grecian, his successor, who gave offence to the government by collecting the acts of the martyrs, Pammachius and Quiritus, Roman senators, with all their families, and many other Christians; Simplicius, senator;

Calepodius, a Christian minister, thrown into the Tyber; Martina, a noble and beautiful virgin; and Hippolitus, a Christian prelate, tied to a wild horse, and dragged until he expired.

During this persecution, raised by Maximinus, numberless Christians were slain without trial, and buried indiscriminately in heaps, sometimes fifty or sixty being cast into a pit together, without the least decency.

The tyrant Maximinus dying, A.D. 238, was succeeded by Gordian, during whose reign, and that of his successor Philip, the Church was free from persecution for the space of more than ten years; but in A.D. 249, a violent persecution broke out in Alexandria, at the instigation of a pagan priest, without the knowledge of the emperor.

The Seventh Persecution, Under Decius, A.D. 249

This was occasioned partly by the hatred he bore to his predecessor Philip, who was deemed a Christian and was partly by his jealousy concerning the amazing increase of Christianity; for the heathen temples began to be forsaken, and the Christian churches thronged.

These reasons stimulated Decius to attempt the very extirpation of the name of Christian; and it was unfortunate for the Gospel, that many errors had, about this time, crept into the Church: the Christians were at variance with each other; self-interest divided those whom social love ought to have united; and the virulence of pride occasioned a variety of factions.

The heathens in general were ambitious to enforce the imperial decrees upon this occasion, and looked upon the murder of a Christian as a merit to themselves. The martyrs, upon this occasion, were innumerable; but the principal we shall give some account of.

Fabian, the bishop of Rome, was the first person of eminence who felt the severity of this persecution. The deceased emperor, Philip, had, on account of his integrity, committed his treasure to the care of this good man. But Decius, not finding as much as his avarice made him expect, determined to wreak his vengeance on the good prelate. He was accordingly seized; and on January 20, A.D. 250, he suffered decapitation.

Julian, a native of Cilicia, as we are informed by St.

Chrysostom, was seized upon for being a Christian. He was put into a leather bag, together with a number of serpents and scorpions, and in that condition thrown into the sea.

Peter, a young man, amiable for the superior qualities of his body and mind, was beheaded for refusing to sacrifice to Venus. He said, "I am astonished you should sacrifice to an infamous woman, whose debaucheries even your own historians record, and whose life consisted of such actions as your laws would punish. No, I shall offer the true God the acceptable sacrifice of praises and prayers." Optimus, the proconsul of Asia, on hearing this, ordered the prisoner to be stretched upon a wheel, by which all his bones were broken, and then he was sent to be beheaded.

Nichomachus, being brought before the proconsul as a Christian, was ordered to sacrifice to the pagan idols. Nichomachus replied, "I cannot pay that respect to devils, which is only due to the Almighty." This speech so much enraged the proconsul that Nichomachus was put to the rack. After enduring the torments for a time, he recanted; but scarcely had he given this proof of his frailty, than he fell into the greatest agonies, dropped down on the ground, and expired immediately.

Denisa, a young woman of only sixteen years of age, who beheld this terrible judgment, suddenly exclaimed, "O unhappy wretch, why would you buy a moment's ease at the expense of a miserable eternity!" Optimus, hearing this, called to her, and Denisa avowing herself to be a Christian, she was beheaded, by his order, soon after.

Andrew and Paul, two companions of Nichomachus, the martyr, A.D. 251, suffered martyrdom by stoning, and expired, calling on their blessed Redeemer.

Alexander and Epimachus, of Alexandria, were apprehended for being Christians: and, confessing the accusation, were beat with staves, torn with hooks, and at length burnt in the fire; and we are informed, in a fragment preserved by Eusebius, that four female martyrs suffered on the same day, and at the same place, but not in the same manner; for these were beheaded.

Lucian and Marcian, two wicked pagans, though skilful magicians, becoming converts to Christianity, to make amends for their former errors, lived the lives of hermits, and subsisted upon bread and water only. After some time spent in this manner, they became zealous preachers, and made many converts. The persecution, however, raging at this time, they were seized upon, and carried before Sabinus, the governor of Bithynia. On being asked by what authority they took upon themselves to preach, Lucian answered, 'That the laws of charity and humanity obliged all men to endeavor the conversion of their neighbors, and to do everything in their power to rescue them from the snares of the devil.'

Lucian having answered in this manner, Marcian said, "Their conversion was by the same grace which was given to St. Paul, who, from a zealous persecutor of the Church, became a preacher of the Gospel."

The proconsul, finding that he could not prevail with them to renounce their faith, condemned them to be burnt alive, which sentence was soon after executed.

Trypho and Respicus, two eminent men, were seized as Christians, and imprisoned at Nice. Their feet were pierced with nails; they were dragged through the streets, scourged, torn with iron hooks, scorched with lighted torches, and at length beheaded, February 1, A.D. 251.

Agatha, a Sicilian lady, was not more remarkable for her personal and acquired endowments, than her piety; her beauty was such, that Quintian, governor of Sicily, became enamored of her, and made many attempts upon her chastity without success. In order to gratify his passions with the greater conveniency, he put the virtuous lady into the hands of Aphrodica, a very infamous and licentious woman. This wretch tried every artifice to win her to the desired prostitution; but found all her efforts were vain; for her chastity was impregnable, and she well knew that virtue alone could procure true happiness. Aphrodica acquainted Quintian with the inefficacy of her endeavors, who, enaged to be foiled in his designs, changed his lust into resentment. On her confessing that she was a Christian, he determined to gratify his revenge, as he could not his passion. Pursuant to his orders, she was scourged, burnt with red-hot irons, and torn with sharp hooks. Having borne these torments with admirable fortitude, she was next laid naked upon live coals, intermingled with glass, and then being carried back to prison, she there expired on February 5, 251.

Cyril, bishop of Gortyna, was seized by order of Lucius, the governor of that place, who, nevertheless, exhorted him to obey the imperial mandate, perform the sacrifices, and save his venerable person from destruction; for he was now eighty-four years of age. The good prelate replied that as he had long taught others to save their souls, he should only think now of his own salvation. The worthy prelate heard his fiery sentence without emotion, walked cheerfully to the place of execution, and underwent his martyrdom with great fortitude.

The persecution raged in no place more than the Island of Crete; for the governor, being exceedingly active in executing the imperial decrees, that place streamed with pious blood.

Babylas, a Christian of a liberal education, became bishop of Antioch, A.D. 237, on the demise of Zebinus. He acted with inimitable zeal, and governed the Church with admirable prudence during the most tempestuous times.

The first misfortune that happened to Antioch during his mission, was the siege of it by Sapor, king of Persia; who, having overrun all Syria, took and plundered this city among others, and used the Christian inhabitants with greater severity than the rest, but was soon totally defeated by Gordian.

After Gordian's death, in the reign of Decius, that emperor came to Antioch, where, having a desire to visit an assembly of Christians, Babylas opposed him, and absolutely refused to let him come in. The emperor dissembled his anger at that time; but soon sending for the bishop, he sharply reprov'd him for his insolence, and then ordered him to sacrifice to the pagan deities as an expiation for his offence. This being refused, he was committed to prison, loaded with chains, treated with great severities, and then beheaded, together with three young men who had been his pupils. A.D. 251.

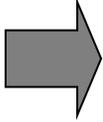
Alexander, bishop of Jerusalem, about this time was cast into prison on account of his religion, where he died through the severity of his confinement.

Julianus, an old man, lame with the gout, and Cronion, another Christian, were bound on the backs of camels, severely scourged, and then thrown into a fire and consumed. Also forty virgins, at Antioch, after being imprisoned, and scourged, were burnt.

In the year of our Lord 251, the emperor Decius having erected a pagan temple at Ephesus, he commanded all who were in that city to sacrifice to the idols. This order was nobly refused by seven of his own soldiers, viz. Maximianus, Martianus, Joannes, Malchus, Dionysius, Seraion, and Constantinus. The emperor wishing to win these soldiers to renounce their faith by his entreaties and lenity, gave them a considerable respite until he returned from an expedition. During the emperor's absence, they escaped, and hid themselves in a cavern; which the emperor being informed of at his return, the mouth of the cave was closed up, and they all perished with hunger.

Theodora, a beautiful young lady of Antioch, on refusing to sacrifice to the Roman idols, was condemned to the stews, that her virtue might be sacrificed to the brutality of lust. Didymus, a Christian, disguised himself in the habit of a Roman soldier, went to the house, informed Theodora who he was, and advised her to make her escape in his clothes. This being effected, and a man found in the brothel instead of a beautiful lady, Didymus was taken before the president, to whom confessing the truth, and owning that he was a Christian the sentence of death was immediately pronounced against him. Theodora, hearing that her deliverer was likely to suffer, came to the judge, threw herself at his feet, and begged that the sentence might fall on her as the guilty person; but, deaf to the cries of the innocent, and insensible to the calls of justice, the inflexible judge condemned both; when they were executed accordingly, being first beheaded, and their bodies afterward burnt.

Secundianus, having been accused as a Christian, was conveyed to prison by some soldiers. On the way, Verianus and Marcellinus said, "Where are you carrying the innocent?" This interrogatory occasioned them to be seized, and all three, after having been tortured, were hanged and decapitated.



Origen, the celebrated presbyter and catechist of Alexandria, at the age of sixty-four, was seized, thrown into a loathsome prison, laden with fetters, his feet placed in the stocks, and his legs extended to the utmost for several successive days. He was threatened with fire, and tormented by every lingering means the most infernal imaginations could suggest. During this cruel temporizing, the emperor Decius died, and Gallus, who succeeded him, engaging in a war with the Goths, the Christians met with a respite. In this interim, Origen obtained his enlargement, and, retiring to Tyre, he there remained until his death, which happened when he was in the sixty-ninth year of his age.

Gallus, the emperor, having concluded his wars, a plague broke out in the empire: sacrifices to the pagan deities were ordered by the emperor, and persecutions spread from the interior to the extreme parts of the empire, and many fell martyrs to the impetuosity of the rabble, as well as the prejudice of the magistrates. Among these were Cornelius, the Christian bishop of Rome, and Lucius, his successor, in 253.

Most of the errors which crept into the Church at this time arose from placing human reason in competition with revelation; but the fallacy of such arguments being proved by the most able divines, the opinions they had created vanished away like the stars before the sun.

The Eighth Persecution, Under Valerian, A.D. 257

Began under Valerian, in the month of April, 257, and continued for three years and six months. The martyrs that fell in this persecution were innumerable, and their tortures and deaths as various and painful. The most eminent martyrs were the following, though neither rank, sex, nor age were regarded.

Rufina and Secunda were two beautiful and accomplished ladies, daughters of Asterius, a gentleman of eminence in Rome. Rufina, the elder, was designed in marriage for Armentarius, a young nobleman; Secunda, the younger, for Verinus, a person of rank and opulence. The suitors, at the time of the persecution's commencing, were both Christians; but when danger appeared, to save their fortunes, they renounced their faith. They took great pains to persuade the ladies to do the same, but, disappointed in their purpose, the lovers were base enough to inform against the ladies, who, being apprehended as Christians, were brought before Junius Donatus, governor of Rome, where, A.D. 257, they sealed their martyrdom with their blood.

Stephen, bishop of Rome, was beheaded in the same year, and about that time Saturninus, the pious orthodox bishop of Toulouse, refusing to sacrifice to idols, was treated with all the barbarous indignities imaginable, and fastened by the feet to the tail of a bull. Upon a signal given, the enraged animal was driven down the steps of the temple, by which the worthy martyr's brains were dashed out.

Sextus succeeded Stephen as bishop of Rome. He is supposed to have been a Greek by birth or by extraction, and had for some time served in the capacity of a deacon under Stephen. His great fidelity, singular wisdom, and uncommon courage distinguished him upon many occasions; and the happy conclusion of a controversy with some heretics is generally ascribed to his piety and prudence. In the year 258, Marcianus, who had the management of the Roman government, procured an order from the emperor Valerian, to put to death all the Christian clergy in Rome, and hence the bishop with six of his deacons, suffered martyrdom in 258.

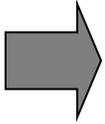
Let us draw near to the fire of martyred Lawrence, that our cold hearts may be warmed thereby. The merciless tyrant, understanding him to be not only a minister of the sacraments, but a distributor also of the Church riches, promised to himself a double prey, by the apprehension of one soul. First, with the rake of avarice to scrape to himself the treasure of poor Christians; then with the fiery fork of tyranny, so to toss and turmoil them, that they should wax weary of their profession. With furious face and cruel countenance, the greedy wolf demanded where this Lawrence had bestowed the substance of the Church: who, craving three days' respite, promised to declare where the treasure might be had. In the meantime, he caused a good number of poor Christians to be congregated. So, when the day of his answer was come, the persecutor strictly charged him to stand to his promise. Then valiant Lawrence, stretching out his arms over the poor, said: "These are the precious treasure of the Church; these are the treasure indeed, in whom the faith of Christ reigneth, in whom Jesus Christ hath His mansion-place. What more precious jewels can Christ have, than those in whom He hath promised to dwell? For so it is written, 'I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in.' And again, 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.' What greater riches can Christ our Master possess, than the poor people in whom He loveth to be seen?"

O, what tongue is able to express the fury and madness of the tyrant's heart! Now he stamped, he stared, he ramped, he fared as one out of his wits: his eyes like fire glowed, his mouth like a boar formed, his teeth like a hellhound grinned. Now, not a reasonable man, but a roaring lion, he might be called.

"Kindle the fire (he cried)--of wood make no spare. Hath this villain deluded the emperor? Away with him, away with him: whip him with scourges, jerk him with rods, buffet him with fists, brain him with clubs. Jesteth the traitor with the emperor? Pinch him with fiery tongs, gird him with burning plates, bring out the strongest chains, and the fire-forks, and the grated bed of iron: on the fire with it; bind the rebel hand and foot; and when the bed is fire-hot, on with him: roast him, broil him, toss him, turn him: on pain of our high displeasure do every man his office, O ye tormentors."

The word was no sooner spoken, but all was done. After many cruel handlings, this meek lamb was laid, I will not say on his fiery bed of iron, but on his soft bed of down. So mightily God wrought with his martyr Lawrence, so miraculously God tempered His element the fire; that it became not a bed of consuming pain, but a pallet of nourishing rest.

In Africa the persecution raged with peculiar violence; many thousands received the crown of martyrdom, among whom the following were the most distinguished characters:



Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, an eminent prelate, and a pious ornament of the Church. The brightness of his genius was tempered by the solidity of his judgment; and with all the accomplishments of the gentleman, he blended the virtues of a Christian. His doctrines were orthodox and pure; his language easy and elegant; and his manners graceful and winning: in fine, he was both the pious and polite preacher. In his youth he was educated in the principles of Gentilism, and having a considerable fortune, he lived in the very extravagance of splendor, and all the dignity of pomp.

About the year 246, Coecilius, a Christian minister of Carthage, became the happy instrument of Cyprian's conversion: on which account, and for the great love that he always afterward bore for the author of his conversion, he was termed Coecilius Cyprian. Previous to his baptism, he studied the Scriptures with care and being struck with the beauties of the truths they contained, he determined to practise the virtues therein recommended. Subsequent to his baptism, he sold his estate, distributed the money among the poor, dressed himself in plain attire, and commenced a life of austerity. He was soon after made a presbyter; and, being greatly admired for his virtues and works, on the death of Donatus, in A.D. 248, he was almost unanimously elected bishop of Carthage.

Cyprian's care not only extended over Carthage, but to Numidia and Mauritania. In all his transactions he took great care to ask the advice of his clergy, knowing that unanimity alone could be of service to the Church, this being one of his maxims, "That the bishop was in the church, and the church in the bishop; so that unity can only be preserved by a close connexion between the pastor and his flock."

In A.D. 250, Cyprian was publicly proscribed by the emperor Decius, under the appellation of Coecilius Cyprian, bishop of the Christians; and the universal cry of the pagans was, "Cyprian to the lions, Cyprian to the beasts." The bishop, however, withdrew from the rage of the populace, and his effects were immediately confiscated. During his retirement, he wrote thirty pious and elegant letters to his flock; but several schisms that then crept into the Church, gave him great uneasiness. The rigor of the persecution abating, he returned to Carthage, and did everything in his power to expunge erroneous opinions. A terrible plague breaking out in Carthage, it was as usual, laid to the charge of the Christians; and the magistrates began to persecute accordingly, which occasioned an epistle from them to Cyprian, in answer to which he vindicates the cause of Christianity. A.D. 257, Cyprian was brought before the proconsul Aspasius Paturnus, who exiled him to a little city on the Lybian sea. On the death of this proconsul, he returned to Carthage, but was soon after seized, and carried before the new governor, who condemned him to be beheaded; which sentence was executed on the fourteenth of September, A.D. 258.

The disciples of Cyprian, martyred in this persecution, were Lucius, Flavian, Victoricus, Remus, Montanus, Julian, Primelus, and Donatian.

At Utica, a most terrible tragedy was exhibited: three hundred Christians were, by the orders of the proconsul, placed round a burning limekiln. A pan of coals and incense being prepared, they were commanded either to sacrifice to Jupiter, or to be thrown into the kiln. Unanimously refusing, they bravely jumped into the pit, and were immediately suffocated.

Fructuosus, bishop of Tarragon, in Spain, and his two deacons, Augurius and Eulogius, were burnt for being Christians.

Alexander, Malchus, and Priscus, three Christians of Palestine, with a woman of the same place, voluntarily accused themselves of being Christians; on which account they were sentenced to be devoured by tigers, which sentence was executed accordingly.

Maxima, Donatilla, and Secunda, three virgins of Tuburga, had gall and vinegar given them to drink, were then severely scourged, tormented on a gibbet, rubbed with lime, scorched on a gridiron, worried by wild beasts, and at length beheaded.

It is here proper to take notice of the singular but miserable fate of the emperor Valerian, who had so long and so terribly persecuted the Christians. This tyrant, by a stratagem, was taken prisoner by Sapor, emperor of Persia, who carried him into his own country, and there treated him with the most unexampled indignity, making him kneel down as the meanest slave, and treading upon him as a footstool when he mounted his horse. After having kept him for the space of seven years in this abject state of slavery, he caused his eyes to be put out, though he was then eighty-three years of age. This not satiating his desire of revenge, he soon after ordered his body to be flayed alive, and rubbed with salt, under which torments he expired; and thus fell one of the most tyrannical emperors of Rome, and one of the greatest persecutors of the Christians.

A.D. 260, Gallienus, the son of Valerian, succeeded him, and during his reign (a few martyrs excepted) the Church enjoyed peace for some years.

The Ninth Persecution Under Aurelian, A.D. 274

The principal sufferers were: Felix, bishop of Rome. This prelate was advanced to the Roman see in 274. He was the first martyr to Aurelian's petulancy, being beheaded on the twenty-second of December, in the same year.

Agapetus, a young gentleman, who sold his estate, and gave the money to the poor, was seized as a Christian, tortured, and then beheaded at Praeneste, a city within a day's journey of Rome.

These are the only martyrs left upon record during this reign, as it was soon put to a stop by the emperor's being murdered by his own domestics, at Byzantium.

Aurelian was succeeded by Tacitus, who was followed by Probus, as the latter was by Carus: this emperor being killed by a thunder storm, his sons, Carnius and Numerian, succeeded him, and during all these reigns the Church had peace.

Diocletian mounted the imperial throne, A.D. 284; at first he showed great favor to the Christians. In the year 286, he associated Maximian with him in the empire; and some Christians were put to death before any general persecution broke out. Among these were Felician and Primus, two brothers.

Marcus and Marcellianus were twins, natives of Rome, and of noble descent. Their parents were heathens, but the tutors, to whom the education of the children was intrusted, brought them up as

Christians. Their constancy at length subdued those who wished them to become pagans, and their parents and whole family became converts to a faith they had before reprobated. They were martyred by being tied to posts, and having their feet pierced with nails. After remaining in this situation for a day and a night, their sufferings were put an end to by thrusting lances through their bodies.

Zoe, the wife of the jailer, who had the care of the before-mentioned martyrs, was also converted by them, and hung upon a tree, with a fire of straw lighted under her. When her body was taken down, it was thrown into a river, with a large stone tied to it, in order to sink it.

In the year of Christ 286, a most remarkable affair occurred; a legion of soldiers, consisting of six thousand six hundred and sixty-six men, contained none but Christians. This legion was called the Theban Legion, because the men had been raised in Thebias: they were quartered in the east until the emperor Maximian ordered them to march to Gaul, to assist him against the rebels of Burgundy. They passed the Alps into Gaul, under the command of Mauritius, Candidus, and Exuperis, their worthy commanders, and at length joined the emperor. Maximian, about this time, ordered a general sacrifice, at which the whole army was to assist; and likewise he commanded that they should take the oath of allegiance and swear, at the saame time, to assist in the extirpation of Christianity in Gaul. Alarmed at these orders, each individual of the Theban Legion absolutely refused either to sacrifice or take the oaths prescribed. This so greatly enraged Maximian, that he ordered the legion to be decimated, that is, every tenth man to be selected from the rest, and put to the sword. This bloody order having been put in execution, those who remained alive were still inflexible, when a second decimation took place, and every tenth man of those living was put to death. This second severity made no more impression than the first had done; the soldiers preserved their fortitude and their principles, but by the advice of their officers they drew up a loyal remonstrance to the emperor. This, it might have been presumed, would have softened the emperor, but it had a contrary effect: for, enraged at their perseverance and unanimity, he commanded that the whole legion should be put to death, which was accordingly executed by the other troops, who cut them to pieces with their swords, September 22, 286.

Alban, from whom St. Alban's, in Hertfordshire, received its name, was the first British martyr. Great Britain had received the Gospel of Christ from Lucius, the first Christian king, but did not suffer from the rage of persecution for many years after. He was originally a pagan, but converted by a Christian ecclesiastic, named Amphibalus, whom he sheltered on account of his religion. The enemies of Amphibalus, having intelligence of the place where he was secreted, came to the house of Alban; in order to facilitate his escape, when the soldiers came, he offered himself up as the person they were seeking for. The deceit being detected, the governor ordered him to be scourged, and then he was sentenced to be beheaded, June 22, A.D. 287.

The venerable Bede assures us, that, upon this occasion, the executioner suddenly became a convert to Christianity, and entreated permission to die for Alban, or with him. Obtaining the latter request, they were beheaded by a soldier, who voluntarily undertook the task of executioner. This happened on the twenty-second of June, A.D. 287, at Verulam, now St. Alban's, in Hertfordshire, where a magnificent church was erected to his memory about the time of Constantine the Great. The edifice, being destroyed in the Saxon wars, was rebuilt by Offa, king of Mercia, and a monastery erected adjoining to it, some remains of which are still visible, and the church is a noble Gothic structure.

Faith, a Christian female, of Aquitain, in France, was ordered to be broiled upon a gridiron, and then beheaded; A.D. 287.

Quintin was a Christian, and a native of Rome, but determined to attempt the propagation of the Gospel in Gaul, with one Lucian, they preached together in Amiens; after which Lucian went to Beaumaris, where he was martyred. Quintin remained in Picardy, and was very zealous in his ministry. Being seized upon as a Christian, he was stretched with pullies until his joints were dislocated; his body was then torn with wire scourges, and boiling oil and pitch poured on his naked flesh; lighted torches were applied to his sides and armpits; and after he had been thus tortured, he was remanded back to prison, and died of the barbarities he had suffered, October 31, A.D. 287. His body was sunk in the Somme.

The Tenth Persecution, Under Diocletian, A.D. 303

Under the Roman emperors, commonly called the Era of the Martyrs, was occasioned partly by the increasing number and luxury of the Christians, and the hatred of Galerius, the adopted son of Diocletian, who, being stimulated by his mother, a bigoted pagan, never ceased persuading the emperor to enter upon the persecution, until he had accomplished his purpose.

The fatal day fixed upon to commence the bloody work, was the twenty-third of February, A.D. 303, that being the day in which the Terminalia were celebrated, and on which, as the cruel pagans boasted, they hoped to put a termination to Christianity. On the appointed day, the persecution began in Nicomedia, on the morning of which the prefect of that city repaired, with a great number of officers and assistants, to the church of the Christians, where, having forced open the doors, they seized upon all the sacred books, and committed them to the flames.

The whole of this transaction was in the presence of Diocletian and Galerius, who, not contented with burning the books, had the church levelled with the ground. This was followed by a severe edict, commanding the destruction of all other Christian churches and books; and an order soon succeeded, to render Christians of all denomination outlaws.

The publication of this edict occasioned an immediate martyrdom, for a bold Christian not only tore it down from the place to which it was affixed, but execrated the name of the emperor for his injustice. A provocation like this was sufficient to call down pagan vengeance upon his head; he was accordingly seized, severely tortured, and then burned alive.

All the Christians were apprehended and imprisoned; and Galerius privately ordered the imperial palace to be set on fire, that the Christians might be charged as the incendiaries, and a plausible pretence given for carrying on the persecution with the greater severities. A general sacrifice was commenced, which occasioned various martyrdoms. No distinction was made of age or sex; the name of Christian was so obnoxious to the pagans that all indiscriminately fell sacrifices to their opinions. Many houses were set on fire, and whole Christian families perished in the flames; and others had stones fastened about their necks, and being tied together were driven into the sea. The persecution became general in all the Roman provinces, but more particularly in the east; and as it lasted ten years, it is impossible to ascertain the numbers martyred, or to enumerate the various modes of martyrdom.

Racks, scourges, swords, daggers, crosses, poison, and famine, were made use of in various parts to dispatch the Christians; and invention was exhausted to devise tortures against such as had no crime, but thinking differently from the votaries of superstition.

A city of Phrygia, consisting entirely of Christians, was burnt, and all the inhabitants perished in the flames.

Tired with slaughter, at length, several governors of provinces represented to the imperial court, the impropriety of such conduct. Hence many were respited from execution, but, though they were not put to death, as much as possible was done to render their lives miserable, many of them having their ears cut off, their noses slit, their right eyes put out, their limbs rendered useless by dreadful dislocations, and their flesh seared in conspicuous places with red-hot irons.

It is necessary now to particularize the most conspicuous persons who laid down their lives in martyrdom in this bloody persecution.

Sebastian, a celebrated martyr, was born at Narbonne, in Gaul, instructed in the principles of Christianity at Milan, and afterward became an officer of the emperor's guard at Rome. He remained a true Christian in the midst of idolatry; unallured by the splendors of a court, untainted by evil examples, and uncontaminated by the hopes of preferment. Refusing to be a pagan, the emperor ordered him to be taken to a field near the city, termed the Campus Martius, and there to be shot to death with arrows; which sentence was executed accordingly. Some pious Christians coming to the place of execution, in order to give his body burial, perceived signs of life in him, and immediately moving him to a place of security, they, in a short time effected his recovery, and prepared him for a second martyrdom; for, as soon as he was able to go out, he placed himself intentionally in the emperor's way as he was going to the temple, and reprehended him for his various cruelties and unreasonable prejudices against Christianity. As soon as Diocletian had overcome his surprise, he ordered Sebastian to be seized, and carried to a place near the palace, and beaten to death; and, that the Christians should not either use means again to recover or bury his body, he ordered that it should be thrown into the common sewer. Nevertheless, a Christian lady named Lucina, found means to remove it from the sewer, and bury it in the catacombs, or repositories of the dead.

The Christians, about this time, upon mature consideration, thought it unlawful to bear arms under a heathen emperor. Maximilian, the son of Fabius Victor, was the first beheaded under this regulation.

Vitus, a Sicilian of considerable family, was brought up a Christian; when his virtues increased with his years, his constancy supported him under all afflictions, and his faith was superior to the most dangerous perils. His father, Hylas, who was a pagan, finding that he had been instructed in the principles of Christianity by the nurse who brought him up, used all his endeavors to bring him back to paganism, and at length sacrificed his son to the idols, June 14, A.D. 303.

Victor was a Christian of a good family at Marseilles, in France; he spent a great part of the night in visiting the afflicted, and confirming the weak; which pious work he could not, consistently with his own safety, perform in the daytime; and his fortune he spent in relieving the distresses of poor Christians. He was at length, however, seized by the emperor Maximian's decree, who

ordered him to be bound, and dragged through the streets. During the execution of this order, he was treated with all manner of cruelties and indignities by the enraged populace. Remaining still inflexible, his courage was deemed obstinacy. Being by order stretched upon the rack, he turned his eyes toward heaven, and prayed to God to endue him with patience, after which he underwent the tortures with most admirable fortitude. After the executioners were tired with inflicting torments on him, he was conveyed to a dungeon. In his confinement, he converted his jailers, named Alexander, Felician, and Longinus. This affair coming to the ears of the emperor, he ordered them immediately to be put to death, and the jailers were accordingly beheaded. Victor was then again put to the rack, unmercifully beaten with batoons, and again sent to prison. Being a third time examined concerning his religion, he persevered in his principles; a small altar was then brought, and he was commanded to offer incense upon it immediately. Fired with indignation at the request, he boldly stepped forward, and with his foot overthrew both altar and idol. This so enraged the emperor Maximian, who was present, that he ordered the foot with which he had kicked the altar to be immediately cut off; and Victor was thrown into a mill, and crushed to pieces with the stones, A.D. 303.

Maximus, governor of Cilicia, being at Tarsus, three Christians were brought before him; their names were Tarachus, an aged man, Probus, and Andronicus. After repeated tortures and exhortations to recant, they, at length, were ordered for execution.

Being brought to the amphitheater, several beasts were let loose upon them; but none of the animals, though hungry, would touch them. The keeper then brought out a large bear, that had that very day destroyed three men; but this voracious creature and a fierce lioness both refused to touch the prisoners. Finding the design of destroying them by the means of wild beasts ineffectual, Maximus ordered them to be slain by the sword, on October 11, A.D. 303.

Romanus, a native of Palestine, was deacon of the church of Caesarea at the time of the commencement of Diocletian's persecution. Being condemned for his faith at Antioch, he was scourged, put to the rack, his body torn with hooks, his flesh cut with knives, his face scarified, his teeth beaten from their sockets, and his hair plucked up by the roots. Soon after he was ordered to be strangled, November 17, A.D. 303.

Susanna, the niece of Caius, bishop of Rome, was pressed by the emperor Diocletian to marry a noble pagan, who was nearly related to him. Refusing the honor intended her, she was beheaded by the emperor's order.

Dorotheus, the high chamberlain of the household to Diocletian, was a Christian, and took great pains to make converts. In his religious labors, he was joined by Gorgonius, another Christian, and one belonging to the palace. They were first tortured and then strangled.

Peter, a eunuch belonging to the emperor, was a Christian of singular modesty and humility. He was laid on a gridiron, and broiled over a slow fire until he expired.

Cyprian, known by the title of the magician, to distinguish him from Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, was a native of Natioch. He received a liberal education in his youth, and particularly applied himself to astrology; after which he traveled for improvement through Greece, Egypt, India, etc. In the course of time he became acquainted with Justina, a young lady of Antioch,

whose birth, beauty, and accomplishments, rendered her the admiration of all who knew her. A pagan gentleman applied to Cyprian, to promote his suit with the beautiful Justina; this he undertook, but soon himself became converted, burnt his books of astrology and magic, received baptism, and felt animated with a powerful spirit of grace. The conversion of Cyprian had a great effect on the pagan gentleman who paid his addresses to Justina, and he in a short time embraced Christianity. During the persecutions of Diocletian, Cyprian and Justina were seized upon as Christians, the former was torn with pincers, and the latter chastised; and, after suffering other torments, both were beheaded.

Eulalia, a Spanish lady of a Christian family, was remarkable in her youth for sweetness of temper, and solidity of understanding seldom found in the capriciousness of juvenile years. Being apprehended as a Christian, the magistrate attempted by the mildest means, to bring her over to paganism, but she ridiculed the pagan deities with such asperity, that the judge, incensed at her behavior, ordered her to be tortured. Her sides were accordingly torn by hooks, and her breasts burnt in the most shocking manner, until she expired by the violence of the flames, December, A.D. 303.

In the year 304, when the persecution reached Spain, Dacian, the governor of Terragona, ordered Valerius the bishop, and Vincent the deacon, to be seized, loaded with irons, and imprisoned. The prisoners being firm in their resolution, Valerius was banished, and Vincent was racked, his limbs dislocated, his flesh torn with hooks, and he was laid on a gridiron, which had not only a fire placed under it, but spikes at the top, which ran into his flesh. These torments neither destroying him, nor changing his resolutions, he was remanded to prison, and confined in a small, loathsome, dark dungeon, strewn with sharp flints, and pieces of broken glass, where he died, January 22, 304. His body was thrown into the river.

The persecution of Diocletian began particularly to rage in A.D. 304, when many Christians were put to cruel tortures and the most painful and ignominious deaths; the most eminent and particular of whom we shall enumerate.

Saturninus, a priest of Albitina, a town of Africa, after being tortured, was remanded to prison, and there starved to death. His four children, after being variously tormented, shared the same fate with their father.

Dativas, a noble Roman senator; Thelico, a pious Christian;

Victoria, a young lady of considerable family and fortune, with some others of less consideration, all auditors of Saturninus, were tortured in a similar manner, and perished by the same means.

Agrape, Chionia, and Irene, three sisters, were seized upon at Thessalonica, when Diocletian's persecution reached Greece. They were burnt, and received the crown of martyrdom in the flames, March 25, A.D. 304. The governor, finding that he could make no impression on Irene, ordered her to be exposed naked in the streets, which shameful order having been executed, a fire was kindled near the city wall, amidst whose flames her spirit ascended beyond the reach of man's cruelty.

Agatho, a man of a pious turn of mind, with Cassice, Philippa, and Eutychia, were martyred about the same time; but the particulars have not been transmitted to us.

Marcellinus, bishop of Rome, who succeeded Caius in that see, having strongly opposed paying divine honors to Diocletian, suffered martyrdom, by a variety of tortures, in the year 324, comforting his soul until he expired with the prospect of these glorious rewards it would receive by the tortures suffered in the body.

Victorius, Carpophorus, Severus, and Severianus, were brothers, and all four employed in places of great trust and honor in the city of Rome. Having exclaimed against the worship of idols, they were apprehended, and scourged, with the plumbetae, or scourges, to the ends of which were fastened leaden balls. This punishment was exercised with such excess of cruelty that the pious brothers fell martyrs to its severity.

Timothy, a deacon of Mauritania, and Maura his wife, had not been united together by the bands of wedlock above three weeks, when they were separated from each other by the persecution. Timothy, being apprehended, as a Christian, was carried before Arrianus, the governor of Thebais, who, knowing that he had the keeping of the Holy Scriptures, commanded him to deliver them up to be burnt; to which he answered, "Had I children, I would sooner deliver them up to be sacrificed, than part with the Word of God." The governor being much incensed at this reply, ordered his eyes to be put out, with red-hot irons, saying, "The books shall at least be useless to you, for you shall not see to read them." His patience under the operation was so great that the governor grew more exasperated; he, therefore, in order, if possible, to overcome his fortitude, ordered him to be hung up by the feet, with a weight tied about his neck, and a gag in his mouth. In this state, Maura his wife, tenderly urged him for her sake to recant; but, when the gag was taken out of his mouth, instead of consenting to his wife's entreaties, he greatly blamed her mistaken love, and declared his resolution of dying for the faith. The consequence was, that Maura resolved to imitate his courage and fidelity and either to accompany or follow him to glory. The governor, after trying in vain to alter her resolution, ordered her to be tortured, which was executed with great severity. After this, Timothy and Maura were crucified near each other, A.D. 304.

Sabinus, bishop of Assisium, refusing to sacrifice to Jupiter, and pushing the idol from him, had his hand cut off by the order of the governor of Tuscany. While in prison, he converted the governor and his family, all of whom suffered martyrdom for the faith. Soon after their execution, Sabinus himself was scourged to death, December, A.D. 304.

Tired with the farce of state and public business, the emperor Diocletian resigned the imperial diadem, and was succeeded by Constantius and Galerius; the former a prince of the most mild and humane disposition and the latter equally remarkable for his cruelty and tyranny. These divided the empire into two equal governments, Galerius ruling in the east, and Constantius in the west; and the people in the two governments felt the effects of the dispositions of the two emperors; for those in the west were governed in the mildest manner, but such as resided in the east felt all the miseries of oppression and lengthened tortures.

Among the many martyred by the order of Galerius, we shall enumerate the most eminent.

Amphianus was a gentleman of eminence in Lucia, and a scholar of Eusebius; Julitta, a Lycaonian of royal descent, but more celebrated for her virtues than noble blood. While on the rack, her child was killed before her face. Julitta, of Cappadocia, was a lady of distinguished capacity, great virtue, and uncommon courage. To complete the execution, Julitta had boiling pitch poured on her feet, her sides torn with hooks, and received the conclusion of her martyrdom, by being beheaded, April 16, A.D. 305.

Hermolaus, a venerable and pious Christian, of a great age, and an intimate acquaintance of Panteleon's, suffered martyrdom for the faith on the same day, and in the same manner as Panteleon.

Eustratius, secretary to the governor of Armina, was thrown into a fiery furnace for exhorting some Christians who had been apprehended, to persevere in their faith.

Nicander and Marcian, two eminent Roman military officers, were apprehended on account of their faith. As they were both men of great abilities in their profession, the utmost means were used to induce them to renounce Christianity; but these endeavors being found ineffectual, they were beheaded.

In the kingdom of Naples, several martyrdoms took place, in particular, Januaricus, bishop of Beneventum; Sosius, deacon of Misene; Proculus, another deacon; Eutyches and Acutius, two laymen; Festus, a deacon; and Desiderius, a reader; all, on account of being Christians, were condemned by the governor of Campania to be devoured by the wild beasts. The savage animals, however, would not touch them, and so they were beheaded.

Quirinus, bishop of Siscia, being carried before Matenius, the governor, was ordered to sacrifice to the pagan deities, agreeably to the edicts of various Roman emperors. The governor, perceiving his constancy, sent him to jail, and ordered him to be heavily ironed; flattering himself, that the hardships of a jail, some occasional tortures and the weight of chains, might overcome his resolution. Being decided in his principles, he was sent to Amantius, the principal governor of Pannonia, now Hungary, who loaded him with chains, and carried him through the principal towns of the Danube, exposing him to ridicule wherever he went. Arriving at length at Sabaria, and finding that Quirinus would not renounce his faith, he ordered him to be cast into a river, with a stone fastened about his neck. This sentence being put into execution, Quirinus floated about for some time, and, exhorting the people in the most pious terms, concluded his admonitions with this prayer: "It is no new thing, O all-powerful Jesus, for Thee to stop the course of rivers, or to cause a man to walk upon the water, as Thou didst Thy servant Peter; the people have already seen the proof of Thy power in me; grant me now to lay down my life for Thy sake, O my God." On pronouncing the last words he immediately sank, and died, June 4, A.D. 308. His body was afterwards taken up, and buried by some pious Christians.

Pamphilus, a native of Phoenicia, of a considerable family, was a man of such extensive learning that he was called a second Origen. He was received into the body of the clergy at Caesarea, where he established a public library and spent his time in the practice of every Christian virtue. He copied the greatest part of the works of Origen with his own hand, and, assisted by Eusebius, gave a correct copy of the Old Testament, which had suffered greatly by the ignorance or

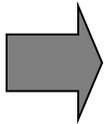
negligence of former transcribers. In the year 307, he was apprehended, and suffered torture and martyrdom.

Marcellus, bishop of Rome, being banished on account of his faith, fell a martyr to the miseries he suffered in exile, January 16, A.D. 310.

Peter, the sixteenth bishop of Alexandria, was martyred November 25, A.D. 311, by order of Maximus Caesar, who reigned in the east.

Agnes, a virgin of only thirteen years of age, was beheaded for being a Christian; as was Serene, the empress of Diocletian. Valentine, a priest, suffered the same fate at Rome; and Erasmus, a bishop, was martyred in Campania.

Soon after this the persecution abated in the middle parts of the empire, as well as in the west; and Providence at length began to manifest vengeance on the persecutors. Maximian endeavored to corrupt his daughter Fausta to murder Constantine her husband; which she discovered, and Constantine forced him to choose his own death, when he preferred the ignominious death of hanging after being an emperor near twenty years.



Constantine was the good and virtuous child of a good and virtuous father, born in Britain. His mother was named Helena, daughter of King Coilus. He was a most bountiful and gracious prince, having a desire to nourish learning and good arts, and did oftentimes use to read, write, and study himself. He had marvellous good success and prosperous achieving of all things he took in hand, which then was (and truly) supposed to proceed of this, for that he was so great a favorer of the Christian faith. Which faith when he had once embraced, he did ever after most devoutly and religiously reverence.

Thus Constantine, sufficiently appointed with strength of men but especially with strength of God, entered his journey coming towards Italy, which was about the last year of the persecution, A.D. 313. Maxentius, understanding of the coming of Constantine, and trusting more to his devilish art of magic than to the good will of his subjects, which he little deserved, durst not show himself out of the city, nor encounter him in the open field, but with privy garrisons laid wait for him by the way in sundry straits, as he should come; with whom Constantine had divers skirmishes, and by the power of the Lord did ever vanquish them and put them to flight.

Notwithstanding, Constantine yet was in no great comfort, but in great care and dread in his mind (approaching now near unto Rome) for the magical charms and sorceries of Maxentius, wherewith he had vanquished before Severus, sent by Galerius against him. Wherefore, being in great doubt and perplexity in himself, and revolving many things in his mind, what help he might have against the operations of his charming, Constantine, in his journey drawing toward the city, and casting up his eyes many times to heaven, in the south part, about the going down of the sun, saw a great brightness in heaven, appearing in the similitude of a cross, giving this inscription, *In hoc vince*, that is, "In this overcome."

Eusebius Pamphilus doth witness that he had heard the said Constantine himself oftentimes report, and also to swear this to be true and certain, which he did see with his own eyes in heaven, and also his soldiers about him. At the sight whereof when he was greatly astonished,

and consulting with his men upon the meaning thereof, behold, in the night season in his sleep, Christ appeared to him with the sign of the same cross which he had seen before, bidding him to make the figuration thereof, and to carry it in his wars before him, and so should we have the victory.

Constantine so established the peace of the Church that for the space of a thousand years we read of no set persecution against the Christians, unto the time of John Wickliffe.

So happy, so glorious was this victory of Constantine, surnamed the Great! For the joy and gladness whereof, the citizens who had sent for him before, with exceeding triumph brought him into the city of Rome, where he was most honorably received, and celebrated the space of seven days together; having, moreover, in the market place, his image set up, holding in his right hand the sign of the cross, with this inscription:

"With this wholesome sign, the true token of fortitude, I have rescued and delivered our city from the yoke of the tyrant."

We shall conclude our account of the tenth and last general persecution with the death of St. George, the titular saint and patron of England. St. George was born in Cappadocia, of Christian parents; and giving proofs of his courage, was promoted in the army of the emperor Diocletian. During the persecution, St. George threw up his command, went boldly to the senate house, and avowed his being a Christian, taking occasion at the same time to remonstrate against paganism, and point out the absurdity of worshipping idols. This freedom so greatly provoked the senate that St. George was ordered to be tortured, and by the emperor's orders was dragged through the streets, and beheaded the next day.

The legend of the dragon, which is associated with this martyr, is usually illustrated by representing St. George seated upon a charging horse and transfixing the monster with his spear. This fiery dragon symbolizes the devil, who was vanquished by St. George's steadfast faith in Christ, which remained unshaken in spite of torture and death.

{ LECTURE 6 }

THE EARLY CHURCH & THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE

* *This lecture adapted from a message delivered at Grace Church in July 2014.*

Hebrews 4:12 – “For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”

- Because it is empowered by the Holy Spirit, the Word of God is a living Book. It actively convicts the human heart, as it pierces to the innermost depths of who we are. It is like a sword—the “sword of the Spirit” as Paul calls it in Ephesians 6:17—a precise implement in the hands of its divine Author. And when it goes forth it will not return void, for God Himself energizes and empowers it.
- The truth of that verse was vividly put on display during the Protestant Reformation—that seismic eruption of spiritual revival that shook the Roman Catholic Church to its core, causing the collapse of a corrupt religious system and permanently altering the course of Western civilization.
- We are all familiar with the great heroes of the Reformation. Names like **Martin Luther**, **John Calvin**, **John Knox**, and **William Tyndale**. And if we had time this morning, I could share with you amazing stories from the lives of each of those men—like **Luther** meeting his wife Katie by smuggling her out of a nunnery in a fish barrel; or **Calvin** nearly getting run through with a sword on a Sunday morning because he refused to let an openly unrepentant man partake in the Lord’s Table; or **Knox** serving for two years as a slave on a French galley ship; or **Tyndale** being burnt at the stake by Henry VIII after translating the New Testament into English.
- Church history is filled with great stories, powerful accounts about the lives of courageous and faithful men and women who were mightily used by God to accomplish incredible things.
- **But the ultimate credit for the Reformation does not belong to those men.** It was not their *courage*, *cleverness*, or *creativity* that brought revival to Western Europe in the sixteenth century. The Reformation was not the result of any church growth strategies, ingenious marketing schemes, or seeker-driven fads. Not at all.
- Do you know what caused the Reformation?
 - It was the Word of God empowered by the Spirit of God preached by men of God in a language that the common people of Europe could understand ... and when their ears were exposed to the truth of God’s Word it pierced their hearts and they were radically changed.

- And as untold multitudes of individual sinners were changed, entire cities, provinces, and nations were changed as well.
- The Reformers themselves recognized that fact. One of the Swiss Reformers, a man named **Ulrich Zwingli**, compared the Bible to the mighty currents of the Rhine river. He said this: “For God’s sake, do not put yourself at odds with the Word of God. For truly it will persist as surely as the Rhine follows its course. One can perhaps dam it up for awhile, but it is impossible to stop it.”
(Source: <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ch/131christians/moversandshakers/zwingli.html>)
- **Martin Luther** echoed that confidence in the power of Scripture. Luther rejected the use of armed violence to promote the Reformation; all that was needed was the preaching of the Word. As he put it, “I will not have recourse to arms and bloodshed in defense of the Gospel. By the Word the earth has been subdued; by the Word the Church has been saved; and by the Word also it shall be reestablished.” (cited from D’Aubigne, *History Of The Reformation Of The Sixteenth Century*, 2.6.2.)
- Quotes like those, and we could read you many more, reveal the true catalyst behind the Protestant Reformation. It is found in **Hebrews 4:12**—namely, that “The Word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword.”
- Thus, it was this Book, through the power of the Holy Spirit, that brought revival to an entire continent and changed the course of history.
- As believers we can all attest to that same truth. It is this Book that the Spirit of God has used to revive our own hearts—to bring us to a saving knowledge of His Son Jesus Christ and to grow us in sanctification, as we meditate on His Word and submit ourselves to its precepts.
- When we reflect on the power of God’s Word, whether historically or personally, we bear witness to the fact that this Book is living and active—because its truth is God’s very revelation energized and empowered by the Spirit of God who inspired its holy contents.
- **Proposition:** As we consider the glorious nature of the Scripture which God has given to us, we will do so by investigating three doctrines: 1) the doctrine of **inspiration**; 2) the doctrine of **canonicity**; and 3) the doctrine of **sufficiency**.

2 Timothy 3 [12] Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. [13] But evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. [14] You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them, [15] and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. [16] **All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; [17] so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.** [4:1] I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by

His appearing and His kingdom: [2] preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. [3] For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, [4] and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. [5] But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

- It is important for us to recognize that Paul had in his mind the **context of persecution** as he wrote those words in 2 Timothy 3:16–17.
- In fact, the letter of 2 Timothy was the last inspired letter he would ever write. He was in a Roman dungeon, awaiting execution. His crime, of course, was that he was guilty of being a Christian. And now he was about to die.
 - This was no academic, esoteric, ivory tower discussion of theoretical Bibliology. No, Paul’s discussion of the Scripture in these verses reflects a genuine love for God’s Word in the midst of very real trials, in the face of death itself.
 - When life itself was on the line, as he sat on the Roman equivalent of death row, Paul clung to the Scripture – because he knew that it alone is the revealed Word of God, and that on the pages of the Book is found the true gospel of salvation, the words of life, our only hope both for this life and the next.
 - And as he passed on his final words of instruction to Timothy, his son in the faith, he told Timothy to cling to the Scripture as well.
- For us, the reality of persecution seems fairly remote. After all, we don’t face a great deal of persecution in this country. Yet, I think we would all agree that it appears that our society’s animosity toward biblical Christianity is steadily increasing. And one day, we might also face very real consequences for our commitment to the truth.
- And if that day comes, what will be our anchor in the midst of the storm? Will it not be God and His Word—the hope that He has given us through the revelation of the Scripture?
- And what will be the hope for our children? The very same thing. **Verses 14–15** (of chapter 3) stand as a great encouragement to Christian parents – to train up their children in the knowledge of the truth, just as Timothy had been trained.
- And what is the hope for the society around us? Is it not, as Paul told Timothy in **verse 2 of chapter 4**, to preach the Word! That is how Timothy was to fulfill his calling as an evangelist, by proclaiming biblical truth in the midst of an antagonistic world. That same principle is true for us today.

- The hope for our own souls, the hope for our children, the hope for the church, and the hope for the world are all one and the same: the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ as revealed in the Scripture.
- That, then, is the context in which Paul reminds Timothy that “All Scripture is inspired.” And it is helpful to be reminded of that context. This is not dry, dusty systematic theology. No, Paul’s love for the Scripture was intensely practical. In the midst of severe persecution, he found refuge by anchoring his heart and his hope in God and His Word.
- With that in mind, let’s consider these **three marvelous doctrines** about the Word of God that arise from **2 Timothy 3:16–17** – the doctrines of *inspiration*, *canonicity*, and *sufficiency*.

I. The Doctrine of Inspiration (v. 16)

- As we come to verse 16, we immediately encounter that well-known phrase, “All Scripture is inspired by God.”
- The Greek word translated “inspired” literally means “breathed out,” meaning that God Himself is the divine Author of Scripture—having inspired its contents through the Holy Spirit.
- The Scriptures consist of divine revelation, such that this Book truly is the Word of God.
- If we were to do a full study on the doctrine of inspiration, we would find a number of biblical passages that relate to this theme.
 - **2 Peter 1:20–21** is one such place—where Peter explains that godly men were moved by the Spirit as they spoke and wrote the prophetic Word of Scripture. In other words, the Spirit of God supernaturally worked through the human writers so that they wrote exactly what He wanted them to write, even though they did so using their own style, vocabulary, and personality.

In **1 Peter 1:10**, we learn that it was the Spirit of Christ who was speaking through the Old Testament prophets—as they foretold the sufferings of the Messiah.

 - And in **Acts 4:25**, Peter told the religious leaders it was the Holy Spirit who prophesied through David regarding the person and work of Jesus Christ.
- When we consider these and other passages, we come to understand that the Scripture is rightly called “God’s Word” – that which God Himself revealed through His Holy Spirit, the One who sovereignly superintended the human authors to speak and write that which is recorded on the pages of our Bibles.

- To read this Book, then, is to read the very revelation of God Himself. And that was Paul’s point here in **2 Timothy 3:16** – The Scripture is God-breathed revelation! This is no ordinary book. It transcends all others because its Author is none other than God Himself.
- Over 2,000 times in the Old Testament alone, from Genesis 1:3 to Malachi 4:3, the assertion is made that God Himself spoke what is written within its pages.
- This theme continues into the New Testament, where the phrase “the word of God” occurs over 40 times (cf. Luke 11:28; Hebrews 4:12).
 - As a result, this Book comes with His *authority* – which is why Paul goes on to charge Timothy to *preach the Word* in light of the Supreme Majesty of the One who will Judge of the living and the dead.
 - Because this Book is God-breathed, it comes with His *power* – such that it can transform hearts and minds and even entire continents.
 - Moreover, because the divine Author is incapable of falsehood, we can confidently trust that the Scriptures are entirely true and free from falsehood (John 17:17). They are the perfect foundation on which all else is built.
- Of course, there will always be scoffers and skeptics who question the divine origins of the Scripture, or who intentionally twist its teachings in order to deceive others.
 - The first eleven verses of **2 Timothy 3** indicate that Timothy himself was facing that kind of opposition.
 - Like him, we too live in a world that is fully of critical attacks against God’s Word. And sometimes we might even find ourselves asking the question, “*How do we know that the Bible is indeed what it claims to be, the very Word of God?*”
 - There are, of course, many lines of reasoning that could be surveyed, all of which affirm the divine authorship of the Scriptures.
 - For example, we could study **biblical prophecy**—considering hundreds of times when biblical predictions have been fulfilled in precisely the way they were foretold. Just the more narrow category of Messianic prophecies would be enough to fill up many sermons—each of them a testimony to the supernatural origins of this book. Put simply, *fulfilled prophecy is an incredible testimony to the divine Authorship of Scripture!*
 - Or we could look to the **historical accuracy** of the Bible—noting the many times that details found in the Old and New Testaments have been confirmed by archeologists and historians.

- Along those lines, I like how **one British pastor** stated it. He said, “God’s word has stood against its critics for hundreds of years. They come, they criticize, they disagree among themselves and they disappear—leaving only a paper trail of unbelief as their legacy. But for those who believe the Bible to be without error, and who believe it is God’s clear revelation for modern man, it consistently proves to be a reliable guide to the way of salvation and for every aspect of the Christian life.” (Brian H. Edwards, *Nothing But the Truth* (Webster, New York: Evangelical Press, 2006), 465.)
- Or we might consider the **moral influence** that the Bible has had on society—a reflection of the transcendent moral law of its Author.
 - Referring to Scripture, authors **Kenneth Boa and Robert Bowman** highlight its exceptional ethical value with these words: “Its teachings and principles are the wisest of all literature. Its laws exalt justice, according dignity to all human beings. Its insights into the human condition are both realistic and hopeful. The Bible offers sound principles concerning marriage and the family, money and possessions, character development, and reconciliation. From the Ten Commandments to the Golden Rule, the Bible continues to be the greatest and wisest book ever written. (Kenneth D. Boa and Robert M. Bowman, Jr.: *20 Compelling Evidences that God Exists* [Colorado Springs: Victor, 2005], 106).
- We might even note the **supernatural unity** that characterizes Scripture.
 - After all, it is pretty remarkable to consider that the sixty-six books of the Bible were written by some **forty different human** authors over a period of about 1500 years. They were written on three different continents (Asia, Europe, and Africa) in three different languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek) by men, many of whom did not know each other, and most of whom came from very different walks of life.
 - The human writers of Scripture were a diverse group. Yet, in spite of the differences in their backgrounds and personalities, along with the various genres of literature they wrote, the writings they produced express a perfect unity of thought.
 - **R. C. Sproul** is right when he says, “One way in which the Bible substantiates its own authority is its amazing coherency and symmetry. Its consistency over centuries and through the pens of multiple authors is nothing less than astonishing.”
- Based on these and other lines of evidence, we could make a very compelling case for the incredible nature of Scripture. The Bible is an amazing book—unique in every respect and clearly superior to any other text that has ever been written. Its vast collection of

fulfilled prophecies, its historical reliability, scientific accuracy, moral transcendence, and extraordinary continuity all point to the fact that it is indeed what it claims to be.

- **But**, it is important for us to realize that evidences like these, no matter how extensive or impressive, will never be able to convince an unbeliever to come to saving faith. That is because saving faith requires the miracle of regeneration, as the Holy Spirit uses His Word to open spiritually blind eyes and impart life to spiritually dead hearts.
- Thus, if we are to answer the question, “How do we know that this Book is the Word of God?” our answer must ultimately point to the fact that Holy Spirit convicted our hearts through the gospel, illuminating our minds to understand and submit to the truth of His Word.
- The apostle Paul explained that reality in **1 Corinthians 2:14**. Speaking of unbelievers, he wrote, “The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned” (v. 14).
 - Christians, on the other hand, have received “the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God” (v. 12).
 - In verse 16, Paul explains that we have been given “the mind of Christ” (v. 16b), meaning that God Himself, through His Spirit, has enabled us to understand and embrace the Scriptures in faith. The Holy Spirit bears witness to the truthfulness of His word, energizing our hearts so that we can know and obey the truth.
- While the evidence for the Bible’s divine authorship is overwhelming, in the end **as John MacArthur has said**: “There is only one argument that can prove to us that the Bible is true and authoritative for our lives: the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts and minds.” (John MacArthur, *Why Believe the Bible* [Ventura, Calif.: Regal Books, 1984], 23.)
- So how do we know the Bible is inspired? Because the Spirit of God has opened our eyes to know the truth and to personally experience its life-changing power.
 - One **well-known apologist** said it this way: “To those outside the Christian faith, Christianity can be shown to rest on strong evidence and have a high degree of probability for its truth claims. But when a person becomes a Christian, the ‘assurance’ or ‘certainty’ becomes a reality [through the work of the Holy Spirit]. Christianity from a ‘morally certain’ standpoint becomes as undeniable as one’s own existence” Josh McDowell & John Stewart (*Answers to Tough Questions*, 154).
 - The Holy Spirit has quickened our hearts to embrace the Word of God; and He has used this Book to transform our lives.
 - We know, first hand, that the Word of God sanctifies those who embrace it (John 17:17; Ephesians 5:26); it illuminates their path (Psalm 119:105, 130), gives them

hope (Psalm 119:49; Romans 15:4), and motivates their obedience (cf. Deuteronomy 17:19–20). It purifies them (Psalm 119:9; John 15:3), protects them (Psalms 17:4; 19:4), nourishes them (Deuteronomy 8:3; Matthew 4:4; 1 Peter 2:2), comforts them (Psalms 19:8; 119:11; Romans 15:4), and encourages them in the faith (Acts 20:32; 1 Corinthians 10:11).

- As those who have been born again, we come to the Scripture with the same attitude expressed by Peter in John 6:68–69: ““Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God.”
- **Illustration:** The story is told of pastor named Harry Ironside, who was publicly preaching the gospel in San Francisco, when an antagonist in the crowd shouted, “Atheism has done more for the world than Christianity!” The atheist went on to challenge Dr. Ironside to a debate.

Dr. Ironside responded by saying, “I would be happy to debate with you. This time. This hour. This place. I will meet you.”

The atheist responded, “Fine, I’ll debate with you.”

Ironside said, “I just have one thing that I want us to do. This time. This place. This day, tomorrow, this very hour, I am going to bring with me 100 men and women who have been saved out of the gutter and out of the darkness and despair of life, who have been lifted up into the brightness of God. I am going to bring 100 of them. And they will be here, standing beside me tomorrow—this place, this time tomorrow.

“And you, you bring 100 men and women who have been saved out of the gutter, who have been saved out of the gutter and the darkness of life, by the gospel of [atheism].”

(Source: Paul E. Little, *Know Why You Believe*, 145–146. Also see, W. A. Criswell, “The Truth of the Faith,” Sermon on John 6:66–69, preached July 26, 1987. Online at: <http://www.wacriswell.org>. [Accessed September 4, 2007]).

- The debate never happened. When asked to produce those whose lives had been radically improved by atheism, the antagonist knew he had lost the argument before it even began.
- The Word of God has transformed the lives of millions – including your life and my life – through the power of the Holy Spirit who confirms its divine Authorship in our hearts.
- It had transformed Timothy’s life too as we see in **3:14–15**.
- Because it is inspired by God, all Scripture reflects His perfect character. All Scripture comes with His absolute authority. All Scripture is true, and right, and perfect. And all

Scripture is empowered by the Holy Spirit to change the lives and hearts of those who read it – just as it transformed our own hearts when God opened our eyes to its truth.

Church Fathers:

The church fathers recognized the inspiration of Scripture, and thus submitted to the Bible's authority because it is the Word of God. Here is a small sampling to demonstrate that point:

Irenaeus: “The Scriptures are indeed perfect, since they were spoken by the Word of God and His Spirit” (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 2.28.2, in *ANF*, 1:399).

Eusebius [Quoting Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria]: “We endeavored as far as possible to hold to and confirm the things which lay before us, and if the reason given satisfied us, we were not ashamed to change our opinions and agree with others; but on the contrary, conscientiously and sincerely, and with hearts laid open before God, we accepted whatever was established by the proofs and teachings of the Holy Scriptures.” (Eusebius, *Church History*, 7.24.7–9)

Athanasius: “It is the opinion of some that the Scriptures do not agree or that God who gave them is false. But there is no disagreement at all. Far from it! Neither can the Father, who is truth, lie; ‘for it is impossible that God should lie’ (Heb. 6:18).” (Athanasius, *Easter Letter*, 19.3, in *NPNF*, 4:546.)

Athanasius (speaking of Arian theologians): “Vainly then do they run about with the pretext that they have demanded Councils for the faith’s sake; for divine Scripture is sufficient above all things; but if a Council be needed on the point, there are the proceedings of the Fathers, for the Nicene Bishops did not neglect this matter, but stated the doctrine so exactly, that persons reading their words honestly, cannot but be reminded by them of the religion towards Christ announced in divine Scripture.” (*De Synodis: Councils of Ariminum and Seleucia*, 1.6. *NPNF* 2nd Series, 4.453.

Cyril of Jerusalem: “For concerning the divine and holy mysteries of the Faith, not even a casual statement must be delivered without the Holy Scriptures; nor must we be drawn aside by mere plausibility and artifices of speech. Even to me, who tell thee these things, give not absolute credence, unless thou receive the proof of the things which I announce from the Divine Scriptures. For this salvation which we believe depends not on ingenious reasoning, but on demonstration of the Holy Scriptures.” (*Catechetical Lectures*, 4.17)

John Chrysostom: “Let us not therefore carry about the notions of the many, but examine into the facts. For how is it not absurd that in respect to money, indeed, we do not trust to others, but refer this to figures and calculation; but in calculating upon facts we are lightly drawn aside by the notions of others; and that too, though we possess an exact balance, and square and rule for all things, the declaration of the divine laws? Wherefore I exhort and entreat you all, disregard what this man and that man thinks about these things, and inquire from the Scriptures all these things; and having learnt what are

the true riches, let us pursue after them that we may obtain also the eternal good things; which may we all obtain, through the grace and love towards men of our Lord Jesus Christ, with Whom, to the Father and the Holy Spirit, be glory, might, and honor, now and ever, and world without end. Amen.” (*Homily on 2 Corinthians*, 13.4)

Augustine: “I have learned to yield this respect and honor only to the canonical books of Scripture: of these alone do I most firmly believe that the authors were completely free from error. And if in these writings I am perplexed by anything which appears to me opposed to the truth, I do not hesitate to suppose that either the manuscript is faulty, or the translator has not caught the meaning of what was said, or I myself have failed to understand it...Concerning which it would be wrong to doubt that they are free from error” (*The Letters of St. Augustine* 82, 3.)

Augustine: “The Scriptures are holy, they are truthful, they are blameless. . . . So we have no grounds at all for blaming Scripture if we happen to deviate in any way, because we haven’t understood it. When we do understand it, we are right. But when we are wrong because we haven’t understood it, we leave it in the right. We have gone wrong, we don’t make our Scripture to be wrong, but it continues to stand up straight and right, so that we may return to it for correction.” (*Sermons* 23.3; cited from the Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture on 2 Timothy 3:16)

Augustine: “Therefore everything written in Scripture must be believed absolutely.” (*The City of God* 21.6.1.)

John Wycliffe: “God and His Word are all one, and they may not be separated.” (John Wycliffe, *Wycket* (Oxford, 1828), 5, in *John Wycliffe and His English Precursors*, 236n4.)

II. The Doctrine of Canonicity

- Canonicity, of course, refers to the fact that our Bibles are complete—being comprised of the sixty-six books from Genesis to Revelation. The Old Testament canon contains the 39 books of Genesis to Malachi; and the New Testament canon contains the 27 books of Matthew to Revelation.
- Now, you might be looking at **verse 16** and asking yourself, “Where is the doctrine of canonicity in that verse?”
- It is right there in the first two words: “All Scripture.” If we are to rightly submit to the inspired Word of God, we need to be sure that we have the *complete* Word of God in our hands.
 - Now, in this context, Paul is primarily referring to the Old Testament Scriptures. And yet, we also know from places like **1 Thessalonians 2:13**, that Paul also regarded his own writings to be inspired and authoritative. And Peter, in **2 Peter 3:15–16**, similarly refers to Paul’s writings as being part of the Scriptures.

- Consequently, the principle expressed in verse 16 clearly extends beyond the Old Testament to include all of inspired Scripture—both from the Old Testament and from the New.
- **But the question still remains, how do we know what comprises “All Scripture”?**
How do we know that the canon is complete?
 - This is a critically important question, of course, since there are many today who would deny that these 66 books are truly the complete Word of God.
 - The Roman Catholic Church, for example, claims that the Apocryphal books which were written during the Intertestamental Period (between the Old and New Testaments) ought to be included in the Bible.
 - And cult groups like the Mormons want to add their own books to the Bible—things like the *Book of Mormon*, *The Doctrines and Covenants*, and *The Pearl of Great Price*.
 - And then there are popular books and movies, like the *Da Vinci Code* from several years ago, that claim later Christians (like Constantine) determined what was in the Bible centuries after these books were written.
 - **So, how do we know that “all Scripture” consists of these 66 books? How do we know that the Bible we hold in our hands is the complete Word of God?**
- There are a number of ways we could answer such questions; in fact, we could spend weeks studying the doctrine of canonicity, talking through all of the relevant biblical and historical details. And there are many wonderful books available that will take you through that wealth of information.
- But this morning I want to give you a simple answer that I hope will be helpful – because it gets to the heart of the whole matter. This answer takes less than 30 seconds to articulate, yet I have found it to be the ultimate answer for just about every question related to questions about canonicity.
- It is simply this, **“We believe in the 39 books of the Old Testament, because our Lord Jesus Christ affirmed the Old Testament. And we believe in the 27 books of the New Testament, because our Lord Jesus Christ authorized His apostles to write the New Testament.”** (Repeat)
- The doctrine of canonicity ultimately comes back to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. If we believe in Him and submit to His authority, then we will simultaneously believe in and submit to His Word. Because He affirmed the Old Testament canon, we also affirm it. Because He authorized His apostles to write the New Testament, we likewise embrace it as well.

- Thus, it was not the Roman Catholic Church that determined the canon. Constantine did not determine the canon. Joseph Smith certainly did not determine the canon. No ... it is the authority of Christ Himself, the Lord of the church and the incarnate Son of God, on which the canon of Scripture rests.
- When it comes to **the Old Testament**, Jesus Christ affirmed the Jewish canon of His day—consisting of the very same content that is in our Old Testaments today.

A study of the gospels shows that, throughout His ministry, Jesus affirmed the Old Testament in its entirety (Matthew 5:17–18)—including its **historical reliability** (cf. Matthew 10:15; 19:3–5; 12:40; 24:38–39), **prophetic accuracy** (Matthew 26:54), **sufficiency** (Luke 16:31), **unity** (Luke 24:27, 44), **inerrancy** (Matthew 22:29; John 17:17), **infallibility** (John 10:35), and **authority** (Matthew 21:13, 16, 42).

He affirmed **the Law**, the **Writings**, and the **Prophets** and all that was written in them; clearly seeing the Old Testament Scriptures as the Word of God (Matt. 15:16; Mark 7:13; Luke 3:2; 5:1; etc.).

- Significantly, the first century Jews did not consider the Apocryphal books to be canonical. And neither did Jesus. He accepted the canon of the Jews as being the complete Old Testament. He never affirms or cites the Apocryphal books – and neither do any of the other writers of the New Testament.
 - (Now, I’m sure some of you are immediately wondering about Jude’s reference to the Book of Enoch ... but the Book of Enoch is *not* part of the Apocrypha. It was simply a well-known piece of Jewish literature at that time period, which Jude cited for the purpose of giving an illustration, just like Paul cited pagan poets on Mars Hill in Acts 17.)
- So, ultimately, we accept the canonicity of the Old Testament on the basis of our Lord’s authoritative affirmation of it.
- What about **the New Testament**? Well, the same principle applies. Our Lord not only affirmed the Old Testament, He also promised that He would give additional revelation to His church through His authorized representatives—namely, the Apostles.
- Turn with me, just for a moment, to John 14 ... because I want you to see this for yourselves. On the night before his death, Jesus said to His disciples:

John 14:25–26 -- “These things I have spoken to you while abiding with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.”
- That last line is especially significant for the doctrine of canonicity. What did Jesus promise His apostles? That the Holy Spirit would help them remember all the things that Jesus had said to them.

- That is an amazing promise! And where do we find the fulfillment of that promise? We find it in the four gospel accounts—where the things that our Lord did and said are perfectly recorded for us.
- And then turn to John 16. In the same context, our Lord promises the apostles that He will give them additional revelation through the Holy Spirit. Look at verse 12:

John 16:12–15 – “I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak of His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose it to you.”

- And where is that additional revelation found? It is found in the New Testament epistles, wherein the Spirit of Christ guided the apostles to provide the church with inspired truth.
- The New Testament, then, was pre-authenticated by Christ Himself, as He authorized the Apostles to be His witnesses in the world (Matthew 28:18–19; Acts 1:8).
- We embrace and submit to the New Testament writings, then, because they were penned by Christ’s authorized representatives, being inspired by the Holy Spirit in the same way as the Old Testament prophets.
- With that in mind we could go book-by-book through the New Testament, and we will find that it meets this criteria.
 - The Gospels of Matthew & John were both written by Apostles.
 - The Gospel of Mark is a record of the memoirs of the Apostle Peter, written by Mark under Peter’s apostolic authority.
 - The Gospel of Luke (and the book of Acts) were both the product of a careful investigation and eyewitness testimony (Luke 1:2), research that would have included Apostolic sources. Moreover, as the companion of the Apostle Paul, Luke wrote under Paul’s Apostolic oversight. (Paul even affirms Luke 10:7 as part of the Scripture in 1 Timothy 5:18.)
 - The Pauline Epistles (Romans–Philemon) were all written by the Apostle Paul.
 - The authorship of Hebrews is unknown, but many in church history believed it to have been also written by Paul. If not penned by Paul himself, it was clearly written by someone closely associated with Paul’s ministry—and therefore, by extension, under his apostolic authority.
 - The General Epistles (the letters of James, Peter, and John) were all written by Apostles.

- The Epistle of Jude was written by the half-brother of Jesus (Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3) who operated under the apostolic oversight of his brother James (cf. Jude 1).
- And finally, the book of Revelation was written by the Apostle John.

Summary: As you can see, for every book of the New Testament, we can demonstrate that the book was written under apostolic authority—either by an apostle or someone closely linked to their apostolic ministry. Thus, we submit to these books because they come from Christ’s authorized representatives. In submitting to them, we are submitting to the Lord Himself.

- The reason the canon is closed is because there are no longer any apostles in the church today, and have not been since the end of the first century.
- Why these 66 books? Because God inspired them! They are His divine revelation! And Christ confirmed that fact! He affirmed the Old Testament canon, and He authorized the New Testament canon.
 - The **author of Hebrews** said it this way in Hebrews 1:1–2: God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.
 - In the Old Testament, God revealed Himself through the prophets ... and Jesus affirmed that reality. In the New Testament, God revealed Himself through His Son, and through His Son’s authorized representatives.
- The authority of the Lord Jesus Himself, then, is the basis for our confidence in the fact that the Bible we hold in our hands is indeed “All Scripture.”

Church History and Canonicity

A. WHAT ABOUT THE OLD TESTAMENT APOCRYPHA?

- If we begin with the Christological principle that we are espousing here, then we might ask, “What OT canon did Jesus affirm?” And did that canon include the Apocrypha (which the Roman Catholic Church canonized at the Council of Trent in 1546)?
- The Roman Catholic Apocrypha consists of The Wisdom of Solomon (c. 30 B.C.); Ecclesiasticus (Sirach) (132 B.C.); Tobit (c. 200 B.C.); Judith (c. 150 B.C.); 1 Esdras (c. 150-100 B.C.); 1 & 2 Maccabees (c. 110 B.C.); Baruch (c. 150-50 B.C.); The Letter of Jeremiah (c. 300-100 B.C.); 2 Esdras (c. A.D. 100); Additions to Esther (140-130 B.C.); The Prayer of Azariah (second or first century B.C.); Susanna (second or first century B.C.); Bel and the Dragon (c. 100 B.C.); and The Prayer of Manasseh (second or first

century B.C.). Though the New Testament quotes from the Old Testament some 250 times, the NT never quotes from these apocryphal books.

- There is strong evidence (from Philo, Josephus, the Babylonian Talmud, the Council of Jamnia, etc.) that the Jews of Jesus’ day affirmed an OT canon that is the same as ours. However the Jews ordered their books differently, starting with Genesis and ending with Chronicles. Also, the Minor Prophets were considered just one book, known as “The Twelve.” As a result, the Jewish canon consisted of only 22 or 24 books (in the case of twenty-two books, Judges and Ruth are combined; and Jeremiah and Lamentations are combined). But this canon consisted of the same books that make up the Protestant canon of 39 OT books.
- Earliest extant reference to the three main divisions of the 22 book Hebrew Scripture is to be found in the prologue to the apocryphal book Ecclesiasticus compassed ca. 190 BC in Hebrew by Jesus ben Sirach.
- The following charts show both the 24 and 22 book arrangement of the Jewish canon. Both approaches correspond to the 39 book approach of the Christian canon, but the order of the books is different.

Josephus, *Contra Apion*, 1:37–42: Our books, those which are justly accredited, are but two and twenty, and contain the record of all time. Of these, five are the books of Moses, comprising the laws and the traditional history from the birth of man down to the death of the lawgiver. . . . The prophets subsequent to Moses wrote the history of the events of their own times in thirteen books. The remaining four books contain hymns to God, and precepts for the conduct of human life.

- Jesus affirmed this understanding of the OT canon in His teaching (cf. Matt 5:17; 7:12; 22:40; Luke 11:51; 16:16). Moreover, Jesus never argued about the canon with the Jewish religious leaders of His day. Rather, His appeals to the OT assumed that both He and His hearers knew what was included in the Scriptures (cf. Matt. 21:42; 22:29; 26:54; 26:5; etc.).

Paul D. Wegner, “The Old Testament Canon in Jesus’ Day”: Jesus describes the extent of the canon in Matthew 23:34–35 and Luke 11:49–51. . . . Both passages state that the Jewish nation will be held responsible for the blood of the prophets from “the blood of Abel” (Gen. 4:8), the first recorded murder, “to the blood of Zechariah” (2 Chron. 24:20–22), the last recorded murder. The implication is that biblical history spans from Genesis to Chronicles, which is the same order as the oldest complete manuscripts of the Old Testament (i.e., Codex Leningradensis [1008 A.D.] and the Aleppo Codex [most likely about fifty years earlier]). There were certainly other martyrs following Zechariah, but the Jewish nation will not be held responsible for them, since they fall outside of the parameters of the Jewish authoritative sacred history. Jesus also uses the common tripartite division of the Hebrew Bible to refer to the canon in Luke 24:44: “These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about me in the Law of Moses, and the

Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled” (NASB). This last designation is evidently representative of the final group of Old Testament writings, of which Psalms was the first and largest book. A similar designation for the Old Testament canon was in use from the time of Philo in the early first century (“[the] laws, and oracles delivered through the mouths of prophets, and psalms, and anything else which fosters and perfects knowledge and piety” [*Contemp.* 3 §25]) until at least the tenth century (al-Masudi, an Arabian historian and geographer, describes the Hebrew canon as “the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms, which are the 24 books”). It is also interesting to note that Jesus quotes from each of the three parts of Scripture as authoritative material (e.g., Law: Mt. 4:4—Deut. 8:3; Prophets: Mt. 10:35-36—Mic. 7:6; Writings: Mt. 13:43—Dan. 12:3).

- **Thus, because Jesus did not affirm a canon that included the intertestamental writings of the apocrypha, neither do we.**
- There are also places in the apocrypha where the apocrypha itself implies that the OT canon was already closed, and that the OT books consisted of those that correspond to the 39 books in our Old Testaments (cf. 1 Macc. 9:27, 14:41; 2 Esdras 14:44–48).
- Additionally, the Apocrypha contains theological and factual errors.

Geisler and Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible*, 270: “The subbiblical nature of the Apocrypha can be seen in its historical and chronological errors. It is claimed that Tobit was alive when the Assyrians conquered Israel (722 B.C.) as well as when Jeroboam revolted against Judah (931 B.C.), yet his total life-span was only 158 years (Tobit 14:11; cf. 1:3–5). Judith speaks of Nebuchadnezzar as reigning in Nineveh instead of Babylon (Judith 1:1).”

- *Note:* Theological errors include (1) praying for the dead; (2) the worship of angels; (3) and the concept of purgatory.
- There is also evidence from **early Christian leaders** that the many in the ancient church did not consider the apocrypha to be on par with Scripture. Even Jerome (who translated the Vulgate) clearly states that the church of his day did not consider the apocrypha to be inspired. Nonetheless, Jerome included them in his translation since they were regarded as profitable for the church, even if they were not to be regarded as Scripture.

Origen, as recorded by Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 6.25.1–2: “But it should be known that there are twenty-two canonical books, according to the Hebrew tradition; the same as the number of the letters of their alphabet.”

Athanasius, *Festal Letter 39*, 2–7 2. But since we have made mention of heretics as dead, but of ourselves as possessing the Divine Scriptures for salvation; and since I fear lest, as Paul wrote to the Corinthians, some few of the simple should be beguiled from their simplicity and purity, by the subtlety of certain men, and should henceforth read other books—those called apocryphal—led astray by the similarity of their names with the true books; I beseech you to bear patiently, if I also write, by way of

remembrance, of matters with which you are acquainted, influenced by the need and advantage of the Church.

3. In proceeding to make mention of these things, I shall adopt, to commend my undertaking, the pattern of Luke the Evangelist, saying on my own account: ‘Forasmuch as some have taken in hand ,’ to reduce into order for themselves the books termed apocryphal, and to mix them up with the divinely inspired Scripture, concerning which we have been fully persuaded, as they who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the Word, delivered to the fathers; it seemed good to me also, having been urged thereto by true brethren, and having learned from the beginning, to set before you the books included in the Canon, and handed down, and accredited as Divine; to the end that anyone who has fallen into error may condemn those who have led him astray; and that he who has continued steadfast in purity may again rejoice, having these things brought to his remembrance.

4. There are, then, of the Old Testament, twenty-two books in number; for, as I have heard, it is handed down that this is the number of the letters among the Hebrews; their respective order and names being as follows. The first is Genesis, then Exodus, next Leviticus, after that Numbers, and then Deuteronomy. Following these there is Joshua, the son of Nun, then Judges, then Ruth. And again, after these four books of Kings, the first and second being reckoned as one book, and so likewise the third and fourth as one book. And again, the first and second of the Chronicles are reckoned as one book. Again Ezra, the first and second are similarly one book. After these there is the book of Psalms, then the Proverbs, next Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs. Job follows, then the Prophets, the twelve being reckoned as one book. Then Isaiah, one book, then Jeremiah with Baruch, Lamentations, and the epistle, one book; afterwards, Ezekiel and Daniel, each one book. Thus far constitutes the Old Testament.

5. Again it is not tedious to speak of the [books] of the New Testament. These are, the four Gospels, according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Afterwards, the Acts of the Apostles and Epistles (called Catholic), seven, viz. of James, one; of Peter, two; of John, three; after these, one of Jude. In addition, there are fourteen Epistles of Paul, written in this order. The first, to the Romans; then two to the Corinthians; after these, to the Galatians; next, to the Ephesians; then to the Philippians; then to the Colossians; after these, two to the Thessalonians, and that to the Hebrews; and again, two to Timothy; one to Titus; and lastly, that to Philemon. And besides, the Revelation of John.

6. These are fountains of salvation, that they who thirst may be satisfied with the living words they contain. In these alone is proclaimed the doctrine of godliness. Let no man add to these, neither let him take ought from these. For concerning these the Lord put to shame the Sadducees, and said, ‘Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures.’ And He reproved the Jews, saying, ‘Search the Scriptures, for these are they that testify of Me.’

7. But for greater exactness I add this also, writing of necessity; that there are other books besides these not indeed included in the Canon, but appointed by the Fathers to be read by those who newly join us, and who wish for instruction in the word of godliness. The Wisdom of Solomon, and the Wisdom of Sirach, and Esther, and Judith, and Tobit, and that which is called the Teaching of the Apostles, and the Shepherd. But the former, my brethren, are included in the Canon, the latter being

[merely] read; nor is there in any place a mention of apocryphal writings. But they are an invention of heretics, who write them when they choose, bestowing upon them their approbation, and assigning to them a date, that so, using them as ancient writings, they may find occasion to lead astray the simple.

Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures*, 4.34–37 For the process was no word-craft, nor contrivance of human devices: but the translation of the Divine Scriptures, spoken by the Holy Ghost, was of the Holy Ghost accomplished. Of these read the two and twenty books, but have nothing to do with the apocryphal writings. Study earnestly these only which we read openly in the Church. Far wiser and more pious than yourself were the Apostles, and the bishops of old time, the presidents of the Church who handed down these books. Being therefore a child of the Church, trench thou not upon its statutes. And of the Old Testament, as we have said, study the two and twenty books, which, if thou art desirous of learning, strive to remember by name, as I recite them. For of the Law the books of Moses are the first five, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy. And next, Joshua the son of Nave, and the book of Judges, including Ruth, counted as seventh. And of the other historical books, the first and second books of the Kings are among the Hebrews one book; also the third and fourth one book. And in like manner, the first and second of Chronicles are with them one book; and the first and second of Esdras are counted one. Esther is the twelfth book; and these are the Historical writings. But those which are written in verses are five, Job, and the book of Psalms, and Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs, which is the seventeenth book. And after these come the five Prophetic books: of the Twelve Prophets one book, of Isaiah one, of Jeremiah one, including Baruch and Lamentations and the Epistle; then Ezekiel, and the Book of Daniel, the twenty-second of the Old Testament. Then of the New Testament there are the four Gospels only, for the rest have false titles and are mischievous. The Manichaeans also wrote a Gospel according to Thomas, which being tinctured with the fragrance of the evangelic title corrupts the souls of the simple sort. Receive also the Acts of the Twelve Apostles; and in addition to these the seven Catholic Epistles of James, Peter, John, and Jude; and as a seal upon them all, and the last work of the disciples, the fourteen Epistles of Paul. But let all the rest be put aside in a secondary rank.

Jerome, *Preface to Jerome's Works*, p. 492 As, then, the Church reads Judith, Tobit, and the books of Maccabees, but does not admit them among the canonical Scriptures, so let it read these two volumes [Wisdom of Solomon and Ecclesiasticus] for the edification of the people, not to give authority to doctrines of the Church.

- In spite of this, because of its inclusion in the Latin *Vulgate*, the Roman Catholic Church officially “canonized” the Apocrypha in 16th century at the Council of Trent.

WHAT ABOUT THE NEW TESTAMENT CANON? WHEN WAS IT FINALLY RECOGNIZED IN CHURCH HISTORY?

- **The main point:** We embrace and submit to the New Testament writings, then, because they were penned by Christ’s authorized representatives, being inspired by the Holy Spirit in the same way as the Old Testament prophets.
- It is important to remember that because these books are inspired, they were authoritative (and therefore canonical) from the moment they were written.
- The New Testament writers themselves give testimony to the fact that their writings are the Word of God (cf. 1 Cor. 14:37; Col. 4:16; 1 Thess. 4:15; 1 Peter 3:15–16; 2 Peter 3:2; 1 John 4:6; etc.).
- Nonetheless, the church’s recognition of the canon took time. After all, most of these books were letters addressed to specific churches. It took time for Christians in other places to hear about those letters and learn of their content. (Remember, this is in a day before email and the printing press.)
- In some cases, the recognition of certain books took longer because the church wanted to make sure that the book really was apostolic in nature. The church was careful not to prematurely accept or reject these books, but to examine them carefully (1 Thess. 5:20–21; cf. Acts 17:11). The fact that the church was careful to do its due diligence should give us greater (not lesser) confidence in their recognition of the canon.
- **In all of this, we can also trust the providential working of God, as He worked to preserve (in a providential, not miraculous, sense) the truth of His Word throughout church history. He did this through the corporate internal testimony of the Spirit.**
- From the very outset of church history, the church recognized the teaching of the apostles as authoritative.

Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, 67: On the day called Sunday there is a gathering together in the same place of all who live in a given city or rural district. The memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits. Then when the reader ceases, the president [pastor] in a discourse admonishes and urges the imitation of these good things. Next we all rise together and send up prayers.

Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.1.1: We have learned from none others the plan of our salvation, than from those through whom the Gospel has come down to us, which they did at one time proclaim in public, and, at a later period, by the will of God, handed down to us in the Scriptures, to be the ground and pillar of our faith.

- Early Christian leaders peppered their writings with citations from the New Testament in order to support their instruction with apostolic authority.

Clement of Rome (c. AD 96) mentions at least eight New Testament books in his epistles, Ignatius of Antioch cites about seven books (c. AD 106); Polycarp mentions 14 (c. AD 140). Irenaeus (AD 185) mentions 21; Hippolytus (AD 170-235), mentions 22.

- As heresies began to arise in church history, true believers realized that it was necessary to make a list of the books that they understood to be apostolic, and therefore authoritative.
 - A heretic named Marcion said that only Luke and 10 of Paul's epistles were inspired.
 - A group known as the Manichaens produced a false gospel called the Gospel of Thomas.
 - Other Gnostic groups began to write their own false gospels.
- The Muratorian Canon (AD. 170) is the earliest known list, and mentions 23 books. It did not mention Hebrews, James, and 1–2 Peter.
- By this point, most Christians accepted the canonicity of all 27 New Testament books, though some were still cautious about Hebrews, James, Jude, 2 Peter, 2–3 John, and Revelation.
 - Again, we should be thankful for their caution. They were not willing to recognize any supposedly apostolic writing as canonical. Instead, they carefully investigated each writing to make sure that it truly was apostolic in origin.
 - Questions about the authorship of Hebrews caused it to be treated with caution.
 - James was alluded to by many early church leaders, yet there were some who questioned its authenticity.
 - 2 and 3 John were private letters, apparently written to individuals, which likely means they took longer to circulate and become known to the church.
 - According to Jerome, 2 Peter was questioned because its Greek style is different than that of 1 Peter. Jerome suggested that Peter used a different amanuensis (secretary) for the second letter, which is why the style is different.
 - Because Jude was not an apostle, but rather the brother of James, some wondered if it should be regarded as having apostolic authority. There were also questions about why it quoted from the non-biblical Book of Enoch.
 - The early church generally attested to the apostolic authorship of the book of Revelation, but some were cautious about the apocryphal nature of its contents.

Bible Book	Clement of Rome	Ignatius	Polycarp	Justin Martyr	Irenaeus	Clement of Alexandria	Tertullian	Origen
Matthew		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Mark			X	X	X	X	X	X
Luke		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
John				X	X	X	X	X
Acts	Possible	X	X		X	X	X	X
Romans	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
1 Corinthians	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
2 Corinthians			X		X	X	X	X
Galatians	X		X		X	X	X	X
Ephesians	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Philippians	X		X		X	X	X	X
Colossians		X			X	X	X	X
1 Thessalonians		X	X		X	X	X	X
2 Thessalonians			X		X	X	X	X
1 Timothy			X		X	X	X	X
2 Timothy			X		X	X	X	X
Titus					X	X	X	X
Philemon							X	X
Hebrews	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
James	Possible				Possible			X
1 Peter	Possible		X		X	X	X	X
2 Peter								Possible
1 John			X	X	X	X	X	X
2 John					X			Possible
3 John			X					Possible
Jude						X	X	X
Revelation				X	X	X	X	X

(cf. <http://www.ntcanon.org/table.shtml>)

- By 363 at the Council of Laodicea, all 27 books are listed. In 367, Athanasius listed all 27. Those same books were recognized by later regional councils at Hippo (393) and Carthage (397).

We have looked, then, at the doctrine of inspiration – that All Scripture is God Breathed – and the doctrine of canonicity – that All Scripture is contained in these sixty six books of the Bible. That brings us to a third doctrine that arises out of 2 Timothy 3:16–17, and it is the doctrine of Scripture’s sufficiency.

III. The Doctrine of Sufficiency

- Based on the fact that the Scripture is the very Word of God; and confident in the fact that our Bibles contain the complete canon of Scripture; we can now consider just how great an impact this Book ought to have on our lives.
- Look at what Paul writes in the remaining portion of verses 16–17.

2 Timothy 3:16–17 -- All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

- As the living and active Word of God, the Scripture is a book of infinite blessings and benefits! It is the revelation of the Creator Himself—the very words of life for those who are His creatures.
- The context of these verses is, of course, pastoral ministry. Timothy is being instructed to look to God’s Word as his all-sufficient authority in every aspect of doctrine and church life. And it is on the basis of this supernatural sufficiency that Paul will command Timothy to “Preach the Word.”
- But as those who are part of the church, these truths are still just as applicable. *All Scripture* is profitable—meaning beneficial and sufficient—for the teaching and doctrine we receive. It contains “the faith once for all delivered to the saints.” Nothing more is necessary.
- And *Scripture alone* is all that is needed to reprove error in our lives and to correct us when we fall into sin. (That, by the way, is the foundation for biblical counseling.)
- And *the Scriptures* are sufficient for training us in righteousness, meaning that we need no other food by which to grow in respect to salvation. As Peter told his readers, “Like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord” (1 Peter 2:2–3).
- The title “man of God” in verse 17 is a technical term that refers specifically to those who preach and teach – but the implications again apply to all who read, hear, and submit to the Scriptures.
 - The result of submitting your life to God’s Word, then, is that you will be made “adequate” – a word that means “complete,” “proficient,” or “capable” to fulfill whatever it is that God has called you to do.
 - *In fact, I like the translation “complete” much better than the word “adequate.” Adequate makes it sound like you’re just average. But the Word of God does not leave us in some form of mediocrity; it makes us complete—fully ready to serve the Lord with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength.*
 - The phrase “equipped for every good work” means that believers are “empowered and enabled to live righteously.”
 - The Word of God renews our minds as we meditate on it.
 - It grows us in holiness as we apply its truths.
 - It produces in us the fruit of the Spirit, as the Spirit of God uses the truth of Scripture to conform us into the image of Christ.

- Thus, as Peter expressed in 2 Peter 1, in Scripture, we have “everything we need for life and godliness” through the “knowledge of God” that is revealed there.
- One of the great themes, of course, that characterizes the ministry of any faithful church is the authority and sufficiency of Scripture.
- And we embrace the Scripture as authoritative and sufficient because it comes from God Himself. The Bible is His *inspired* Word. These 66 books constitute the *completed canon*. And everything we need is found here in its *all-sufficient truth*.
- In light of that reality, we don’t look to psychology for answers, when God has given us the answers already. Nor do we question what God has said, on the basis of the latest evolutionary theory.
- We emphasize preaching the Bible because we know that the power is in the Spirit-inspired text. And we pay no attention to manmade strategies of church growth, because—again—the key to a ministry that pleases God is one that rests entirely on His all-sufficient Word.
- Moreover, as individual believers, we delight to read, study, and meditate on God’s Word because we recognize that His words are the words of true life—and they are sufficient to equip us and grow us in our sanctification—so that we can resist any temptation and endure any trial as we treasure His Word in our hearts.

Church Fathers

Origen (182–254): “In the two testaments every word that pertains unto God may be sought and discussed, and out of them all knowledge of things may be understood. And if anything remains which Holy Scripture does not determine, no other third scripture ought to be received to authorize any knowledge.” (*Homily on Leviticus*, 5)

Hippolytus (170–236): “There is one God, whom we do not otherwise acknowledge, brethren, but out of the Sacred Scriptures. For as he, who would profess the wisdom of this world cannot otherwise attain it, unless he read the doctrines of the philosophers; so whosoever will exercise piety towards God, can learn it nowhere but from the Holy Scriptures. (*Against Heresies*, 9)

Aphrahat (c. 270–c. 345): “For if the days of a man should be as many as all the days of the world from Adam to the end of the ages and he should sit and meditate upon the holy Scriptures, he would not comprehend all the force of the depth of the words. And man cannot rise up to the wisdom of God.” (*Demonstrations* 22.26; cited from ACCS, 2 Timothy, 268)

Athanasius (296–373): “The sacred and inspired Scriptures are sufficient to declare the truth.” (*Against the Heathen*, 1.3)

Augustine (354–430): “For among the things that are plainly laid down in Scripture are to be found all matters that concern faith and the manner of life.” (*On Christian Doctrine*, 2.9)

John Chrysostom (347–407): “By Scripture we may disprove what is false, be corrected, be brought to a right understanding, and be comforted and consoled.” (Homilies on 2 Timothy, 9; cited from ACCS, 2 Timothy, 269)

John of Damascus (676–749): “To search the sacred Scripture is very good and most profitable for the soul. For ‘like a tree which is planted near the running waters,’ so does the soul watered by sacred Scripture also grow hearty and bear fruit in due season.” (*The Orthodox Faith* 4.17; cited from ACCS, 2 Timothy, 269)

Conclusion

- We began by looking briefly at the Reformation – because in looking at the Reformation we see the dramatic effects that the Word of God produces when it is unleashed on the hearts and minds of men and women.
- But even long before the Reformation, throughout the centuries of church history, true Christians looked to the Scriptures as their highest authority – embracing its inspiration, canonicity, and sufficiency.
- Believers today should do the same.

{ ADDENDUM }

Additional Information on Canonicity

Key Question: How do we know that the 66 books we have in our Bibles today are the complete Word of God?

This is answered by the **doctrine of canonicity**. Church history plays a vital role in the discussion of this doctrine.

THE TERM “CANON”:

- Comes from Greek word κανών originally meaning “a reed”
- It came to mean a “rod” or “bar” which led to “measuring rod” or “standard”
 - Grammar—it meant a rule or procedure
 - Chronology—it meant a table of historical dates
 - Literature—a list of works correctly attributed to a given author
- Greek word used four times in NT...always with metaphorical meaning
 - 2 Cor. 10:13, 15, 16 – geographical limit or boundary
 - Galatians 6:16 – moral standard that believers should follow
- Thus, κανών depicts a definitely bounded or fixed space – a rule or measure

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS:

- By definition, the written Word of God consists of that which God has revealed through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

2 Peter 1:20–21 – “But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation [creation or origination], for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.”

Norm Geisler and William Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible*, 211:

Inspiration determines canonicity. If a book was authoritative, it was so because God breathed it and made it so. How a book received authority, then, is determined by God. How men recognize that authority is another matter altogether (see discussion in chap.13). As J. I. Packer notes, “The Church no more gave us the New Testament canon than Sir Isaac Newton gave us the force of gravity. God gave us gravity, by His work of creation, and similarly He gave us the New Testament canon, by inspiring the individual books that make it up.”

- In the Old Testament, God’s Word was revealed through His prophets. In the New Testament, God’s Word was revealed through His Son (Jesus Christ).

Hebrews 1:1–2 – “God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.”

- The Scriptures are the written Word of God. Jesus Christ is the Incarnate Word of God.

John 1:1, 18 – “In the beginning was the Word. And the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.”

- Jesus Christ (as the Incarnate Word of God) affirmed the Jewish canon of the Old Testament. (This is the same canon found in Protestant Bibles today.)

Reasons We Believe, p. 111: Throughout His ministry, Jesus affirmed the Old Testament in its entirety (Matthew 5:17–18)—including its historical reliability (cf. Matthew 10:15; 19:3–5; 12:40; 24:38–39), prophetic accuracy (Matthew 26:54), sufficiency (Luke 16:31), unity (Luke 24:27, 44), inerrancy (Matthew 22:29; John 17:17), infallibility (John 10:35), and authority (Matthew 21:13, 16, 42). “Our Lord used historical incidents in the Old Testament in a manner that evinced His total confidence in their factual historicity” explains Charles Ryrie. “Obviously, our Lord felt He had a reliable Bible, historically true, with every word trustworthy” (Charles C. Ryrie, *What You Should Know about Inerrancy* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1981), 77–78.)

Note: Jesus clearly saw the Old Testament as the Word of God (Matt. 15:16; Mark 7:13; Luke 3:2; 5:1; etc.). This, of course, is in keeping with what the OT claimed for itself (cf. Psalm 12:5; Isaiah 1:11; Jeremiah 2:2); and is how the NT epistles view it (cf. Romans 3:2).

- Jesus Christ also promised that He would give additional revelation to His church through His authorized representatives (the Apostles).

John 14:23–26 -- “Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father’s who sent Me. These things I have spoken to you while abiding with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.”

John 16:12–15 – “I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak of His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose it to you.”

- The authoritative testimony of the Incarnate Word gives us the primary reason to affirm the canonicity of the Old Testament and the canonicity of those books that bear the mark of apostolic authority (e.g. the New Testament).

***Reasons We Believe*, p. 111:** Jesus also testified to the authority and inspiration of the New Testament, predicting that the Holy Spirit would come to complete His teaching ministry. In John 16:12–13, Jesus promised His disciples: “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.” These teachings were pre-authenticated by Christ Himself (John 14:26), authorizing the Apostles to be His witnesses in the world (Matthew 28:18–19; Acts 1:8). The Apostles, therefore, rightly recognized their own inspired writings as being part of the biblical canon, on par with the books of the Old Testament (1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Peter 3:15–16).

- As Christians, then, we affirm the inspiration of the 39 books of the Old Testament because Jesus Christ affirmed them. Secondly, we affirm the inspiration of the 27 books of the New Testament because Jesus Christ promised that He would reveal further truth to His Apostles.

Paul Helm, “Faith, Evidence, and the Scriptures,” p. 310: How do we get to the sixty-six books from the slender base that has been established? The short answer to this is that we get to it through the authority of Christ. It is because He endorses the Old Testament and makes provision for the New that both Old and New have this authority.

- *What if someone accuses us of circular reasoning?*

Granted, this is a presuppositional argument that requires faith. (We might quickly note that all worldviews are ultimately presuppositional and require faith.)

Nonetheless, our faith is a reasonable faith—and it is more reasonable than any other worldview. (In the book *Reasons We Believe*, we present twenty reasons that affirm the trustworthiness of Scripture and the NT Gospels, and another twenty that affirm the Person and work of Jesus Christ.) Thus, we have good reasons (from both the perspective of internal consistency and external verifiability) to affirm that Jesus Christ is who He claimed to be, and that the Jesus of Scripture is the Jesus of History.

Having said that, it is the Holy Spirit who ultimately makes the truth of Christianity (and of Jesus Christ) certain in the hearts of believers (1 Corinthians 2:12–13). He gives us absolute confidence both in God’s Word and God’s Son.

As Josh McDowell and John Stewart explain, “To those outside the Christian faith, Christianity can be shown to rest on strong evidence and have a high degree of probability for its truth claims. But when a person becomes a Christian, the ‘assurance’ or ‘certainty’ becomes a reality. Christianity from a ‘morally certain’ standpoint becomes as undeniable as one’s own existence” (*Answers to Tough Questions*, 154).

- Insofar as we have believed in Jesus Christ and submitted ourselves to His lordship, we must likewise view His authority as absolute. There is no higher authority than His when it comes to establishing our own confidence in the biblical canon.

INITIAL CONCLUSIONS

1. Jesus Christ affirmed the Jewish canon of the Old Testament as Scripture. Therefore we must also do the same.
2. Jesus Christ also established the principle of apostolic authority when He promised to give further revelation through the Spirit to the Church.
3. Apostolic authorship (or authorization), then, becomes the primary principle for affirming the books of the New Testament as canonical. The church is bound to submit to the teaching of Christ's authorized representatives.
4. Because additional revelation was only promised to the Apostles, the canon was closed when the apostolic age ended.
5. NOTE: The church did not establish the canon. Rather, the church recognized and affirmed the canon, based on whether or not a book was written under the authority of an Apostle.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- In addition to the eleven disciples, the New Testament indicates that James (the half-brother of Jesus) (Gal. 1:19; 1 Cor. 15:7), and Paul were also Apostles.
- In order to be considered an Apostle, one had to meet the following three criteria:

In order to be an apostle, one had to meet at least three necessary qualifications: (1) an apostle had to be an eyewitness of the resurrected Christ (Acts 1:22; 10:39–41; 1 Cor. 9:1; 15:7–8); (2) an apostle had to be directly appointed by Jesus Christ (Mark 3:14; Luke 6:13; Acts 1:2, 24; 10:41; Gal. 1:1); (3) an apostle had to be able to confirm his mission and message with miraculous signs (Matt. 10:1–2; Acts 1:5–8; 2:43; 4:33; 5:12; 8:14; 2 Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:3–4). We might also note that, in choosing Matthias as a replacement for Judas, the eleven also looked for someone who had accompanied Jesus throughout His entire earthly ministry (Acts 1:21–22; 10:39–41).

Based on these qualifications alone, many continuationists agree that there are no apostles in the church today. Thus, Wayne Grudem (a continuationist) notes in his *Systematic Theology*, “It seems that no apostles were appointed after Paul, and certainly, since no one today can meet the qualification of having seen the risen Christ with his own eyes, there are no apostles today” (p. 911).

- There have been no such Apostles since the first-century of church history. (In 1 Corinthians 15:8, Paul indicates that he is the last Apostle.) The church fathers who came immediately after the Apostles saw the Apostles as a distinct group in history. They did not consider themselves to be Apostles. (Ephesians 2:20 indicates the Apostles were given by God for the foundation age of the Church.)

TAKING THE NEW TESTAMENT BOOK BY BOOK

- The Gospels of Matthew & John were both written by Apostles.
- The Gospel of Mark is the memoirs of the Apostle Peter as recorded by Mark.
- The Gospel of Luke (and the book of Acts) investigated eyewitness accounts in composing his gospel (Luke 1:2). These would have surely included Apostolic sources. Moreover, as the companion of the Apostle Paul, Luke wrote under Paul's Apostolic oversight. (Paul even affirms Luke 10:7 as part of the Scripture in 1 Timothy 5:18.)
- The Pauline Epistles (Romans–Philemon) were written by the Apostle Paul. Paul Himself claims that his teachings are the Word of God (cf. 1 Cor. 2:13; 1 Thess. 2:13) and the Apostle Peter confirms this assessment (in 2 Peter 3:15).
 - The authorship of Hebrews is unknown. However, the early church clearly believed the epistle to be Apostolic, and a number of Christian leaders attributed the letter's authorship to Paul (such as Clement of Alexandria). If not penned by Paul himself, it was clearly written by someone closely associated with Paul's ministry—and therefore, by extension, under his apostolic authority.

* When apostolic authorship is in question, we must then consider other criteria for canonicity. These criteria will be discussed below.

- The General Epistles (James, Peter, John) were written by Apostles.
- The Epistle of Jude was likely written by the half-brother of Jesus (Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3), and not by the Apostle Jude of Luke 6:16 (in light of John 7:5). Because he was not an Apostle, Jude operated under the apostolic oversight of his brother James (cf. Jude 1).
- The Apocalypse of Revelation was written by the Apostle John.

Summary: For every book of the New Testament, we can make a strong case that the book was written under apostolic authority—either by an apostle or someone closely linked to their apostolic ministry. Thus, we submit to these books because they come from Christ's authorized representatives. In submitting to them, we are submitting to the Lord Himself.

* * * * *

TWO MAJOR VIEWS OF THE CANON'S RECOGNITION:

- *Authoritative collection of writings*—(Roman Catholic view)...authority in collecting agency (church) rather than in writings themselves
- *Collection of authoritative writings*—authority in the books themselves (this is the proper view!)
 - The consummation of the canon did not depend on the church's reception of the books. In reality the canon was completed when the last book was finished.
 - The canon had all the authority it would ever have at that moment; however, the church's recognition of that authority took time.
 - After an autograph's arrival at its destination it remained there for awhile. It was read repeatedly by the addresses but went no further. Exceptions to this are the circular letters (ex: Rev. Gal. and 2 Cor.) Probably Ephesians (cf. Eph. 1:1; Col. 4:16).
 - After a while word would get out and requests for copies would come in. Gradually these copies became plentiful and were made into sets of books. Evidence for such collections of inspired books comes from a very early time, a time even before a number of the 27 books were composed.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REGARDING THE NT BOOKS:

- NT consists of 27 books (8–9 authors); 4 gospels, 1 history, 21 epistles, and 1 apocalypse (from AD 45 to AD 95)
- No original manuscripts (autographs) remain.
- A large number of Egyptian papyri give an idea of what form the NT autographs must have taken.
 - Circulated in scroll form—sheets of papyrus pasted together end to end and rolled up into a roll, which was held by a thread or string; scroll normally written only on one side with the outside used for address
 - Some books used secretaries or amanuenses (ex: Tertius in Romans [16:22], but Paul in Galatians [6:11])

- Only postal service was for official government use, so NT books used a messenger who was in full sympathy with the purpose of the letter (cf. 2 Cor. 2:13; 7:6; Eph.. 6:21; Phil. 2:27; Philemon 12)
- No extra space between words of *autographa* (so it's hard for the modern reader to tell where one word ends and another begins); done for expense reasons
- Little or no punctuation used...but sometimes a horizontal line was given to indicate an abbreviation (above) or a paragraph (below)

* * * * *

EXCURSUS

Regarding the Authorship of the Four Gospels

(From *Reasons We Believe*, pp. 122–25)

If the Gospels were written by men distantly removed from the events they recorded, we would have reason for concern. Thankfully, however, that is not the case. Two of the Gospels, Matthew and John, were penned by disciples of Jesus and provide eye-witness testimony to the events they discuss (cf. John 1:14; 21:20–25; 1 John 1:1–4). The Gospel of Mark was written by a close friend and associate of the apostle Peter (1 Peter 5:13; cf. Acts 12:12). As the early Christian leader Papias (c. 60–c. 130) explains, “Mark became an interpreter of Peter; as many things as he remembered he wrote down accurately (though certainly not in order) the things said or done by the Lord.”¹ Thus Mark’s Gospel reflects the memoirs of Peter (who was an eye-witness to Jesus’ ministry), which Mark preserved by writing down.

Luke (who wrote both the third Gospel and the book of Acts) was the traveling companion of the apostle Paul (cf. Acts 16:10–17; 20:5–15; 21:1–18; 27:1–28:16; Colossians 4:14), and was a careful researcher. Luke himself reports that he wrote his Gospel, “having investigated everything carefully from the beginning . . . so that you may know the exact truth” (Luke 1:3–4). The biblical Gospels, then, are the product of eye-witness testimony (Luke 1:1–4; Acts 1:21–22; Galatians 1; Hebrews 2:3; 2 Peter 1:16), either first-hand (in the case of Matthew and John) or second-hand (in the case of Mark and Luke). As those who venerated Jesus (cf. Acts 2:36; Revelation 1:17), they took special care in giving solemn testimony to His life (Acts 2:40; 8:25; 10:42; 18:5; 20:21; 28:23; 1 John 1:2; 4:14; 2 Peter 1:16–20; Revelation 1:2).

Furthermore, the Gospels were not written in a vacuum. The events recorded by the Evangelists were at the heart and soul of their ministries; from the very beginnings of the church they had repeatedly recounted the details of Jesus’ life and ministry, both to themselves and to those in the Christian community. That they would forget the very thing that defined them is difficult to imagine.² Yet, even if forgetting were possible, their eyewitness testimony was safeguarded by

¹ *Fragments of Papias* 2.15.

the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus promised would help His disciples remember His teachings (John 14:26; 16:13). As Robert Gromacki points out:

. . . some have argued that even eye-witnesses would not have been able to remember the events accurately. Men, especially aging men, are prone to memory failure. If the Bible were nothing more than a mere human composition, then this argument would carry some weight. However, such critics disregard the promise of Christ to His apostles [in John 14:26].³

Thus the Holy Spirit guaranteed that what they remembered would be accurate. That Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were the actual authors of the Gospels that bear their names is overwhelmingly supported by the testimony of church history, with affirmation coming from early Christian leaders such as Papias (c. 60–c. 130), Justin Martyr (100–165), Polycrates (c. 130–196), Irenaeus (c. 140–c. 202) who cites Polycarp (c. 69–160), Clement of Alexandria (c. 150–c. 215), Tertullian (c.160–c. 220), Origen (c.185–c. 254), Eusebius (c. 263–c. 339), Jerome (c. 345–420) and others. Never is the fourfold Gospel seriously questioned.⁴ In the words of Irenaeus (c. 140–c. 202):

It is not possible that the Gospels can be either more or fewer in number than they are. For, since there are four zones of the world in which we live, and four principal winds, while the Church is scattered throughout all the world, and the “pillar and ground” of the Church is the Gospel and the spirit of life; it is fitting that she should have four pillars, breathing out immortality on every side, and vivifying men afresh. . . . And therefore the Gospels are in accord with these things, among which Christ Jesus is seated.⁵

Irenaeus continues by listing the four Gospels as we know them today: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Of course, nearly a century earlier, Papias had already given testimony to these same four books.⁶ According to the church historian Eusebius, Irenaeus also received some of his information from Polycarp, who was taught these things by the apostles (cf. 2 Timothy 2:2).⁷

² J. P. Moreland, *Scaling the Secular City* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2005), 143–145 explains how the Gospel writers’ concern for accuracy would have been even greater in a Jewish oral tradition, where the students of leading rabbis (like Jesus) would take great care to memorize the teachings and deeds of their masters.

³ Robert G. Gromacki, *New Testament Survey* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1992), 57. Gromacki assumes that the earliest gospels were not written until A.D. 60, a point which not all NT scholars take.

⁴ There is some discussion among scholars as to whether the fourth Gospel was penned by John the apostle or another John named “John the elder.” D.A. Carson has shown that the two individuals were probably one and the same (Carson, *John*, 69–70). Even if they were different, William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith* (Crossway, 1994), 204 notes that “The clear majority [of church fathers] opts for the apostle.” Craig goes on to demonstrate that, based on the internal evidence in the book, the apostle John is the only plausible candidate for authorship.

⁵ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.11.8. Cited from Schaeff, *AnteNicene Fathers*.

⁶ John Chapman, “St. Papias” in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911).

⁷ Eusebius, *Church History*, 4.14.3–8.

Internal evidence, coming from the books themselves, is consistent with the testimony of church history. For example, Matthew's Gospel frequently references the Old Testament, and describes Jesus' interaction with the Jews in a way that suggests its author was a native Jew.⁸ Some scholars have noted that it also puts greater emphasis on numbers and on money than the other Gospels, a characteristic that would be consistent with the author's occupation as a tax collector (Matthew 9:9).⁹ In Mark's Gospel, the apostle Peter is cast in a more negative light than in the other Gospels (cf. Mark 8:32–33; 14:29–72), suggesting that he was the self-effacing source from which Mark received his information.¹⁰ The author of Luke also wrote Acts (compare Luke 1 with Acts 1) and was a traveling companion of Paul (cf. Acts 16:10-17; 20:5-15; 21:1-18; 27:1–28:16; 2 Timothy 4:11). He is explicit in emphasizing that he researched his information thoroughly (Luke 1:1–4), as is seen in the many historically verifiable details he includes (some of which will be considered below). This would be fitting for one who was trained as a physician (Colossians 4:14). The author of John speaks of himself only as “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (John 21:7). This corresponds to John's emphasis on love in his three epistles (1 John 3:16, 23; 4:9–10, 19; 2 John 1:6). Moreover, the author was a disciple (cf. John 21:2, 20, 24), one of the Twelve (John 13:23–24; cf. Mark 14:17; Luke 22:14), an eye-witness to the events of Christ's life and death (John 1:14; 19:26,35), and among the inner circle of Christ's followers, but not Peter (John 21:20–24; cf. John 20:2-10; Mark 5:37–38; 9:2–3; 14:33).¹¹ Only John and his brother James fit these criteria. But since James was martyred early in church history (Acts 12:2) the evidence points to John as the author (cf. John 21:22–23).¹² The fact that much of John's material is unique (intended as a supplement to the other Gospels) suggests that someone with authority must have written it, otherwise the early church would probably not have accepted it as canonical.

In all four cases, the internal evidence (meaning details within the book itself such as writing style, biographical data, and historical details) and the external evidence (meaning non-biblical testimony that affirms the authorship of a given book) consistently and repeatedly affirm the authorship of the Gospels by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. On the flip side, there is nothing beyond mere speculation that should cause us to question their authenticity.

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⁸ Cf. A. Lukyn Williams, *St. Matthew*, volume 1, *The Pulpit Commentary* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, n.d.), xi.

⁹ Cf. Daniel Wallace, “Matthew: Introduction, Argument, Outline,” accessed online at www.bible.org on August 19, 2007.

¹⁰ James A. Brooks in *Mark*, *New American Commentary* (Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman, 1991), notes that, “The large amount of concern for Peter and the less-than-flattering image of Peter in Mark may be an indication that Peter was one source among others” (p. 27).

¹¹ Cf. Edwin A. Blum, “The Gospel of John,” 267–348 in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* (New Testament) edited by John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1983), 267.

¹² Cf. Gerald L. Borchert, *John 1–11*, *New American Commentary* (Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 86.

KEY TERMS RELATED TO THE STUDY OF CANONICITY:

General Terms	
Canon/Canonicity	This resolves the question of what books are truly inspired and authoritative and the approximate period in history when they were so recognized by the people of God. The term comes from Greek and means “straight rod, or straight edge, or ruler.”
Inerrancy	Free from error
Autographs	The original manuscripts of the Bible.
Textual Criticism	Or “lower criticism.” It is concerned with restoring the original text on the basis of evidence provided by variants, or different readings, where the surviving manuscripts disagree with each other.
Old Testament Canonicity– Key Terms	
Septuagint	Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures. It was completed by Jewish scholars in Alexandria Egypt between 250–150 B.C.
Itala Version	Latin translation of the Septuagint completed around A.D. 200.
Vulgate	Jerome’s Latin translation (A.D. 390–404)
Peshitta and Syriac Hexapla	Syriac versions of the Old Testament.
Polygot	An elaborate printed edition of the OT in which the Hebrew text and all of the available ancient versions were printed in parallel columns.
Sopherim	Jewish scribes (from Ezra to Antigonus [3 rd century B.C.]) who sought to standardize a pure Hebrew text.
Midrash	Jewish textual study or interpretation brought together between 100 B.C. and A.D. 300.
Tosefta	“Addition or supplement” which arose between A.D. 100 and 300. It is a collection of teachings and traditions of the Tannaim which were closely related to the Mishna.
Talmud	“Instruction” grew up between A.D. 100 and 500. Its two main divisions were the Mishna and the Gemara.
Mishna	“Repetition” or “teaching” composed around A.D. 200 in Hebrew; it contained a digest of the oral laws, traditions, and explanations of Scripture.
Gemara	“To complete, accomplish, or learn;” it was composed in Aramaic and was an expanded commentary upon the Mishna.
Masorettes	Scholars who between A.D. 500–950 gave the final form to the OT text.
Qumran	Location of the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, which were found in 1947.

New Testament Canonicity – Key Terms	
<i>Kartou</i>	2 John 12: a sheet of papyrus used as paper
<i>Melanos</i>	2 John from “melas” which means black; it was the term used by ancient writers to refer to their ink. It was made by mixing soot and gum with water. It was durable but did not sink into the papyrus immediately and

	thus could be erased to make corrections.
<i>Kalamou</i>	3 John 13: this refers to the pen that a scribe would use. It was a reed that was sharpened and moistened by the scribe with his mouth.
<i>Biblos</i>	This term refers to a sheet of papyrus paper after it had been written on. “kartou” refers to it before it is written on. A short writing could be referred to as “to Biblion” and a collection of short writings was called “ta Biblia”
<i>Biblia</i>	The neuter form of the above term gave rise to this feminine word. In the Old Latin Latin it is transliterated “Biblia.” It is from this Latin that the English word for the Scriptures is derived, namely, Bible.
Papyrus	A cheap form of paper-like material used for writing. It came from reeds growing in Egypt. They were cut and their pith was pressed together in strips. Placed end to end these sheets of papyrus made scrolls.
Codex	This refers to book-like form. It was not present until the 2 nd century AD and was probably introduced by the Christians. Sheets of papyrus were folded in half and then sewn or glued together making a book. It could be written on both sides of the page and it made quick reference possible.
Parchment	Also known as “vellum” was made by processing animal skins. It was invented when king Eumenes II of Pergamum wanted to build a library to rival Alexandria. He started by exporting papyrus from Egypt. When the king of Egypt learned of Eumenes plan, he stopped exporting papyrus, so Eumenes developed parchment. It was expensive but durable. Sinaiticus and Vaticanus are examples of parchment codices.
Uncial	This is writing in all capitals (capitals are the letters used to inscribe stone)...the uncials were less rigid than true capitals. Used in formal literary works; it is represented by the upper case letters of today’s Greek; found in the earliest parchment codices of NT; dominant but not exclusive style of earliest papyrus manuscripts; formal style for 1 st 4 or 5 centuries of the Christian era
Cursive	free-flowing letters which connected to one another in running handwriting. This was used for informal writings from the middle of the first millennium until the 9 th century AD. It was fast to write and some of the letters extended above and below the rest
Miniscule	this was a combination of the uncial and cursive form. It had the beauty of the uncials but the efficiency of the cursive style. It was used privately and informally by the 9 th century AD and by the 10 th century AD had become part of the formal literary style. It is best represented by the lower case letters of today’s Greek NT

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SECONDARY CRITERIA

- In cases where Apostolic authorship might be in question, there are several additional criteria that we might use in the process of recognizing canonicity.

- In order to affirm the ultimate authority of Scripture (which we must if we believe it to be the inerrant Word of God), we should be careful to derive these criteria from the Bible itself.

Richard B. Gaffin, “The New Testament: How Do We Know for Sure?”

Christianity Today (February 1998, 28–29): “In the final analysis, the attempt to demonstrate criteria of canonicity seeks, from a position above the Canon, to rationalize or generalize about the Canon. . . . Instead we must recognize the New Testament canon as a self-establishing, self-validating entity.”

- Dr. Larry Pettegrew (in his Systematic Theology class notes) has suggested the following five principles (all of which are derived from Scripture).
 1. The Credential Principle: Namely that God revealed Himself in the Old Testament through His prophets and in the New Testament through His Apostles.

R. Laird Harris, concerning the Pentateuch: “. . . ancient Israel believed that Moses wrote it as the spokesman for God. There is no dissenting voice. And is it not clear that this is precisely why ancient Israel received it as authoritative, i.e., canonical? It was not canonized because of its antiquity, linguistic phenomena, beautiful style, royal imposition, or ecclesiastical decision. The principle for canonizing the Pentateuch which guided ancient Israel, as far as we have any evidence at all, is, Was it from God’s great spokesman, Moses? The human author, admitted by all to be a spokesman for the divine Author, guaranteed the writing. . . . Similarly, succeeding prophets were received upon due authentication and their written works were received with the same respect, being received therefore as the Word of God. . . . What was prophetic was regarded as the Word of God. What was not prophetic was . . . not regarded as the Word of God. The canon grew as the prophets succeeded one another in their ministry; it was finished, as Josephus says, when the Holy Spirit ceased speaking through prophets in Israel. . . . when all the tests [of a prophet] were applied and a prophet was acknowledged to be true, his words and writings were received forthwith by the faithful as from God, i.e., canonical.”

- **New Testament statements regarding Old Testament inspiration:**
 - Matt. 5:18—“jot and tittle”
 - John 10:35—“Scripture cannot be broken”
 - 2 Tim. 3:16—“All Scripture is God-breathed”
 - Heb. 1:1-2—“God spoke through the prophets”
 - 1 Pet. 1:10-11—“Prophets. . . prophesied of the grace to come”
 - 2 Pet. 1:21—“holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit”

New Testament statements regarding New Testament inspiration:

Only Scripture was permitted to be publicly read in the church:

- **1 Thess. 5:27**— “Read this to all the brethren”
- **Col. 4:16**— “When this letter is read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and you, for your part read my letter that is coming from Laodicea.”
- **Rev. 1:3**—“Blessed is he who hears and speaks the words of this prophecy”
- **1 Tim. 4:13**—Give attention to the reading, exhortation, and teaching

Other important statements:

- 1 Thess. 2:13—Paul writes, “For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.”
 - 1 Tim. 5:18—Paul calls an OT passage Scripture (Deut 25:4) but also refers to a statement by Christ as Scripture (Luke 10:7...The laborer is worthy of his wages). Thus, it shows that Paul viewed the words of Christ as equally authoritative to the words of the OT (cf. 2 Tim. 3:16)
 - 2 Pet. 3:15–16—Peter refers to Paul’s writings as Scripture (tas graphas) Thus, Peter recognized Paul’s words (as a representative of Christ) as authoritative
2. The Competency Principle: Only God is adequate to witness to Himself. Therefore, we should ultimately allow the Scripture to inform us as to how to recognize what is Scripture and what isn’t. The Bible should be our final authority in thinking about canonicity; not our own rational, externally-exposed criteria.

Hebrews 6:13 – “For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself.”

3. The Chronological Principle: God limited canonicity to the prophets in the Old Testament and the Apostles in the New Testament. (Micah 4:5–6 hints at the fact that the next true prophet from God would be the one like Elijah—namely, John the Baptist.) Moreover, any supposed Scripture written after the Apostolic age must be rejected since it cannot be authenticated by Christ’s authorized representatives.

Paul D. Wegner, “The Canon of the OT in Jesus’ Day”: “[A]ccording to Jewish tradition the voice of God had ceased following the time of Malachi (about 400 B.C.) and thus new books were no longer being added to the sacred scriptures. In the apocryphal book of 1 Maccabees, Simon Maccabees speaks of the great sorrow in Israel such as there had not been since the prophets ceased to appear to them (9:27). In the Pseudepigrapha, the author of 2 Baruch (85:3) claims that the prophets had fallen asleep.”

4. The Consistency Principle: God cannot contradict Himself. Therefore, if a book is truly from God it must be harmonious with what was previously revealed by God.

Acts 17:11 – “Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.”

5. The Conviction Principle: The Holy Spirit illumines the hearts of His people to recognize the authenticity of His Word. This might be referred to as the Corporate Internal Testimony of the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 2:12–15a – “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. But he who is spiritual appraises all things.”

* * * * *

WHAT ABOUT THE OLD TESTAMENT APOCRYPHA?

- If we begin with the Christological principle that we are espousing here, then we might ask, “What OT canon did Jesus affirm?” And did that canon include the Apocrypha (which the Roman Catholic Church canonized at the Council of Trent in 1546)?
- There is strong evidence (from Philo, Josephus, the Babylonian Talmud, the Council of Jamnia, etc.) that the Jews of Jesus’ day affirmed an OT canon that is the same as ours. However the Jews ordered their books differently, starting with Genesis and ending with Chronicles. Also, the Minor Prophets were considered just one book, known as “The Twelve.” As a result, the Jewish canon consisted of only 22 or 24 books (in the case of twenty-two books, Judges and Ruth are combined; and Jeremiah and Lamentations are combined). But this canon consisted of the same books that make up the Protestant canon of 39 OT books.
- Earliest extant reference to the three main divisions of the 22 book Hebrew Scripture is to be found in the prologue to the apocryphal book Ecclesiasticus compassed ca. 190 BC in Hebrew by Jesus ben Sirach.
- The following charts show both the 24 and 22 book arrangement of the Jewish canon. Both approaches correspond to the 39 book approach of the Christian canon, but the order of the books is different.

The Hebrew Canon (24-Book Arrangement)			
<i>Book</i>	<i>Author</i>	<i>Approximate Date</i>	<i>Place Written</i>
Section I: The Law			
1. Genesis	Moses	1445–1405 B.C	Wilderness
2. Exodus	Moses	1445–1405 B.C	Wilderness
3. Leviticus	Moses	1445–1405 B.C	Wilderness
4. Numbers	Moses	c. 1405 B.C	Wilderness
5. Deuteronomy	Moses	c. 1405 B.C	Near Promised Land
Section II: The Prophets (Former Prophets and Latter Prophets)			
6. Joshua	Joshua	1405–1385 B.C	Israel
7. Judges	Possibly Samuel	1040–1004 B.C	Israel
8. 1 & 2 Samuel	Anonymous	931–722 B.C.	Israel
9. 1 & 2 Kings	Anonymous	Before 538 B.C.	Babylon
10. Isaiah	Isaiah	c. 739–869	Israel
11. Jeremiah	Jeremiah	c. 627–561 B.C.	Judah
12. Ezekiel	Ezekiel	c. 593–585 B.C.	Babylon
13. The Twelve			
- Hosea	Hosea	c. 755–710 B.C.	Israel
- Joel	Joel	c. 835–796 B.C.	Judah
- Amos	Amos	c. 760 B.C.	Judah (to Israel)
- Obadiah	Obadiah	c. 848–841 B.C.	Judah (to Edom)
- Jonah	Jonah	c. 760 B.C.	Israel (to Nineveh)
- Micah	Micah	c. 735–710 B.C.	Judah
- Nahum	Nahum	c. 660–630 B.C.	Judah (to Nineveh)
- Habakkuk	Habakkuk	c. 609	Judah
- Zephaniah	Zephaniah	635–625 B.C.	Judah
- Haggai	Haggai	520–518 B.C.	Judah (Post Exile)
- Zechariah	Zechariah	520–c. 475 B.C.	Judah (Post Exile)
- Malachi	Malachi	433–424 B.C.	Judah (Post Exile)
Section III: The Writings			
14. Psalms	David, <i>et. al.</i>	ca. 1410–500 B.C	Israel
15. Proverbs	Solomon	971–931 B.C.	Israel
16. Job	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
17. Song of Songs	Solomon	c. 971 B.C.	Israel
18. Ruth	Possibly Samuel	c. 1011–971 B.C.	Israel
19. Lamentations	Jeremiah	586 B.C.	Judah
20. Ecclesiastes	Solomon	c. 931 B.C.	Israel
21. Esther	Possibly Mordecai	c. 465 B.C.	Persia or Israel
22. Daniel	Daniel	605–536 B.C.	Babylon, Persia
23. Ezra/Nehemiah	Ezra (for both)	457–424 B.C.	Israel (Post Exile)
24. 1 & 2 Chronicles	Possibly Ezra	c. 450–430 B.C.	Israel (Post Exile)

The Hebrew Canon (22-Book Arrangement)			
<i>Book</i>	<i>Author</i>	<i>Approximate Date</i>	<i>Place Written</i>
Section I: The Law			
1. Genesis	Moses	1445–1405 B.C	Wilderness
2. Exodus	Moses	1445–1405 B.C	Wilderness
3. Leviticus	Moses	1445–1405 B.C	Wilderness
4. Numbers	Moses	c. 1405 B.C	Wilderness
5. Deuteronomy	Moses	c. 1405 B.C	Near Promised Land
Section II: The Prophets (Former Prophets and Latter Prophets)			
6. Joshua	Joshua	1405–1385 B.C	Israel
7. Judges/Ruth	Possibly Samuel	1040–971 B.C	Israel
8. 1 & 2 Samuel	Anonymous	931–722 B.C.	Israel
9. 1 & 2 Kings	Anonymous	Before 538 B.C.	Babylon
10. Isaiah	Isaiah	c. 739–869	Israel
11. Jeremiah & Lamentations	Jeremiah	c. 627–561 B.C.	Judah
12. Ezekiel	Ezekiel	c. 593–585 B.C.	Babylon
13. The Twelve			
- Hosea	Hosea	c. 755–710 B.C.	Israel
- Joel	Joel	c. 835–796 B.C.	Judah
- Amos	Amos	c. 760 B.C.	Judah (to Israel)
- Obadiah	Obadiah	c. 848–841 B.C.	Judah (to Edom)
- Jonah	Jonah	c. 760 B.C.	Israel (to Nineveh)
- Micah	Micah	c. 735–710 B.C.	Judah
- Nahum	Nahum	c. 660–630 B.C.	Judah (to Nineveh)
- Habakkuk	Habakkuk	c. 609	Judah
- Zephaniah	Zephaniah	635–625 B.C.	Judah
- Haggai	Haggai	520–518 B.C.	Judah (Post Exile)
- Zechariah	Zechariah	520–c. 475 B.C.	Judah (Post Exile)
- Malachi	Malachi	433–424 B.C.	Judah (Post Exile)
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19. Esther	Possibly Mordecai	c. 465 B.C.	Persia or Israel
20. Daniel	Daniel	605–536 B.C.	Babylon, Persia
21. Ezra/Nehemiah	Ezra (for both)	457–424 B.C.	Israel (Post Exile)
22. 1 & 2 Chronicles	Possibly Ezra	c. 450–430 B.C.	Israel (Post Exile)

Josephus, *Contra Apion*, 1:37–42: It therefore naturally, or rather necessarily, follows (seeing that with us it is not open to everybody to write the records, and that there is no discrepancy in what is written; seeing that, on the contrary, the prophets alone had this privilege, obtaining their knowledge of the most remote and ancient history through the inspiration which they owed to God, and committing to writing a clear account of the events of their own time just as they occurred)—it follows, I say, that we do not possess myriads of inconsistent books conflicting with each other. Our books, those which are justly accredited, are but two and twenty, and contain the record of all time.

Of these, five are the books of Moses, comprising the laws and the traditional history from the birth of man down to the death of the lawgiver. . . . the prophets subsequent to Moses wrote the history of the events of their own times in thirteen books. The remaining four books contain hymns to God, and precepts for the conduct of human life.

From Artaxerxes to our own time the complete history has been written, but has not been deemed worthy of equal credit with the earlier records, because of the failure of the exact succession of the prophets.

We have given practical proof of our reverence for our own Scriptures. For, although such long ages have now passed, no one has ventured either to add, or to remove, or to alter a syllable; and it is an instinct with every Jew, from the day of his birth to regard them as the decrees of God, to abide by them, and, if need be, cheerfully to die for them.

- Jesus affirmed this understanding of the OT canon in His teaching (cf. Matt 5:17; 7:12; 22:40; Luke 11:51; 16:16). Moreover, Jesus never argued about the canon with the Jewish religious leaders of His day. Rather, His appeals to the OT assumed that both He and His hearers knew what was included in the Scriptures (cf. Matt. 21:42; 22:29; 26:54; 26:5; etc.).

Paul D. Wegner, “The Old Testament Canon in Jesus’ Day”: Jesus describes the extent of the canon in Matthew 23:34-35 and Luke 11:49-51, of which F. F. Bruce observes: “No body of literature ever had its credentials confirmed by a higher authority” [*Books and the Parchments*, 96]. Both passages state that the Jewish nation will be held responsible for the blood of the prophets from “the blood of Abel” (Gen. 4:8), the first recorded murder, “to the blood of Zechariah” (2 Chron. 24:20-22), the last recorded murder. The implication is that biblical history spans from Genesis to Chronicles, which is the same order as the oldest complete manuscripts of the Old Testament (i.e., Codex Leningradensis [1008 A.D.] and the Aleppo Codex [most likely about fifty years earlier]). There were certainly other martyrs following Zechariah, but the Jewish nation will not be held responsible for them, since they fall outside of the parameters of the Jewish authoritative sacred history. Jesus also uses the common tripartite division of the Hebrew Bible to refer to the canon in Luke 24:44: “These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about me in the Law of Moses, and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled” (NASB). This last designation is evidently representative of the final group of Old Testament writings, of which Psalms was the first and largest book. A similar designation for the Old Testament canon was in use from the time of Philo

in the early first century (“[the] laws, and oracles delivered through the mouths of prophets, and psalms, and anything else which fosters and perfects knowledge and piety” [*Contemp.* 3 §25]) until at least the tenth century (al-Masudi, an Arabian historian and geographer, describes the Hebrew canon as “the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms, which are the 24 books”). It is also interesting to note that Jesus quotes from each of the three parts of Scripture as authoritative material (e.g., Law: Mt. 4:4—Deut. 8:3; Prophets: Mt. 10:35-36—Mic. 7:6; Writings: Mt. 13:43—Dan. 12:3).

- As noted above, there are places in the apocrypha where the apocrypha itself asserts that the OT canon was already closed, and that the OT books consisted of those that correspond to the 39 books in our Old Testaments (cf. 1 Macc. 9:27, 4:46, 14:41; 2 Esdras 14:44–48).
- The Roman Catholic Apocrypha consists of The Wisdom of Solomon (c. 30 B.C.); Ecclesiasticus (Sirach) (132 B.C.); Tobit (c. 200 B.C.); Judith (c. 150 B.C.); 1 Esdras (c. 150-100 B.C.); 1 & 2 Maccabees (c. 110 B.C.); Baruch (c. 150-50 B.C.); The Letter of Jeremiah (c. 300-100 B.C.); 2 Esdras (c. A.D. 100); Additions to Esther (140-130 B.C.); The Prayer of Azariah (second or first century B.C.); Susanna (second or first century B.C.); Bel and the Dragon (c. 100 B.C.); and The Prayer of Manasseh (second or first century B.C.). Though the New Testament quotes from the Old Testament some 250 times, the NT never quotes from these apocryphal books.
- There is also evidence from early Christian leaders that many (perhaps the majority) in the ancient church did not consider the apocrypha to be on par with Scripture. Even Jerome (who translated the Vulgate) clearly states that the church of his day did not consider the apocrypha to be inspired. Nonetheless, Jerome included them in his translation since they were regarded as profitable for the church, even if they were not to be regarded as Scripture.

Origen, as recorded by Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 6.25.1–2: “But it should be known that there are twenty-two canonical books, according to the Hebrew tradition; the same as the number of the letters of their alphabet.”

Athanasius, *Thirty-Ninth Festal Letter*, 3–4: In proceeding to make mention of these things, I shall adopt, to commend my undertaking, the pattern of Luke the Evangelist, saying on my own account: ‘Forasmuch as some have taken in hand,’ to reduce into order for themselves the books termed Apocryphal, and to mix them up with the divinely inspired Scripture, concerning which we have been fully persuaded, as they who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the Word, delivered to the fathers; it seemed good to me also, having been urged thereto by true brethren, and having learned from the beginning, to set before you the books included in the Canon, and handed down, and accredited as Divine; to the end that anyone who has fallen into error may condemn those who have led him astray; and that he who has continued steadfast in purity may again rejoice, having these things brought to his remembrance. There are, then, of the Old Testament, twenty-two books in number. . .

- Additionally, the Apocrypha contains theological and factual errors.

Geisler and Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible*, 270: “The subbiblical nature of the Apocrypha can be seen in its historical and chronological errors. It is claimed that Tobit was alive when the Assyrians conquered Israel (722 B.C.) as well as when Jeroboam revolted against Judah (931 B.C.), yet his total life-span was only 158 years (Tobit 14:11; cf. 1:3–5). Judith speaks of Nebuchadnezzar as reigning in Nineveh instead of Babylon (Judith 1:1).”

Note: Theological errors include (1) praying for the dead; (2) the worship of angels; (3) and the concept of purgatory.

- In spite of all of this, because of its inclusion in the Latin *Vulgate*, the Roman Catholic Church officially “canonized” the Apocrypha in 16th century at the Council of Trent.

Reasons for inclusion (per Geisler and Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible*, 266ff; summaries of these arguments adapted from Rodney Anderson):

1. The New Testament seems to reflect the thought of the Apocrypha in some places.

Response: There are no quotations in the New Testament from the Apocrypha. Even if there are allusions to the Apocrypha, this does not mean they are canonical.

2. The New Testament quotes mostly from the Greek Old Testament, the Septuagint (LXX), which contained the Apocrypha.

Response: The earliest Septuagint manuscripts are from the fourth century. There is no way of knowing if they were included in the first century manuscripts.

3. Some of the early church Fathers regarded the Apocrypha as canonical, quoted from it and used it in public worship.

Response: Even though some Church Fathers considered the Apocrypha canonical, some did not. There was no agreement on this issue.

4. Catacomb scenes depict episodes from the Apocrypha, showing it was part of the early Christian’s religious life.

Response: Scenes from the catacombs do not prove canonicity.

5. The great Greek manuscripts (א, A, and B) interpose the Apocrypha among the Old Testament books.

Response: There is no Greek manuscript that contains all of the Apocryphal books accepted at the Council of Trent.

6. The Syriac Church accepted them in the fourth century.

Response: The Syrian bible of the second century did not contain the Apocrypha.

7. Augustine and the councils he influenced at Hippo (393) and presided over at Carthage (397) accepted them.

Response: Although Augustine recognized the Apocrypha, his opinion was based on the wonderful example they provide of the martyrs and that they were a part of the Septuagint. Neither of these reasons is true grounds for canonicity.

8. The Greek Church accepts them.

Response: The acceptance of the Apocrypha by the Greek church does not constitute grounds for canonicity. Furthermore, Larger Catechism omits the Apocrypha since it did not exist as a part of the Hebrew Bible.

9. The Roman Catholic Church proclaimed them canonical at the Council of Trent (1546).

Response: The Roman Catholic Church's first official acceptance of the Apocrypha as Scripture at the Council of Trent came 1500 years after these books were written.

10. The Apocryphal books continued in the Protestant Bibles as late as the nineteenth century.

Response: Although Apocryphal books were included in Protestant Bibles prior to the Council of Trent, they were usually placed in a separate section and were not considered inspired by God. (They were not considered Scripture by the Reformers.)

11. Some Apocryphal books written in Hebrew have been found among other Old Testament canonical books in the Dead Sea community at Qumran

Response: Although Apocryphal books were discovered at Qumran, only commentaries from canonical books were found. This indicates that they scribes did not consider these Apocryphal books to be inspired.

THE NEW TESTAMENT CANON IN CHURCH HISTORY

- It is important to remember that, because these books are inspired, they were authoritative (and therefore canonical) from the moment they were written.
- The writer's of the New Testament themselves give testimony to the fact that their writings are the Word of God (cf. 1 Cor. 14:37; Col. 4:16; 1 Thess. 4:15; 1 Peter 3:15–16; 2 Peter 3:2; 1 John 4:6; etc.).
- Nonetheless, the church's recognition of the canon took time.

- In some cases, the canonicity of certain books was questioned. In such cases, the church applied the tests of canonicity in order to separate that which truly came from God from that which did not.
- The church was careful not to prematurely reject these books, but to examine them carefully (1 Thess. 5:20–21; cf. Acts 17:11). The fact that the church was careful to do its due diligence should give us greater (not lesser) confidence in their recognition of the canon.
- **In all of this, we can also trust the providential working of God, as He worked to preserve (in a providential, not miraculous, sense) the truth of His Word throughout church history. He did this through the corporate internal testimony of the Spirit.**
- Larry Pettegrew identifies three periods of circulation and recognition in church history (see below).

1. The Period of separate circulation (70–170)

During this period the individual books were being circulated. Some such as the circular epistles like Colossians, and those to churches in close proximity (Corinth, Thessalonica, Philippi) were gathered in local churches and read. Others which were written to individuals (Timothy, Titus, Philemon) were less well known but gradually grew in recognition. Hebrews was frequently debated because the author was unknown.

Clement of Rome (c. AD 96) mentions at least eight New Testament books in his epistles, Ignatius of Antioch cites about seven books (c. AD 106); Polycarp mentions about 15 (c. AD 140). Irenaeus (AD 185) mentions 21; Hippolytus (AD 170-235, mentions 22.

During this time the books which were questioned but not excluded were Hebrews (unknown author), James, 2 Peter, 2, 3 John, Revelation.

2. Period of separation, the issue at this time is extent (170–303)

During this period various collections are coming together. The issue is which writings were to be excluded. Marcion (AD 140) stimulates identification because of his false canon; the Edict of Diocletian does as well. The Muratorian Canon (AD. 170) is the earliest known collection excluding only Hebrews, James, and 1, 2 Peter. Irenaeus (AD 185) mentions 21 books, Hippolytus (AD 170-235), mentions 22. The Old Syriac version excludes 2 Peter, 2–3 John, Jude and Revelation, and the Old Latin (AD 200) excludes 1, 2 Peter, James, and Hebrews.

3. **Period of completion** (303–397)

Eusebius tells us that certain books were still debated though accepted: James, Jude, 2 Peter, and 2, 3 John, though most accepted them. Revelation still had not gained complete acceptance primarily because it ended with a curse on anyone who added or took away from it.

During this period the formal acceptance and recognition takes place. Council of Laodicea (AD 363) mentions the present collection of 27; Athanasius mentions 27 in his Easter letter of AD 367 and these are the recognized canon at the local Council of Hippo (AD 393) and the Third Synod of Carthage (AD 397).

WHY WERE SOME BOOKS QUESTIONED?

Hebrews – Clement of Rome and Justin Martyr both allude to the epistle in their writings, showing that they considered it to be canonical. Yet, later Christian leaders disputed its place in the New Testament. Thus, *The Pulpit Commentary* notes: “It was apparently only because its authorship was questioned that its claim to canonicity was in the first instance questioned too. And then, as time went on, the reluctance thus arising seems to have been strengthened by heretical misinterpretations of some passages contained in it” (specifically with regard to debates involving Arianism and Novatianism).

James – Hippolytus and Irenaeus quote from James, and Clement of Rome alludes to it. Eusebius notes that both James and Jude were widely used in the churches of his day, even though there were questions as to the genuineness of both books. Eusebius for his part quotes from the epistle and refers to its author as “the apostle.” Martin Luther would later question the book, but only because of a perceived discrepancy between James’ teaching on justification and Paul’s teaching on the same.

2 Peter – According to *The Pulpit Commentary*: “In considering the genuineness of this Epistle we are confronted at once with the well-known words of Eusebius. He says, in his ‘Ecclesiastical History,’ which seems to have been finished in A.D. 325, ‘One Epistle of Peter, which is called the first, is accepted; and this the presbyters of old have used in their writings as undoubted. But that which is circulated as his Second Epistle we have received to be not canonical. Nevertheless, as it appeared to many to be useful, it has been diligently read with the other Scriptures’ (Eusebius, ‘Hist. Eccl.,’ iii. 3). In the same chapter he says that he knows only one genuine Epistle among the writings attributed to St. Peter; and in bk. iii. 25 he classes the Second Epistle with those of James and Jude, as ‘disputed, indeed, but known to most men.’” Nonetheless, there are allusions to the epistle from Clement of Rome, Melito of Sardis, Theophilus of Antioch, Hippolytus of Portus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and others. According to Jerome, doubt about the genuineness of the second epistle was due in part to differences in style between the two (a point he reconciled by asserting that Peter used two different interpreters or secretaries to compose the two letters).

2, 3 John – The genuineness of these letters was recognized by early Christian leaders like Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Dionysius of Alexandria. So why was the canonicity of these letters sometimes questioned? *The Pulpit Commentary* explains: “Thus it is precisely the earliest witnesses who are favorable to the apostolic authorship; and at no time do the doubts as to their apostolicity appear to have been general. And if the evidence as a whole appears to be meager, we must remember these facts. (1) These Epistles were probably written *the very last* of all the books in the New Testament. Many of the other books had acquired a considerable circulation before these were in existence. (2) They are *private* letters, addressed, not to Churches, but to individuals, and therefore were likely to remain in obscurity for a considerable time. We may compare the public and official letters of a bishop now with his private letters. The one kind are published and generally circulated at once; the others, if published at all, not until long after his death. (3) The comparative *insignificance* of these letters would lead to their remaining generally unknown for some time. They are very short, and not of very general interest.”

Jude – Though the authenticity of its authorship was not questioned; its canonicity was debated by some. According to *The Pulpit Commentary*: “Jerome mentions the fact that it quotes the apocryphal Book of Enoch as a reason for its being rejected in some quarters. Its brevity, its peculiar contents, and the circumstance that it makes no claim to apostolic authorship, would no doubt also stand in the way of a rapid, extensive, and unhesitating acceptance.”

Revelation – Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Hippolytus, Origen, and many other later Church Fathers attribute the book of Revelation to the Apostle John. In this regard, Justin says, “John, one of the apostles of Christ, who prophesied in a Revelation made to him that the believers in our Christ should spend a thousand years in Jerusalem” (*Dialogue with Trypho*, 81). Questions as to its canonicity probably relate to its content, which is clearly distinct from any other book in the New Testament.

* * * * *

The Church Fathers and the Canon (adapted from Geisler and Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible*, 100, 205, 292; summary provided by Rodney Anderson).

Polycarp (c. A.D. 150)

The younger contemporary and disciple of the apostle John, Polycarp quotes from Matthew, John, the first ten of Paul’s epistles, Peter, and 2 John. Because most of the rest of the books were small, it could not be expected that he would refer to them. As a result, the argument from silence that Polycarp did not know or accept them is a weak one at best.

Justin Martyr (d. 165)

In his first *Apology* (c.150-155), Justin Martyr regarded the gospels as the “Voice of God” (chap. 65). Justin Martyr considered all the gospels as Scripture, plus

most of Paul’s epistles, as well as Peter and Revelation. It is noteworthy that Justin had occasion to refer to Mark, Luke, John, and Revelation, not cited by Polycarp, and not to refer to Philippians or Timothy, which would tend to confirm the thesis that both men accepted more books than those from which they quoted.

Tatian (c.110-180)

The disciple of Justin, Tatian called John 1:5 “Scripture” in his *Apology* (chap. 13). . . He is also noted for his pioneer effort in writing a harmony of the gospels, *Diatessaron* (c. 150-160).

Irenaeus (c. 130-202)

In his treatise *Against Heresies* (3.1.1), Irenaeus referred to the authority of the New Testament when he stated, “For the Lord of all gave the power of the Gospel to his apostles, through whom we have come to know the truth, that is, the teaching of the Son of God This Gospel they first preached. Afterwards, by the will of God, they handed it down to us in the Scriptures, to be ‘the pillar and ground’ of our faith.” The first early Father who himself quoted almost every book of the New Testament was Irenaeus. He quoted or considered as authentic twenty-three of the twenty-seven books, omitting (but not necessarily rejecting) Philemon, James, 2 Peter, and 3 John.

The Muratorian Canon (A.D. 170).

Aside from Marcion’s heretical canon (A.D. 140), the earliest canonical list is in the Muratorian Fragment. This list coincides exactly with the Old Latin, omitting only Hebrews, James, and 1 and 2 Peter. Westcott argues for the probability of a break in this manuscript that may once have included those books. It does seem strange that Hebrews and Peter should be omitted while Philemon and 3 John were included. This feature is the opposite of the lists of Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria.

Clement of Alexandria (c. 150-215)

In his *Stromata* Clement notes: “There is no discord between the Law and the Gospel, but harmony, for they both proceed from the same Author, . . . differing in name and time to suit the age and culture of their hearers . . . by a wise economy, but potentially one, . . . since faith in Christ and the knowledge . . . of the Gospel is the explanation . . . and the fulfillment of the Law.” Clement has almost an identical list as Irenaeus, with the exception of his omission of 2 Timothy and 2 John. Philemon and 3 John may not have been quoted because of their brevity, leaving only 2 Peter and James in question.

Tertullian (c. 160-220)

Tertullian . . . maintained that the four gospels “are reared on the certain basis of Apostolic authority, and so are inspired in a far different sense from the writings of the spiritual Christian; all the faithful, it is true, have the Spirit of God, but all are not Apostles.”

Origen (c.185-c.254)

He believed that God “gave the law, and the prophets, and the Gospels, being also the God of the apostles and of the Old and New Testaments.” He wrote, “This Spirit inspired each one of the saints, whether prophets or apostles; and there was not one Spirit in the men of the old dispensation, and another in those who were inspired at the advent of Christ.”

Cyprian (c. 200-258)

In his treatise *The Unity of the Catholic Church*, he appeals to the gospels as authoritative, referring to them as the “commandments of Christ.” He also adds the Corinthian letters of Paul to his list of authorities and appeals to Paul’s letter to the Ephesians (4:4-6).

In the same passage, Cyprian reaffirms the inspiration of the New Testament, as he writes, “When the Holy Spirit says, in the person of the Lord.” Again, he adds, “The Holy Spirit warns us through the Apostle” as he cites 1 Corinthians 11:19.

Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 263 or 265–340)

As a church historian, Eusebius spent much time espousing the Old and New Testaments as inspired writings that were commented upon by the successors of the apostles. He also wrote much about the canon of the New Testament in his *Ecclesiastical History*.

Athanasius of Alexandria (c. 295-373)

Athanasius was the first to use the term “canon” in reference to the New Testament books, which he called “the fountains of salvation.” Athanasius clearly and emphatically listed all twenty-seven books as canonical, saying, “Again it is not tedious to speak of the books of the New Testament. These are, the four gospels, according to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Afterwards, the Acts of the Apostles and Epistles (called Catholic), seven, viz. of James, one; of Peter, two; of John, three; after these, one of Jude. In addition, there are fourteen Epistles of Paul, written in this order. The first, to the Romans; then two to the Corinthians; after these, to the Galatians; next, to the Ephesians; then to the Philippians; then to the Colossians; after these, two to the Thessalonians, and that to the Hebrews; and again, two to Timothy; one to Titus; and lastly, that to Philemon. And besides, the Revelation of John.”

Cyril of Jerusalem (c. 313-386)

In his *Catecheses*, he informs his catechumen that he is offering a summary of “the whole doctrine of the Faith” which “has been built up strongly out of all the Scriptures.” Then he proceeds to warn others not to change or contradict his teachings because of the Scripture’s injunction as found in Galatians 1:8-9. In his treatise *Of the Divine Scriptures*, he speaks of “the divinely-inspired Scriptures of both the Old and the New Testament.” He then proceeds to list all of the books of the Hebrew Old Testament (twenty-two) and all of the books of the Christian New Testament except Revelation (twenty-six), saying, “Learn also diligently, and from the Church, what are the books of the Old Testament, and what are those of the New. And, pray, read none of the Apocryphal writings.”

WHAT ABOUT NEW TESTAMENT “APOCRYPHA”?

(These notes adapted from Mark A. Copeland, “Can We Trust the Bible?”)

The Pseudepigrapha

A. BRIEF DESCRIPTION...

1. Otherwise called "false writings"
2. There are over 280 of these writings
3. More than 50 are accounts of Christ
4. The more well-known of these are:
 - a. The Gospel of Thomas
 - b. The Gospel of Peter
 - c. The Gospel of Hebrews
 - d. The Protevangelium of James
5. Their value is limited, but they do illustrate:
 - a. Some of the teachings that the Apostles opposed.
 - b. The popular desire at that time for information beyond the Scriptures
 - c. The tendency to glorify Christianity by fraudulent means

REASONS FOR REJECTION...

1. They were never considered canonical by respectable leaders
2. Mainly produced by heretical groups
3. Containing exaggerated and mythical religious folklore
4. Most known only through citation or quotation by another author
5. Thus their historical connection to the Apostles is suspect

The New Testament “Apocrypha”

BRIEF DESCRIPTION...

- Not to be confused with the OT Apocrypha
- These were books written after the time of Christ (and after the time of the Apostles)
 - a. Which were initially accepted (as semi-canonical) by some in the church
 - b. Which included the writings of the early Church Fathers (the Apostolic Fathers) and appeared at times in collections along with the New Testament Scriptures
 - c. They had acceptance in some areas for a temporary period of time
 - d. They never enjoyed acceptance by the church in general (as being anything more than helpful writings)
 - e. Written after the Apostolic age had ended (with exception of Clement’s *First Epistle*)
- The NT Apocrypha include:
 - a. Clement’s *Epistle to the Corinthians* (96 A.D.)
 - b. *The Ancient Homily*, also known as the *Second Epistle of Clement of Rome to the Corinthians* (120-140 A.D.)
 - c. *The Shepherd of Hermas* (115-140 A.D.)
 - d. *The Didache*, also known as the *Teaching of the Twelve* (100-120 A.D.)
 - e. *The Epistle of Pseudo-Barnabas* (130 A.D.)

- f. *The Apocalypse of Peter* (150 A.D.)
 - g. *The Acts of Paul and Thecla* (170 A.D.)
 - h. *The Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians* (108 A.D.)
 - i. *The Seven Epistles of Ignatius* (110 A.D.)
- These are more valuable than the Pseudepigrapha
 - a. They provide early documentation of the existence of NT books
 - b. They fill in the gap between the teaching of the Apostles and the writings of the early church of the third and fourth centuries
 - c. They provide clues to the practices, policies and future teachings of the church

REASONS FOR REJECTION...

1. They were not written by the Apostles or under Apostolic oversight
2. They never enjoyed more than a temporary and local recognition
3. Those that advocated their acceptance considered them at best to be "semi-canonical"
4. No major church council or NT collection included them as inspired books
5. The reason they had some acceptance was because they wrongly attached themselves to references in canonical books (cf. Colossians 4:16) or alleged apostolic authorship (e.g. the Acts of Paul)

WITNESSES TO THE NEW TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES:

What copies of the New Testament Scriptures have survived from early church history until now?

Papyri:

- Called “papyrus” because of the material written on
- Designated with a “P” and an Arabic numeral (ex: p¹)
- Chester Beatty papyri – 3 codices from the third century or earlier

- p52 (not Beatty) helps for dating—proves the existence and use of John during the first half of the second century in Egypt
- Bodmer Papyri (1955–56)
 - p66—Gospel of John from AD 200—104 pages remain
 - p72—3rd century (Jude and 1–2 Peter)—earliest known copy of Jude and Peter’s 2 Epistles
 - p74—7th century, early text-type (Acts, James, 1-2 Peter, 1-3 John, Jude)
 - p75—175 to 225 AD; earliest copy of Luke also includes John—102 of 144 pages have survived; similar form of text to that of Vaticanus

Uncial Manuscripts:

- 266 uncial manuscripts have thus far been calculated
- Codex Sinaiticus—Aleph
 - It is the only complete uncial mss. of the NT
 - Dates to fourth century
 - Acquired by Tischendorf from the monastery of St. Catharine in 1853
 - In general, it belongs to the Alexandrian text family
- Codex Alexandrinus—A
 - 2 columns
 - Dates to first half of 5th century
 - First early manuscript discovered by scholars
 - Ranks with Vaticanus and Sinaiticus in importance
 - Best manuscript of Revelation apart from P47
 - It is Byzantine in the Gospels but Alexandrian outside
- Vaticanus—B
 - Oldest and best of the uncials
 - Originally it had the whole Greek Bible
 - Pastoral epistles, Philemon, Rev. and part of Hebrews is missing
 - Originally in Egypt but in Vatican since 1481
 - Tischendorff studied it for 6 hours and later 42 hours
 - Westcott and Hort did not have access to it directly but had to ask Rome
 - Now it has been photographed and published
 - Best Alexandrian text in the Gospels and Acts
- Codex Ephraemi—C—04
 - 5th century—in the national library of Paris
 - originally written in Egypt
 - No 2 Thess. or 2 John but everything else
 - Palimpsest—original was scrapped off so that the sermons of Ephraem could be copied
 - Tischendorff used chemicals to restore text
 - Text is mixed—some of all the families represented

- Codex Bezae—D—05
 - Unknown origins
 - Beza got it in 1562
 - Greek text on left and Latin on right
 - Acts, 3 John 11-13, and the Gospels
 - Best and earliest example of Western text-type
- Codex Claromontanus—D2
 - Bilingual
 - Pauline Epistles
 - Western text type
 - 6th century
 - Leading western authority on the epistles

Ancient Versions of the NT

- Earliest versions prepared by missionaries to reach people who spoke Syriac, Latin, or Coptic. Scholars use divergent renderings to help trace the internal history of a version.
 - Translations are quite numerous
 - Early date makes them valuable
 - Gives us location of where text-type was used
 - BUT...
 - Textual criticism must be applied
 - Limitations of language
 - Some scribes did not know Greek well
- The Syriac Version (there are 5 different ones)
 - Antioch (Acts) also Ephesus and Alexandria
 - Syriac translation existed by AD 150
 - Tatian's *Diatessaron* in AD 170 used this
 - The Old Syriac Version
 - Preserved in two manuscripts...
 - Syr^c — parchment in Brit. Museum; discovered by William Cureton in 1858 (5th century)
 - Syr^s — palimpsest discovered by Agnes Smith Lewis in St. Catharine in 1892 (4th cent.)
 - Peshitta Version or Syriac Vulgate (Peshitta means “simple”)
 - Whole NT except for 5 books (2 Pet, 2-3 John, Jude, Rev.)
 - Byzantine text type (so after 4th century)
 - Syr^p — 5th century; contains 22 books
 - Standard version of Scriptures after AD 431
 - More than 350 mss. Today

- The Palestinian Syriac version (71)
 - Syr^{pal}—Aramaic translation chiefly from a lectionary of the Gospels
 - Based on Greek text of the Caesarean type
 - 5th century

- The Latin Versions (72)
 - The Gospels were first rendered into Latin during the last quarter of the 2nd century in North Africa
 - Many Latin manuscripts
 - 2 versions
 - The Old Latin Versions (dating back to 2nd century)

 - The Latin Vulgate
 - Because of conflicting copies Jerome revised them
 - AD 382, Pope Damasus asked Jerome to revise the Latin Bible; Jerome did a great job with the Gospels but a rather cursory job with the rest
 - He finished the Gospels in AD 384
 - At least 8,000 editions of Vulgate
 - Codex Sangallensis (S) is the oldest known manuscript of Vulgate (5th cent)

- The Coptic Versions
 - Coptic is the latest form of Egyptian; written in hieroglyphs until Christian era (Gr. Uncials)
 - Sahidic dialect in south (upper Egypt) AD 200
 - Bohairic dialect in north (Lower Egypt)—official version of the Coptic Church
 - Tetraevangelium (Morgan MS. 569)—8th or 9th c.; all Gospels except 14 leaves of Luke
 - Codex B—Acts of Apostles and John
 - Codex A—Pauline Epistles and John
 - Bohairic version from Alex. text-type
 - Fayyumic dialect papyrus agrees with Sahidic version 2x as much as Bohairic version
 - Sub-Achmimic John is from AD 350–75 and agrees with Alexandrian text (81)

***NOTE:** For this class, it is not necessary to memorize all of the details of these early manuscripts and translations. But it is important to see—from a historical perspective—the incredible amount of textual evidence that exists for the New Testament text. Thus, we can be confident that the New Testament we hold in our hands today corresponds precisely to what the Apostles wrote.*

* * * * *

WHAT ABOUT THE Gnostic GOSPELS?

(From Nathan Busenitz, *Reasons We Believe*)

It sometimes surprises, or even frightens, contemporary Christians to learn that there are other “gospels” outside of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. But they need not be afraid. “The apocryphal gospels, even the earliest and soberest among them, can hardly be compared with the canonical Gospels. The former are all patently secondary and legendary and obviously slanted.”¹³ Of these extra-biblical traditions about Jesus, “only a tiny proportion have even a slight claim to being genuine. The vast majority of the material is quite worthless as a historical source for knowledge of Jesus, and their real value lies more in highlighting the quality of information preserved in the canonical Gospels themselves.”¹⁴

It is possible, of course, that we might find some factual accounts about Jesus outside of the biblical Gospels. The Gospels do not claim to be exhaustive biographies of the life of Jesus. In fact, John closes his Gospel by stating: “Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written” (John 21:25). What the Gospels do claim, however, is that the information they provide is both accurate and sufficient, so that when you read them “you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught” (Luke 1:4).

It is also important to recognize that the New Testament continually warns against the reality of false teachers—those who would distort the truth for their own gain. In their letters, the apostles warned their readers about the danger of certain heresies, including lies that might affect their understanding of Jesus and His redemptive work (e.g. 1 Corinthians 15:13–14 Galatians 1:6–10; Colossians 2:4; 1 Timothy 4:7; 1 John 4:1–3; 2 Peter 1:16; Jude 3–4). Among these heresies, Gnosticism was a growing concern. “The name *gnosticism* comes from the Greek word *gnosis*, meaning ‘knowledge,’ and stresses the character of this heresy. Gnosticism was a philosophical system built upon Greek philosophy that stressed matter was evil but spirit was good.”¹⁵ The Gnostics’ belief that matter was evil forced them to rethink the incarnation of Christ. If Christ was good, then He could not have possessed a physical body, since matter is evil. The Gnostics invented two possible explanations: “one view was that because matter was evil, Jesus could not have actually come in human form; He only appeared in human form and only appeared to suffer. The other view suggested that the divine Logos came upon the human Jesus and departed prior to the crucifixion.”¹⁶

In either case, the Gnostic view of Jesus was incompatible with that taught by the apostles, that “the Word [meaning Christ] became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14; cf. Romans 1:3; Galatians 4:4; Philippians 2:8; Colossians 1:22; 1 Timothy 3:16). In his first epistle, John reiterated this point, “Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God” (1 John 4:2–3). Paul likewise

¹³ Edwin Yamauchi, cited in Norman Geisler and William Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible*, 311.

¹⁴ John W. Drane, *Introducing the New Testament* (Oxford: Lion Publishing, 2000), 227.

¹⁵ Paul P. Enns, *The Moody handbook of theology* (Chicago, Ill.: Moody Press, 1997), 415.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

warned Timothy to “avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called ‘knowledge’ [*gnosis*]” (1 Timothy 6:20).

The Gnostic gospels, along with other grossly imaginative accounts of the life of Jesus Christ, were rightly rejected by the early Christians.¹⁷ From such gospels, “we learn not a single verifiable new fact about the historical Jesus’ ministry, and only a few new sayings that might possibly have been his.”¹⁸ Referring to extrabiblical writings like the *Gospel of Peter*, the *Gospel of Mary*, the *Gospel of Thomas*, and the *Gospel of Philip*, New Testament scholar George L. Borchert (a Ph.D. from Princeton Theological Seminary and University) writes:

The emergence of documents with strange fairy-tale-like stories about Jesus and skewed theological ideas . . . bear witness to the necessity in the church for authoritative Gospels to combat the growth of deviant views and fanciful legends concerning Jesus. To peruse these noncanonical documents and reflect on the stories about Jesus preserved in them and other early documents gives the reader the immediate sense of the genuine reserve and feeling of authenticity that is present in the canonical presentations concerning Jesus.¹⁹

Following the warning of the apostles, the early church rejected these gospels.²⁰ They were either so fanciful or so theologically skewed (by Gnosticism) that their historical authenticity was clearly lacking.²¹ In some cases, such as the *Gospel of Thomas*, they are merely a collection of sayings, and therefore not really “gospels” at all.

¹⁷ These extra-biblical writings (such as the Dead Sea Scrolls and the *Nag Hammadi* Library) are not secret, as Dan Brown’s *The Da Vinci Code* implies. They have been translated into English, and are available in book form through either a bookstore or a local library.

¹⁸ Raymond E. Brown, “The Gnostic Gospels,” *The New York Times* Book Review, (January 20, 1980), 3. Cited from Erwin W. Lutzer, *The Da Vinci Deception* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale, 2004), 43.

¹⁹ Gerald L. Borchert, *John 1–11*, 33. It should be noted that Oxford scholar Christopher Tucket has demonstrated that the synoptic gospels were written earlier than the Gnostic gospels, due to the fact that the Gnostic gospels borrow from them but not vice versa. Cf. Stephen Clark, *The Da Vinci Code on Trial* (Wales: Bryntirion Press, 2005), 36. On page 37, Clark also debunks Dan Brown’s claims (as “nonsense” and “wildly erratic”) that there were eighty gospels originally.

²⁰ Herman N. Ridderbos in *Redemptive History and the New Testament* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R, 1988), 41 explains of the biblical Gospels that, “The [early] church never knew [or even considered] that anything else than *these* Gospels and *these* letters of Paul, among others, were what it could trust and what had been delivered to it at its foundation.”

²¹ For more on the Gnostic gospels from an apologetic standpoint, see James L. Garlow’s *The Da Vinci Codebreaker* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Bethany House, 2006), 85–88, 90–97. For a more academic treatment, see Darrell Bock, *Breaking the Da Vinci Code* (Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, 2004), 61–124. On pages 123–24, Bock concludes his critique of a fanciful allegation made by Dan Brown. After a survey of the historical evidence, Bock writes: “Attributing the selection of the Gospels to Constantine and the Council of Nicea ignores more than a century of widespread use and recognition of these four Gospels [prior to Nicea]. . . . The four Gospels were well established before Constantine was born.”

The “Gnostic gospels” are not gospels at all in the sense of the four canonical Gospels, which are filled with narrative, concrete details, historical figures, political activity, and details about social and religious life.²²

The New Testament Gospels are clearly superior—both in terms of being straightforward accounts of Jesus’ life, and also by being theologically consistent with what the apostles taught in the rest of the New Testament. This again affirms the trustworthiness of the biblical Gospels, and helps explain why the early Christians were able to easily identify the true Gospels from the earliest points of church history.

* * * * *

ARE THERE ANY LOST BOOKS OF THE BIBLE?
(From Erwin Lutzer, “How Many Books Are in the Bible?”)

Occasionally we hear references to the so-called lost books of the Bible, books that some people think have been hidden from the general populace. In 1979, Bell Publishing Company of New York came out with a book entitled *The Lost Books of the Bible*. On the flyleaf it says that these books were not among those chosen to comprise the Bible, and “They were suppressed by the church, and for over fifteen hundred years were shrouded in secrecy.”

These books are not really as secret as the authors imply. New Testament scholars have been well aware of their existence throughout the centuries, though perhaps these books were not accessible to the common man. Their credibility is rejected by both Catholics and Protestants. These books include stories about the birth of Mary and of Christ. Also there are a dozen or more stories that took place during Christ’s lifetime. Three or four purport to relate to events in the Old Testament.

These books never even vied for a place in the canon. Unlike some other books that were actually disputed (the *Shepherd of Hermas*, for example), these books were recognized as legends from the beginning. These “forgotten books” are so obviously inferior to those in our Bible that they cannot be taken seriously.

Indeed, in the preface, Dr. Frank Crane admitted the point by saying that legends and apocryphal stories surround all great men such as Napoleon, Charlemagne, and Julius Caesar, so we can also expect that tales would grow up around Christ. He went on to say that Christ appealed to the “fictional minds” of his day. These writers, Crane admitted, do not pretend to write down what is strictly true, but tinge all events with their imagination.

Finally, Crane said the common man can now make his own decision as to whether the early church did right in rejecting these books. He did not hesitate to say that common sense itself will show the superiority of the accepted canonical books.

I agree. Should there be any doubt about the accepted books, the best solution would be to read these so-called lost books. And for that matter, one should also read those books that laid more

²² Carl E. Olson and Sandra Miesel, *The Da Vinci Hoax* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), 66.

serious claim to canonicity. They also are so inferior to the books of the New Testament that we become convinced that the early church did not err.

In the upper room, Christ promised that the Holy Spirit would help them recall his teachings. “When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He Will bear witness of Me” (John 15:26). That was a tacit confirmation of the New Testament that still needed to be written. The early believers recognized those writings that were either written by an Apostle or by someone personally acquainted with one. After the apostolic period, no more books could claim the stamp of divine authority.

The Book of Revelation ends with a warning: “I testify to everyone who bears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to then; God shall add to him the plagues which are written in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book” (Rev. 22.18–19)

Although these words refer specifically to the Book of Revelation and not to the New Testament as a whole (there were still questions as to which books were properly in the New Testament when Revelation was penned), yet they are a warning to the many false cults who have claimed to add to God’s Word.

In our present New Testament we have the final word from God until our Lord returns and the Bible as we know it will no longer be necessary.

{ LECTURE 7 }

THE FAITH OF OUR FATHERS

* * * * *

Sola Fide in the Early Church**Church Fathers & Justification by Faith**

- The realization that salvation is only by grace, and not by our own efforts, is what liberated the Reformers from the bondage of guilt and the system of works righteousness and traditional sacramentalism in which they had been trapped.
- **But what about the early leaders of Christianity *who lived in the centuries after the apostles?***
- Did they also understand justification to be by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone?
- When we survey the early patristic literature, we quickly find that the church fathers embraced the same gospel as the Apostles at the Jerusalem Council and as the Reformers in the sixteenth century. The Reformation was not the *invention of something new*; rather it was the *recovery of something very old*.
- Just as the Reformers taught, the root of justification is grace alone through faith alone based on the righteous work of Christ alone. The fruit of justification then, is seen in a transformed life.

Or as **Augustine (354–430)** explained:

If Abraham was not justified by works, how was he justified?” The apostle goes on to tell us how: What does scripture say? (that is, about how Abraham was justified). Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness (Rom. 4:3; Gen. 15:6). Abraham, then, was justified by faith. Paul and James do not contradict each other: good works follow justification. . . . The two apostles are not contradicting each other. James dwells on an action performed by Abraham that we all know about: he offered his son to God as a sacrifice. That is a great work, but it proceeded from faith. I have nothing but praise for the superstructure of action, but I see the foundation of faith; I admire the good work as a fruit, but I recognize that it springs from the root of faith. (John E. Rotelle, O.S.A., ed., WSA, Part

3, Vol. 15, trans. Maria Boulding, O.S.B., Expositions of the Psalms 1–32, Exposition 2 of Psalm 31, 2–4 [Hyde Park: New City Press, 2000], pp. 364–365)

In other words, Augustine taught that justification is by grace alone through *faith alone*, but saving faith is never alone. The root of salvation by grace through faith will always produce the fruit of a changed life. That was precisely how Luther, Calvin, and the other Reformers understood the gospel. It is how we, as evangelicals today, understand the gospel as well.

Was Augustine alone in that understanding? Absolutely not.

Let's start with **Clement of Rome**. Clement was the pastor of the church in Rome from about 90 to 100 AD. That means, as a church leader, he was a contemporary of the apostle John. He was also a disciple of the apostle Paul, and he is even mentioned by Paul in Philippians 4:3.

- So, he is very, very early. Because he was a pastor in Rome, the Roman Catholics consider him to be the fourth pope. But listen to what he wrote in his letter to the Corinthians. This is one of the earliest Christian documents that we have outside of the New Testament. In chapter 32 of his epistle, he says this:

Clement of Rome: And we [Christians], too, being called by His will in Christ Jesus, are not justified by ourselves, nor by our own wisdom, or understanding, or godliness, or works which we have wrought in holiness of heart; but by that faith through which, from the beginning, Almighty God has justified all men; to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. (*First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 32.4).

- It doesn't get much clearer than that. We are justified by faith and not by works.

To Clement's voice, we can add a chorus of others:

Polycarp (c. 69–160):

- I rejoice that the secure root of your faith, proclaimed from ancient times, even now continues to abide and bear fruit in our Lord Jesus Christ. He persevered to the point of death on behalf of our sins; and God raised him up after loosing the labor pains of Hades. Even without seeing him, you believe in him with an inexpressible and glorious joy that many long to experience. For you know that you have been saved by a gracious gift—not from works but by the will of God through Jesus Christ." (Epistle to the Philippians 1.2–3; trans. by Bart D. Ehrman, *The Apostolic Fathers*, Loeb, 333–335)

Ignatius of Antioch (c. 50–c. 110):

- But to me Jesus Christ is in the place of all that is ancient: His cross, and death, and resurrection, and the faith which is by Him, are undefiled monuments of antiquity; by which I desire, through your prayers, to be justified. (Epistle to Philadelphians, VIII).

Epistle to Diognetus (second century):

- He gave His own Son as a ransom for us, the holy One for transgressors, the blameless One for the wicked, the righteous One for the unrighteous, the incorruptible One for the corruptible, the immortal One for them that are mortal. For what other thing was capable of covering our sins than His righteousness? By what other one was it possible that we, the wicked and ungodly, could be justified, than by the only Son of God? O sweet exchange! O unsearchable operation! O benefits surpassing all expectation! That the wickedness of many should be hid in a single righteous One, and that the righteousness of One should justify many transgressors! (Epistle to Diognetus 9, 2–5; ANF 1:28; cited from Thomas Oden, *The Justification Reader*, 65)

Justin Martyr (100–165):

- Justin speaks of “those who repented, and who no longer were purified by the blood of goats and of sheep, or by the ashes of an heifer, or by the offerings of fine flour, but by faith through the blood of Christ, and through His death.” (*Dialogue with Trypho*, 13)

Origen (185–254):

- A man is justified by faith. The works of the law can make no contribution to this. Where there is no faith which might justify the believer, even if there are works of the law these are not based on the foundation of faith. Even if they are good in themselves they cannot justify the one who does them, because faith is lacking, and faith is the mark of those who are justified by God. (Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans; CER 2.136; ACCS NT 6:104; cited from Thomas Oden, *The Justification Reader*, 45)
- For God is just, and therefore he could not justify the unjust. Therefore he required the intervention of a propitiator, so that by having faith in him those who could not be justified by their own works might be justified. (Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans 2:112; ACCS NT 6:102–3; cited from Thomas Oden, *The Justification Reader*, 63)

- [Regarding the Thief on the Cross]: Who has been justified by faith alone without works of the law? Thus in my opinion that thief was crucified with Christ should suffice for a suitable example. He called out to him from the cross, “Lord Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom!” In the Gospels, nothing else is recorded about his good works, but for the sake of this faith alone Jesus said to him, “Truly I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.” (Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans 3.9.3; Cited from Joel C. Elowsky, *We Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 99)

Didymus the Blind (c. 313-398):

- A person is saved by grace, not by works but by faith. There should be no doubt but that faith saves and then lives by doing its own works, so that the works which are added to salvation by faith are not those of the law but a different kind of thing altogether.” (Commentary on James, 2:26b.)

Basil of Caesarea (329–379):

- Let one who boasts boast in the Lord, that Christ has been made by God for us righteousness, wisdom, justification, redemption. This is perfect and pure boasting in God, when one is not proud on account of his own righteousness but knows that he is indeed unworthy of the true righteousness and is justified solely by faith in Christ. And Paul boasts that he despises his own righteousness, seeking that righteousness that is on account of Christ, which is the righteousness of God by faith. (Sermon on Humility, 22; cited from Joel C. Elowsky, *We Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 98)
- An eternal rest awaits those who have rightly contended in this life; not because of the merits of their works but from the grace of a most bountiful God, in which they have hoped. (Homily on Psalm 114; Cited from Joel C. Elowsky, *We Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 99)

Athanasius (c. 296–373)

- For naturally, since the Logos of God was above all, when He offered His own temple and bodily instrument as a substitute for the life of all, He fulfilled by death all that was required. (On the Incarnation of the Logos, 6–7, 9.)

Hilary of Poitiers (300–368):

Hilary notes that “faith justifies” some twenty times in his thirty-three chapter commentary on Matthew’s gospel.

- Wages cannot be considered as a gift, because they are due to work, but God has given free grace to all men by the justification of faith. (Commentary on Matthew 20:7)

Ambrose (339–397):

- I have nothing, therefore, whereby I may glory in my works; I have nothing to boast of, and, therefore, I will glory in Christ. I will not glory because I am righteous, but because I am redeemed. I will not glory because I am free from sin, but because my sins are pardoned. I will not glory because I have done good to any one, or any one has done good to me, but because Christ is my advocate with the Father, and because Christ’s blood was shed for me. (*Concerning Jacob and a Happy Life*, 1.6; cited from G. Finch, *A Sketch of the Romish Controversy*, 220).
- Therefore let no one boast of his works, because no one can be justified by his works; but he who is just receives it as a gift, because he is justified by the washing of regeneration. It is faith, therefore, which delivers us by the blood of Christ, because blessed is he whose sins are forgiven, and to whom pardon is granted. (*Letter 73*; cited from G. Finch, *A Sketch of the Romish Controversy*, 220)
- “Ye behold the mysteries, ye behold the grace of Christ, and the grace of the Holy Spirit, which is conferred in some sort fortuitously; forasmuch as every one is not justified by the Lord by reason of his works, but by reason of his faith. (*An Exhortation to Virginity*; cited from George Finch, *A Sketch of the Romish Controversy*, 220).

John Chrysostom (347–407):

- Even faith, [Paul] says, is not from us. For if the Lord had not come, if he had not called us, how should we have been able to believe? “For how,” [Paul] says, “shall they believe if they have not heard?” (Rom. 10:14). So even the act of faith is not self-initiated. It is, he says, “the gift of God” (Eph. 2:8c). (Homily on Ephesians 2:8; IOEP 2:160; ACCS NT 8:134; cited from Thomas Oden, *The Justification Reader*, 44)
- God allowed his Son to suffer as if a condemned sinner, so that we might be delivered from the penalty of our sins. This is God’s righteousness, that we are not justified by works (for then they would have to be perfect, which is impossible), but by grace, in which case all our sin is removed (Homilies on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians 11:5; NPNF 1 12:334; ACCS NT 7:252; cited from Thomas Oden, *The Justification Reader*, 61).

- For as people, on receiving some great good, ask themselves if it is not a dream, as not believing it; so it is with respect to the gifts of God. What then was it that was thought incredible? That those who were enemies and sinners, justified by neither the law nor works, should immediately through faith alone be advanced to the highest favor. On this head [topic] accordingly Paul has discoursed at length in his Epistle to the Romans, and here again at length. “This is a faithful saying,” he says, “and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” As the Jews were chiefly attracted by this, he persuades them not to listen to the law, since they could not attain salvation by it without faith. Against this he contends, for it seemed to them incredible that a person who had misspent all his former life in vain and wicked actions should afterwards be saved by his faith alone. On this account he says, “It is a saying to be believed.” (Homilies on 1 Timothy 1.15–16; cited from Joel C. Elowsky, *We Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 98).
- To have brought humanity, more senseless than stones, to the dignity of angels simply through bare words, and faith alone, without any hard work, is indeed a rich and glorious mystery. It is just as if one were to take a dog, quite consumed with hunger and the mange, foul and loathsome to see, and not so much as able to move but lying passed out, and make him all at once into a human being and to display him upon the royal throne. (Homilies on Colossians 1:26–28; Cited from Joel C. Elowsky, *We Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 98)
- For if even before this, the circumcision was made uncircumcision, much rather was it now, since it is cast out from both periods. But after saying that “it was excluded,” he shows also, how. How then does he say it was excluded? “By what law? of works? Nay, but by the law of faith.” See he calls the faith also a law delighting to keep to the names, and so allay the seeming novelty. But what is the “law of faith?” It is, being saved by grace. Here he shows God’s power, in that He has not only saved, but has even justified, and led them to boasting, and this too without needing works, but looking for faith only. NPNF1: Vol. XI, Homilies on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans, Homily 7, vs. 27.
- Now since the Jews kept turning over and over the fact, that the Patriarch, and friend of God, was the first to receive circumcision, he wishes to show, that it was by faith that he too was justified. And this was quite a vantage ground to insist upon. For a person who had no works, to be justified by faith, was nothing unlikely. But for a person richly adorned with good deeds, not to be made just from hence, but from faith, this is the thing to cause wonder, and to set the power of faith in a strong light. NPNF1: Vol. XI, Homilies on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans, Homily 8, Romans 4:1-2, first paragraph.

- And this he removes, with great skill and prudence, turning their argument against themselves, and showing that those who relinquish the Law are not only not cursed, but blessed; and they who keep it, not only not blessed but cursed. They said that he who kept not the Law was cursed, but he proves that he who kept it was cursed, and he who kept it not, blessed. Again, they said that he who adhered to Faith alone was cursed, but he shows that he who adhered to Faith alone, is blessed. And how does he prove all this? for it is no common thing which we have promised; wherefore it is necessary to give close attention to what follows. He had already shown this, by referring to the words spoken to the Patriarch, ‘In thee shall all nations be blessed,’ (Genesis 12:4.) at a time, that is, when Faith existed, not the Law. NPNF1: Vol. XIII, Commentary on Galatians, 3:8.
- For he makes a wide distinction between ‘commandments’ and ‘ordinances.’ He either then means ‘faith,’ calling that an ‘ordinance,’ (for by faith alone He saved us,) or he means ‘precept,’ such as Christ gave, when He said, ‘But I say unto you, that ye are not to be angry at all.’ (Matthew 5:22.) That is to say, ‘If thou shalt believe that God raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.’ (Romans 10:6-9.) And again, ‘The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth, and in thine heart. Say not, Who shall ascend into heaven, or who shall descend into the abyss?’ or, who hath ‘brought. Him again from the dead?’ Instead of a certain manner of life, He brought in faith. For that He might not save us to no purpose, He both Himself underwent the penalty, and also required of men the faith that is by doctrines. NPNF1: Vol. XIII, Homilies on Ephesians, Homily 5, Ephesians 2:11,12.
- God’s mission was not to save people in order that they may remain barren or inert. For Scripture says that faith has saved us. Put better: Since God willed it, faith has saved us. Now in what case, tell me, does faith save without itself doing anything at all? Faith’s workings themselves are a gift of God, lest anyone should boast. What then is Paul saying? Not that God has forbidden works but that he has forbidden us to be justified by works. No one, Paul says, is justified by works, precisely in order that the grace and benevolence of God may become apparent. Homily on Ephesians 4.2.9. Mark J. Edwards, ed., Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament VI: Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998), p. 134. See also John Chrysostom. F. Field, ed., Interpretatio omnium Epistolarum Paulinarum per Homilias Facta (Oxford J. H. Parker, 1845-1862), 2:160.
- The patriarch Abraham himself before receiving circumcision had been declared righteous on the score of faith alone: before circumcision, the text says, “Abraham believed God, and credit for it brought him to righteousness.” Fathers of the Church, Vol. 82, Homilies on Genesis 18-45, 27.7 (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1990), p. 167.

Augustine (354–430):

- When someone believes in him who justifies the impious, that faith is reckoned as justice to the believer, as David too declares that person blessed whom God has accepted and endowed with righteousness, independently of any righteous actions (Rom 4:5-6). What righteousness is this? The righteousness of faith, preceded by no good works, but with good works as its consequence. (John E. Rotelle, O.S.A., ed., WSA, Part 1, Vol. 11, trans. Maria Boulding, O.S.B., Expositions of the Psalms 1-32, Exposition 2 of Psalm 31, 7 [Hyde Park: New City Press, 2000], 370)
- What is grace? That which is freely given. What is “freely given”? Given, not paid. If it was due, wages would be given, but grace would not be bestowed. But if it was really due, then you were good. But if, as is true, you were evil but believed on him who justifies the ungodly (What is, “who justifies the ungodly”? the ungodly is made righteous), consider what by right hung over you by the law and you have obtained by grace. But having obtained that grace by faith, you will be just by faith—“for the just lives by faith.” (*Tractates on the Gospel of John*, John 1:15–18, Tractate 3.9 in *NPNF*, 7:21; cited from Gregg R. Allison, *Historical Theology*, 501)

Jerome (347–420):

Jerome uses the phrase “sola fide” some 15 times in volume 30 of the PL alone. (cf. Joel C. Elowsky, We Believe in the Holy Spirit, 98.

- We are saved by grace rather than works, for we can give God nothing in return for what he has bestowed on us (Epistle to the Ephesians 1.2.1; PL 26:468B [574]; ACCS NT 8:132; cited from Thomas Oden, *The Justification Reader*, 48).
- God proposed to save by faith alone those whom he foreknew would believe. (Commentary on the Pauline Epistles, Romans 8.28–29; Joel C. Elowsky, *We Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 98).
- You have received by faith alone the Holy Spirit who is not received except by the righteous. ... Abraham believed and it was credited to him as righteousness. Likewise also for you faith alone suffices as righteousness. (Commentary on the Pauline Epistles, Galatians 3.6; Cited from Joel C. Elowsky, *We Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 98).

Ambrosiaster (fourth century):

- All thanksgiving for our salvation is to be given only to God. He extends his mercy to us so as to recall us to life precisely while we are straying, without looking for the right road. And thus we are not to glory in ourselves but in God, who has regenerated us by a

heavenly birth through faith in Christ (Epistle to the Ephesians, ACCS NT 8:134; cited from Thomas Oden, *The Justification Reader*, 47).

- These are the true riches of God’s mercy, that even when we did not seek it mercy was made known through his own initiative. (Epistle to the Ephesians 2.4; CSEL 81.3:80; ACCS NT 8:131; cited from Thomas Oden, *The Justification Reader*, 48)
- God gave what he promised in order to be revealed as righteous. For he had promised that he would justify those who believe in Christ, as he says in Habakkuk: ‘The righteous will live by faith in me’ (Hab. 2:4). Whoever has faith in God and Christ is righteous. (Commentary on Paul’s Epistles; CSEL 81 ad loc.; ACCS NT 6:103; cited from Thomas Oden, *The Justification Reader*, 63)
- They are justified freely because, while doing nothing or providing any repayment, they are justified by faith alone as a gift of God. (Commentary on Romans 3.24; cited from Joel C. Elowsky, *We Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 98)
- It is determined by God that whoever believes in Christ shall be saved and have forgiveness of sins, not through works but through faith alone, without merit. (Commentary on 1 Corinthians 1.4; cited from Joel C. Elowsky, *We Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 97).
- “How then can the Jews think that they have been justified by the works of the law in the same way as Abraham, when they see that Abraham was not justified by the works of the law but by faith alone? Therefore there is no need of the law when the ungodly is justified before God by faith alone.” Ambrosiaster (fl. c. 366-384), on Rom. 4:5—Gerald Bray, ed., *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament VI: Romans* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998), p. 112.
- [On Rom. 1:11] For the mercy of God had been given for this reason, that they should cease from the works of the law, as I have often said, because God, taking pity on our weaknesses, decreed that the human race would be saved by faith alone, along with the natural law. Gerald Bray, ed., *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament VI: Romans* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998), p. 23.
- [On Rom. 2:12] For if the law is given not for the righteous but for the unrighteous, whoever does not sin is a friend of the law. For him faith alone is the way by which he is made perfect. For others mere avoidance of evil will not gain them any advantage with God unless they also believe in God, so that they may be righteous on both counts. For the one righteousness is temporal; the other is eternal. Gerald Bray, ed., *Ancient Christian*

Commentary on Scripture, New Testament VI: Romans (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998), p. 65.

- [On Rom. 3:27] Paul tells those who live under the law that they have no reason to boast basing themselves on the law and claiming to be of the race of Abraham, seeing that no one is justified before God except by faith. Gerald Bray, ed., Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament VI: Romans (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998), p. 103.
- [On Rom. 4:6] "righteousness apart from works": Paul backs this up by the example of the prophet David, who says that those are blessed of whom God has decreed that, without work or any keeping of the law, they are justified before God by faith alone. Gerald Bray, ed., Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament VI: Romans (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998), p. 113.

Marius Victorinus (fourth century):

- The fact that you Ephesians are saved is not something that comes from yourselves. It is the gift of God. It is not from your works, but it is God's grace and God's gift, not from anything you have deserved (Epistle to the Ephesians 1.2.9; BT 1972:152 (1256 A–B); ACCS NT 8:134; cited from Thomas Oden, *The Justification Reader*, 48).
- He did not make us deserving, since we did not receive things by our own merit but by the grace and goodness of God (Epistle to the Ephesians 1.2.7; BT 1972:152 (1255C); ACCS NT 8:132; cited from Thomas Oden, *The Justification Reader*, 48).
- For the patriarchs prefigured and foretold that man would be justified from faith. Therefore, just as it was reckoned as righteousness to Abraham that he had faith, so we too, if we have faith in Christ and every mystery of his, will be sons of Abraham. Our whole life will be accounted as righteous. (Epistle to the Galatians, 1.3.7. Mark J. Edwards, ed., Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, ACCS, 39)

Prosper of Aquitaine (390–455):

- And just as there are no crimes so detestable that they can prevent the gift of grace, so too there can be no works so eminent that they are owed in condign [deserved] judgment that which is given freely. Would it not be a debasement of redemption in Christ's blood, and would not God's mercy be made secondary to human works, if justification, which is through grace, were owed in view of preceding merits, so that it were not the gift of a

Donor, but the wages of a laborer? (Call of All Nations, 1.17; FEF 3:195, sec. 2044; cited from Thomas Oden, *The Justification Reader*, 46).

- Faith that justifies a sinner cannot be had except for God’s gift, and it is not a reward for previous merits. (The Call of All Nations, 1.24; cited from Joel C. Elowsky, *We Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 97)

Theodoret of Cyrrhus (393–457):

- All we bring to grace is our faith. But even in this faith, divine grace itself has become our enabler. For [Paul] adds, “And this is not of yourselves but it is a gift of God; not of works, lest anyone should boast” (Eph. 2:8–9). It is not of our own accord that we have believed, but we have come to belief after having been called; and even when we had come to believe, He did not require of us purity of life, but approving mere faith, God bestowed on us forgiveness of sins. (Interpretation of the Fourteen Epistles of Paul; FEF 3:248–49, sec. 2163; cited from Thomas Oden, *The Justification Reader*, 44)
- The Lord Christ is both God and the mercy seat, both the priest and the lamb, and he performed the work of our salvation by his blood, demanding only faith from us. (Interpretation of the Letter to the Romans; PG 82 ad loc.; ACCS NT 6:102; cited from Thomas Oden, *The Justification Reader*, 62)
- I consider myself as wretched—in fact, wretched three times over. I am guilty of all kinds of errors. Through faith alone I look for finding some mercy in the day of the Lord’s appearing. (Letter 83; Cited from Joel C. Elowsky, *We Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 99)

Cyril of Alexandria (412-444):

- For we are justified by faith, not by works of the law, as Scripture says (Gal. 2:16). By faith in whom, then, are we justified? Is it not in him who suffered death according to the flesh for our sake? It is not in one Lord Jesus Christ? Have we not been redeemed by proclaiming his death and confessing his resurrection? (*Against Nestorius*, “The Dispensation of the Incarnation,” 61; Cited from Norman Russell, *Cyril of Alexandria*, 165).
- For truly the compassion from beside the Father is Christ, as he takes away the sins, dismisses the charges and justifies by faith, and recovers the lost and makes [them] stronger than death. . . . For by him and in him we have known the Father, and we have become rich in the justification by faith. (Commentary on Hosea. Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, p. 29).

Leo the Great (400–461):

- The devil sees himself robbed of all his tyrannical power and driven from the hearts of those he once possessed, while from either sex thousands of the old, the young, the middle-aged are snatched away from him, and no one is debarred by sin—either because of his own sin or original sin—where justification is not paid for [by] merits but simply given as a free gift. (Sermon 49.3; cited from Joel C. Elowsky, *We Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 97)

Fulgentius (462–533)

- The blessed Paul argues that we are saved by faith, which he declares to be not from us but a gift from God. Thus there cannot possibly be true salvation where there is no true faith, and, since this faith is divinely enabled, it is without doubt bestowed by his free generosity. Where there is true belief through true faith, true salvation certainly accompanies it. Anyone who departs from true faith will not possess the grace of true salvation. (Eph. 2:7; Fulgentius, *On the Incarnation* 1; CCL 91:313; ACCS NT 8:133-34; cited from Thomas Oden, *The Justification Reader*, 48)

Oecumenius (6th century):

- Abraham is the image of someone who is justified by faith alone, since what he believed was credited to him as righteousness. But he is also approved because of his works, since he offered up his son Isaac on the altar. Of course he did not do this work by itself; in doing it, he remained firmly anchored in his faith, believing that through Isaac his seed would be multiplied until it was as numerous as the stars. (Commentary on James 2:23; Gerald Bray, ed., *James, 1-2 Peter, 1-3 John, Jude, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, 33)

Ildefonsus of Toledo (d. 657):

- The beginning of salvation comes from faith, which, when it is in Christ, is justification for the believer. (*Journey through the Desert*, 89 in Pelikan 3:27; cited from Gregg R. Allison, *Historical Theology*, 504)
- God, who makes the unclean clean and removes sins, justifies the sinner apart from works. (*The Virginity of Mary*, in Pelikan, 3:27; cited from Gregg R. Allison, *Historical Theology*, 504)

On the fact that good works are the fruit of salvation:

- Faith unadorned with works is not only lacking in beauty, but is in fact dead. (*Journey through the Desert*, 83, in Pelikan, 3:27; cited from Gregg R. Allison, *Historical Theology*, 504)

Julian of Toledo (642–690):

- The righteousness of faith, by which we are justified. This faith is that we believe in him whom we cannot see, and that, being cleansed by faith, we will eventually see him in whom we now believe.” (*The Sixth Age*, 2.14, in Pelikan, 3:27; cited from Gregg R. Allison, *Historical Theology*, 504)

Bede (673–735):

- “Although the apostle Paul preached that we are justified by faith without works, those who understand by this that it does not matter whether they live evil lives or do wicked and terrible things, as long as they believe in Christ, because salvation is through faith, have made a great mistake. James here expounds how Paul’s words ought to be understood. This is why he uses the example of Abraham, whom Paul also used as an example of faith, to show that the patriarch also performed good works in the light of his faith. It is therefore wrong to interpret Paul in such a way as to suggest that it did not matter whether Abraham put his faith into practice or not. What Paul meant was that no one obtains the gift of justification on the basis of merits derived from works performed beforehand, because the gift of justification comes only from faith.” Bede (673–735), on Paul and James—Gerald Bray, ed., *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament XI: James, 1-2Peter, 1-3 John, Jude* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), p. 31.

Anselm (1033–1109):

- [If God] shall say that you are a sinner, you say: ‘Lord, I interpose the death of our Lord Jesus Christ between my sins and you.’ (Liber meditationum, Consolatio, PL 158:687; cited from Thomas Oden, *The Justification Reader*, 58)

Conclusion

Clearly, it is impossible for anyone to claim that the doctrine of justification by grace alone through faith alone is without historical warrant. It was not a Reformation invention. Rather, it was the clear teaching of the apostles in the New Testament; it was a conviction that was championed by many in the early church; and it was a principle that was recovered during the Reformation.

So, the question naturally arises, when did Roman Catholic soteriology began to become synergistic – such that God’s grace *plus* human works were deemed necessary for justification?

- In some ways, the answer to that question seems to be that it was a gradual process. Apostasy always is; it takes place slowly over time as the traditions of men become elevated to a place where they obscure the clear teaching of God’s Word.
- But, if we were to narrow the question a bit more, and ask when did the gospel become so obscured in Western Christianity that it was lost – perhaps the answer is found in the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215.
- As **Norm Geisler** and **Josh Betancourt** explain in their book, *Is Rome the True Church*:

Roman Catholicism as it is known today is not the same as the Catholic Church before 1215. Even though the split between East and West occurred in 1054, most non-Catholics today would have been able to belong to the Catholic Church before the thirteenth century. Regardless of certain things the church permitted, none of its official doctrinal proclamations regarding essential salvation doctrines were contrary to orthodoxy.

While the development of Roman Catholicism from the original church was gradual, beginning in early centuries, one of the most significant turning points came in 1215, when one can see the beginning of Roman Catholicism as it is subsequently known. It is here that the seeds of what distinguishes Roman Catholicism were first pronounced as dogma. It is here that they pronounced the doctrine of transubstantiation, the primacy of the bishop of Rome, and seven sacraments. Many consider this a key turning point in the development of Roman Catholicism in distinction from non-Catholic forms of Christianity. ([Crossway, 2008], 53–54)

- **Thomas Aquinas** (1225–1274), who was born ten years after the Fourth Lateran Council, also contributed greatly to confusion on the true nature of the gospel.

As **Gregg R. Allison** explains:

More than anyone else, Thomas Aquinas set down the medieval Catholic notion of justification and its corollaries of grace, human effort, and merit. Although a substantial departure from Augustine and the Augustinians of the Middle Ages, his theology became determinative for the Roman Catholic Church. . . . [He] emphasized the grace of God yet prescribed an important role for human cooperation in obtaining salvation. Certainly, God exercises the primary role in achieving and applying salvation, but people have their part to play as well. God moves by initiating grace in a person’s life; then that person moves toward God and moves away from sin, resulting in the forgiveness of sins. Thus,

Aquinas believed in a synergy, or cooperative effort, between God and people in justification. (*Historical Theology*, 505)

- By the thirteenth century, then, the official doctrines of the Roman Catholic church had become fully corrupted.
- Which brings us back full circle to the pre-Reformers. By the middle of the twelfth-century, already, the Waldensians were questioning certain errors that they saw in the Roman Catholic Church. In the 14th-century, John Wycliffe; in the 15th-century, John Huss. And then in the 16th century, Martin Luther.
- Martin Luther studied the Fathers during his time at the monastery in Erfurt; Ulrich Zwingli was well-known for his knowledge and use of the Fathers; John Calvin cited the Fathers often. In his *Institutes*, he writes the following:

John Calvin: Moreover, (the Roman church) unjustly set the ancient fathers against us (I mean the ancient writers of a better age of the church) as if in them they had supporters of their own impiety. If the contest were to be determined by patristic authority, the tide of victory — to put it very modestly — would turn to our side. Now, these fathers have written many wise and excellent things. . . . [Yet] the good things that these fathers have written they [the Roman Catholics] either do not notice, or misrepresent or pervert. . . . But we do not despise them [the church fathers]; in fact, if it were to our present purpose, I could with no trouble at all prove that the greater part of what we are saying today meets their approval. (“Dedicatory Letter to Francis I,” *Institutes*, section 4)

Thus we conclude that the Reformers were not in disagreement with the church Fathers regarding the gospel. Rather, they were trying to recover the very same Gospel that the both the Apostles and the early church Fathers cherished and taught. The evangelical principles of *sola fide* and *sola gratia*, which were so essential during the Reformation, were the same principles upheld by the early church.

And that should be very encouraging for those of us who teach and preach that very gospel today.

{ LECTURE 8 }

WATER BAPTISM, SALVATION BY FAITH ALONE,
AND THE CHURCH FATHERS

* It is not the goal of this section to address either the issue of proper modes of baptism or the question of infant baptism. Research suggests that baptisms were generally performed by immersion (though exceptions were made in certain cases), and that paedobaptism was not practiced in the church until the third and fourth centuries (developing out of a growing concern for babies who died in infancy).²³

Overview

Water baptism is an ordinance of the church, instituted by Jesus Himself, in which believers publicly identify themselves with their Lord and Savior. Water baptism pictures their death to sin and their new life in Christ, and signifies the reality that, through faith in Christ, they have been born again (regenerated), forgiven from sin, united to Christ, and sealed by the Holy Spirit who indwells them. Water baptism also signifies their incorporation into Christ's body, the church.

Water baptism is a physical sign that symbolizes a spiritual reality. Thus, water baptism does not *result* in regeneration or forgiveness or new life in Christ. Rather, it *reflects* those realities, and makes a public declaration of them.

Early in church history, Christians began to *equate* the physical sign with the spiritual reality. Consequently, they taught that the external act of water baptism effects regeneration, forgiveness, and the reception of the Holy Spirit. Since regeneration and forgiveness are necessary for salvation, the church fathers likewise taught that water baptism is necessary for salvation.

The confusion of the physical sign with the spiritual reality led to several theological problems. The first was the development of infant baptism. Due to a high infant mortality rate, Christian parents were worried that if their young children died without baptism they would not go to heaven. This “emergency practice” likely started in the third century and became a mainstream practice of the church by the fourth and fifth centuries.

Another theological problem was the delay of water baptism by adults who, believing that baptism forgave all previous sins, wanted to wait until the end of their lives to be baptized. This resulted in a high number of “death bed” baptisms in the fourth and fifth centuries—eventually leading to the development of the Roman Catholic practice of last rites.

In spite of their insistence on water baptism as necessary for salvation, the church fathers also taught that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone. This reflects an inconsistency in their soteriology, which we will consider in this section.

²³ Cf. Everett Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009). Also, Hendrick Stander and Johannes Louw, *Baptism in the Early Church* (Evangelical Press, 2004).

I. What did the church fathers teach about the efficacy of water baptism?

- A. The earliest patristic document that discusses baptism does not talk of baptismal regeneration (e.g. the *Didache*). However, the *Didache* does indicate that the non-baptized were not permitted to participate in the Lord's Supper.

The Didache (late first century): After the foregoing instructions, baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, in living [running] water. If you have no living water, then baptize in other water, and if you are not able in cold, then in warm. If you have neither, pour water three times on the head, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Before baptism, let the one baptizing and the one to be baptized fast, as also any others who are able. Command the one who is to be baptized to fast beforehand for one or two days.²⁴

The Didache: No one is to eat or drink of your eucharist except those who have been baptized into the name of the Lord.²⁵

- B. From the second century on, patristic writers frequently equated water baptism with regeneration (the “new birth”). The primary verse used to support this connection was John 3:5.

Justin Martyr (d. 165): As many as are persuaded and believe that what we [Christians] teach and say is true, and undertake to be able to live accordingly, and instructed to pray and to entreat God with fasting, for the remission of their sins that are past, we pray and fast with them. Then they are brought by us where there is water and are regenerated in the same manner in which we were ourselves regenerated. For, in the name of God, the Father . . . and of our Savior Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit [Matt. 28:19], they then receive the washing with water. For Christ also said, “Unless you are born again, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.”²⁶

NOTE: Justin seems to indicate that the remission of sins took place before baptism. Later church fathers seem to view baptism as being concurrent with the remission of sins.

Irenaeus (d. c. 202): “And dipped himself,” says [the Scripture], “seven times in Jordan.” It was not for nothing that Naaman of old, when suffering from leprosy, was purified upon his being baptized, but it served as an indication to us. For as we are lepers in sin, we are made clean, by means of the sacred water and the invocation of the Lord, from our old transgressions; being spiritually regenerated as new-born babes, even as the Lord has declared: “Except a man be born again through water and the Spirit, he shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.”²⁷

²⁴ *Didache*, 7.1–4.

²⁵ *Didache*, 9.5.

²⁶ Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, 61.

²⁷ Irenaeus, *Fragment*, 34.

Cyprian (c. 200–258): [I]t behooves those to be baptized . . . so that they are prepared, in the lawful and true and only baptism of the holy Church, by divine regeneration, for the kingdom of God . . . because it is written “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”²⁸

Ambrose (333–397): You have read, therefore, that the three witnesses in Baptism are one: water, blood and the Spirit [1 John 5:8]: and if you withdraw any one of these, the sacrament of Baptism is not valid. For what is the water without the cross of Christ? A common element with no sacramental effect. Nor on the other hand is there any mystery of regeneration without water: for “unless a man be born again of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.”²⁹

- C. Because they equated it with regeneration, the church fathers saw water baptism as bringing forgiveness for all sins that had been committed up to that point. (Note that only *past sins* were considered forgiven in baptism.)

Theophilus of Antioch (c. 181): Moreover, those things which were created from the waters were blessed by God, so that this might also be a sign that men would at a future time receive repentance and remission of sins through water and the bath of regeneration—all who proceed to the truth and are born again and receive a blessing from God. (*To Autolycus* 2:16)

Cyprian: In the baptism of water is received the forgiveness of sins.³⁰

Jerome (c. 415): This much you must know, that baptism forgives past sins, but it does not safeguard future justice, which is preserved by labor and industry and diligence, and depends always and above all on the mercy of God.³¹

Note: This emphasis on the forgiveness of past sins led some Christians to postpone baptism until the end of their lives (so that the majority of their sins would be cleansed through baptism).

- D. The church fathers also taught that the Holy Spirit was received by believers immediately following water baptism.

Tertullian: We don’t receive the Holy Spirit in the water. Rather, in the water we are cleansed and prepared for the Holy Spirit. After this, when we have come from the baptismal font, we are thoroughly anointed with a blessed unction. Next, the hand is laid upon us, invoking and inviting the Holy Spirit through benediction. To our body, as it emerges from the font, after is old sins, flies the dove of the Holy Spirit, bringing us the peace of God.³²

²⁸ Cyprian, *Epistles*, 72 [73]: 21.

²⁹ Ambrose, *On the Mysteries* 4.20.

³⁰ Cyprian, *Treatise* 11.4.

³¹ Jerome, *Dialogue against the Pelagians* 3.1.

³² Tertullian, *On Baptism*, 6–8. ANF 3:672–73. Cited from Allison, *Historical Theology*, 614.

Aphrahat (inter 336–345): For from baptism we receive the Spirit of Christ. At that same moment in which the priests invoke the Spirit, heaven opens, and He descends and rests upon the waters; and those who are baptized are clothed in Him. For the Spirit is absent from all those who are born of the flesh, until they come to the water of re-birth; and then they receive the Holy Spirit....in the second birth, that through baptism, they receive the Holy Spirit.³³

E. Other benefits were also associated with baptism.

John Chrysostom: Behold, they thoroughly enjoy the peacefulness of freedom who shortly before were held captive. They are citizens of the Church who were wandering in error. They have their lot in righteousness who were in the confusion of sin. For not only are they free, but holy also; not only holy, but righteous too; not only righteous, but sons also; not only sons, but heirs as well; not only heirs, but brothers even of Christ; not only brothers of Christ, but also co-heirs; not only co-heirs, but His very members; not only His members, but a temple too; not a temple only, but likewise the instruments of the Spirit. You see how many are the benefits of Baptism, and some think its heavenly grace consists only in the remission of sins; but we have enumerated ten honors. For this reason we baptize even infants, though they are not defiled by sin [or though they do not have personal sins] so that there may be given to them holiness, righteousness, adoption, inheritance, brotherhood with Christ, and that they may be His members.³⁴

Gregg Allison: The early church understood baptism in various ways: as the forgiveness of sins, deliverance from death, regeneration or the new birth, the gift of the Holy Spirit, the renunciation of Satan, and identification with Jesus Christ.³⁵

F. Thus, baptism was viewed as necessary for salvation.

Gregg Allison: Tying baptism with regeneration and linking it to John 3:5 led to the necessity of baptism for salvation.³⁶

Tertullian (155–220): When, however, the prescript is laid down that “without baptism, salvation is attainable by none” chiefly on the ground of that declaration of the Lord, who says, “Unless one be born of water, he hath not life.”³⁷

Recognitions of Clement (c. 221): But you will perhaps say, “What does the baptism of water contribute toward the worship of God?” In the first place, because that which has pleased God is fulfilled. In the second place, because

³³ Aphrahat, *Treatises* 6.14.

³⁴ John Chrysostom, *Baptismal Catecheses*, quoted by Augustine in *Contra Iulianum* 1.6.21.

³⁵ Gregg Allison, *Historical Theology*, 615.

³⁶ Gregg Allison, *Historical Theology*, 614.

³⁷ Tertullian, *On Baptism*, 12.1.

when you are regenerated and born again of water and of God, the frailty of your former birth, which you have through men, is cut off, and so . . . you shall be able to attain salvation; but otherwise it is impossible. For thus has the true prophet [Jesus] testified to us with an oath: “Verily, I say to you, that unless a man is born again of water . . . he shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.”³⁸

Ambrose (340–397), The Church was redeemed at the price of Christ’s blood. Jew or Greek, it makes no difference; but if he has believed, he must circumcise himself from his sins [in baptism (Col. 2:11-12)] so that he can be saved . . . for no one ascends into the kingdom of heaven except through the sacrament of baptism. . . . “Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.”³⁹

Cyril of Jerusalem (c. 350): He that is baptized with water, but is not found worthy of the Spirit, does not receive the grace in perfection. Nor, if a man be virtuous in his deeds, but does not receive the seal by means of the water, shall he enter the kingdom of heaven. A bold saying, but not mine; for it is Jesus who has declared it.⁴⁰

Note: The influence of Neo-Platonism in the early church may have contributed to the early church’s understanding of baptism: in which the physical action performed on earth was thought to accomplish a corresponding spiritual reality in heaven.

G. Though treated as a moral imperative, baptism was regarded as a gift of God’s grace.

Gregory of Nazianzus: Baptism is God's most beautiful and magnificent gift. . . . We call it gift, grace, anointing, enlightenment, garment of immortality, bath of rebirth, seal, and most precious gift. It is called gift because it is conferred on those who bring nothing of their own; grace since it is given even to the guilty; Baptism because sin is buried in the water; anointing for it is priestly and royal as are those who are anointed; enlightenment because it radiates light; clothing since it veils our shame; bath because it washes; and seal as it is our guard and the sign of God’s Lordship.⁴¹

H. The church fathers disagreed on whether or not baptism had to take place within the catholic church, or whether baptisms performed in other movements (like Novatianism and Donatism) were valid. After Augustine, the church accepted the belief that any baptism was valid, provided it was performed according to the biblical, Trinitarian formula.

³⁸ *Recognitions of Clement* 6.9.

³⁹ Ambrose, *On Abraham* 2.11.79–84.

⁴⁰ Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures* 3.4.

⁴¹ Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orations on Holy Baptism* 40:3-4; PG 36, 361C.

II. How does the patristic emphasis on baptism compare with the church fathers understanding of salvation by faith alone?

- A. As a parallel to the first point noted above, the earliest church documents teach salvation by faith apart from works. (This is, in fact, a consistent emphasis throughout all of the church fathers [see below].)

Clement of Rome (d. c. 100): And we [Christians], too, being called by His will in Christ Jesus, are not justified by ourselves, nor by our own wisdom, or understanding, or godliness, or works which we have wrought in holiness of heart; but by that faith through which, from the beginning, Almighty God has justified all men; to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.⁴²

Polycarp (c. 69–160): Even without seeing him, you believe in him with an inexpressible and glorious joy that many long to experience. For you know that you have been saved by a gracious gift—not from works but by the will of God through Jesus Christ.⁴³

- B. The church fathers acknowledge times when regeneration occurred by faith and *preceded* baptism.

Cyril of Jerusalem: The water cleanses the body, and the Spirit seals the soul, that we may draw near to god, “having our heart sprinkled” by the Spirit “and our body washed with pure water.” . . . Neither does he who is baptized with water, but not found worthy of the Spirit, receive the grace in perfection; nor if a person is virtuous in his deeds, but receives not the seal by water, shall he enter into the kingdom of heaven. A bold saying, but not mine, for it is Jesus who has declared it, and here is the proof of the statement from holy Scripture. Cornelius was a just man who was honored with a vision of angels and had set up his prayers and alms deeds as a good memorial before God in heaven. Peter came, and the Spirit was poured out on them that believed, and they spoke with other tongues and prophesied. And after the grace of the Spirit the Scripture says that Peter commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ in order that, the soul having been born again by faith, the body also might by the water partake of the grace.⁴⁴

- C. The church fathers associate the forgiveness of sins with faith alone.

John Chrysostom (again) [regarding Luke 18:9–14]: Would you know how good our Master is? The Publican went up full of ten thousand wickednesses, and saying only, “Be merciful unto me,” went down justified. (Luke 18:13, 14.) Yea, God says by the prophet, “Because of sin for some little season I grieved him, and I saw that he was grieved and went sorrowful, and I healed his ways” (Isaiah

⁴² Clement of Rome, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 32.4.

⁴³ Polycarp, *Epistle to the Philippians* 1.2–3; trans. by Bart D. Ehrman, *The Apostolic Fathers*, Loeb, 333–335. Cf. Polycarp, *Epistle to the Ephesians*, 12.

⁴⁴ Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures*, 3.4. ACCS, Acts, 141. [NN] Cf. Origen, *Romans* 5.7.3.

57:17, 18). What is there equal to this lovingkindness? On condition of his “being but sorrowful,” so he speaks, “I forgave him his sins.”⁴⁵

Ambrosiaster: It is determined by God that whoever believes in Christ shall be saved and have forgiveness of sins, not through works but through faith alone, without merit.⁴⁶

D. The church fathers associate the giving of the Holy Spirit with faith alone.

Ambrose (again): Ye behold the mysteries, ye behold the grace of Christ, and the grace of the Holy Spirit, which is conferred in some sort fortuitously; forasmuch as everyone is not justified by the Lord by reason of his works, but by reason of his faith.⁴⁷

John Chrysostom: It would not be right that the grace of the Spirit should come to one who was graceless or full of offense. We are blessed first by the taking away of the curse. Then, justified by faith, we receive the grace of the Holy Spirit. So the cross has dissolved the curse, faith has brought righteousness, and by God’s own righteousness the grace of the Spirit has been given.⁴⁸

Jerome (again): You have received by faith alone the Holy Spirit who is not received except by the righteous. . . . Abraham believed and it was credited to him as righteousness. Likewise also for you faith alone suffices as righteousness.⁴⁹

E. There are many other benefits associated with faith alone (including the blessings of baptism).

John Chrysostom (again) (on Rom. 5:2): If then He hath brought us near to Himself, when we were far off, much more will He keep us now that we are near. And let me beg you to consider how he everywhere sets down these two points; His part, and our part. On His part, however, there be things varied and numerous and diverse. For He died for us, and farther reconciled us, and brought us to Himself, and gave us grace unspeakable. But we brought faith only as our contribution. And so he says,” “by faith, unto this grace” What grace is this? tell me. It is the being counted worthy of the knowledge of God, the being forced from error, the coming to a knowledge of the Truth, the obtaining of all the blessings that come through Baptism. For the end of His bringing us near was that we might receive these gifts. For it was not only that we might have simple remission of sins, that we were reconciled; but that we might receive also

⁴⁵ John Chrysostom, Homily 8, *1 Corinthians*, 1 Corinthians 3:1–3.

⁴⁶ Ambrosiaster, Commentary on 1 Corinthians 1.4; cited from Joel C. Elowsky, *We Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 97.

⁴⁷ Ambrose, *An Exhortation to Virginit*y; cited from George Finch, *A Sketch of the Romish Controversy*, 220.

⁴⁸ John Chrysostom, *Homily on Galatians*, 3.14. NPNF 1 13:27. ACCS, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, 40–41.

⁴⁹ Jerome, *Commentary on the Pauline Epistles*, Galatians 3.6; Cited from Joel C. Elowsky, *We Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 98.

countless benefits. Nor did He even pause at these, but promised others, namely, those unutterable blessings that pass understanding alike and language. And this is why he has set them both down also. For by mentioning grace he clearly points at what we have at present received, but by saying, “And we rejoice in hope of the glory of God,” he unveils the whole of things to come. And he had well said, “wherein also we stand.” For this is the nature of God’s grace. It hath no end, it knows no bound, but evermore is on the advance to greater things, which in human things is not the case. Take an instance of what I mean. A person has acquired rule and glory and authority, yet he does not stand therein continuously, but is speedily cast out of it. Or if man take it not from him, death comes, and is sure to take it from him. But God’s gifts are not of this kind; for neither man, nor occasion, nor crisis of affairs, nor even the Devil, nor death, can come and cast us out of them. But when we are dead we then more strictly speaking have possession of them, and keep going on enjoying more and more.⁵⁰

F. The church fathers taught that faith alone is necessary for salvation.

Origen (again): [Regarding the Thief on the Cross]: Who has been justified by faith alone without works of the law? Thus in my opinion that thief [who] was crucified with Christ should suffice for a suitable example. He called out to him from the cross, “Lord Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom!” In the Gospels, nothing else is recorded about his good works, but for the sake of this faith alone Jesus said to him, “Truly I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.⁵¹

John Chrysostom (again): But what is the “law of faith?” It is, being saved by grace. Here he shows God’s power, in that He has not only saved, but has even justified, and led them to boasting, and this too without needing works, but looking for faith only.⁵²

John Chrysostom (again) : To have brought humanity, more senseless than stones, to the dignity of angels simply through bare words, and faith alone, without any hard work, is indeed a rich and glorious mystery. It is just as if one were to take a dog, quite consumed with hunger and the mange, foul and loathsome to see, and not so much as able to move but lying passed out, and make him all at once into a human being and to display him upon the royal throne.⁵³

John Chrysostom (again) (on Gal. 3:8): And this he removes, with great skill and prudence, turning their argument against themselves, and showing that those who relinquish the Law are not only not cursed, but blessed; and they who keep it, not only not blessed but cursed. They said that he who kept not the Law was

⁵⁰ John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Romans*, Homily 9 (Rom. 5:2).

⁵¹ Origen, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* 3.9.3; Cited from Joel C. Elowsky, *We Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 99.

⁵² John Chrysostom, NPNF1: Vol. XI, *Homilies on Romans*, Homily 7, vs. 27.

⁵³ John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Colossians* 1:26–28; Cited from Joel C. Elowsky, *We Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 98.

cursed, but he proves that he who kept it was cursed, and he who kept it not, blessed. Again, they said that he who adhered to faith alone was cursed, but he shows that he who adhered to faith alone, is blessed. And how does he prove all this? for it is no common thing which we have promised; wherefore it is necessary to give close attention to what follows. He had already shown this, by referring to the words spoken to the Patriarch, ‘In thee shall all nations be blessed,’ (Genesis 12:4.) at a time, that is, when Faith existed, not the Law.⁵⁴

John Chrysostom (again) [regarding Luke 18:9–14]: Would you know how good our Master is? The Publican went up full of ten thousand wickednesses, and saying only, “Be merciful unto me,” went down justified. (Luke 18:13, 14.) Yea, God says by the prophet, “Because of sin for some little season I grieved him, and I saw that he was grieved and went sorrowful, and I healed his ways” (Isaiah 57:17, 18). What is there equal to this lovingkindness? On condition of his “being but sorrowful,” so he speaks, “I forgave him his sins.”⁵⁵

John Chrysostom (again) [regarding Acts 15:9–11]: Everywhere [Peter] places the Gentiles on an equal footing. “And he made no distinction between us and them but cleansed their hearts by faith.” From faith alone, he says, they obtained the same gifts. This is also meant as a lesson to those [objectors]; this is able to teach them that faith alone is necessary, and not works or circumcision. For indeed they do not say all this only as an apology for the Gentiles, but also to teach [the Jewish believers] to abandon the law. For the moment, however, this is not said. “Now therefore why do you make trial of God by putting a yoke upon the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will.” What does “make trial of God” mean? As if He were not strong enough, he means, to save by faith, that is, “why do you disbelieve God?” Thus it is from a want of faith that the law is brought in. . . . “But we believe that we shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will.” How powerful are these words! Likewise Paul says in the epistle to the Romans, “For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to glory in, but not before God.” Do you see that all this is more or [?] less for them than an apology for the Gentiles?⁵⁶

John Chrysostom (again): What is the “law of faith?” It is, being saved by grace. Here he shows God’s power, in that He has not only saved, but has even justified, and led them to boasting, and this too without needing works, but looking for faith only.⁵⁷

John Chrysostom (again) (on Rom. 5:2): If then He hath brought us near to Himself, when we were far off, much more will He keep us now that we are near. And let me beg you to consider how he everywhere sets down these two points;

⁵⁴ John Chrysostom, *Commentary on Galatians*, 3:8.

⁵⁵ John Chrysostom, *Homily 8, 1 Corinthians*, 1 Corinthians 3:1–3.

⁵⁶ John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Acts*, 32; Cited from *Ancient Christian Commentary, Acts*, 183.

⁵⁷ John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, 7.27.

His part, and our part. On His part, however, there be things varied and numerous and diverse. For He died for us, and farther reconciled us, and brought us to Himself, and gave us grace unspeakable. But we brought faith only as our contribution.⁵⁸

John Chrysostom (again) (on 1 Tim. 1:15–16): For as people, on receiving some great good, ask themselves if it is not a dream, as not believing it; so it is with respect to the gifts of God. What then was it that was thought incredible? That those who were enemies and sinners, justified by neither the law nor works, should immediately through faith alone be advanced to the highest favor. On this head [topic] accordingly Paul has discoursed at length in his Epistle to the Romans, and here again at length. “This is a faithful saying,” he says, “and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” As the Jews were chiefly attracted by this, he persuades them not to listen to the law, since they could not attain salvation by it without faith. Against this he contends, for it seemed to them incredible that a person who had misspent all his former life in vain and wicked actions should afterwards be saved by his faith alone. On this account he says, “It is a saying to be believed.”⁵⁹

John Chrysostom (again): For by faith alone He saved us. . . . Instead of a certain manner of life, He brought in faith. For that He might not save us to no purpose, He both Himself underwent the penalty, and also required of men the faith that is by doctrines.⁶⁰

John Chrysostom: In order to stop anyone from asking: *How can we be saved without contributing anything at all to our salvation?* Paul shows that in fact we do contribute a great deal toward it—we supply our faith!⁶¹

Yet, Chrysostom elsewhere notes that:

John Chrysostom (again) (on Ephesians 2:8): Even faith, [Paul] says, is not from us. For if the Lord had not come, if he had not called us, how should we have been able to believe? “For how,” [Paul] says, “shall they believe if they have not heard?” (Rom. 10:14). So even the act of faith is not self-initiated. It is, he says, “the gift of God” (Eph. 2:8c).⁶²

Jerome (again): God proposed to save by faith alone those whom he foreknew would believe.⁶³

⁵⁸ Chrysostom, *Homilies on Romans*, Homily 9 (Rom. 5:2).

⁵⁹ John Chrysostom, *Homilies on 1 Timothy 1:15–16*; cited from Joel C. Elowsky, *We Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 98.

⁶⁰ John Chrysostom, *Homily on Ephesians 2:11–12*.

⁶¹ John Chrysostom, *Homily on Romans*, 7. NPNF 1 11:377. ACCS, Romans, 100.

⁶² John Chrysostom, *Homily on Ephesians 2:8*; IOEP 2:160; ACCS NT 8:134; cited from Thomas Oden, *The Justification Reader*, 44.

⁶³ Jerome, *Commentary on the Pauline Epistles*, Romans 8.28–29; Joel C. Elowsky, *We Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 98.

Jerome: Paul says this in case the secret thought should steal upon us that “if we are not saved by our own works, at least we are saved by our own faith, and so in a way our salvation is of ourselves. “ Thus he added the statement that faith too is not in our own will but in God’s gift.⁶⁴

Ambrosiaster (again): They are justified freely because, while doing nothing or providing any repayment, they are justified by faith alone as a gift of God.⁶⁵

Ambrosiaster (again): It is determined by God that whoever believes in Christ shall be saved and have forgiveness of sins, not through works but through faith alone, without merit.⁶⁶

Ambrosiaster (again): [On Rom. 4:6] "righteousness apart from works": Paul backs this up by the example of the prophet David, who says that those are blessed of whom God has decreed that, without work or any keeping of the law, they are justified before God by faith alone.⁶⁷

Ambrosiaster: For the mercy of God had been given for this reason, that they should cease from the works of the law, as I have often said, because God, taking pity on our weaknesses, decreed that the human race would be saved by faith alone, along with the natural law. . . . For if the law is given not for the righteous but for the unrighteous, whoever does not sin is a friend of the law. For him faith alone is the way by which he is made perfect. For others mere avoidance of evil will not gain them any advantage with God unless they also believe in God, so that they may be righteous on both counts. For the one righteousness is temporal; the other is eternal.⁶⁸

Theodoret of Cyr: The righteousness of God is not revealed to everyone but only to those with the eyes of faith. For the holy apostle teaches us that God foresaw this for us from the beginning and predicted it through the prophets, and even before the prophets, had it hidden in his secret will.

Paul quoted Habakkuk for the benefit of the Jews, because he wanted to teach them not to cling to the provisions of the law but to follow the prophets. For many centuries before they had predicted that one day there would be salvation by faith alone.⁶⁹

G. Though sinners are commanded to believe, faith itself is a gift from God.

⁶⁴ Jerome, *Epistle to the Ephesians*, 1.2.8–9. ACCS, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, 133.

⁶⁵ Ambrosiaster, Commentary on Romans 3.24; cited from Joel C. Elowsky, *We Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 98.

⁶⁶ Ambrosiaster, Commentary on 1 Corinthians 1.4; cited from Joel C. Elowsky, *We Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 97.

⁶⁷ Ambrosiaster, Commentary on Romans 4:6. ACCS NT, 6:113.

⁶⁸ Ambrosiaster, *Romans*, ACCS, ed. Gerald Bray (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 6:23 & 65.

⁶⁹ Theodoret of Cyr, Interpretation of the Letter to the Romans. PG 82, col. 57-60. ACCS, Romans, 31.

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H. The church fathers insisted that saving faith corresponded to the doctrinal truth handed down by the apostles. Thus, the faith of heretics was invalid and impotent to save.

III. How can the church father’s insistence on the necessity of water baptism for salvation be harmonized with their simultaneous emphasis on the fact that salvation is by faith alone?

Nick Needham: This strongly attested strand on initial justification by faith, even faith alone, must, however, be coordinated with the patristic teaching that forgiveness is mediated through baptism. . . . There seems to be no necessary friction between these two ideas (justification by faith and by baptism).⁷²

In answering that question, perhaps several thoughts should be noted:

A. In places, the church fathers seem to emphasize the *absolute necessity* of water baptism for salvation. Yet, in other places, they note exceptions. In other words, the church fathers recognized that there were times when people were saved *even though they did not experience water baptism.*

(These exceptions demonstrate their prioritization of faith over baptism. Obviously, no one could be saved without faith. Yet it was possible, as these exceptions demonstrate, to be saved without being baptized.)

1. Believers who were martyred before being baptized.

Tertullian [says of the martyr that he] settles every debt of sin by the compensation of his own blood; for all sins are forgiven by such a deed as this.⁷³

Origen: Inasmuch as the one who endures [martyrdom] receives forgiveness of sins, it is a baptism. For if baptism promises forgiveness of sins, even as we have received

⁷⁰ John Chrysostom, *Homily on Ephesians 2:8*; IOEP 2:160; ACCS NT 8:134; cited from Thomas Oden, *The Justification Reader*, 44.

⁷¹ Jerome, *Epistle to the Ephesians*, 1.2.8–9. ACCS, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, 133.

⁷² Nicholas Needham, “Justification in the Early Church Fathers,” 42.

⁷³ Tertullian, *Apology* 50.15. Tertullian calls baptism “another baptism” in *Modesty* 22.4.

forgiveness with reference to the baptism in water and Spirit, and if the one who endured the baptism of martyrdom receives forgiveness of sins, martyrdom would with good reason be called a baptism.⁷⁴

Origen: Let us be mindful of our sins, because there is no forgiveness of sins without receiving baptism, and that according to the laws of the gospel it is impossible to be baptized again with water and the Spirit for forgiveness of sins, and that a baptism of martyrdom has been given us. Martyrdom is named a baptism, as is evident from [Mark 10:38 and Luke 12:50]. Consider the baptism of martyrdom, that even the Savior's [martyrdom] brought purification to the world, martyrdom becomes a healing of the many who are being purified.⁷⁵

Cyprian: [Baptismal candidates who are martyred] are not in fact deprived of the sacrament of baptism, inasmuch as they are baptized with the greatest and most glorious baptism of all, that of blood. . . . [T]hose baptized in their own blood and sanctified with a martyr's suffering are made perfect and obtain the grace that God has promised.⁷⁶

Basil of Caesarea: There have been some who in their championship of true religion have undergone death for Christ's sake, not in mere similitude [baptism], but in actual fact, and so have needed none of the outward signs of water for their salvation, because they were baptized in their own blood. Thus I write not to disparage the baptism by water, but to overthrow the arguments of those who exalt themselves against the Spirit.⁷⁷

Cyril of Jerusalem: If any man does not receive Baptism, he does not have salvation. The only exception is the martyrs, who, even without water, will receive the kingdom....for the Savior calls martyrdom a Baptism (cf. Mark 10:38) ...Bearing your sins, you go down into the water; but the calling down of grace seals your soul and does not permit that you afterwards be swallowed up by the fearsome dragon. You go down dead in your sins, and come up made alive in righteousness.⁷⁸

2. Baptismal candidates who died before being baptized.

Ambrose of Milan: But I hear that you grieve because he [Emperor Valentinian] did not receive the sacrament of baptism. Tell me: What else is in your power other than the desire, the request? But he even had this desire for a long time, that, when he should come into Italy, he would be initiated, and recently he signified his desire to be baptized by me, and for this reason above all others he thought that I ought to be summoned. Has he not, then, the grace which he desired; has he not the grace which

⁷⁴ Origen, *Commentary on Matthew* 16.6.

⁷⁵ Origen, *Exhortation to Martyrdom*, 30.

⁷⁶ Cyprian, *Letters* 73 (72).21.1–2.

⁷⁷ Basil, *Holy Spirit*, 15.36.

⁷⁸ Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures* 3.10,12.

he requested? And because he asked, he received, and therefore it is said: ‘By whatsoever death the just man shall be overtaken, his soul shall be at rest’ (Wis. 4:7).

Grant, therefore, O holy Father, to Thy servant the gift which Moses received, because he saw in spirit; the gift which David merited, because he knew from revelation. Grant, I pray, to Thy servant Valentinian the gift which he longed for, the gift which he requested while in health, vigor, and security. If, stricken with sickness, he had deferred it, he would not be entirely without Thy mercy who has been cheated by the swiftness of time, not by his own wish. Grant, therefore, to Thy servant the gift of Thy grace which he never rejected ... He who had Thy Spirit, how has he not received Thy grace?

Or if the fact disturbs you that the mysteries have not been solemnly celebrated, then you should realize that not even martyrs are crowned if they are catechumens, for they are not crowned if they are not initiated. But if they are washed in their own blood, his piety and his desire have washed him, also.⁷⁹

Everett Ferguson: Ambrose as a pastor was perhaps the first to set forth the possibility of salvation through a baptism of desire.⁸⁰

3. True believers who desired water baptism but were unable to be baptized for some legitimate reason.

Augustine: That the place of baptism is sometimes supplied by martyrdom is supported by an argument by no means trivial, which the blessed Cyprian adduces from the thief, to whom, though he was not baptized, it was yet said, “Today shall you be with me in Paradise.” (Luke 23:43) On considering which, again and again, I find that not only martyrdom for the sake of Christ may supply what was wanting of baptism, but also faith and conversion of heart, if recourse may not be had to the celebration of the mystery of baptism for want of time. For neither was that thief crucified for the name of Christ, but as the reward of his own deeds; nor did he suffer because he believed, but he believed while suffering. It was shown, therefore, in the case of that thief, how great is the power, even without the visible sacrament of baptism, of what the apostle says, “With the heart man believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” (Romans 10:10) But the want is supplied invisibly only when the administration of baptism is prevented, not by contempt for religion, but by the necessity of the moment. For much more in the case of Cornelius and his friends, than in the case of that robber, might it seem superfluous that they should also be baptized with water, seeing that in them the gift of the Holy Spirit, which, according to the testimony of holy Scripture, was received by other men only after baptism, had made itself manifest by every unmistakable sign appropriate to those times when they spoke with tongues. Yet they were baptized, and for this action we have the authority of an apostle as the warrant. So far ought all of us to be from being induced by any imperfection in the inner man, if it so happen that

⁷⁹ Roy J. Deferrari, translator. “Consolation on the Death of Emperor Valerian.” *Funeral Orations by Saint Gregory Nazianzen and Saint Ambrose. The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation.* New York: Fathers of the Church, 1953. 261–299, at 287–289. Retrieved from the Internet Archive, 23 September 2013.

⁸⁰ Everett Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 646.

before baptism a person has advanced, through the workings of a pious heart, to spiritual understanding, to despise a sacrament which is applied to the body by the hands of the minister, but which is God's own means for working spiritually a man's dedication to Himself.⁸¹

Augustine: For whatever unbaptized persons die confessing Christ, this confession is of the same efficacy for the remission of sins as if they were washed in the sacred font of baptism. For He who said, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God," made also an exception in their favor, in that other sentence where He no less absolutely said, "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven;" and in another place, "Whosoever will lose his life for my sake, shall find it."⁸²

Augustine: Those who, though they have not received the washing of regeneration, die for the confession of Christ – it avails them just as much for the forgiveness of their sins as if they had been washed in the sacred font of Baptism. For He that said, "If anyone is not reborn of water and the Spirit, he will not enter the kingdom of heaven," made an exception for them in that other statement in which He says no less generally, "Whoever confesses Me before men, I too will confess him before My Father, who is in heaven" [Matt 10:32].⁸³

Based on the writings of Ambrose and Augustine, later church leaders like Thomas Aquinas asserted that a genuine desire for baptism is all that is necessary for salvation.

- B. The church fathers also viewed preaching the gospel as more important than performing baptisms. This too evidences the priority that they gave to faith.

John Chrysostom: The greatness of baptism does not lie in the baptizer but in the one whose name is invoked in the baptism. Furthermore, although baptism is important and even necessary in order to obtain the kingdom, still it is much less than preaching the gospel. A person of no singular excellence can baptize, but only the truly gifted can preach the gospel.⁸⁴

Ambrosiaster: Because it is a greater thing to preach the gospel than to baptize, Paul says that he was sent to do the former, not the latter. Not everyone who baptizes is competent to preach the gospel, for the words used a baptism are an established formula.⁸⁵

⁸¹ Augustine, *On Baptism*, 4.22.

⁸² Augustine, *Handbook of Faith, Hope, & Love*, 7.

⁸³ Augustine, *City of God*, 13.7.

⁸⁴ John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians* 3.6. NPNF 1 12:12; ACCS, 1-2 Corinthians, 11.

⁸⁵ Ambrosiaster, *Commentary on Paul's Epistles*. CSEL 81.12. ACCS, 1 – 2 Corinthians, 12.

- C. Though keeping them distinct, the church fathers saw baptism as directly connected to faith.

Everett Ferguson: [commenting on the writings of Cyril of Jerusalem] Faith was presupposed, but Cyril often makes mention of it. For instance, in the *Procatechesis*, sins are blotted out “by believing” (8). In his first lecture Cyril calls on his hearers to prepare “through faith for the new birth” and to get the “earnest of the Holy Spirit [2 Cor. 1:22] through faith” so as to be able to enter “the eternal habitations [Luke 16:9]” (*Cat.* 1.2), and declares that the “communion of the Holy Spirit is given in proportion to each person’s faith” (1.5). Faith is the ground of forgiveness of sins (2.6; 17.37), makes children of God (7.13), gives regeneration (ἀναγεννηθείσης—3.4), and saves (5.10 and 13.31 on the thief on the cross). The lecture devoted to baptism (*Cat.* 3) mentions “election according to faith” (*Cat.* 3.1), the soul “cleansed by sincere faith for reception of the Holy Spirit” (3.2), and “drawing near in faith that you may be made faithful” (3.15).⁸⁶

Cyril of Alexandria: “From the days of John, the kingdom of heaven is preached, and everyone takes it by force.” The kingdom of heaven here means justification by faith, the washing away of sin by holy baptism, and sanctification by the Spirit. It also means worshiping in the Spirit, the service that is superior to shadows and types, the honor of the adoption of children, and the hope of the glory about to be given to the saints.⁸⁷

- D. Thus, they could speak of baptism as the “seal” of faith.

Everett Ferguson: “Seal” was the commonest baptismal designation in the second century. Some texts show the seal clearly as a mark of ownership and protection. For Christian usage in relation to baptism there are two lines of thought—an eschatological and a juristic. There is a close relation of seal and name in the second and third centuries so that “seal” and “baptismal formula” are close together. Indeed “seal” is no separate baptismal rite but an interpretation of the baptismal bath.⁸⁸

Basil of Caesarea: Faith and baptism are two kindred and inseparable ways of salvation: faith is perfected through baptism, baptism is established through faith, and both are completed by the same names. For as we *believe* in the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, so we are also *baptized* in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit; first comes the confession, introducing us to salvation, and baptism follows, setting the seal upon our assent.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Everett Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 475.

⁸⁷ Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on Luke*, Homily 110. Luke, ACCS, 258.

⁸⁸ Everett Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 8.

⁸⁹ Basil of Caesarea, *On the Holy Spirit*, 12.28.

Nick Needham: Basil’s approach effectively makes initial justification itself a twofold process: faith introduces us to salvation, and baptism perfects the introduction. Basil’s use of “seal” imagery may indicate that he regarded baptism as the public and official declaration of a justification that until then has been private and unofficial.⁹⁰

While the Old Testament Israelites had circumcision as a seal, Christians were given baptism as a seal.

John Chrysostom: The Jews had circumcision for a seal, but we the earnest of the Spirit.⁹¹

John Chrysostom: No longer, says St. Paul, is circumcision accomplished by the knife, but in Christ himself, for the hand does not perform the circumcision as in the old law, but the Spirit circumcises not a part but the whole person. There was a body there, and there is a body here; but that body was circumcised in the flesh, this body in the Spirit. . . . When and where? In baptism.⁹²

- E. Water baptism was seen not as a human work, but as a gracious work of God. Thus, its necessity was not viewed (by the church fathers) as being in conflict with their emphasis on salvation by faith alone.

Cyprian: Believe and live, and do ye who persecute us in time rejoice with us for eternity. When you have once departed thither, there is no longer any place for repentance, and no possibility of making satisfaction. Here life is either lost or saved; here eternal safety is provided for by the worship of God and the fruits of faith. Nor let anyone be restrained either by his sins or by his years from coming to obtain salvation. To him who still remains in this world no repentance is too late. The approach to God’s mercy is open, and the access is easy to those who seek and apprehend the truth. Do you entreat for your sins, although it be in the very end of life, and at the setting of the sun of time; and implore God, who is the one and true God, in confession and faith of acknowledgment of Him, and pardon is granted to the man who confesses, and saving mercy is given from the divine goodness to the believer, and a passage is opened to immortality even in death itself. This grace Christ bestows; this gift of His mercy He confers upon us, by overcoming death in the trophy of the cross, by redeeming the believer with the price of His blood, by reconciling man to God the Father, by quickening our mortal nature with a heavenly regeneration.⁹³

Ambrose: Therefore let no one boast of his works, because no one can be justified by his works; but he who is just receives it as a gift, because he is justified by the

⁹⁰ Nick Needham, “Justification in the Early Church Fathers,” 42.

⁹¹ John Chrysostom, *Homilies on 2 Corinthians* 3.7 on 2 Cor. 1:21–22. Cited from Everett Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 560.

⁹² John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Colossians* 6.2 on Col. 2:11. Cited from Everett Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 560.

⁹³ Cyprian, *Treatise 5, An Address to Demetrianus*, 25.

washing of regeneration. It is faith, therefore, which delivers us by the blood of Christ, because blessed is he whose sins are forgiven, and to whom pardon is granted.⁹⁴

Ambrosiaster (fourth century): All thanksgiving for our salvation is to be given only to God. He extends his mercy to us so as to recall us to life precisely while we are straying, without looking for the right road. And thus we are not to glory in ourselves but in God, who has regenerated us by a heavenly birth through faith in Christ.⁹⁵

John Chrysostom (again) (on Titus 3:4–6): Strange! How were we drowned in wickedness, so that we could not be purified, but needed a new birth? For this is implied by “Regeneration.” For as when a house is in a ruinous state no one places props under it, nor makes any addition to the old building, but pulls it down to its foundations, and rebuilds it anew; so in our case, God has not repaired us, but has made us anew. For this is “the renewing of the Holy Ghost.” He has made us new men. How? “By His Spirit”; and to show this further, he adds, “Which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior.” Thus we need the Spirit abundantly. “That being justified by His grace”—again by grace and not by debt—“we may be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” At the same time there is an incitement to humility, and a hope for the future. For if when we were so abandoned, as to require to be born again, to be saved by grace, to have no good in us, if then He saved us, much more will He save us in the world to come.⁹⁶

Note: The church fathers understood that the regenerating agent in baptism was the Holy Spirit and not the water itself. Thus, while they insisted on the necessity of water baptism, they did not view the water as having any magical or transforming power in itself. It was the Spirit who accomplished spiritual realities through baptism.

Nick Needham: Cyril and other fathers insisted that it was not the *water* of baptism that bestowed these spiritual benefits, but the Holy Spirit, Who worked inwardly in the soul at the same time that the water outwardly washed the body.⁹⁷

Basil of Caesarea: If there is any grace in the water, it is not of the nature of the water, but of the presence of the Spirit.⁹⁸

- F. At the same time, water baptism was viewed as an initial fruit of repentance. Thus, it brought assurance of salvation (by confirming the believer’s profession of faith).

⁹⁴ Ambrose, *Letters* 73.11; cited from G. Finch, *A Sketch of the Romish Controversy*, 220. Cf. Anderson, Murphy, and Burgess, *Justification by Faith*, 127. See also John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Ephesians* 11, on Eph. 4:7.

⁹⁵ Ambrosiaster, Epistle to the Ephesians, ACCS NT 8:134; cited from Thomas Oden, *The Justification Reader*, 47.

⁹⁶ John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Titus*, 5. Regarding Titus 3:4–6.

⁹⁷ N. R. Needham, *2000 Years of Christ’s Power*, Part 1, 183.

⁹⁸ Basil, *On the Spirit*, 15.35 in *NPNF*, 8:22. Cited from Allison, *Historical Theology*, 615.

Conversely, those who were unwilling to be baptized called into question the genuineness of their profession of faith.

Regarding the assurance that comes through baptism:

John Chrysostom: “Attend to this, you who come to baptism at the close of life, for we indeed pray that after baptism you may have also this deportment, but you are seeking and doing your utmost to depart without it. For, what though you be justified: yet is it of faith only. But we pray that thou should have as well the confidence that comes of good works.”⁹⁹

*Chrysostom, along with others like the Cappadocian Fathers, strongly discouraged waiting until one’s deathbed to be baptized. Doing so provided no assurance of salvation.*¹⁰⁰

In the book of Acts, all the believers were baptized. Thus, someone who was not willing to be baptized called into question the legitimacy of their profession of faith.

Tertullian: For the law of baptizing has been imposed and the formula prescribed: “Go,” he says, “teach the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and God of the Holy Spirit.” The comparison with this law of that definition, “Unless one has been reborn of water and Spirit, he shall not enter into the kingdom of the heavens,” has tied faith to the necessity of baptism. Accordingly, all thereafter who became believers used to be baptized.¹⁰¹

John Chrysostom (on Acts 2:38): “What shall we do?” They did what must be done, but we do the opposite. They [those converted on the Day of Pentecost] condemned themselves and despaired of their salvation. This is what made them such as they were. They knew what a gift they had received. But how will you become like them, when you do everything in an opposite spirit? As soon as they heard, they were baptized. They did not speak these cold words that we do now, or did they contrive delays, even though they heard all the requirements. For they did not hesitate when they were commanded to “save yourselves from this generation” but welcomed it. They showed their welcome through action and proved through deeds what sort of people they were.¹⁰²

- G. There are times when the church fathers appear to be inconsistent regarding the relationship of salvation to water baptism. For example, most of the church fathers insist that Christians are saved in the same way as Abraham—by faith alone. Yet some of the fathers, like Tertullian, articulate a key distinction: Abraham did not have to be baptized, but Christians do.

⁹⁹ John Chrysostom, *On the Second Epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, Homily 2.8.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Everett Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 617–626.

¹⁰¹ Tertullian, *On Baptism* 13. ANF 3:676; ACCS, John 1–10, 112.

¹⁰² John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles* 7. NPNF 1 11:48–49. ACCS, Acts, 36.

Tertullian: In days gone by, there was salvation by means of bare faith, before the passion and resurrection of the Lord. But now that faith has been enlarged and has become a faith that believes in his nativity, passion, and resurrection, there has been an amplification added to the sacrament, that is, the sealing act of baptism; the clothing, in some sense, of the faith which before was bare, and which cannot exist now without its proper law. For the law of baptism has been imposed.¹⁰³

IV. Summary and Conclusion

A. The Church Fathers

The church fathers insisted on the need for water baptism because they linked the physical act with a number of vital spiritual realities—including regeneration, the forgiveness of sins, and the reception of the Holy Spirit. Based on their understanding of John 3:5, they regarded water baptism as necessary for salvation.

At the same time, they also stated that believers were saved by faith alone—and that the forgiveness of sins and reception of the Holy Spirit also came by faith alone. In part, this may be because they viewed baptism as the *sealing* of faith. Thus, they viewed it as an extension of faith. It was considered a gift of God’s grace and not a self-righteous work.

On the one hand, they recognized that it was possible, in certain cases, to be saved by faith alone without receiving water baptism. On the other hand, they seriously questioned the spiritual condition of anyone not willing to be baptized.

B. Evangelical Protestants

Though some Protestants have maintained a belief in baptismal regeneration,¹⁰⁴ most evangelicals view water baptism as a symbol of spiritual realities that have already taken place in the life of a believer. They contend that regeneration, the forgiveness of sins, and the reception of the Holy Spirit occur at the very moment of conversion (which is by grace through faith alone). Those realities are later signified, and publicly professed, in the waters of baptism.

Thus, water baptism does not *result in* the realities of regeneration, forgiveness, and Spirit-indwelling. Rather, it *reflects* those spiritual realities which have already occurred.

J. I. Packer: Christian baptism . . . is a sign from God that signifies inward cleansing and remission of sins (Acts 22:16; 1 Cor 6:11; Eph 5:25–27), Spirit-wrought regeneration and new life (Titus 3:5), and the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit as God’s seal testifying and guaranteeing that one will be kept safe in Christ forever (1 Cor 12:13; Eph 1:13–14). Baptism carries these meanings

¹⁰³ Tertullian, *On Baptism*, 13. ANF 3:676. Cited from Allison, *Historical Theology*, 614.

¹⁰⁴ For a critique of Luther’s baptismal regeneration see, Patrick Ramsey, “Sola Fide Compromised? Martin Luther and the Doctrine of Baptism.” *Themelios* 34, no. 2 (July 2009), http://thegospelcoalition.org/themelios/article/sola_fide_compromised_martin_luther_and_the_doctrine_of_baptism. Some have suggested that certain writers of the Westminster Confession also held to baptismal regeneration: <http://www.trinity-pres.net/essays/ht-burges-baptism.pdf>.

because first and fundamentally it signifies union with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection (Rom 6:3–7; Col 2:11–12); and this union with Christ is the source of every element in our salvation (1 John 5:11–12). Receiving the sign in faith assures the persons baptized that God’s gift of new life in Christ is freely given to them.¹⁰⁵

Bruce Ware: One area where most credobaptists and most paedobaptists agree is this: baptism is the sign and seal of the new covenant, inaugurated by Christ’s death and resurrection, signifying the promise for the one baptized that sins are forgiven, that new life in Christ is received, and that God gives the person a new heart and the indwelling Holy Spirit, by faith.¹⁰⁶

Evangelicals similarly view water baptism as a mandatory fruit of repentance (because it was commanded by Christ). Though salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, every believer ought to be baptized.

The notion of a non-baptized Christian is foreign to the New Testament. Those who are unwilling to obey the Lord in this matter call into question the authenticity of their profession of faith.

C. Final Thoughts

1. On the one hand, the church fathers conflated the external *symbol* of water baptism with the internal *reality* of Spirit baptism. This confusion led to them being doctrinally inconsistent with their teachings regarding justification by faith alone. Moreover, the result led to several unhelpful practices in church history—including infant baptism and the development of last rites.
2. Thus, evangelicals are right to be critical of the church fathers in this area. Insofar as the teachings of the church fathers do not align with Scripture, they ought to be rejected and discarded (cf. 1 Thess. 5:20–22). Our practice of baptism *must conform to Scripture*, and not to church tradition.
3. Nonetheless, the fact that the church fathers took baptism very seriously is perhaps a helpful counterbalance to some in contemporary evangelical culture who treat it with a casual indifference. As noted above, any professing Christian who is unwilling to be baptized calls into question the sincerity of that profession.

¹⁰⁵ J. I. Packer, *Concise Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1993), 212.

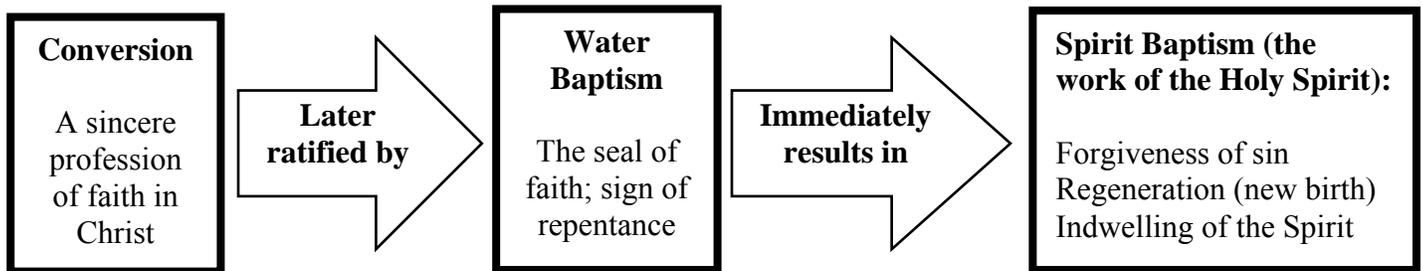
¹⁰⁶ Bruce Ware, “Believer’s Baptism View,” in *Baptism: Three Views*, ed. David F. Wright (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 41.

Comparison Chart

Patristic View:

Spirit baptism takes place after conversion (in, or immediately following, the act of water baptism) and results in the forgiveness of sin, regeneration (new birth), and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

The transforming power of regeneration does not lie in the water of baptism but in the working of the Holy Spirit. While the spiritual reality (of Spirit baptism) was seen as inseparable from the physical act (of water baptism), the church fathers did note several exceptions (see above).

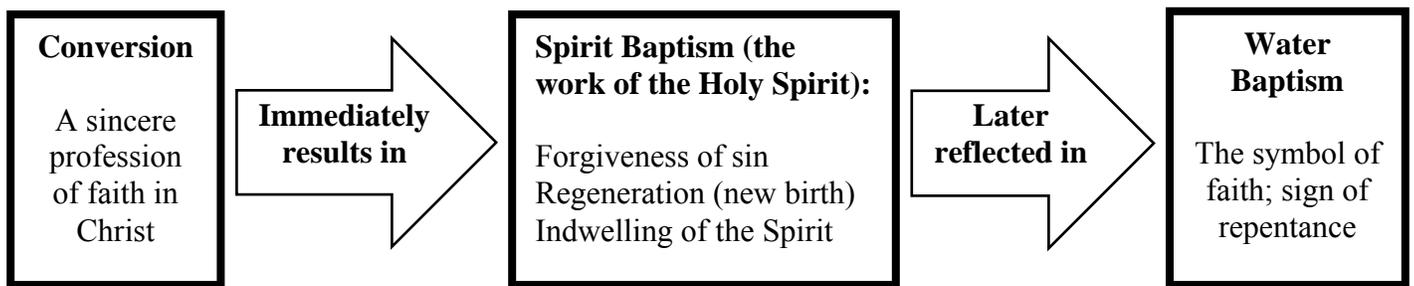


Note: As infant baptism replaced believer’s baptism (in the 4th and 5th centuries), conversion (a sincere profession of faith in Christ) was seen as taking place subsequent to baptism.

Evangelical (Baptistic) View:

Spirit baptism takes place at conversion (being later symbolized by water baptism) and results in the forgiveness of sin, regeneration (new birth), and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Note: True faith is a repentant faith, and baptism is an initial sign (or fruit) of repentance.



Scripture gives examples when salvation from sin and the indwelling ministry of the Spirit (Luke 18:9–14; 23:40–43; Acts 9:17–18; 10:43–48; 16:31–34; cf. 1 Cor. 1:14–17) occurred either *without* water baptism or *prior* to it. Such passages support the evangelical view.

Biblical Evaluation:

“Does Mark 16:16 teach that baptism is necessary for salvation?”

S. Michael Houdman

Does Mark 16:16 teach that baptism is necessary for salvation? No, it does not. It clearly establishes that belief is required for salvation, but it does not prove or disprove the idea of baptism being a requirement. How can we know, then, if one must be baptized in order to be saved? We must look to the full counsel of God’s Word. Here is a summary of the evidence:

1—The Bible is clear that we are saved by faith alone. Abraham was saved by faith, and we are saved by faith (Romans 4:1–25; Galatians 3:6–22).

2—Throughout the Bible, in every dispensation, people have been saved without being baptized. Every believer in the Old Testament (e.g., Abraham, Jacob, David, Solomon) was saved but not baptized. The thief on the cross was saved but not baptized. Cornelius was saved before he was baptized (Acts 10:44–46).

3—Baptism is a testimony of our faith and a public declaration that we believe in Jesus Christ. The Scriptures tell us that we have eternal life the moment we believe (John 5:24), and belief always comes before being baptized. Baptism does not save us any more than walking an aisle or saying a prayer saves us. We are saved when we believe.

4—The Bible never says that if one is not baptized then he is not saved.

5—If baptism were required for salvation, then no one could be saved without another party being present. Someone must be there to baptize a person before he can be saved. This effectively limits who can be saved and when he can be saved. The consequences of this doctrine, when carried to a logical conclusion, are devastating. For example, a soldier who believes on the battlefield but is killed before he can be baptized would go to hell.

6—Throughout the Bible we see that at the point of faith a believer possesses all the promises and blessings of salvation (John 1:12; 3:16; 5:24; 6:47; 20:31; Acts 10:43; 13:39; 16:31). When one believes, he has eternal life, does not come under judgment, and has passed from death into life (John 5:24)—all before he or she is baptized.

Online Source: <http://www.gotquestions.org/baptism-Mark-16-16.html#ixzz32HTvYY8f>

{ ADDENDUM }

EVANGELICALS AND THE EUCHARIST

Originally posted on *The Cripplegate* blog:

“Evangelicals & the Eucharist” (by Nathan Busenitz)

Recently, I received no less than three inquiries regarding the early church’s celebration of the Lord’s Table and its implications for the evangelical church today. Two of these inquiries have come from Roman Catholics, each of whom has suggested that the Roman Catholic practice of transubstantiation best represents the way the Lord’s Table was observed in the first few centuries of church history.

The word “eucharist” means “thanksgiving” and was an early Christian way of referring to the celebration of the Lord’s Table. Believers in the early centuries of church history regularly celebrated the Lord’s Table as a way to commemorate the death of Christ. The Lord Himself commanded this observance on the night before His death. As the apostle Paul recorded in 1 Corinthians 11:23–26:

For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, “This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.” In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.” For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes.

In discussing the Lord’s Table from the perspective of church history, at least two important questions arise. **First**, did the early church believe that the elements (the bread and the cup) were actually and literally transformed into the physical body and blood of Christ? In other words, did they articulate the doctrine of transubstantiation as modern Roman Catholics do? **Second**, did early Christians view the eucharist as a propitiatory sacrifice? Or put another way, did they view it in the terms articulated by the sixteenth-century Council of Trent?

In this article, we will address the first of those two questions.

Did the Early Church Fathers Hold to Transubstantiation?

Transubstantiation is the Roman Catholic teaching that in the eucharist, the bread and the cup are transformed into the literal body and blood of Christ. Here are several quotes from the church fathers, often cited by Roman Catholics, in defense of their claim that the early church embraced *transubstantiation*.

Ignatius of Antioch (d. c. 110): “Take note of those who hold heterodox opinions on the grace of Jesus Christ which has come to us, and see how contrary their opinions are to the

mind of God. . . . They abstain from the Eucharist and from prayer because they do not confess that the Eucharist is the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ, flesh which suffered for our sins and which that Father, in his goodness, raised up again. They who deny the gift of God are perishing in their disputes” (*Letter to the Smyrnaeans* 6:2–7:1).

Irenaeus (d. 202): “He took from among creation that which is bread, and gave thanks, saying, ‘This is my body.’ The cup likewise, which is from among the creation to which we belong, he confessed to be his blood” (*Against Heresies*, 4:17:5).

Irenaeus again: “He has declared the cup, a part of creation, to be his own blood, from which he causes our blood to flow; and the bread, a part of creation, he has established as his own body, from which he gives increase unto our bodies. When, therefore, the mixed cup [wine and water] and the baked bread receives the Word of God and becomes the Eucharist, the body of Christ, and from these the substance of our flesh is increased and supported, how can they say that the flesh is not capable of receiving the gift of God, which is eternal life—flesh which is nourished by the body and blood of the Lord, and is in fact a member of him?” (*Against Heresies*, 5:2).

Tertullian (160–225): “[T]he flesh feeds on the body and blood of Christ, that the soul likewise may be filled with God” (*The Resurrection of the Dead*).

Origen (182–254): “Formerly, in an obscure way, there was manna for food; now, however, in full view, there is the true food, the flesh of the Word of God, as he himself says: ‘My flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink’” (*Homilies on Numbers*, 7:2).

Augustine (354–430): “I promised you [new Christians], who have now been baptized, a sermon in which I would explain the sacrament of the Lord’s Table. . . . That bread which you see on the altar, having been sanctified by the word of God, is the body of Christ. That chalice, or rather, what is in that chalice, having been sanctified by the word of God, is the blood of Christ” (*Sermons* 227).

How should we think about such statements?

Obviously, there is no disputing the fact that the patristic authors made statements like, “The bread is the body of Christ” and “The cup is the blood of Christ.” But there is a question of exactly what they meant when they used that language. After all, the Lord Himself said, “This is My body” and “This is My blood.” So it is not surprising that the early fathers echoed those very words.

But what did they mean when they used the language of Christ to describe the Lord’s Table? Did they intend the elements to be viewed as Christ’s literal flesh and blood? Or did they see the elements as symbols and figures of those physical realities?

In answering such questions, at least two things ought to be kept in mind:

* * * * *

1. We ought to interpret the church fathers' statements within their historical context.

Such is especially true with regard to the quotes cited above from Ignatius and Irenaeus. During their ministries, both men found themselves contending against the theological error of docetism (a component of Gnostic teaching), which taught that all matter was evil. Consequently, docetism denied that Jesus possessed a real physical body. It was against this false teaching that the apostle John declared, “For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist” ([2 John 7](#)).

In order to combat the false notions of docetism, Ignatius and Irenaeus echoed the language Christ used at the Last Supper (paraphrasing His words, “This is My body” and “This is My blood”). Such provided a highly effective argument against docetic heresies, since our Lord’s words underscore the fact that He possessed a real, physical body.

A generation after Irenaeus, Tertullian (160–225) used the same arguments against the Gnostic heretic Marcion. However, Tertullian provided more information into how the eucharistic elements ought to be understood. **Tertullian** wrote:

“Having taken the bread and given it to His disciples, Jesus made it His own body, by saying, **‘This is My body,’ that is, *the symbol of My body*. There could not have been a symbol, however, unless there was first a true body. An empty thing or phantom is incapable of a symbol.** He likewise, when mentioning the cup and making the new covenant to be sealed ‘in His blood,’ affirms the reality of His body. For no blood can belong to a body that is not a body of flesh” (*Against Marcion*, 4.40).

Tertullian’s explanation could not be clearer. On the one hand, he based his argument against Gnostic docetism on the words of Christ, “This is My body.” On the other hand, Tertullian recognized that the elements themselves ought to be understood as *symbols which represent the reality of Christ’s physical body*. Because of the reality they represented, they provided a compelling refutation of docetic error.

Based on Tertullian’s explanation, we have good reason to view the words of Ignatius and Irenaeus in that same light.

* * * * *

2. We ought to allow the church fathers to clarify their understanding of the Lord’s Table.

We have already seen how Tertullian clarified his understanding of the Lord’s Table by noting that the bread and the cup were symbols of Christ’s body and blood. In that same vein, we find that many of the church fathers similarly clarified their understanding of the eucharist by describing it in symbolic and spiritual terms.

At times, they echoed the language of Christ (e.g. “This is My body” and “This is My blood”) when describing the Lord’s Table. Yet, in other places, it becomes clear that they intended this language to be ultimately understood in spiritual and symbolic terms. Here are a number of examples that demonstrate this point:

The Didache, written in the late-first or early-second century, referred to the elements of the Lord’s table as “***spiritual food and drink***” (*The Didache*, 9). The long passage detailing the Lord’s Table in this early Christian document gives no hint of transubstantiation whatsoever.

Justin Martyr (110–165) spoke of “the bread which our Christ gave us to offer ***in remembrance of the Body*** which He assumed for the sake of those who believe in Him, for whom He also suffered, and also to the cup which He taught us to offer in the Eucharist, ***in commemoration of His blood***” (*Dialogue with Trypho*, 70).

Clement of Alexandria explained that, “The Scripture, accordingly, has named wine ***the symbol of the sacred blood***” (*The Instructor*, 2.2).

Origen similarly noted, “We have ***a symbol*** of gratitude to God in the bread which we call the Eucharist” (*Against Celsus*, 8.57).

Cyprian (200–258), who sometimes described the eucharist using very literal language, spoke against any who might use mere water for their celebration of the Lord’s Table. In condemning such practices, he explained that the cup of the Lord is a *representation* of the blood of Christ: “I marvel much whence this practice has arisen, that in some places, contrary to Evangelical and Apostolic discipline, water is offered in the Cup of the Lord, which alone cannot ***represent the Blood of Christ***” (*Epistle* 63.7).

Eusebius of Caesarea (263–340) espoused a symbolic view in his *Proof of the Gospel*:

For with the wine which was indeed the symbol of His blood, He cleanses them that are baptized into His death, and believe on His blood, of their old sins, washing them away and purifying their old garments and vesture, so that they, ransomed by the precious blood of the divine spiritual grapes, and with the wine from this vine, “put off the old man with his deeds, and put on the new man which is renewed into knowledge in the image of Him that created him.” . . . He gave to His disciples, when He said, “Take, drink; this is my blood that is shed for you for the remission of sins: this do in remembrance of me.” And, “His teeth are white as milk,” show the brightness and purity of the sacramental food. For again, ***He gave Himself the symbols of His divine dispensation to His disciples, when He bade them make the likeness of His own Body***. For since He no more was to take pleasure in bloody sacrifices, or those ordained by Moses in the slaughter of animals of various kinds, and was ***to give them bread to use as the symbol of His Body***, He taught the purity and brightness of such food by saying, “And his teeth are white as milk” (*Demonstratio Evangelica*, 8.1.76–80).

Athanasius (296–373) similarly contended that the elements of the Eucharist are to be understood spiritually, not physically: “[W]hat *He says is not fleshly but spiritual*. For how many would the body suffice for eating, that it should become the food for the whole world? But for this reason He made mention of the ascension of the Son of Man into heaven, *in order that He might draw them away from the bodily notion*, and that from henceforth they might learn that *the aforesaid flesh was heavenly eating from above and spiritual food given by Him*.” (*Festal Letter*, 4.19)

Augustine (354–430), also, clarified that the Lord’s Table was to be understood in spiritual terms: “*Understand spiritually what I said*; you are not to eat this body which you see; nor to drink that blood which they who will crucify me shall pour forth. . . . Although *it is needful that this be visibly celebrated, yet it must be spiritually understood*” (*Exposition of the Psalms*, 99.8).

Augustine also explained the eucharistic elements as symbols. Speaking of Christ, Augustine noted: “He committed and delivered to His disciples *the figure* [or symbol] of His Body and Blood.” (*Exposition of the Psalms*, 3.1).

And in another place, quoting the Lord Jesus, Augustine further explained: “‘Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man,’ says Christ, ‘and drink His blood, ye have no life in you.’ This seems to enjoin a crime or a vice; *it is therefore a figure* [or symbol], enjoining that we should have a share in the sufferings of our Lord, and that we should retain a sweet and profitable memory of the fact that His flesh was wounded and crucified for us (*On Christian Doctrine*, 3.16.24).

A number of similar quotations from the church fathers could be given to make the point that—at least for many of the fathers—the elements of the eucharist were ultimately understood in *symbolic* or *spiritual* terms. **In other words, they did not hold to the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation.**

To be sure, they often reiterated the language of Christ when He said, “This is My body” and “This is My blood.” They especially used such language in defending the reality of His incarnation against Gnostic, docetic heretics who denied the reality of Christ’s physical body.

At the same time, however, they clarified their understanding of the Lord’s Table by further explaining that they ultimately recognized the elements of the Lord’s Table to be symbols—figures which *represented* and *commemorated* the physical reality of our Lord’s body and blood.

{ LECTURE 9 }

THE CHRISTIANIZATION OF ROME
Constantine and the Nicene Era

* * * * *

I. Constantine and the Christianization of Rome

Constantine (272–337)

- After Diocletian’s reign ended in 305, a power struggle ensued for control of the Roman Empire
- It would be five years before Constantine I (the Great) gained control of the Western Empire by defeating Maximian at Gaul in 310 and then, two years later, by defeating Maximian’s son Maxentius at Milvian in 312
- It was at the Milvian Bridge that Constantine reportedly saw a vision of a cross in the sky and was told to conquer in the name of Christianity
- In 313, Constantine issued the *Edict of Milan* which changed the climate from one of hostile tolerance toward Christianity to one of friendliness and even protection. (The exception to this were the Donatists, who continued to be persecuted under Constantine.)
- It wasn’t until 324 that Constantine defeated Licinius in the East and became the sole ruler of the entire Roman Empire
- The next year, in 325, the first general church council (since the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15) convened in Nicea
- Later, under Theodosius the Great (379–395), the inevitable occurred when Christianity was made the *exclusive* religion while others were rejected.



Christianity under Constantine after 324

- Constantine attributed his victory at the Milvian Bridge to the Christian God. As a result, he sought to give toleration and imperial favor to Christianity.
- He abolished all Roman opposition against Christianity.
- He gave large donations to the Church.
- Christian clergy were exempted from military service.
- Military personal were strongly encouraged to be baptized.

- Constantine was not baptized until 337 on his death bed by Eusebius of Nicomedia. His excuse – he wanted to be baptized in the Jordan River. In all likelihood, he wanted his sinful life and then to be baptized at the end.
- This, along with the killing of family members, causes one to doubt the authenticity of his Christian profession.
- He gave his sons a Christian education.
- Constantine’s mother, Saint Helena, built churches on holy sites in Palestine.
- He called the Synod of Arles 314 to address the Donatist question.
- He called the Council of Nicea in 325 to have agreement among the churches.

A Manual of Church History: “He exempted the Christian clergy from military and municipal duties and their property from taxation (313); abolished various pagan customs and ordinances offensive to Christians (315); facilitated the emancipation of Christian slaves (315); legalized bequests to Christian churches, a very important measure (321); enjoined the civil observance of Sunday, though only as the day of the Sun, and in connection with an ordinance requiring the consultation of the soothsayer (321); contributed largely toward the building of Christian houses of worship; and gave his sons a Christian education” (p. 306).

Stephen Tomkins: “But what kind of Christian was Constantine? He ruled with all the bloody brutality of pagan emperors—or Old Testament kings for that matter—killing even his firstborn son to protect his throne. But as well as legalizing Christianity, he Christianized the law: he outlawed crucifixion, the killing of unwanted children, the abuse of slaves and peasants, gladiatorial games and facial branding (because ‘man is made in God’s image’), and he decreed that all prisoners should see the sun every day. Whether a genuine vision lies behind the Milvian Bridge story or simply inspired PR, there is no doubting the sincerity of Constantine’s Christian conversion. Just how Christian it was can be doubted, though” (*A Short History of Christianity* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005], 46).

Results of Constantine’s Rule

- On the positive side, persecution against the church ceased; the church was able to organize church-wide councils which proved useful in discerning doctrine

Henry Chadwick: “The pagan contemporaries of Constantine were not wrong in saying that he had carried through a huge religious and social revolution. To change the religion of the Roman Empire was to change the

world” (*The Oxford Illustrated History of Christianity* [Oxford University Press, 1990], p. 61).

- On the negative side, the connection between church and state soon became inseparable; and nominal Christianity grew as religious freedom (for non-Christians) became non-existent

S. M. Houghton: “The greatest danger threatening Christianity was realized when the emperor decided that he himself would rule the Church. The Lord Jesus Christ is the King in his Church, and no earthly power should ever be allowed to use its influence, much less its authority, in that spiritual dominion where Christ reigns supreme. But Constantine called meetings of bishops and other Church dignitaries, and such meetings were then presided over in his name” (*Sketches from Church History* [Carlisle, Penn.: Banner of Truth, 1980] p. 21)

- Constantine was succeeded by his three sons: Constantine II, Constantius II, and Constans (they jointly ruled the empire from 337 to 361, when the last of them died)
- It was during this time that the Arian/Athanasian controversy was in full force.

Julian the Apostate

- Flavius Claudius Julianus (reigned from 361–63) was the last pagan Roman emperor. He tried to restore traditional Roman paganism to a position of prominence within the Empire.
- He was the Nephew of Constantine I
- He was called “The Apostate” by Christians because he rejected Christianity and instead embraced Theurgy, a form of Neoplatonism
- Julian himself claimed that he had been forced to become a Christian as a child, and that his acceptance of paganism came of his own volition after reading the poems of Homer
- As emperor, Julian attempted to change the state of Rome’s religious landscape; he thought that by restoring the old Roman faith, he would bring strength back to the empire
- Part of his efforts included an edict to guarantee freedom of religion (issued in 362); it reverted the edicts made by Constantius II (issued in 353 and 356) which made Christianity the primary religion of Rome

Theodosius the Great

- Flavius Theodosius (347–395) reigned from 379 until his death in 395
- Theodosius co-ruled with two of the sons of Valentinian I (Valentinian II and Gratian). He became the sole emperor in 394.
- He made Christianity the official state religion of the Roman Empire
- He also established Nicene (Trinitarian) Christianity as the official religion (as opposed to Arianism). He worked hard to uproot paganism
- He called the Council of Constantinople in 381 to deal a final blow to Arianism
- He was the last emperor of the united empire; after his death the Roman empire was permanently split between East and West (though the church would not split between East and West until the 11th century)
- On February 27, 380, he declared that “Catholic Christianity” was the only legitimate imperial religion, ending any state support for the traditional Roman religion.



Ronald H. Bainton: “Julian lasted as emperor only two years, from 361 to 363. The Arian-Athanasian controversy was then resumed until it was definitively resolved by the accession to the imperial dignity of the Spaniard Theodosius I, who was responsible for the final victory of the Nicene view. It was he who summoned the Second Ecumenical Council, at Constantinople in 381, where with slight modification the Creed of Nicaea was reaffirmed. Theodosius did much more. He established what even Constantine had never envisaged: the Christian state. Heretics of every sort were forbidden to assemble and their churches were confiscated; they even lost the right to inherit property. As for paganism, once the official religion of the empire, its rituals were proscribed, though its adherents were not treated violently or deprived of their civil rights. Half a century later, in 438, Theodosius II issued the Theodosian Code, which inflicted the penalty of death on those who denied the Trinity (the Arians) and on those who repeated baptism (the Donatists, who would not recognize Catholic baptism)” (*Christianity* [Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987], 100)

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{ EXCURSUS }

Pagan Saints?

(By Nathan Busenitz)

The Cripplegate blog

As a church history professor, I am sometimes asked how certain practices developed in church history. For example: When did the Roman Catholic (and Eastern Orthodox) emphasis on praying to saints and venerating relics and icons begin?

A somewhat obscure, but extremely helpful, book by John Calvin answers that question directly.

In his work, *A Treatise on Relics*, Calvin utilizes his extensive knowledge of church history to demonstrate that prayers to the saints, prayers for the dead, the veneration of relics, the lighting of candles (in homage to the saints), and the veneration of icons are all rooted in Roman paganism. Such practices infiltrated the Christian church after Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire in the fourth century.

Here is an excerpt from Calvin's work that summarizes his thesis:

Hero-worship is innate to human nature, and it is founded on some of our noblest feelings, — gratitude, love, and admiration, — but which, like all other feelings, when uncontrolled by principle and reason, may easily degenerate into the wildest exaggerations, and lead to most dangerous consequences. It was by such an exaggeration of these noble feelings that [Roman] Paganism filled the Olympus with gods and demigods, — elevating to this rank men who have often deserved the gratitude of their fellow-creatures, by some signal services rendered to the community, or their admiration, by having performed some deeds which required a more than usual degree of mental and physical powers.

The same cause obtained for the Christian martyrs the gratitude and admiration of their fellow-Christians, and finally converted them into a kind of demigods. This was more particularly the case when the church began to be corrupted by her compromise with Paganism [during the fourth and fifth-centuries], which having been baptized without being converted, rapidly introduced into the Christian church, not only many of its rites and ceremonies, but even its polytheism, with this difference, that the divinities of Greece and Rome were replaced by Christian saints, many of whom received the offices of their Pagan predecessors.

The church in the beginning tolerated these abuses, as a temporary evil, but was afterwards unable to remove them; and they became so strong, particularly during the prevailing ignorance of the middle ages, that the church ended up legalizing, through her decrees, that at which she did nothing but wink at first.

In a footnote, Calvin gives specific examples of how Christian saints simply became substitutes for pagan deities.

Thus St. Anthony of Padua restores, like Mercury, stolen property; St. Hubert, like Diana, is the patron of sportsmen; St. Cosmas, like Esculapius, that of physicians, etc. In fact, almost every profession and trade, as well as every place, have their especial patron saint, who, like the tutelary divinity of the Pagans, receives particular hours from his or her protégés.

Calvin's treatment includes a historical overview, quotes from the church fathers, and even citations from sixteenth-century Roman Catholic scholars. The result is an air-tight case for the true origin of many Catholic practices.

Calvin's conclusion is that these practices are nothing more than idolatrous superstitions, rooted in ancient Roman paganism. Even today, five centuries later, his work still serves as a necessary warning to those who persist in such idolatry. Hence his concluding sentence: "Now, those who fall into this error must do so willingly, as no one can from henceforth plead ignorance on the subject as their excuse."

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II. The Council of Nicaea (A.D. 325)

- Nicea (also spelled Nicaea) was also known as New Constantinople
- This was the first ecumenical since the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15 (in A.D. 49)
- The primary controversy surrounded the nature of Christ—was He equal with God in the essence of His deity, or was He a created being who was not equal with God?

Franklin H. Littell: “Arianism taught that Jesus Christ was not eternal but made by the Father to do His creative work. Some taught he was elevated to the position of Son of God because of his great virtue. The teaching appealed to both strict monotheists and to tribesmen who knew all about great men who were elected to be gods. The chief theological champion of what finally became official was Athanasius (c 296–373), exiled five times as the tides of political influence and controversy in church synods ebbed away or flowed toward his defense of the true deity of God the Son” (*Illustrated History of Christianity* [New York: Continuum, 2003], p. 44)

- Constantine convened the council in order to bring unity to the Christian church. He was attempting to put an end to the doctrinal controversies caused by the different viewpoints.

The New Catholic Encyclopedia: “Captivated by Christianity, Constantine wanted to give it the protection of the state; for, in line with the old Roman idea, he regarded himself as Pontifex Maximus of Christianity, ‘bishop in matters external’ (Vita Const. 4.24). As such, he thought it his task to settle a controversy that was upsetting the politico religious unity of his Christian empire. . . . When another synod in Antioch late in 324 failed to effect the desired unity, the Emperor decided to settle the controversy by a general synod of the more important bishops of the world” (vol. 10, p. 432)

- Three different positions on the deity of Christ were put forward at Nicea.
 - **Hetero-ousious** (“of a different substance”) – This was the view of Arius (256-336) and Eusebius of Nicomedia (not to be confused with the historian, Eusebius of Caesarea).
 - Logos (Christ) is not co-eternal, co-essential with, or co-equal with the Father. He was a son born, such that there was a moment before the creation of the world when the Son was begotten or created. A “logical” position; “If the Father begat the Son, he that was begotten had a beginning of existence: and from this it is evident, that there was a time when the Son was not. It therefore necessarily follows that he had his subsistence from nothing.”

- **Homo-ousious** (“of the same substance”) – This was the view of Alexander of Alexandria as well as Athanasius (who was only a deacon at the time of the Council).
 - Logos (Christ) is co-eternal with the Father, never to change.
 - **Homoi-ousios** (“of a similar substance”) – This view was an attempt to mediate between the other two views. It taught that the Son was divine but not deity in the sense of being of the same nature as the Father. Eusebius of Caesarea, for example, was one who held this view but then (upon fully understanding the Arian position) was convinced of the orthodox position.
- The Council
 - The disputing first led to a council called by Alexander, Bishop of Alexandria. 100 bishops of Egypt attended who excommunicated Arius and his followers (including Eusebius of Nicomedia.)

Everett Ferguson: “Arius was a Libyan by birth but received his religious education from Lucian of Antioch (a martyr in 312). He was already a popular preacher in Alexandria when he challenged his bishop Alexander’s teaching that the Father and the Son possess equal eternity.

Arius affirmed, “There was (once) when Christ was not.”

Understanding “begetting” as equivalent to “creating,” Arius taught that Jesus Christ was not derived from the substance of the Father, but, as the first and highest of God’s creations, became the instrument of all the rest of creation.

Bishop Alexander secured a condemnation of Arius’s teaching at a synod in Alexandria (317 or 318) that sent a letter to other bishops concerning the exclusion of Arius from fellowship. Arius put his views in writing and appealed to his friends, notably Eusebius, bishop of Nicomedia, for support. Both sides circulated conflicting correspondence” (*Church History*, 193).

Mark Noll: “When in 318 [Arius] communicated his views to his bishop, Alexander, he so stressed the unified, eternal character of God the Father that the Son was reduced to a lower status. Arius, who called Alexander a Sabellian for stressing the unity of the Father and the Son, for his part thoroughly subordinated the Son to the Father. In response, many in the church wondered how such a subordinated Christ—who was more than human, yet less than fully God—could impart salvation to humanity. To Arius, however, the transcendence of the Father and the need to pursue logically the meaning of divine unity mattered more than anything else” (*Turning Points* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997], 49).

- More disputing occurred causing the Emperor Constantine to call a major council

in Nicea. 318 bishops attended along with presbyters and deacons—totaled 2,000 church leaders in all. The event lasted 41 days.

Mark Noll: “On May 20, 325, the Christian church entered a new era. On that day about 320 bishops gathered at Nicaea, then a major city in Bithynia (now small-town Iznik in Turkey). The occasion marked the first “ecumenical,” or worldwide, council of the church. Its business—to adjudicate the meaning of Jesus’ divinity—dealt with the very heart of the Christian faith. What made the council such an extraordinarily important turning point was not just the doctrinal question at stake but the way in which political and social forces combined with the critical theological issue. The idea for the council did not come from the bishops. Rather, they had been summoned by the great Roman emperor himself, Constantine (ca. 288–337). After such a summons and after dealing with such an issue, the church would never be the same” (p. 49).

New Catholic Encyclopedia: “The Council opened at Nicaea in Bithynia (modern Iznik, northwestern Turkey in Asia), in Constantine’s palace, with an address by the Emperor. About 300 bishops were present . . . more than 100 came from Asia Minor, about 30 from Syria-Phoenicia, fewer than 20 from Palestine and Egypt. (vol. 10; p. 432)

- The position of Arius was immediately rejected by the council.

Robert Baker and John Landers: “After preliminary matters had been addressed, a confession of faith by Arius was presented. It defined the nature of Christ as being different from that of God and viewed Christ as a created being, greater than humans and worthy of worship but less than God. The council promptly and vehemently rejected this creed. Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea offered a creed that he said had been used previously in the church. The wording of this creed was ambiguous. When the orthodox party saw that the Arians were willing to accept the creed of Eusebius, they led a movement to reject it because it was not explicit enough. Athanasius, a young deacon from the church in Alexandria and the champion of the orthodox view, presented the [Nicene] creed to the council” (*A Summary of Christian History* [Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2005], p. 62)

- The emperor wavered back and forth (motivated primarily by political ends) as the two major positions were debated—he leaned toward the third position of Eusebius of Caesarea. It became obvious that this compromise position would not pass as Homo-ousios supporters insisted on the inclusion of this word. Eventually, Constantine approved of the Nicene Creed.

Robert Baker and John Landers: “With Constantine’s approval the creed was adopted and a decree of banishment was issued against Arius and those who followed his view. Christians who had been victims of imperial power a few years before used imperial power to persecute one another. Constantine later changed his mind and recalled Arius, banishing Athanasius. This

complete doctrinal reversal meant nothing to his political mind. Constantine probably had little grasp of Christian doctrine. His deferred baptism, moral and ethical standards, and retention of the pagan office that guaranteed his place as a Roman god after death were evidence of his spiritual character” (p. 63)

- The Results of the Council

- The council thus adopted the *Nicene Creed* with its short but direct statement of deity but which lacked precision. It did not speak to the question of the deity of the Holy Spirit (primarily because that was not the issue being debated at the time) giving rise to future controversy about the Trinity.
- From a political standpoint, Constantine's purpose was unity—not purity.
- The position of Arius was rejected with only two bishops (Theognis of Nicaea and Eusebius of Nicomedia) and Arius not signing the creed. These were banished to Illyria. Arius' books were burned.
- But the controversy was not fully settled at Nicea.
 - Athanasius became Bishop of Alexandria and the leading spokesman for the orthodox view. Due to opposition from Arius, he was deposed and restored five times until his death.
 - Arius was still very influential and even Eusebius of Caesarea (who held the half way position) persuaded Constantine to be more favorable to Arius yet remaining orthodox.

- **The Nicene Creed**

"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, the only-begotten of his Father, of the substance of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance [*homoousios consubstantialem*] with the Father. By whom all things were made, both which be in heaven and in earth. Who for us men and for our salvation came down [from heaven] and was incarnate and was made man. He suffered and the third day he rose again, and ascended into heaven. And he shall come again to judge both the quick and the dead. And [we believe] in the Holy Ghost. And whosoever shall say that there was a time when the Son of God was not, or that before he was begotten he was not, or that he was made of things that were not, or that he is of a different substance or essence (from the Father) or that he is a creature, or subject to change or conversion – all that so say, the Catholic [Universal] and Apostolic Church anathematizes them."

- The Significance of the Nicene Creed

Everett Ferguson: “Nicaea marked a crucial development in doctrinal history. By adopting a creed backed up by anathemas, it made creeds into something more than confessions of faith. Instead of being summaries of catechetical instruction to be confessed at baptism, as they had been, creeds in the fourth century became formulations of councils. At Nicaea it was not catechumens who needed a creed, but bishops. . . . Instead of being only a confession of faith, the creed of Nicaea became a test of fellowship” (*Church History* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005], 1.197).

- The Council of Nicaea and the Celebration of Easter

Robert H. Brumback: “The council of Nicea also fixed the date for the observance of Easter. The name “Easter” comes from Ostra, goddess of the morning light or of the return of the sun in the spring. The eastern church and the western church differed upon the observance of the date of this festival. Many of the churches observed it on the Sunday after that day. The Council of Nicea settled the matter by fixing the day to be observed as the first Sunday after the first full moon which appears next after March 21” (*History of the Church through the Ages*, [Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1957], 43).

***The Plain Truth Magazine*, p. 21:** “The Council of Nicea confronts two major issues. It deals firstly with a dispute over the relationship of Christ to God the Father. The dispute is called the Arian controversy. Arius, a priest of Alexandria, has been teaching that Christ was created, not eternal and divine like the Father. The Council condemns him and his doctrine and exiles Arian teachers. (The movement, however, continues strong in many areas. When Gothic and Germanic invaders are converted to Christianity, it is frequently to the Arian form.) The other major issue at the Council is the proper date for the celebration of Passover. Many Christians especially those in Asia Minor still commemorate Jesus' death on the 14th day of the Hebrew month Nisan the day the "Jewish" Passover lambs had been slain. In contrast, Rome and the Western churches emphasize the resurrection, rather than the death of Jesus. They celebrate an annual Passover feast but always on a Sunday. The Council rules that the ancient Christian Passover commemorating the death of Jesus must no longer be kept on pain of death. The Western custom is to be observed throughout the Empire, on the first Sunday after the full moon following the vernal equinox. It is later to be called ‘Easter’ when the Germanic tribes are converted en masse to Christianity.”

- In a letter to those not present at the Council (from Eusebius, *The Life of Constantine*, 3.18-20), Constantine explained the decision regarding Easter:

“When the question relative to the sacred festival of Easter arose, it was universally thought that it would be convenient that all should keep the feast on one day; for what could be more beautiful and more desirable, than to see this festival, through which we receive the hope of immortality, celebrated by all with one accord, and in the same manner? It was declared to be particularly unworthy

for this, the holiest of all festivals, to follow the custom (the calculation) of the Jews, who have soiled their hands with the most fearful of crimes, and whose minds were blinded. . . . We ought not, therefore, to have anything in common with the Jews, for the Savior has shown us another way; our worship follows a more legitimate and more convenient course; and consequently, in unanimously adopting this mode, we desire, dearest brethren, to separate ourselves from the detestable company of the Jews, for it is truly shameful for us to hear them boast that without their direction we could not keep this feast. How can they be in the right, they who, after the death of the Saviour, have no longer been led by reason but by wild violence, as their delusion may urge them? . . . [It is] your duty not to tarnish your soul by communications with such wicked people. Our Saviour has left us only one festival day of our redemption. . . . Think then how unseemly it is that on the same day some should be fasting whilst others are seated at a banquet; and that after Easter, some should be rejoicing at feasts, whilst others are still observing a strict fast. For this reason, Divine Providence wills that this custom should be rectified and regulated in a uniform way; and everyone, I hope, will agree upon this point. As, on the one hand, it is our duty not to have anything in common with the murderers of our Lord; and as, on the other, the custom now followed by the Churches of the West, of the South and of the North, and by some of those of the East, is the most acceptable. . . . You should consider not only that the number of churches in these provinces makes a majority, but also that it is right we should have nothing in common with the Jews. To sum up in few words: By the unanimous judgment of all, it has been decided that the most holy festival of Easter should be everywhere celebrated on one and the same day, and it is not seemly that in so holy a thing there should be any division. As this is the state of the case, accept joyfully the divine favour, and this truly divine command; for all which takes place in assemblies of the bishops ought to be regarded as proceeding from the will of God.”

Important Note: Our confidence in the full deity of Christ is not based on the Council of Nicea, it is only affirmed by it. Thus, it is like anything else from church history. The authoritative basis comes from Scripture. Church history simply affirms what we know to be true from God’s Word.

- The biblical backing for this doctrine is fully discussed in other classes here at the seminary. (Cf. passages like Isaiah 7:14 with Matthew 1:23; and Isaiah 9:6 among many others.)
- However, here is a brief citation from Dr. MacArthur’s commentary on John 1–11 that sums up some of the evidence.

John MacArthur: Jesus frequently spoke of His unique, otherworldly origin, of having preexisted in heaven before coming into this world. To the hostile Jews He declared, “You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world” (John 8:23). “What then,” He asked, “if you see the Son of Man ascending to where He was before?” (John 6:62). In His high-priestly prayer Jesus

spoke of the glory which He had with the Father before the world existed (John 17:5). In John 16:28 He told His disciples, “I came forth from the Father and have come into the world; I am leaving the world again and going to the Father.” Thus, John described Jesus in the prologue of his gospel with these words: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1).

Amazingly, Jesus assumed the prerogatives of deity. He claimed to have control over the eternal destinies of people (John 8:24; cf. Luke 12:8–9; John 5:22, 27–29), to have authority over the divinely-ordained institution of the Sabbath (Matt. 12:8; Mark 2:28; Luke 6:5), to have the power to answer prayer (John 14:13–14; cf. Acts 7:59; 9:10–17), and to have the right to receive worship and faith due to God alone (Matt. 21:16; John 14:1; cf. John 5:23). He also assumed the ability to forgive sins (Mark 2:5–11)—something which, as His shocked opponents correctly understood, only God can do (v. 7).

Jesus also called God’s angels (Gen. 28:12; Luke 12:8–9; 15:10; John 1:51) His angels (Matt. 13:41; 24:30–31); God’s elect (Luke 18:7; Rom. 8:33) His elect (Matt. 24:30–31); and God’s kingdom (Matt. 12:28; 19:24; 21:31; Mark 1:15; Luke 4:43; John 3:3) His kingdom (Matt. 13:41; 16:28; cf. Luke 1:33; 2 Tim. 4:1).

When a Samaritan woman said to Him, “I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us” (John 4:25) Jesus replied, “I who speak to you am He” (v. 26). In His high-priestly prayer to the Father, He referred to Himself as “Jesus Christ whom You have sent” (John 17:3); “Christ” is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word translated “Messiah.” When asked at His trial by the high priest, “Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?” (Mark 14:61) Jesus replied simply, “I am” (v. 62). He also accepted, without correction or amendment, the testimonies of Peter (Matt. 16:16–17), Martha (John 11:27), and others (e.g., Matt. 9:27; 20:30–31) that He was the Messiah. He was the One of whom Isaiah prophesied, “His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6).

The Lord’s favorite description of Himself was “Son of Man” (cf. Matt. 8:20; Mark 2:28; Luke 6:22; John 9:35–37, etc.). Although that title seems to stress His humanity, it also speaks of His deity. Jesus’ use of the term derives from Daniel 7:13–14, where the Son of Man is on equal terms with God the Father, the Ancient of Days.

The Jews viewed themselves collectively as sons of God. Jesus, however, claimed to be God’s Son in a unique sense. “All things have been handed over to Me by My Father,” Jesus affirmed, “and no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him” (Matt. 11:27). In John 5:25–26 He said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself.” After receiving word that Lazarus was ill Jesus said to the disciples, “This sickness is not to end in death, but for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by it” (John 11:4). When asked at His trial, “Are You the Son of God, then?” Jesus

replied, “Yes, I am” (Luke 22:70; cf. Mark 14:61–62). Instead of rejecting the title, the Lord embraced it without apology or embarrassment (Matt. 4:3, 6; 8:29; Mark 3:11–12; Luke 4:41; John 1:49–50; 11:27).

The hostile authorities clearly understood that Jesus’ use of the title Son of God was a claim to deity. Otherwise, they would not have accused Him of blasphemy (cf. John 10:46). In fact, it was Jesus’ claim to be the Son of God that led the Jews to demand His death: “The Jews answered [Pilate], ‘We have a law, and by that law He ought to die because He made Himself out to be the Son of God’” (John 19:7). And in John 5:18 — “The Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.” Even while He was on the cross, some mocked Him, sneering, “He trusts in God; let God rescue Him now, if He delights in Him; for He said, ‘I am the Son of God’” (Matt. 27:43).

Jesus further outraged the unbelieving Jews by taking for Himself the covenant name of God, “I am” (Yahweh). That name was so sacred to the Jews that they refused to even pronounce it, lest they take it vain (cf. Exod. 20:7). In John 8:24 Jesus warned that those who refuse to believe He is Yahweh will perish eternally: “Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.” (The word “He” is not in the original Greek.) Later in that chapter “Jesus said to [His hearers], ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am’” (v. 58). Unlike many modern deniers of His deity, the Jews knew exactly what He was claiming, as their subsequent attempt to stone Him for blasphemy makes clear (v. 59). In John 13:19 Jesus told His disciples that when what He predicted came to pass, they would believe that He is Yahweh. Even His enemies, coming to arrest Him in Gethsemane, were overwhelmed by His divine power and fell to the ground when Jesus said “I am” (John 18:5–8).

All of the above lines of evidence converge on one inescapable point: Jesus Christ claimed absolute equality with God. Thus He could say, “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30); “He who sees Me sees the One who sent Me” (John 12:45); and “He who has seen Me has seen the Father” (14:9–10). And thus we can conclude that “in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (Col. 2:9), and we can worship Him accordingly as “our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus” (Titus 2:13).

{ LECTURE 10 }

DID CONSTANTINE INVENT THE TRINITY?

The Deity of Christ and Doctrinal Developments in the First Four Centuries

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Introduction

The doctrine of the Trinity is founded on two fundamental truths: (1) There is one true God. (2) The one God has eternally existed as three distinct persons, each of whom is equally and fully God.¹⁰⁷

The word *Trinity* captures those dual truths in a single, theological term. As Wayne Grudem explains, “The word *trinity* is never found in the Bible, though the idea represented by the word is taught in many places. The word *trinity* means ‘tri-unity’ or ‘three-in-oneness.’ It is used to summarize the teaching of Scripture that God is three persons yet one God.”¹⁰⁸

Thus, the term expresses the truth that the one God exists as a Tri-Unity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These three divine members are ontologically equal to one another (in essence, substance, character, and being) even though they are distinct persons with functional differences.

Because the word *Trinity* does not appear in Scripture, opponents of this doctrine claim it was the invention of church history. Most often, these opponents point to historical developments in the fourth century—contending that belief in the Trinity began under Emperor Constantine at the Council of Nicaea. Here are few examples of such claims:

Dennis A. Beard: “The Doctrine of the Trinity did not exist until 325 A.D.”¹⁰⁹

Dan Brown, in *The Da Vinci Code* uses one of his characters (Sir Leigh Teabing) to allege: “Jesus’ establishment as ‘the Son of God’ was officially proposed and voted on by the Council of Nicaea. . . . [It was] a relatively close vote at that.”

P. R. Lackey, speaking of the Council of Nicaea, asserts that at that time: “a whole new theology was formally canonized into the Church.”¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ John Ankerberg and John Weldon: “The threeness and oneness of God constitute a paradox or an antinomy—merely an apparent contradiction, not a genuine one. . . . God’s oneness refers to the divine essence; His threeness to the plurality of persons.” (John Ankerberg and John Weldon, *Knowing the Truth about the Trinity*, Kindle Edition).

¹⁰⁸ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 226.

¹⁰⁹ David A. Beard, *The Errors of the Trinity* (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2003) 28.

¹¹⁰ P. R. Lackey, *The Tyranny of the Trinity* (Bloomington, IN: Authorhouse, 2011), 261.

Robert Spears, a Unitarian, writes: “It is an unquestionable historical fact that the doctrine of the Trinity is a false doctrine foisted into the Church during the third and fourth centuries; which finally triumphed by the aid of persecuting emperors.”¹¹¹

Watchtower Magazine: “The testimony of the Bible and of history makes clear that the Trinity was unknown throughout Biblical times and for several centuries thereafter.”¹¹²

Watchtower Magazine: “For many years, there had been much opposition on Biblical grounds to the developing idea that Jesus was God. To try to solve the dispute, Roman emperor Constantine summoned all bishops to Nicaea. . . . Constantine’s role was crucial. After two months of furious religious debate, this pagan politician intervened and decided in favor of those who said that Jesus was God. . . . After Nicaea, debates on the subject continued for decades. Those who believed that Jesus was not equal to God even came back into favor for a time. But later Emperor Theodosius decided against them. He established the creed of the Council of Nicaea as the standard for his realm and convened the Council of Constantinople in 381 C.E. to clarify the formula. That council agreed to place the holy spirit on the same level as God and Christ. For the first time, Christendom’s Trinity began to come into focus.”

Even some evangelical authors, like Rob Bell, while claiming to believe in the Trinity present it in such a way that they question it’s biblical legitimacy—explaining it as though it is the product of later church history.

Rob Bell: “This three-in-oneness understanding of God emerged in the several hundred years after Jesus’ resurrection. People began to call this concept the Trinity. . . . It is a spring, and people jumped for thousands of years without it. It was added later. We can take it out and examine it. Discuss it, probe it, question it. It flexes, and it stretches.”¹¹³

Rob Bell (again): “As [Jesus’] movement gathered steam, this Jewish man came to be talked about more and more as God, fully divine as well as fully human. As his followers talked about him and did what he said and told and retold his stories, the significance of his life began to take on all sorts of cosmic dimensions.”¹¹⁴

Many antagonists—from Muslims to Jehovah’s Witnesses to Christadelphians to Mormons to Unitarians to popular skeptics—deny the doctrine of the Trinity, along with its corollary affirmation of the deity of Jesus Christ. Without fail, their arguments hinge largely on the claim that *Trinitarianism* was an invention of church history.

¹¹¹ Robert Spears, *The Unitarian Handbook of Scriptural Illustrations & Expositions* (London: British and Foreign Unitarian Association, 1883), 96.

¹¹² “Should You Believe in the Trinity?” *Watchtower Magazine*, 1989.

¹¹³ Rob Bell, *Velvet Elvis*, 22.

¹¹⁴ Rob Bell, *Velvet Elvis*, 124.

The purpose of this lecture is to investigate such allegations. Was the doctrine of the Trinity created by the Roman church of the fourth century? Is this doctrine a product of the Councils of Nicaea and Constantinople? After all, the word *Trinity* is not in the Bible. Does that make it an invention of church history?

In order to answer that question, we will consider the following three areas: biblical authority, and then patristic affirmation, and finally, creedal articulation.

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First, let's consider the issue of biblical authority.

BIBLICAL AUTHORITY:

The truth of any doctrine (including the Trinity) is established and grounded in the Scriptures—not in church history. Thus, the authoritative basis for what we believe is the Bible. As those who affirm the Reformation principle of *sola Scriptura*, we look to the Scripture alone for our doctrine. We embrace the doctrine of the Trinity then, because we see it clearly taught on the pages of God's revealed Word. God Himself has revealed to us the mystery of His Triune nature.

We noted earlier that the doctrine of the Trinity is built on two fundamental realities, both of which are established in the Scriptures.

Reality 1: There is one true God.

- Isaiah 46:9— “Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me.”
- Cf. Deut. 4:35; 6:4; Isa. 43:10–11; 45:5, 18, 21–22; Joel 2:27; Zech. 14:9; Mal. 2:10; Mark 12:29; James 2:19; 1 Tim. 2:5.

Reality 2: God exists as three distinct Persons, each of whom is equally and fully God.

- **The Father is God.**
 - 2 Corinthians 1:3—“ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort.”
 - Cf. Matt. 6:9, 14; John 17:1–3; 1 Cor. 8:6; Php. 2:11; Col. 1:3; 1 Pet. 1:2; *et. al.*
- **The Son is God.**
 - Titus 2:13—“ looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus”

- Cf. Isaiah 9:6; Matt. 1:23; John 1:1, 14, 18; 20:28; Acts 20:28; Rom. 9:5; 1 Cor. 1:24; 2 Cor. 4:4; Php. 2:6; Col. 1:15–16; 2:9; Titus 2:13; Heb. 1:3, 8; 2 Pet. 1:1; 1 John 5:20.
- **The Son is not the Father.**
- John 1:1–2—“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.”
 - Cf. Matt. 11:27; John 3:35; 4:34; 5:30–32, 37; 6:38; 10:36; 12:49; 14:8–11; 17:20–24; Gal. 4:41 John 2:1; Heb. 7:25.
- **The Holy Spirit is God.**
- Acts 5:3–4—“But Peter said, ‘Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back some of the price of the land? While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.’”
 - The Spirit possesses all of the attributes of deity (Gen. 1:2; 6:3; Job 33:4; Psalm 139:7–8; John 3:3–8; 14:23; 1 Cor. 2:10–11; 6:16,19; 2 Cor. 3:18; Heb. 9:14; 10:15–16; 2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:10–11; 2 Pet. 1:21).
 - Moreover, He is a Person, possessing the attributes of personhood (Mark 3:29; John 14:26; 16:8; Acts 8:29; 13:2; 16:6; Rom. 8:26; 15:30; 1 Cor. 12:11; Eph. 4:30; 1 Tim. 4:1; Heb. 10:29; Rev. 2:7).
- **The Spirit is not the Father nor the Son.**
- John 14:16–17—“I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; 17 that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.
 - Cf. Isaiah 48:16; Matt. 28:19; Luke 3:21; John 14:26; 16:13–14; Rom. 8:27; Heb. 9:8.
- **On this basis, the Bible often refers to God in ways that emphasize all three Members of the Trinity.**
 - 2 Cor. 13:14—“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.”
 - Cf. Matt. 28:19; Rom. 14:17–18; 15:13–17; 15:30; 1 Cor. 6:11, 17–19; 12:4–6; 2 Cor. 1:21–22; 3:4–6; Gal. 2:21–3:2; Eph. 2:18; 21–22; 3:11–17;

4:4–6; 5:18–20; Php. 2:1, 6; Col. 1:6–8; 1 Thess. 1:1–5; 4:2, 8; 5:18–19; 2 Thess. 2:13, 14; 3:5; Titus 3:4–6; Heb. 9:14; 1 John 3:23–24; Jude 20–21.

The actual word “Trinity” may not be found in Scripture; but the concept is inherently biblical.

As we’ve already seen in this lecture series, Trinitarian doctrine is revealed *implicitly* in the Old Testament and *explicitly* in the New Testament.

Thus, any discussion about the history of Trinitarianism must begin with the fact that this is a truth established in the Word of God, and not in the minds of men who lived centuries after the apostolic age.

* * * * *

This brings us to a second consideration regarding the doctrine of the Trinity and church history. We’ve looked briefly at the biblical authority, now we can dive into the area . . .

PATRISTIC AFFIRMATION:

The doctrine of the Trinity is based on two biblical realities: 1) that there is one God; 2) and that God has eternally existed in three Persons. Those two realities were wholeheartedly embraced by the church fathers who lived before the Council of Nicaea.

As we would expect, those church leaders who lived immediately after the time of the apostles affirmed the biblical truths we have just discussed. Again, it is important to emphasize that church history is not *authoritative*. But it is *affirming* to recognize that the initial generations of believers following the time of the apostles believed the same truths that we hold dear as Christians who are alive today.

NOTE: The church fathers themselves understood the Scriptures alone to be their authority. In contending for the truth of the Trinity, they based their arguments entirely in the text of Scripture. In fact, the primary context in which Trinitarian discussions take place are when a church leader is defending biblical truth against the advancement of error by heretics. Along those lines, the fourth-century church leader **Gregory of Nyssa** explained, in his conflict with the Arians, that Scripture alone must be the determiner of such things. No council or church tradition would suffice.

Gregory of Nyssa: What then is our reply [to the Arians]? We do not think that it is right to make their prevailing custom the law and rule of sound doctrine. For if custom [tradition] is to avail for proof of soundness, we too, surely, may advance our prevailing custom; and if they reject this, we are surely not bound to follow theirs. Let the inspired Scripture, then, be our umpire, and the vote of truth will surely be given to those whose dogmas are found to agree with the Divine words.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Holy Trinity, and of the Godhead of the Holy Spirit*, Letter to Eustathius.

In the same way that we must look to God’s Word as the *authoritative basis* for what we believe, the church fathers of the first few centuries of church history similarly examined the Scriptures to see if these things were so (cf. Acts 17:11).

So, looking now from the perspective of ante-Nicene church history, let’s consider our two fundamental realities again.

Gregg Allison, *Historical Theology*: The early church was faced with both belief in monotheism and belief in the deity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—what would later be called Trinitarianism. And the early church affirmed both.¹¹⁶

Reality 1: There is one true God.

Here is a small sampling of patristic support for this truth.

- **Clement of Rome** (d. c. 99): “Undoubtedly [Moses] knew; but he acted thus, that there might be no sedition in Israel, and that the name of the true and only God might be glorified; to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.”¹¹⁷
- **Theophilus of Antioch** (d. c. 185): “ And I pray for favor from the only God, that I may accurately speak the whole truth according to His will, that you and everyone who reads this work may be guided by His truth and favor.”¹¹⁸

(NOTE: Theophilus was the first to use the term “Trinity;” though Tertullian later popularized its usage.)¹¹⁹

- **Athenagorus of Athens** (d. c. 190) [in response to charges that Christians were atheists because they were monotheists]: “Our doctrine acknowledges one God, the Maker of this universe, who is Himself uncreated (for that which is does not come to be, but that which is not) but has made all things by the Logos which is from Him.”¹²⁰
- **Irenaeus** (d. c. 202): It is proper, then, that I should begin with the first and most important head, that is, God the Creator, who made the heaven and the earth, and all things that are therein . . . , and to demonstrate that there is nothing either above Him or after Him; nor that, influenced by any one, but of His own free will, He created all things, since He is the only God, the only Lord, the only Creator, the only Father, alone containing all things, and Himself commanding all things into existence.¹²¹

¹¹⁶ Gregg Allison, *Historical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 232.

¹¹⁷ Clement, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 43.

¹¹⁸ Theophilus, *Epistle to Autolycus*, 3.23.

¹¹⁹ Theophilus, *Epistle to Autolycus*, 2.15.

¹²⁰ Athenagorus, *A Plea for the Christians*, 4.

¹²¹ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 2.1.

- **Irenaeus** (again) [in response to the polytheistic teachings of Gnosticism]: “Impious indeed, beyond all impiety, are these men, who assert that the Maker of heaven and earth, the only God Almighty, besides whom there is no God, was produced by means of a defect, which itself sprang from another defect, so that, according to them, He was the product of the third defect.”¹²²
- **Irenaeus** (again): Now, that this God is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Paul the apostle also has declared, [saying,] “There is one God, the Father, who is above all, and through all things, and in us all.” I have indeed proved already that there is only one God; but I shall further demonstrate this from the apostles themselves, and from the discourses of the Lord. For what sort of conduct would it be, were we to forsake the utterances of the prophets, of the Lord, and of the apostles, that we might give heed to these persons, who speak not a word of sense?¹²³
- **Irenaeus** (again): We have learned from none others the plan of our salvation, than from those through whom the Gospel has come down to us, which they did at one time proclaim in public, and, at a later period, by the will of God, handed down to us in the Scriptures, to be the ground and pillar of our faith. . . . These [the Apostles] have all declared to us that there is one God, Creator of heaven and earth, announced by the law and the prophets; and one Christ the Son of God. If anyone do not agree to these truths, he despises the companions of the Lord; nay more, he despises Christ Himself the Lord; yea, he despises the Father also, and stands self-condemned, resisting and opposing his own salvation, as is the case with all heretics.¹²⁴
- **Tertullian** (c. 160–225) [in response to the false teachings of Hermogenes who taught that matter was eternal]: “This rule is required by the nature of the One-only God, who is One-only in no other way than as the sole God; and in no other way sole, than as having nothing else with Him. So also He will be first, because all things are after Him; and all things are after Him, because all things are by Him; and all things are by Him, because they are of nothing: so that reason coincides with the Scripture, which says: “Who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counselor? or with whom took He counsel? or who hath shown to Him the way of wisdom and knowledge? Who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed to him again?” Surely none! Because there was present with Him no power, no material, no nature which belonged to any other than Himself.”¹²⁵
- **Origen** (185–254) [in response to the attacks of the skeptical Celsus]: “We Christians, however, who are devoted to the worship of the only God, who created these things, feel grateful for them to Him who made them.”¹²⁶

¹²² Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 1.16.

¹²³ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 2.2.

¹²⁴ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.1.1–2.

¹²⁵ Tertullian, *Against Hermogenes*, 17.

¹²⁶ Origen, *Against Celsus*, 4.75.

Reality 2: God exists as three distinct Persons, each of whom is equally and fully God.

○ **The Father is God.**

- Hundreds of examples could be given in this regard, demonstrating that early believers often referred to God using the title “Father.”
- **Irenaeus** (d. c. 202): “The preaching of the apostles, the authoritative teaching of the Lord, the announcements of the prophets, the dictated utterances of the apostles, and the ministration of the law - all of which praise one and the same Being, the God and Father of all”¹²⁷

○ **The Son is God.**

- Around 106, the Roman governor Pliny the Younger wrote a letter in which he explained that the Christians in his region sang hymns “to Christ as to a god.”¹²⁸
- That commitment to the deity of Christ is affirmed repeatedly throughout Ante-Nicene literature:
- **Ignatius of Antioch** (c. 50–117): For our God, Jesus Christ, was, according to the appointment of God, conceived in the womb by Mary, of the seed of David, but by the Holy Ghost.¹²⁹
- **Ignatius** (again): [in response to the heretical teachings of Ebionism] “If any one says there is one God, and also confesses Christ Jesus, but thinks the Lord to be a mere man, and not the only-begotten God, and Wisdom, and the Word of God, and deems Him to consist merely of a soul and body, such a one is a serpent, that preaches deceit and error for the destruction of men.”¹³⁰
- **Ignatius** (again): Every kind of magic was destroyed, and every bond of wickedness disappeared; ignorance was removed, and the old kingdom abolished, God Himself being manifested in human form for the renewal of eternal life.¹³¹

¹²⁷ Irenaeus, *Against Heresis*, 2.35.4.

¹²⁸ Pliny, *Letters*, 10.96 – 97. Letter to the Emperor Trajan.

¹²⁹ Ignatius, *Epistles to the Ephesians*, Shorter, 18).

¹³⁰ Ignatius, *Epistle to the Philadelphians*, Longer, 6.

¹³¹ Ignatius, *Epistle to the Ephesians*, Shorter, 19.

- **Ignatius** (again): “We have also as a Physician the Lord our God Jesus the Christ the only-begotten Son and Word, before time began, but who afterwards became also man, of Mary the virgin. For ‘the Word was made flesh.’”¹³²
 - In his epistles, Ignatius repeatedly refers to Jesus Christ as God (cf. *Ephesians* 1, 19; *Romans* 1, 3; *Smyrneans* 1; *Polycarp* 3).
- **Polycarp of Smyrna** (69–155): Now may the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the eternal High Priest himself, the Son of God Jesus Christ, build you up in faith and truth . . . , and to us with you, and to all those under heaven who will yet believe in our Lord and God Jesus Christ and in his Father who raised him from the dead.¹³³
- **Justin Martyr (100–165)**: And that Christ being Lord, and God the Son of God, and appearing formerly in power as Man, and Angel, and in the glory of fire as at the bush, so also was manifested at the judgment executed on Sodom, has been demonstrated fully by what has been said.¹³⁴
- **Justin** (again): The Father of the universe has a Son; who also, being the first-begotten Word of God, is even God. And of old He appeared in the shape of fire and in the likeness of an angel to Moses and to the other prophets; but now in the times of your reign, having, as we before said, become Man by a virgin . . .”¹³⁵
- **Justin** (again): For if you had understood what has been written by the prophets, you would not have denied that He was God, Son of the only, unbegotten, unutterable God.¹³⁶
- **Tatian (110–172)**: We do not act as fools, O Greeks, nor utter idle tales when we announce that God was born in the form of man. (fn 125)
- **Melito of Sardis** (d. c. 180): “He that hung up the earth in space was Himself hanged up; He that fixed the heavens was fixed with nails; He that bore up the earth was born up on a tree; the Lord of all was subjected to ignominy in a naked body - God put to death! . . . [I]n order that He might not be seen, the luminaries turned away, and the day became darkened—because they slew God, who hung naked on the tree. . . . This is He who made the heaven and the earth, and in the beginning, together with the Father, fashioned man; who was announced by means of the law and the prophets; who put on a bodily form in the Virgin; who was hanged upon the tree; who was buried in the earth; who rose from the place of the

¹³² Ignatius, *Epistle to the Ephesians*, Longer, 7.

¹³³ *Polycarp. Philippians* 12:2.

¹³⁴ Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 128

¹³⁵ Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*.

¹³⁶ Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*.

dead, and ascended to the height of heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father.”¹³⁷

- **Irenaeus of Lyons** (120–202): “For I have shown from the Scriptures, that no one of the sons of Adam is as to everything, and absolutely, called God, or named Lord. But that He is Himself in His own right, beyond all men who ever lived, God, and Lord, and King Eternal, and the Incarnate Word, proclaimed by all the prophets, the apostles, and by the Spirit Himself, may be seen by all who have attained to even a small portion of the truth. Now, the Scriptures would not have testified these things of Him, if, like others, He had been a mere man. . . . He is the holy Lord, the Wonderful, the Counselor, the Beautiful in appearance, and the Mighty God, coming on the clouds as the Judge of all men; — all these things did the Scriptures prophesy of Him.”¹³⁸
- **Irenaeus** (again): “He received testimony from all that He was very man, and that He was very God, from the Father, from the Spirit, from angels, from the creation itself, from men, from apostate spirits and demons.”¹³⁹
- **Tertullian** (c. 160–225): “Christ is also God” because “that which has come forth from God [in the virgin birth] is at once God and the Son of God, and the two are one. . . . In His birth, God and man united.”¹⁴⁰
- **Hippolytus** (170–235): “The Logos alone of this God is from God himself; wherefore also the Logos is God, being the substance of God.”¹⁴¹
- **Caius** (180–217) [in response to those who would question the deity of Christ] “Perhaps what they allege might be credible, did not the Holy Scriptures, in the first place, contradict them. And then, besides, there are writings of certain brethren older than the times of Victor, which they wrote against the heathen in defense of the truth, and against the heresies of their time: I mean Justin and Miltiades, and Tatian and Clement, and many others, in all which divinity is ascribed to Christ. For who is ignorant of the books of Irenaeus and Melito, and the rest, which declare Christ to be God and man? All the psalms, too, and hymns of brethren, which have been written from the beginning by the faithful, celebrate Christ the Word of God, ascribing divinity to Him.”¹⁴²
- **Origen** (c. 185–254): “If anyone would say that the Word of God or the Wisdom of God had a beginning, let him beware lest he direct his impiety rather against the unbegotten Father, since he denies that He was always

¹³⁷ Melito, *The Philosopher*, 5.

¹³⁸ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.19.2.

¹³⁹ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 4.6.7.

¹⁴⁰ Tertullian, Ankerberg, FN 128

¹⁴¹ Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies*, 10.29.

¹⁴² Caius, *Against the Heresy of Artemon*, 2.1.

Father, and that He has always begotten the Word, and that He always had wisdom in all previous times or ages or whatever can be imagined in priority... There can be no more ancient title of almighty God than that of Father, and it is through the Son that he is Father.”¹⁴³

- **Origen** (again): “Jesus Christ . . . while He was God, and though made man, remained God as He was before.”¹⁴⁴
 - **Novatian of Rome** (210–280) “Scripture has as much described Jesus Christ to be man, as moreover it has also described Christ the Lord to be God. . . . This same Jesus is called also God and the Son of God.”¹⁴⁵
- **The Son is not the Father.**
- This point could be repeatedly demonstrated in the way that the church fathers distinguish the Son from the Father.
 - **Irenaeus** (d. c. 202): Therefore neither would the Lord, nor the Holy Spirit, nor the apostles, have ever named as God, definitely and absolutely, him who was not God, unless he were truly God; nor would they have named any one in his own person Lord, except God the Father ruling over all, and His Son who has received dominion from His Father over all creation, as this passage has it: “The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit Thou at my right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool.” Here the [Scripture] represents to us the Father addressing the Son; He who gave Him the inheritance of the heathen, and subjected to Him all His enemies. Since, therefore, the Father is truly Lord, and the Son truly Lord, the Holy Spirit has fitly designated them by the title of Lord.¹⁴⁶
 - As early church leaders began to consider these dual truths—namely that the Son is fully God and yet He is also distinct from the Father—they began to speak of *essential unity* and *numeric or economic distinction*.
 - **Justin Martyr** (100–165): Then I replied, “Reverting to the Scriptures, I shall endeavor to persuade you, that He who is said to have appeared to Abraham, and to Jacob, and to Moses, and who is called God, is distinct from Him who made all things, — numerically, I mean, not in will. For I affirm that He has never at any time done anything which He who made the world — above

¹⁴³ Origen, *De Princ.* 1.2.; PG 11.132

¹⁴⁴ Ankerberg, FN 135

¹⁴⁵ Novatian, *On the Trinity*, Ankerberg, FN 133

¹⁴⁶ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.6.1.

whom there is no other God — has not wished Him both to do and to engage Himself with.”¹⁴⁷

- **Justin Martyr** (again): “We can indisputably learn that [God] conversed with someone who was numerically distinct from Himself and also a rational Being.”¹⁴⁸
- **Irenaeus** (d. c. 202) articulated the different roles within the Trinity in this way: “the Father planning everything well and giving His commands, the Son carrying these into execution and performing the work of creating, and the Spirit nourishing and increasing [what is made].”¹⁴⁹
- Elsewhere **Irenaeus** explained the Triune way in which “was God revealed; for God the Father is shown forth through all these [operations], the Spirit indeed working, and the Son ministering, while the Father was approving, and man’s salvation was being accomplished.”¹⁵⁰
- **Athenagoras** (d. c. 190): The Son of God is the Logos of the Father, in idea and in operation; for after the pattern of Him and by Him were all things made, the Father and the Son being one. And, the Son being in the Father and the Father in the Son, in oneness and power of spirit, the understanding and reason (νοῦς καὶ λόγος) of the Father is the Son of God. But if, in your surpassing intelligence, it occurs to you to inquire what is meant by the Son, I will state briefly that He is the first product of the Father, not as having been brought into existence (for from the beginning, God, who is the eternal mind [νοῦς], had the Logos in Himself, being from eternity instinct with Logos [λογικός]; but inasmuch as He came forth to be the idea and energizing power of all material things.¹⁵¹
- **Tertullian** (c. 160–225): “We, however, as we indeed always have done and more especially since we have been better instructed by the Paraclete, who leads men indeed into all truth), believe that there is one only God, but under the following dispensation, or οἰκονομία [economy], as it is called, that this one only God has also a Son, His Word, who proceeded from Himself, by whom all things were made, and without whom nothing was made. Him we believe to have been sent by the Father into the Virgin, and to have been born of her - being both Man and God, the Son of Man and

¹⁴⁷ Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 56.

¹⁴⁸ Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 62.

¹⁴⁹ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 4.38.3.

¹⁵⁰ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 4.20.6.

¹⁵¹ Athenagoras, *A Plea for the Christians*, 10.

the Son of God, and to have been called by the name of Jesus Christ; we believe Him to have suffered, died, and been buried, according to the Scriptures, and, after He had been raised again by the Father and taken back to heaven, to be sitting at the right hand of the Father, and that He will come to judge the quick and the dead; who sent also from heaven from the Father, according to His own promise, the Holy Ghost, the Paraclete, the sanctifier of the faith of those who believe in the Father, and in the Son, and in the Holy Ghost. That this rule of faith has come down to us from the beginning of the gospel.”¹⁵²

- It is in this context that the word Trinity began to be applied to these dual realities.
 - **Tertullian** (c. 160–225): The Father is God, and the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God, and each is God; . . . when Christ should come He might be both acknowledged as God and designated as Lord, being the Son of Him who is both God and Lord. . . . As soon, however, as Christ came, and was recognized by us as the very Being who had from the beginning caused plurality (in the Divine Economy), being the second from the Father, and with the Spirit the third, and Himself declaring and manifesting the Father more fully (than He had ever been before), the title of Him who is God and Lord was at once restored to the Unity (of the Divine Nature).¹⁵³
- It is also in this context that the heresy of modalism (or Sabellianism) developed; which denies that God simultaneously exists as three distinct Persons—arguing instead that the one God sometimes manifests Himself as Father, sometimes as Son, and sometimes as Spirit.
- Biblically, that view is completely untenable, for reasons we have already discussed regarding the distinction of each Member of the Trinity.
- Modalists accused Trinitarians of belief in two gods. But orthodox church leaders responded by condemning Sabellianism as a heresy.
 - **Tertullian** (c. 160–225): “We have, moreover, in that other Gospel a clear revelation, i.e. of the Son’s distinction from the Father, “My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” and again, (in the third Gospel,) “Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit.” But even if (we had not these passages, we meet with satisfactory evidence) after His resurrection and glorious victory over death. Now that all the restraint of His humiliation is taken away, He might, if

¹⁵² Tertullian, *Against Praxeas*, 2.

¹⁵³ Tertullian, *Against Praxeas*, 13:

possible, have shown Himself as the Father to so faithful a woman (as Mary Magdalene) when she approached to touch Him, out of love, not from curiosity, nor with Thomas' incredulity. But not so; Jesus saith unto her, "Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren" (and even in this He proves Himself to be the Son; for if He had been the Father, He would have called them His children, (instead of His brethren), "and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." Now, does this mean, I ascend as the Father to the Father, and as God to God? Or as the Son to the Father, and as the Word to God? Wherefore also does this Gospel, at its very termination, intimate that these things were ever written, if it be not, to use its own words, "that ye might believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God?" Whenever, therefore, you take any of the statements of this Gospel, and apply them to demonstrate the identity of the Father and the Son, supposing that they serve your views therein, you are contending against the definite purpose of the Gospel. For these things certainly are not written that you may believe that Jesus Christ is the Father, but the Son."¹⁵⁴

- **Hippolytus** (170–235): If, then, the Word was with God, and was also God, what follows? Would one say that he speaks of two Gods? I shall not indeed speak of two Gods, but of one; of two persons, however, and of a third economy, viz., the grace of the Holy Spirit. For the Father indeed is one, but there are two persons, because there is also the Son; and then there is the third, the Holy Spirit. The Father decrees, the Word executes, and the Son is manifested, through whom the Father is believed on. The economy of harmony is led back to one God; for God is one. It is the Father who commands, and the Son who obeys, and the Holy Spirit who gives understanding: The Father who is *above all*, and the Son who is through all, and the Holy Spirit who is in all.¹⁵⁵
- **Novatian** (210–280) [in response to the Sabellian heretics who accused Trinitarians teaching multiple gods] "Let us therefore believe this, since it is most faithful that Jesus Christ the Son of God is our Lord and God; because "in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and God was the Word. The same was in the beginning with God." And, "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt in us." And, "My Lord and my God." And, "Whose are the fathers, and of whom according to the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for evermore." What, then, shall we say? Does Scripture set before us two Gods? How, then, does it say that "God is one?" Or is not Christ God also? How,

¹⁵⁴ Tertullian, *Against Praxeas*, 25.

¹⁵⁵ Hippolytus, *Against the Heresy of One Noetus*, 14.

then, is it said to Christ, “My Lord and my God?” Unless, therefore, we hold all this with fitting veneration and lawful argument, we shall reasonably be thought to have furnished a scandal to the heretics, not assuredly by the fault of the heavenly Scriptures, which never deceive; but by the presumption of human error, whereby they have chosen to be heretics.”¹⁵⁶

- **Pseudo-Ignatius** (c. 250): For there are some vain talkers and deceivers, not Christians, but Christ-betrayers, bearing about the name of Christ in deceit, and “corrupting the word” of the Gospel; while they intermix the poison of their deceit with their persuasive talk. . . . Some of them say that the Son is a mere man, and that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are but the same person, and that the creation is the work of God, not by Christ, but by some other strange power.¹⁵⁷
- **Gregg Allison, *Historical Theology***: “The early church rejected both dynamic monarchianism and modalism as being far removed from its traditional understanding of the oneness of God and the threeness of the Father, Son (who is fully divine), and Spirit. Dynamic monarchianism considered Jesus Christ to be a mere man, while modalistic monarchianism emphasized the oneness of the Godhead to such an extent that the three were lost in the one. The church found neither of these views acceptable.”¹⁵⁸
- Thus, early Christians affirmed both the reality that there is only one God (in contrast to pagan polytheism); while also affirming a distinction between the Father and the Son—each of whom is fully God.
 - **Pseudo-Ignatius** (c. 250)— Give heed to the doctrine of the apostles, and believe both the law and the prophets: that ye reject every Jewish and Gentile error, and neither introduce a multiplicity of gods, nor yet deny Christ under the pretense of [maintaining] the unity of God.

For Moses, the faithful servant of God, when he said, “The Lord thy God is one Lord,” and thus proclaimed that there was only one God, did yet forthwith confess also our Lord when he said, “The Lord rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah fire and brimstone from the Lord.” And again, “And God said, Let Us make man after our image: and so God made man, after the image of God made He him.” And further “In the image of God made He man.” And that [the Son of God] was to be made man [Moses shows when] he says, “A prophet shall the Lord raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me.”

¹⁵⁶ Novatian, *A Treatise on the Trinity*, 30

¹⁵⁷ Ignatius, *To the Trallians*, Longer, 6.

¹⁵⁸ Gregg Allison, *Historical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 236.

The prophets also, when they speak as in the person of God, [saying,] “I am God, the first [of beings], and I am also the last, and besides Me there is no God,” concerning the Father of the universe, do also speak of our Lord Jesus Christ. “A Son,” they say, has been given to us, on whose shoulder the government is from above; and His name is called the Angel of great counsel, Wonderful, Counselor, the strong and mighty God.” And concerning His incarnation, “Behold, a virgin shall be with Child, and shall bring forth a Son; and they shall call his name Immanuel.” And concerning the passion, “He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and as a lamb before her shearers is dumb, I also was an innocent lamb led to be sacrificed.”

The Evangelists, too, when they declared that the one Father was “the only true God,” did not omit what concerned our Lord, but wrote: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made.” And concerning the incarnation: “The Word,” says [the Scripture], “became flesh, and dwelt among us.” And again: “The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.” And those very apostles, who said “that there is one God,” said also that “there is one Mediator between God and men.” Nor were they ashamed of the incarnation and the passion. For what says [one]? “The man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself” for the life and salvation of the world. (*Epistle to the Antiochans*, 1–4).

○ **The Holy Spirit is God.**

- **John Ankerberg and John Weldon:** “Although the doctrine of the Holy Spirit was theologically less refined in the early Church than the doctrine of Jesus Christ, there was still recognition that the Holy Spirit was both personal and God.”¹⁵⁹
- **Athenagoras** (d. c. 190): [in response to the notion that Christians were atheists] – The Holy Spirit Himself also, which operates in the prophets, we assert to be an effluence of God, flowing from Him, and returning back again like a beam of the sun. Who, then, would not be astonished to hear men who speak of God the Father, and of God the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and who declare both their power in union and their distinction in order, called atheists?¹⁶⁰
- **Origen** (185–254): We must understand, therefore, that as the Son, who alone knows the Father, reveals Him to whom He will, so the Holy Spirit,

¹⁵⁹ John Ankerberg and John Weldon, *Knowing the Truth about the Trinity* (Kindle edition), chapter 6.

¹⁶⁰ Athenagoras, *A Plea for the Christians*, 10.

who alone searches the deep things of God, reveals God to whom He will: “For the Spirit bloweth where He listeth.”¹⁶¹

- **Origen** [Refuting the notion that the Holy Spirit is not the eternal Third Member of the Trinity] “For if this were the case, the Holy Spirit would never be reckoned in the Unity of the Trinity, i.e., along with the unchangeable Father and His Son, unless He had always been the Holy Spirit.”¹⁶²
 - **Origen** (again): “From all which we learn that the person of the Holy Spirit was of such authority and dignity, that [the formula for] baptism was not complete except by the authority of the most excellent Trinity of them all, i.e., by the naming of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and by joining to the unbegotten God the Father, and to His only-begotten Son, the name also of the Holy Spirit. Who, then, is not amazed at the exceeding majesty of the Holy Spirit, when he hears that he who speaks a word against the Son of man may hope for forgiveness; but that he who is guilty of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit has not forgiveness, either in the present world or in that which is to come!”¹⁶³
- **The Holy Spirit is not the Father nor the Son.**
- **Clement of Rome** (d. c. 99): “Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Scepter of the majesty of God, did not come in the pomp of pride or arrogance, although He might have done so, but in a lowly condition, as the Holy Spirit had declared regarding Him.”¹⁶⁴
 - **The Martyrdom of Polycarp** (2nd century): “We wish you, brethren, all happiness, while you walk according to the doctrine of the Gospel of Jesus Christ; with whom be glory to God the Father and the Holy Spirit, for the salvation of His holy elect, after whose example the blessed Polycarp suffered, following in whose steps may we too be found in the kingdom of Jesus Christ!”¹⁶⁵
 - **Irenaeus** (d. c. 202): “The Church, though dispersed throughout the whole world, even to the ends of the earth, has received from the apostles and their disciples this faith: [She believes] in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are in them; and in one Christ Jesus, the Son of God, who became incarnate for our salvation; and in the Holy Spirit, who proclaimed through the prophets the dispensations of God, and the advents, and the birth from a virgin, and the

¹⁶¹ Origen, *De Principiis*, 1.3.4.

¹⁶² Origen, *De Principiis*, 1.3.4.

¹⁶³ Origen, *De Principiis*, 1.3.2.

¹⁶⁴ Clement, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 16.

¹⁶⁵ *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, 22.

passion, and the resurrection from the dead, and the ascension into heaven in the flesh of the beloved Christ Jesus, our Lord.”¹⁶⁶

- **Tertullian** (c. 160–225): “Thus the connection of the Father in the Son, and of the Son in the Paraclete, produces three coherent Persons, who are yet distinct One from Another. These Three are one essence, not one Person, as it is said, ‘I and my Father are One,’ in respect of unity of substance not singularity of number.”¹⁶⁷
- **Tertullian** (again): “I confess that I call God and His Word - the Father and His Son - two. For the root and the tree are distinctly two things, but correlatively joined; the fountain and the river are also two forms, but indivisible; so likewise the sun and the ray are two forms, but coherent ones. Everything which proceeds from something else must needs be second to that from which it proceeds, without being on that account separated: Where, however, there is a second, there must be two; and where there is a third, there must be three. Now the Spirit indeed is third from God and the Son; just as the fruit of the tree is third from the root, or as the stream out of the river is third from the fountain, or as the apex of the ray is third from the sun. Nothing, however, is alien from that original source whence it derives its own properties. In like manner the Trinity, flowing down from the Father through intertwined and connected steps, does not at all disturb the Monarchy, whilst it at the same time guards the state of the Economy.”¹⁶⁸
- **Origen** (185–254): “As, then, after those first discussions which, according to the requirements of the case, we held at the beginning regarding the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, it seemed right that we should retrace our steps, and show that the same God was the creator and founder of the world, and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, i.e., that the God of the law and of the prophets and of the Gospel was one and the same; and that, in the next place, it ought to be shown, with respect to Christ, in what manner He who had formerly been demonstrated to be the Word and Wisdom of God became man; it remains that we now return with all possible brevity to the subject of the Holy Spirit.

It is time, then, that we say a few words to the best of our ability regarding the Holy Spirit, whom our Lord and Savior in the Gospel according to John has named the Paraclete. For as it is the same God Himself, and the same Christ, so also is it the same Holy Spirit who was in the prophets and apostles, i.e., either in those who believed in God before the advent of Christ, or in those who by means of Christ have sought refuge in God.”¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁶ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 1.10.1.

¹⁶⁷ Tertullian, *Against Praxeas*, 25.

¹⁶⁸ Tertullian, *Against Praxeas*, 8.

¹⁶⁹ Origen, *De Principiis*, 2.7.1

- **On this basis, the Ante-Nicene Fathers often refers to God in ways that emphasize all three Members of the Trinity.**
 - **Gregg Allison, *Historical Theology*:** “An early description of the relationship between the three referred to the Son as the Word of the Father and to the Spirit as the Wisdom of the Father; these two were the two “hands” of the Father as he created. In an interesting reference to the creation of the sun and moon on the fourth day of creation, Theophilus noted: ‘The three days which were before the lights are types of the Trinity—of God, his Word, and his Wisdom’ [*To Autolytus*, 2.15]. Appealing to Proverbs 3:19 – 20 and 8:22 – 31, Irenaeus ‘demonstrated that the Word, namely the Son, was always with the Father; and that Wisdom also, which is the Spirit, was present with him, anterior [prior] to all creation. . . . There is therefore one God, who by the Word and Wisdom created and arranged all things [Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 4.20.3–4].”¹⁷⁰
 - **Clement of Rome (c. 30–95):** “Why are there strifes, and tumults, and divisions, and schisms, and wars among you? Have we not one God and one Christ? Is there not one Spirit of grace poured out upon us?”¹⁷¹
 - **Clement (again):** “For as God lives, and the Lord Jesus Christ lives, and the Holy Spirit, who are the faith and hope of the chosen ones—the one who in humility of mind, with extended gentleness, without regret has done the ordinances and commandments given by God, this one will be enrolled and given a name among the number of the saved through Jesus Christ, through whom is the glory unto Him forever and ever, amen.”¹⁷²
 - **Ignatius (d. c. 117):** “[You are] stones of the temple of the Father, prepared for the building of God the Father, and drawn up on high by the instrument of Jesus Christ, which is the cross, making use of the Holy Spirit as a rope, while your faith was the means by which you ascended, and your love the way which led up to God.”¹⁷³
 - **Polycarp (c. 69–160):** “Lord God Almighty, the Father of thy beloved and blessed Son Jesus Christ . . . wherefore also I praise Thee for all things, I bless Thee, I glorify Thee, along with the everlasting and heavenly Jesus Christ, Thy beloved Son, with whom, to Thee, and the Holy Ghost, be glory both now and to all coming ages. Amen.”¹⁷⁴
 - ***Martyrdom of Polycarp* (second century):** “I have collected these things, when they had almost faded away through the lapse of time, that the Lord Jesus Christ

¹⁷⁰ Gregg Allison, *Historical Theology*, 233.

¹⁷¹ Clement of Rome, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 46.

¹⁷² Clement of Rome, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 58.

¹⁷³ Ignatius, *Epistle to the Ephesians*, Shorter, 9

¹⁷⁴ *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, 15.

may also gather me along with His elect into His heavenly kingdom to whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be glory forever and ever. Amen.”¹⁷⁵

- **Justin Martyr** (c. 100–165) “For, in the name of God, the Father and Lord of the universe, and of our Savior Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, they then receive the washing with water.”¹⁷⁶
- **Justin Martyr** (again): “. . . the most true God, the Father of righteousness and temperance and other virtues, who is free from all impurity. But both Him, and the Son (who came forth from Him and taught us these things . . .), and the prophetic Spirit, we worship and adore, knowing them in reason and truth.”¹⁷⁷
- **Irenaeus** (d. c. 202): “The Church, though dispersed throughout the whole world, even to the ends of the earth, has received from the apostles and their disciples this faith: . . .one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are in them; and in one Christ Jesus, the Son of God, who became incarnate for our salvation; and in the Holy Spirit, who proclaimed through the prophets the dispensations of God, and the advents, and the birth from a virgin, and the passion, and the resurrection from the dead, and the ascension into heaven in the flesh of the beloved Christ Jesus, our Lord, and His manifestation from heaven in the glory of the Father ‘to gather all things in one,’ and to raise up anew all flesh of the whole human race, in order that to Christ Jesus, our Lord, and God, and Savior, and King, according to the will of the invisible Father, ‘every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess; to him, and that He should execute just judgment towards all.”¹⁷⁸
- **Irenaeus** (again): “When the Lord told his disciples to go and teach all nations and to baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, he conferred on them the power of giving men new life in God. He had promised through the prophets that in these last days he would pour out his Spirit on his servants and handmaids, and that they would prophesy. So when the Son of God became the Son of Man, the Spirit also descended upon him, becoming accustomed in this way to dwelling with the human race, to living in men and to inhabiting God’s creation. The Spirit accomplished the Father’s will in men who had grown old in sin, and gave them new life in Christ.”¹⁷⁹
- **Tertullian** (c. 160–225): “We define that there are two, the Father and the Son, and three with the Holy Spirit, and this number is made by the pattern of salvation... [which] brings about unity in trinity, interrelating the three, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. They are three, not in dignity, but in degree, not in substance but in form, not in power but in kind. They are of one substance and

¹⁷⁵ Martyrdom of Polycarp, 22

¹⁷⁶ Justin, *First Apology*, 61.

¹⁷⁷ Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, 6.

¹⁷⁸ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 10.1

¹⁷⁹ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* by Saint Irenaeus, bishop (Lib. 3, 17. 1-3)

power, because there is one God from whom these degrees, forms and kinds devolve in the name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit."¹⁸⁰

- **Tertullian** (again): “Now, with regard to this rule of faith - that we may from this point acknowledge what it is which we defend - it is, you must know, that which prescribes the belief that there is one only God, and that He is none other than the Creator of the world, who produced all things out of nothing through His own Word, first of all sent forth; that this Word is called His Son, and, under the name of God, was seen “in diverse manners” by the patriarchs, heard at all times in the prophets, at last brought down by the Spirit and Power of the Father into the Virgin Mary, was made flesh in her womb, and, being born of her, went forth as Jesus Christ; thenceforth He preached the new law and the new promise of the kingdom of heaven, worked miracles; having been crucified, He rose again the third day; (then) having ascended into the heavens, He sat at the right hand of the Father; sent instead of Himself the Power of the Holy Ghost to lead such as believe; will come with glory to take the saints to the enjoyment of everlasting life and of the heavenly promises, and to condemn the wicked to everlasting fire, after the resurrection of both these classes shall have happened, together with the restoration of their flesh. This rule, as it will be proved, was taught by Christ, and raises amongst ourselves no other questions than those which heresies introduce, and which make men heretics.”¹⁸¹
- **Tertullian** [in response to the modalistic *monarchianism* of Praxeas]: “But as for me, who derive the Son from no other source but from the substance of the Father, and (represent Him) as doing nothing without the Father’s will, and as having received all power from the Father, how can I be possibly destroying the Monarchy from the faith, when I preserve it in the Son just as it was committed to Him by the Father? The same remark (I wish also to be formally) made by me with respect to the third degree in the Godhead, because I believe the Spirit to proceed from no other source than from the Father through the Son.”¹⁸²
- **Hippolytus** (170–235): [It is] the Father who is above all, the Son who is through all, and the Holy Spirit who is in all. And we cannot otherwise think of one God, but by believing in truth in Father and Son and Holy Spirit. . . . For it is through this Trinity that the Father is glorified. . . . The whole Scriptures, then, proclaim this truth.”¹⁸³
- **Origen** (185–254): “Moreover, nothing in the Trinity can be called greater or less, since the fountain of divinity alone contains all things by His word and reason, and by the Spirit of His mouth sanctifies all things which are worthy of sanctification.”¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁰ Tertullian, *Against Praxeas*, 23; PL 2.156-7.

¹⁸¹ Tertullian, *Against Heretics*, 13.

¹⁸² Tertullian, *Against Praxeas*, 4.

¹⁸³ Hippolytus, Ankerberg, FN 129.

¹⁸⁴ Origen, Roberts and Donaldson, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 4, p. 255, de Principiis, I. iii. 7

- **Origen** (again): “But in our desire to show the divine benefits bestowed upon us by Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, which Trinity is the fountain of all holiness.”¹⁸⁵
- **Gregory Thaumaturgus of Neo-Caesarea** (205–270) “All [the persons] are one nature, one essence, one will, and are called the Holy Trinity; and these also are names subsistent, one nature in three persons, and one genus [kind].”¹⁸⁶

* * * * *

This brings us to our third and final consideration regarding the doctrine of the Trinity and early church history.

CREEDAL ARTICULATION:

All of the patristic evidence we have considered so far has been from before the fourth century of church history. It thus becomes obvious that the councils and creeds of the fourth century did not invent anything new, they simply affirmed and articulated that which had been established in the Scripture and taught by those who had come before them.

- With the ushering in of peace for Christians within the Roman empire, Christian theologians now had greater time to focus their attention on discussions related to the Trinity.
 - **James White:** While we can find a deep witness to a belief in one God and in the deity of Christ, from the beginning, the specific relationship of the Father, Son, and Spirit was not the first priority for those writers [during the centuries of persecution before Constantine] who put quill and ink to paper. . . . The end of persecution brought an almost immediate refocusing of the church’s attention upon the issues of the Trinity and the deity of Christ. Indeed, the first major council of the church, called by Emperor Constantine in Nicaea in A. D. 325, addressed the issue of the nature of Christ a scant dozen years after the persecutions ended.¹⁸⁷
- At the **Council of Nicaea** in 325—when the deity of Christ came under attack—the true church arose to defend it from Arian attack.
- The Council of Nicaea did not determine or establish the doctrine of Christ’s deity. It rather affirmed and defended the doctrine that had always been taught by the church going back to the time of the apostles and being established in the Scriptures.
- *The Da Vinci Code* might claim that the deity of Christ was determined by a relatively close vote at the Council of Nicaea, but that is simply not true.

¹⁸⁵ Origen, *De Principiis*, 1.4.2.

¹⁸⁶ Ankerberg, FN 131.

¹⁸⁷ James R. White, *The Forgotten Trinity* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1998), 178.

- First of all, the doctrine of the deity of Christ is determined by the Word of Christ.
 - Second, the affirmation of His deity was overwhelmingly recognized by those who participated in the Council of Nicaea. Of the 318 bishops who attended, 316 signed the Nicene Creed. The two who didn't were diehard supporters of Arius.
 - **The Nicene Creed:** “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 essence of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, of one essence with the Father, 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, becoming man, suffered and rose again on the third day, ascended to the heavens, and will come again to judge the living and the dead; and in the Holy Spirit.
- Though the victory at Nicaea had been overwhelming, the controversy with Arianism still raged in the Roman Empire over the next 50 years.
 - During this time, church leaders like **Athanasius** and the **Cappadocian Fathers** (Basil, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory of Nazianzus), stood firm in their defense of biblical truth.
 - In addition to emphasizing the deity of Christ (the doctrine that had been the focus of Nicaea), they also emphasized the deity and personhood of the Holy Spirit.
 - In 381, at the **Council of Constantinople**, Arianism was fully and finally defeated within the Roman empire. A modified version of the Nicene Creed was also adopted, one in which more detail was given regarding the Person and work of the Holy Spirit.
- **The Niceano-Constantinopolitan Creed:** We 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 Son of God, the Only-begotten, Begotten of the Father before all ages, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, Begotten, not made; of one essence with the Father, by whom all things were made: Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again with glory to judge the living and the dead, Whose kingdom shall have no end. And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, and Giver of Life, Who proceeds from the Father, Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, Who spoke by the Prophets; and we believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins. We look for the Resurrection of the dead, and the Life of the age to come. Amen.

- Later creeds, such as the Athanasian Creed and the Apostles' Creed exhibited this same Trinitarian emphasis.

* * * * *

Conclusion:

- In this lecture, we have considered the doctrine of the Trinity in the early history of the church. We have seen that the Trinity is a doctrine that is established on the authority of Scripture. It was affirmed by Christian leaders in the centuries following the apostles. And it was articulated in creedal form during the fourth century at the Councils of Nicaea and Constantinople.
- We spent the bulk of our time demonstrating that this doctrine was certainly not *invented* in the fourth century—it was not the result of Roman paganism influencing Christianity; nor was it the product of Constantine's conversion.

Roger E. Olson: “A few groups flatly deny the doctrine of the Trinity as false and perhaps an invention of certain church fathers unduly influenced by the Roman emperor Constantine. But church history proves these groups wrong. The very earliest church fathers believed in the Trinity, and the Trinity is strongly implied in Scripture. In fact, there's no way to make sense of Scripture without it!”¹⁸⁸

Fred von Kamecke: Was the Trinity invented? No. Rather, it was the inevitable response of the church's experience with God. He's the One who revealed himself to us in this mysterious manner, a fact borne out by the Scriptures. The word "Trinity" never appears, but the reality to which the term points is everywhere evident. Since it is a concept so deeply imbedded in the Scriptures, it is God himself who is responsible for it. This is the eternal, unchanging nature of this incredible God.¹⁸⁹

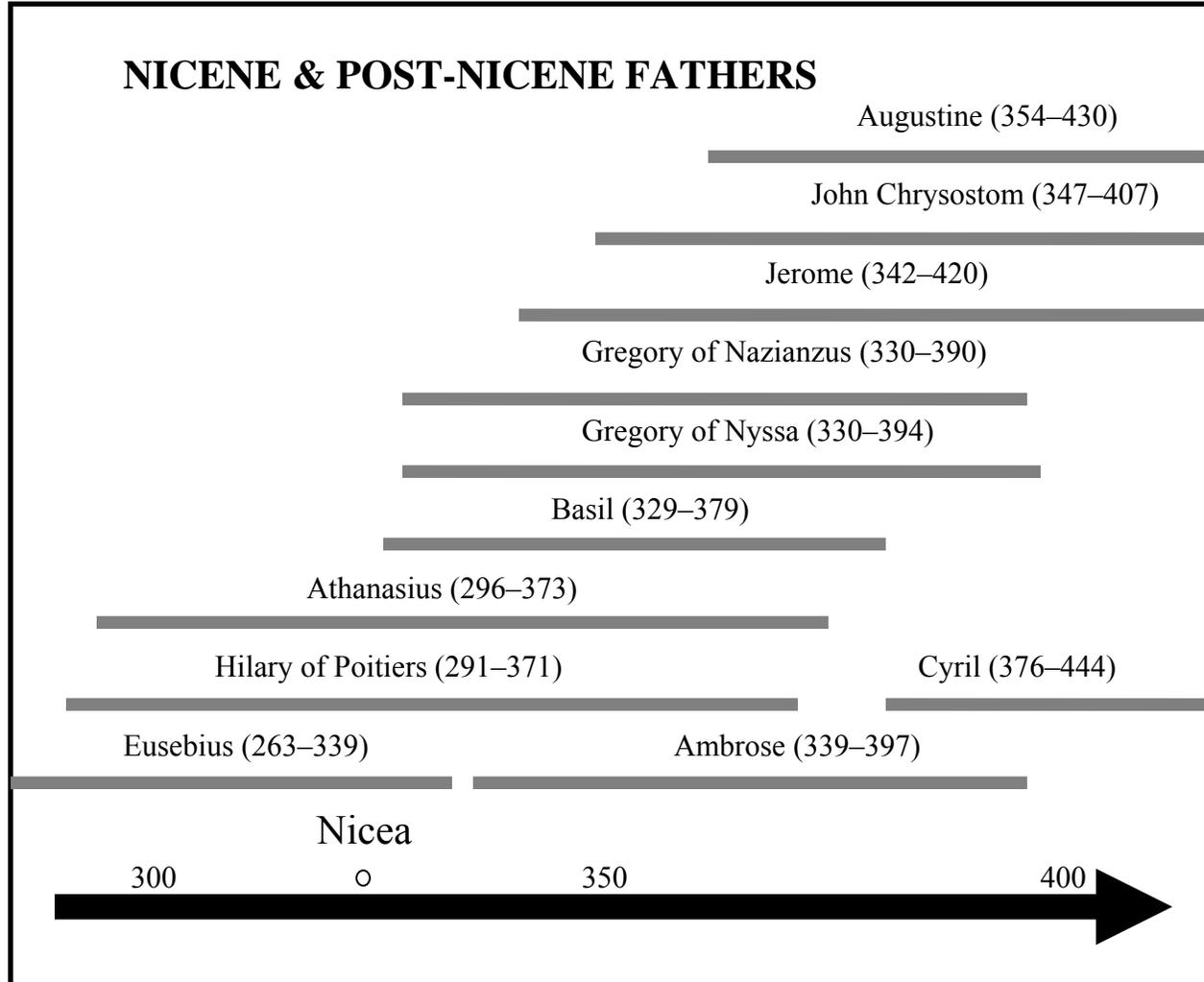
¹⁸⁸ Roger E. Olson, 144–145, *Finding God in the Shack*, IVP, 2009 Downers Grove, IL

¹⁸⁹ Fred von Kamecke, *Busted: Exposing Popular Myths about Christianity*, page number needed:

{ LECTURE 11 }

THE NICENE & POST-NICENE FATHERS

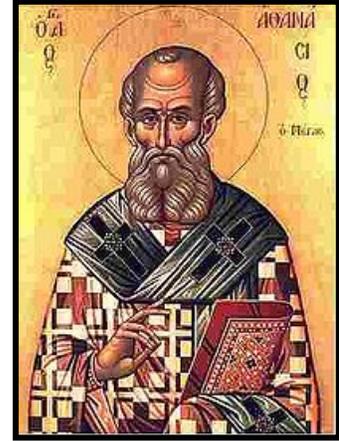
Christian Leaders of the Fourth and Fifth Centuries



Mark Ellingsen: “Augustine was far from isolated in his greatness during his own lifetime. He was more or less a (younger) contemporary of Athanasius, as well as a full contemporary of the famed preacher Ambrose (ca. 339–97), the bishop of Milan; the equally renowned preacher and bishop of Constantinople John Chrysostom (ca. 347–407); and the eminent biblical scholar and translator of the Bible Jerome. Another group of famed contemporaries was the Cappadocians: Basil the Great, his sister Macrina (ca. 327–379), their brother Gregory of Nyssa, and their friend Gregory of Nazianzus. These four friends/relatives served the Church in the region of eastern Asia Minor (present-day Turkey) that bears the name of Cappadocia” (*Reclaiming Our Roots* [Harrisburg, Penn.: Trinity Press, 1999], 1.125)

I. Athanasius

- **Athanasius of Alexandria** (c. 296–373) was a Christian bishop, the Patriarch of Alexandria, in the fourth century.
- Primary defender against Arianism (the teaching that Jesus was created by the Father at some point in time); taught that the Son was of identical essence as the Father



His Life

- Born to wealthy parents in Egypt in 296; died 373.
- He was well-educated and influenced by the martyr-mindset of his day.
- Small in stature yet had a keen mind—a skilled theologian and a prolific writer.
- His writings were very influential during and after the Council of Nicaea.
- Because of his stand against Arius, he became widely known—he was made a bishop of Alexandria at age 33 when his teacher, Alexander, died.

Athanasius after the Council of Nicaea

- Though he was only a deacon at the time of the Council of Nicea (325), Athanasius spent most of the fourth century fighting Arius. He became the bishop of Alexandria just a few years later (in 328).

John Piper: “Within two years after taking office as Bishop of Alexandria, Athanasius became the flash point of controversy. Most of the bishops who had signed the Creed of Nicaea did not like calling people heretics, even if they disagreed with this basic affirmation of Christ’s deity. They wanted to get rid of Athanasius and his passion for this cause. Athanasius was accused of levying illegal taxes. There were accusations that he was too young when ordained, that he used magic, that he subsidized treasonable persons, and more. Constantine did not like Athanasius’s hard line either and called him to Rome in 331 to face the charges the bishops were bringing. The facts acquitted him, but his defense of the Nicene formulation of Christ’s deity was increasingly in the minority”
(*Contending for Our All*, 50).

Bruce L. Shelley: “No career better illustrates the way in which imperial power took over actual control of the church than that of Athanasius. As a young advisor to Alexander, he had won a resounding victory at Nicea over his elderly

opponent, Arius. Soon after that, at the age of 33, he succeeded Alexander as bishop of the great see of Alexandria. For the next 50 years, however, no one could predict who would win in the struggle with Arianism. During these decades, Athanasius was banished no less than five times, each banishment and return to Alexandria representing either a change in emperors or a shift in the makeup of the palace ecclesiastical clique that had the emperor's ear. At times Athanasius was so completely out of imperial favor that he felt deserted by all his supporters. During one such hour he uttered his famous defiance, *Athanasius Against the World*. He would stand alone, if need be, against the whole empire" (*Church History in Plain Language* [Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, 2008], p. 103).

Made bishop in 328	Exiled 336
Restored in 338	Exiled 339
Restored in 346	Exiled 356
Restored in 361	Exiled 362
Restored in 363	Exiled 365
Restored in 366	Died 373

- **First Exile (336–338)**

- Athanasius was falsely accused of kidnapping another bishop (named Arsenius) and cutting off his hand for use in magical incantations.

John Piper: “[Athanasius’s enemies] bribed Arsenius, a bishop in Hypsele (on the Nile in southern Egypt), to disappear so that the rumor could be started that Athanasius had arranged his murder and cut off one of his hands to use for magic. Constantine was told and asked for a trial to be held in Tyre. Meanwhile one of Athanasius’s trusted deacons had found Arsenius hiding in a monastery and had taken him captive and brought him secretly to Tyre. At the trial the accusers produced a human hand to confirm the indictment. But Athanasius was ready. ‘Did you know Arsenius personally?’ he asked. ‘Yes’ was the eager reply from many sides. So Arsenius was ushered in alive, wrapped up in a cloak. When he was revealed to them, they were surprised but demanded an explanation of how he had lost his hand. Athanasius turned up his cloak and showed that one hand at least was there. There was a moment of suspense, artfully managed by Athanasius. Then the other hand was exposed, and the accusers were requested to point out whence the third hand had been cut off” (*Contending for Our All*, 50–51).

- In spite of Athanasius’s innocence being proven, he was still sent into exile when his opponents accused him of interfering with wheat shipments from Alexandria to Rome. He was sent to Treveri (near modern-day Luxembourg).

- He was able to return to Alexandria after Constantine died and his sons came to the throne.

- **Second & Third Exiles (339–346 & 356–362)**

- Eusebius of Nicomedia convinced Constantius II (Constantine’s son) to get rid of Athanasius. This resulted in the second two exiles of Athanasius.

Stephen Nichols: “Even though Athanasius was on the right side of the line between heresy and orthodoxy, and even though he enjoyed overwhelming support throughout the church, Constantius II saw to it that Athanasius would have his troubles. Sensing that Arianism had not been rooted out of the church, Athanasius applied the bulk of his energies to making sure that what the council decided at Nicea in 325 would stand and be the only accepted teaching in the churches. He used his pulpit to preach sermons on the orthodox view, directly and vehemently condemning the teachings of Arius. He used his skill with words to write letter after letter on the issue, as well as major treatises such as *On the Incarnation* (335 or 336). And whenever Athanasius’s crusade against Arianism was gaining traction, Constantius II stepped in. He would dispatch some troops to have Athanasius exiled – one time Athanasius was carried away during a Communion service. When the public and clerical outcry grew too large for Constantius II to ignore, he would reluctantly let Athanasius return to his post as bishop. As Athanasius returned to his mission of proclaiming the orthodox view of Christ, Constantius II would dispatch the troops again.” (*For Us and For Our Salvation*, 64)

- **On one occasion, Roman soldiers stormed the church during a communion service.**

Athanasius: “It was now night, and some of the people were keeping a vigil preparatory to a communion on the morrow, when the General Syrianus suddenly came upon us with more than five thousand soldiers, having arms and drawn swords, bows, spears, and clubs, as I have related above. With these he surrounded the Church, stationing his soldiers near at hand, in order that no one might be able to leave the Church and pass by them. Now I considered that it would be unreasonable in me to desert the people during such a disturbance, and not to endanger myself in their behalf; therefore, I sat down upon my throne [chair], and desired the Deacon to read a Psalm, and the people to answer, ‘For His mercy endures forever,’ and then all to withdraw and depart home. But the General having now made a forcible entry, and the Clergy and those of the laity, who were still there, cried out, and demanded that we too should withdraw. But I refused, declaring that I would [not] do so, until they had retired one and all.

Accordingly I stood up, and having bidden prayer, I then made my request of them, that all should depart before me, saying that it was better that my safety should be endangered, than that any of them should receive hurt. So when the greater part had gone forth, and the rest were following, the monks who were there with us and certain of the Clergy came up and dragged us away. And thus, while some of the soldiers stood about the sanctuary, and others were going round the Church, we passed through, under the Lord's guidance, and with His protection withdrew without observation, greatly glorifying God that we had not betrayed the people, but had first sent them away, and then had been able to save ourselves" (cited from Leithart, 12).

- **Fourth & Fifth Exiles (362–364 & 365–366)**
 - The fourth exile took place under Emperor Julian who attempted to take the Roman Empire back into paganism. When it became obvious that Athanasius was resolute in his Christian conviction, Julian drove him out of Alexandria. The exile ended when Julian died.
 - The fifth and final exile occurred under Emperor Valens who simply evicted Athanasius because he had been earlier exiled by Julian. When Valens realized that the people of Alexandria loved Athanasius, he had him restored to his office (in order to garner popularity with the citizens of Alexandria).
 - During these times of exile, Athanasius often lived with some of the early monks of the Egyptian desert. These monks, particularly *Antony*, left a life-long impression on Athanasius.

The Legacy of Athanasius

What lessons can we learn from the man nicknamed “the saint of stubbornness”?

- **We ought to be willing to fight for fundamental Christian doctrines.**

Stephen Nichols: “One has to ask why Athanasius endured so much for so long. Why did he wrangle for decades over one word, over one letter, *i*? The reason comes in a phrase also found in the Nicene Creed, a phrase that is attributed to Athanasius. It may not be too much of a stretch to claim this phrase to be one of the most profound, if not beautiful, phrases in all of theological literature, the phrase “*for us and for our salvation.*” Athanasius wrangled with the best minds of the day and endured persecution at the hands of the most powerful politicians of the day, all for the sake of the gospel. The *person* of Christ, Athanasius believed, had everything to do with the *work* of Christ. If the church got it wrong on the person of Christ, the church would be wrong on the work of Christ. Athanasius

spent six decades contending for a letter and contending against the world for the sake of the gospel.” (*For Us and Our Salvation*, 66–67)

- **At times, being faithful means you will also be unpopular.**

C. S. Lewis: ““His epitaph is Athanasius contra mundum, ‘Athanasius against the world.’ We are proud that our own country has more than once stood against the world. Athanasius did the same. He stood for the Trinitarian doctrine, “whole and undefiled,” when it looked as if all the civilised world was slipping back from Christianity into the religion of Arius—into one of those ‘sensible’ synthetic religions which are so strongly recommended today and which, then as now, included among their devotees many highly cultivated clergymen. It is his glory that he did not move with the times; it is his reward that he now remains when those times, as all times do, have moved away.” (Preface to *On the Incarnation*)

- **The key to honoring God is to hold firmly and faithfully to what the Bible teaches.**

Steve Lawson: “When the cardinal doctrines of the faith were under siege, Athanasius held tenaciously to biblical fidelity in his day. This African Father faithfully guarded the high ground of Christian truth at a time when others retreated amid rising persecution. No matter what, the bishop of Alexandria was willing to stand firm upon Scripture and, whenever necessary, defend Scripture with Scripture.

The need is the same in this hour of history. Nothing has changed. The truth is always under ruthless assault and the stakes are always high. In every generation, men of God must follow in the footsteps of this magnificent Church Father, remaining faithful to the text of Scripture.

We must not shy away from doctrinal disputes that strike against the very heart of the gospel. We must not flinch in the face of divisive attacks. The ever-changing tides of popular fads that are sweeping through the church today must not prevail over God-authored doctrines. We must lift high the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.” (*Pillars of Grace*, 156)

- **Superficial unity is false unity. True unity is founded on doctrinal truth.**

John Piper: “Athanasius would have grieved over sentences like ‘It is Christ who unites us; it is doctrine that divides.’ And sentences like: ‘We should ask, Whom do you trust? rather than what do you believe?’ He would have grieved because he knew this is the very tactic used by the Arians bishops to cover the councils with fog so that the word *Christ* could mean anything. Those who talk like this – ‘Christ unites, doctrine divides’ – have simply replaced propositions about Christ with the word *Christ*. It carries no meaning until one says something about him. They think they have done something profound and fresh, when they call us away

from the propositions of doctrine to the word *Christ*. In fact they have done something very old and worn and deadly.” (*Contending for Our All*, 64)

- **The examples of faithful men in generations past should motivate us to stand faithfully *against the world* in our own generation.**

John Piper: “Thank you, Athanasius. Thank you... for a lifetime of exile and suffering for the glory of Christ. Thank you for not backing down when you were almost alone. Thank you for seeing the truth so clearly and for standing firm. You were a gift of God to the church and the world.” (*Contending for Our All*, 74–75)

Athanasius on the Canon:

2. But since we have made mention of heretics as dead, but of ourselves as possessing the Divine Scriptures for salvation; and since I fear lest, as Paul wrote to the Corinthians, some few of the simple should be beguiled from their simplicity and purity, by the subtlety of certain men, and should henceforth read other books - those called apocryphal - led astray by the similarity of their names with the true books; I beseech you to bear patiently, if I also write, by way of remembrance, of matters with which you are acquainted, influenced by the need and advantage of the Church.

3. In proceeding to make mention of these things, I shall adopt, to commend my undertaking, the pattern of Luke the Evangelist, saying on my own account: ‘Forasmuch as some have taken in hand,’ to reduce into order for themselves the books termed apocryphal, and to mix them up with the divinely inspired Scripture, concerning which we have been fully persuaded, as they who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the Word, delivered to the fathers; it seemed good to me also, having been urged thereto by true brethren, and having learned from the beginning, to set before you the books included in the Canon, and handed down, and accredited as Divine; to the end that any one who has fallen into error may condemn those who have led him astray; and that he who has continued steadfast in purity may again rejoice, having these things brought to his remembrance.

4. There are, then, of the Old Testament, twenty-two books in number; for, as I have heard, it is handed down that this is the number of the letters among the Hebrews; their respective order and names being as follows. The first is Genesis, then Exodus, next Leviticus, after that Numbers, and then Deuteronomy. Following these there is Joshua, the son of Nun, then Judges, then Ruth. And again, after these four books of Kings, the first and second being reckoned as one book, and so likewise the third and fourth as one book. And again, the first and second of the Chronicles are reckoned as one book. Again Ezra, the first and second are similarly one book. After these there is the book of Psalms, then the Proverbs, next Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs. Job follows, then the Prophets, the twelve being reckoned as one book. Then Isaiah, one book, then Jeremiah with Baruch, Lamentations, and the epistle, one book; afterwards, Ezekiel and Daniel, each one book. Thus far constitutes the Old Testament.

5. Again it is not tedious to speak of the [books] of the New Testament. These are, the four Gospels, according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Afterwards, the Acts of the Apostles and Epistles (called Catholic), seven, viz. of James, one; of Peter, two; of

John, three; after these, one of Jude. In addition, there are fourteen Epistles of Paul, written in this order. The first, to the Romans; then two to the Corinthians; after these, to the Galatians; next, to the Ephesians; then to the Philippians; then to the Colossians; after these, two to the Thessalonians, and that to the Hebrews; and again, two to Timothy; one to Titus; and lastly, that to Philemon. And besides, the Revelation of John.

6. These are fountains of salvation, that they who thirst may be satisfied with the living words they contain. In these alone is proclaimed the doctrine of godliness. Let no man add to these, neither let him take ought from these. For concerning these the Lord put to shame the Sadducees, and said, ‘Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures.’ And He reproved the Jews, saying, ‘Search the Scriptures, for these are they that testify of Me.’

7. But for greater exactness I add this also, writing of necessity; that there are other books besides these not indeed included in the Canon, but appointed by the Fathers to be read by those who newly join us, and who wish for instruction in the word of godliness. The Wisdom of Solomon, and the Wisdom of Sirach, and Esther, and Judith, and Tobit, and that which is called the Teaching of the Apostles, and the Shepherd. But the former, my brethren, are included in the Canon, the latter being [merely] read; nor is there in any place a mention of apocryphal writings. But they are an invention of heretics, who write them when they choose, bestowing upon them their approbation, and assigning to them a date, that so, using them as ancient writings, they may find occasion to lead astray the simple. (Athanasius, *Festal Letter*, 39)

The Athanasian Creed – Likely penned by Ambrose of Milan

(1) Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the catholic [universal] faith; (2) Which faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly. (3) And the catholic [universal] faith is this: That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; (4) Neither confounding the persons nor dividing the substance. (5) For there is one person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Spirit. (6) But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit is all one, the glory equal, the majesty coeternal. (7) Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Spirit. (8) The Father uncreated, the Son uncreated, and the Holy Spirit uncreated. (9) The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, and the Holy Spirit incomprehensible. (10) The Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Spirit eternal. (11) And yet they are not three eternal but one eternal. (12) As also there are not three uncreated nor three incomprehensible, but one uncreated and one incomprehensible. (13) So likewise the Father is almighty, the Son almighty, and the Holy Spirit almighty. (14) And yet they are not three almighties, but one almighty. (15) So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God; (16) And yet they are not three Gods, but one God. (17) So likewise the Father is Lord, the Son Lord, and the Holy Spirit Lord; (18) And yet they are not three Lords but one Lord. (19) For like as we are compelled by the Christian verity to acknowledge every Person by himself to be God and Lord; (20) So are we forbidden by the catholic religion to say; There are three Gods or three Lords. (21) The Father is made of none, neither created nor begotten. (22) The Son is of the Father alone; not made nor created, but begotten. (23) The Holy Spirit is of the Father and of the Son; neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding. (24) So there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons;

one Holy Spirit, not three Holy Spirits. (25) And in this Trinity none is afore or after another; none is greater or less than another. (26) But the whole three persons are coeternal, and coequal. (27) So that in all things, as aforesaid, the Unity in Trinity and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshipped. (28) He therefore that will be saved must thus think of the Trinity. (29) Furthermore it is necessary to everlasting salvation that he also believe rightly the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. (30) For the right faith is that we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and man. (31) God of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds; and man of substance of His mother, born in the world. (32) Perfect God and perfect man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting. (33) Equal to the Father as touching His Godhead, and inferior to the Father as touching His manhood. (34) Who, although He is God and man, yet He is not two, but one Christ. (35) One, not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking of that manhood into God. (36) One altogether, not by confusion of substance, but by unity of person. (37) For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ; (38) Who suffered for our salvation, descended into hell, rose again the third day from the dead; (39) He ascended into heaven, He sits on the right hand of the Father, God, Almighty; (40) From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. (41) At whose coming all men shall rise again with their bodies; (42) and shall give account of their own works. (43) And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting and they that have done evil into everlasting fire. (44) This is the catholic [universal] faith, which except a man believe faithfully he cannot be saved.

Athanasius on the Death of Arius (Letter LIV, To Serapion)

Athanasius to Serapion, a brother and fellow-minister, health in the Lord. . . .

I was not at Constantinople when he died, but Macarius the Presbyter was, and I heard the account of it from him. Arius had been invited by the Emperor Constantine, through the interest of Eusebius [of Nicomedia] and his fellows; and when he entered the presence the Emperor enquired of him, whether he held the Faith of the Catholic Church? And he declared upon oath that he held the right Faith, and gave in an account of his Faith in writing, suppressing the points for which he had been cast out of the Church by the Bishop Alexander, and speciously alleging expressions out of the Scriptures. When therefore he swore that he did not profess the opinions for which Alexander had excommunicated him, [the Emperor] dismissed him, saying, ‘If thy Faith be right, thou hast done well to swear; but if thy Faith be impious, and thou hast sworn, God judge of thee according to thy oath.’ When he thus came forth from the presence of the Emperor, Eusebius and his fellows, with their accustomed violence, desired to bring him into the Church. But Alexander, the Bishop of Constantinople of blessed memory, resisted them, saying that the inventor of the heresy ought not to be admitted to communion; whereupon Eusebius and his fellows threatened, declaring, ‘As we have caused him to be invited by the Emperor, in opposition to your wishes, so to-morrow, though it be contrary to your desire, Arius shall have communion with us in this Church.’ It was the Sabbath when they said this.

When the Bishop Alexander heard this, he was greatly distressed, and entering into the church, he stretched forth his hands unto God, and bewailed himself; and casting himself upon his face in the chancel, he prayed, lying upon the pavement. Macarius also

was present, and prayed with him, and heard his words. And he besought these two things, saying, ‘If Arius is brought to communion to-morrow, let me Thy servant depart, and destroy not the pious with the impious; but if Thou wilt spare Thy Church (and I know that Thou wilt spare), look upon the words of Eusebius and his fellows, and give not thine inheritance to destruction and reproach, and take off Arius, lest if he enter into the Church, the heresy also may seem to enter with him, and henceforward impiety be accounted for piety.’ When the Bishop had thus prayed, he retired in great anxiety; and a wonderful and extraordinary circumstance took place. While Eusebius and his fellows threatened, the Bishop prayed; but Arius, who had great confidence in Eusebius and his fellows, and talked very wildly, urged by the necessities of nature withdrew, and suddenly, in the language of Scripture, ‘falling headlong he burst asunder in the midst,’ and immediately expired as he lay, and was deprived both of communion and of his life together.

Such has been the end of Arius: and Eusebius and his fellows, overwhelmed with shame, buried their accomplice, while the blessed Alexander, amidst the rejoicings of the Church, celebrated the Communion with piety and orthodoxy, praying with all the brethren, and greatly glorifying God, not as exulting in his death (God forbid!), for ‘it is appointed unto all men once to die,’ but because this thing had been shown forth in a manner transcending human judgments. For the Lord Himself judging between the threats of Eusebius and his fellows, and the prayer of Alexander, condemned the Arian heresy, showing it to be unworthy of communion with the Church, and making manifest to all, that although it receive the support of the Emperor and of all mankind, yet it was condemned by the Church herself. So the antichristian gang of the Arian madmen has been shown to be displeasing to God and impious; and many of those who before were deceived by it changed their opinions. For none other than the Lord Himself who was blasphemed by them condemned the heresy which rose up against Him, and again showed that howsoever the Emperor Constantius may now use violence to the Bishops in behalf of it, yet it is excluded from the communion of the Church, and alien from the kingdom of heaven. Wherefore also let the question which has arisen among you be henceforth set at rest; (for this was the agreement made among you), and let no one join himself to the heresy, but let even those who have been deceived repent. For who shall receive what the Lord condemned? And will not he who takes up the support of that which He has made excommunicate, be guilty of great impiety, and manifestly an enemy of Christ?

II. The Cappadocian Fathers

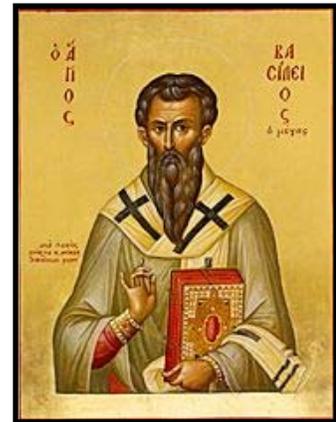
- The Cappadocian Fathers include Basil of Caesarea (330–79); Gregory of Nyssa, Basil’s brother (335–94); and Gregory of Nazianzus, a close friend (330–390)
- These three Christian leaders were instrumental in reclaiming many who had been impacted by Arianism. They ministered in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey), where Arianism had continued to spread even after the Council of Nicaea.

Basil of Caesarea:

H. Dermot McDonald: “In 364 Basil was ordained presbyter and in the spring of 370 he succeeded Eusebius as bishop of Caesarea [Philippi]. His new monastery was at the heart of the complex of hospitals and hostels he founded, largely out of his own pocket, out of his concern for the sick and needy. He took a firm stand against the state-supported Arian party, and wrote several works to oppose their errors. . . . By giving precise meanings to the terms used in talking about the Trinity, Basil paved the way for the work of the Council of Constantinople in 381. He was the first to fix the accepted formula for the Trinity: one *substance* (*ousia*) and three persons (*hypostaseis*)” (*Introduction to the History of Christianity*, ed. Tim Dowley [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995], 175).

In his own words (regarding the Holy Spirit):

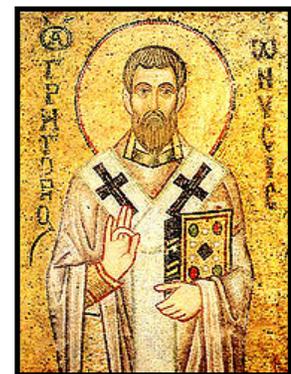
Let us then examine the points one by one. He [the Holy Spirit] is good by nature, in the same way as the Father is good, and the Son is good; the creature on the other hand shares in goodness by choosing the good. He knows “The deep things of God;” [2 Cor. 3:17] the creature [by contrast] receives the manifestation of ineffable things through the Spirit. He quickens together with God, who produces and preserves all things alive, and together with the Son, who gives life. “He that raised up Christ from the dead,” it is said, “shall also quicken your mortal bodies by the spirit that dwells in you;” [1 Cor. 2:10, 11] and again “my sheep hear my voice, ... and I give unto them eternal life;” but Spirit” also, it is said, “gives life;” [Rom. 8:11] and again “the Spirit,” it is said, “is life, because of righteousness.” [John 10:27–28] And the Lord bears witness that “it is the Spirit that quickens; the flesh profits nothing.” [2 Cor. 3:6] How then shall we alienate the Spirit from His quickening power, and make Him belong to lifeless nature? Who is so contentious, who is so utterly without the heavenly gift, [Rom. 8:10] and unfed by God’s good words, who is so devoid of part and lot in eternal hopes, as to sever the Spirit from the Godhead and rank Him with the creature? (*On the Spirit*, 24.56).



Gregory of Nyssa:

In his own words (regarding the Trinity):

They charge us with preaching three Gods, and din into the ears of the multitude this slander, which they never rest from maintaining persuasively. Then truth fights on our side, for we show both publicly to all men, and privately to those who converse with us, that we anathematize any man who says that there are three Gods, and hold him to be not even a Christian. Then, as soon as they hear this, they find Sabellius a handy weapon against us, and the plague that he spread is the subject of continual attacks upon us. . . . Now they charge us with innovation, and



frame their complaint against us in this way:—They allege that while we confess three Persons we say that there is one goodness, and one power, and one Godhead. And in this assertion they do not go beyond the truth; for we do say so. But the ground of their complaint is that their custom does not admit this, and Scripture does not support it. What then is our reply? We do not think that it is right to make their prevailing custom the law and rule of sound doctrine. For if custom is to avail for proof of soundness, we too, surely, may advance our prevailing custom; and if they reject this, we are surely not bound to follow theirs. Let the inspired Scripture, then, be our umpire, and the vote of truth will surely be given to those whose dogmas are found to agree with the Divine words. (Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Holy Trinity, and of the Godhead of the Holy Spirit*, Letter to Eustathius)

Gregory of Nazianzus

In his own words (regarding the deity of Christ):

For we have learnt to believe in and to teach the Deity of the Son from their great and lofty utterances. And what utterances are these? These: God—The Word—He That Was In The Beginning and With The Beginning, and The Beginning. “In the Beginning was The Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God,” [John 1:1] and “With Thee is the Beginning,” [Psalm 110:3] and “He who calls her The Beginning from generations.” [Isaiah 61:4] Then the Son is Only-begotten: The only “begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, it says, He hath declared Him.” [John 1:18] The Way, the Truth, the Life, the Light. “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life;” and “I am the Light of the World.” [John 7:12; 9:5; 14:6] Wisdom and Power, “Christ, the Wisdom of God, and the Power of God.” [1 Cor. 1:24] The Effulgence, the Impress, the Image, the Seal; “Who being the Effulgence of His glory and the Impress of His Essence,” [Heb. 1:3] and “the Image of His Goodness,” and “Him hath God the Father sealed.” [John 6:27] Lord, King, He That Is, The Almighty. “The Lord rained down fire from the Lord;” [Gen 19:24] and “A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Thy Kingdom;” [Psalm 45:6] and “Which is and was and is to come, the Almighty” [Rev. 1:8] —all which are clearly spoken of the Son, with all the other passages of the same force, none of which is an afterthought, or added later to the Son or the Spirit, any more than to the Father Himself. For Their Perfection is not affected by additions. There never was a time when He was without the Word, or when He was not the Father, or when He was not true, or not wise, or not powerful, or devoid of life, or of splendor, or of goodness. (*Oration XXIX*, sect. XVII)



III. Ambrose of Milan (339–397)

His Life

- Born in 339 at Trier, died in 397.
- Practiced in the Roman law-courts and in 370 became governor of Aemilia-Liguria.
- In 374, he became Bishop of Milan. He did not seek to be nominated as a bishop, but was simply trying to arbitrate the process of finding a new one. The people, when they couldn't agree on anyone else, asked Ambrose to take the position.
- At this time, he was baptized and ordained (in only 8 days). He also devoted himself to the study of theology.
- He was partly responsible for the conversion of Augustine.
- He was an outstanding preacher and a staunch upholder of orthodoxy.

**His Writings**

- Most of his writings were defenses of Christian ethics and morality against Paganism and Arianism.
- The rest of his writings were sermons on instructions given to candidate for baptism, etc.
- He also advocated the separation of church and state; standing against the increasing influence of imperial control on the Christian church.
- He wrote some Latin hymns and many attribute the Athanasian Creed to his pen.

In his own words (defending the Trinity):

Now this is the declaration of our Faith, that we say that God is One, neither dividing His Son from Him, as do the heathen, nor denying, with the Jews, that He was begotten of the Father before all worlds, and afterwards born of the Virgin; nor yet, like Sabellius, confounding the Father with the Word, and so maintaining that Father and Son are one and the same Person; nor again, as doth Photinus, holding that the Son first came into existence in the Virgin's womb: nor believing, with Arius, in a number of diverse Powers, and so, like the benighted heathen, making out more than one God. For it is written: "Hear, O Israel: the Lord thy God is one God." . . .

If, then, God is One, one is the name, one is the power, of the Trinity. Christ Himself, indeed, saith: "Go ye, baptize the nations in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." [Matt. 28:19] In the *name*, mark you, not in the *names*."

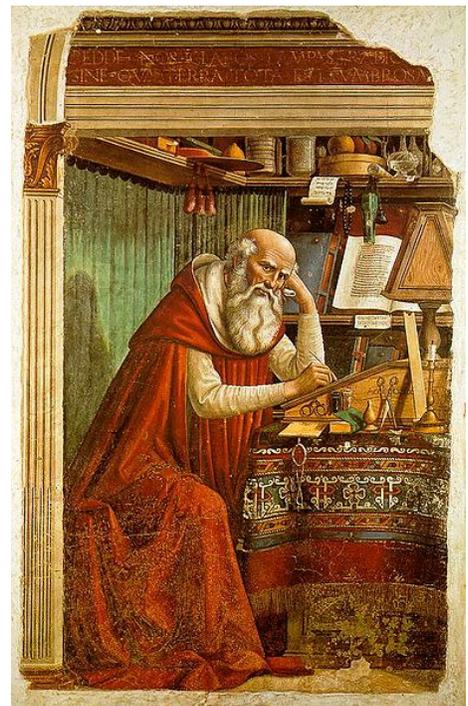
Moreover, Christ Himself saith: “I and the Father are One.” [John 10:30] “One,” said He, that there be no separation of power and nature; but again, “*We are*,” that you may recognize Father and Son, forasmuch as the perfect Father is believed to have begotten the perfect Son, [Matt. 5:48] and the Father and the Son are One, not by confusion of Person, but by unity of nature.

We say, then, that there is one God, not two or three Gods, this being the error into which the impious heresy of the Arians doth run with its blasphemies. For it says that there are three Gods, in that it divides the Godhead of the Trinity; whereas the Lord, in saying, “Go, baptize the nations in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” hath shown that the Trinity is of one power. We confess Father, Son, and Spirit, understanding in a perfect Trinity both fullness of Divinity and unity of power. (*Exposition of the Christian Faith*, 1.1.6–10)

IV. Jerome (342–420)

His Life

- Born at Stridon in Dalmatia in 342. Studied at Rome, travelled in Gaul and then took up an ascetic life at Aquileia.
- He had an extensive library and enjoyed reading both the Bible and the Roman classics, especially Cicero. (At one point, he had a dream where his love of Cicero was confronted as being greater than his love for Scripture.)
- He set out for Palestine, settling in the Syrian desert for 4–5 years (a hermit) and there learned Hebrew. He was one of the few to learn Hebrew at this time. Not even Augustine knew Hebrew. Augustine felt the LXX was sufficient.
- He then returned to Rome to teach asceticism for some time and returned to Bethlehem in 386 to preside over a men's monastery. He had a reputation for being easily irritated and difficult to get along with.



His Writings

- Jerome’s scholarship was unsurpassed in the early Church.
- His greatest accomplishment was his translation of the Bible into Latin (Vulgate, meaning, “language of the people”) from the original languages (383-405). This he did at the request of Damasus, Bishop of Rome—a monumental work.
- Jerome’s Vulgate included the apocryphal books as they were in the Septuagint. However, he agreed to this compromise over personal objections.
- **Key Quote (regarding the Apocrypha)** “As then the Church reads Judith, Tobit and the books of Maccabees, but does not admit them among the canonical Scriptures, so let it read these two volumes (Wisdom of Solomon and Ecclesiasticus) for the edification of the people, not to give authority to doctrines of the Church.” (*Preface to Jerome’s Works*, p. 492)
- Jerome also wrote many Biblical commentaries (strong in linguistic/topographical information); and contributed to the doctrinal discussions which raged during his day (e.g. Arius and Pelagianism.)
- On the positive side, Jerome emphasized the exegetical study of Scripture and the importance of Christ-centered preaching. On the negative side, Jerome overemphasized the merits of celibacy including the perpetual virginity of Mary.

V. John Chrysostom (347–407)

His Life

- 347–407 Bishop of Constantinople and "Doctor of the Church"
- He studied law under Libanius of Antioch and Theology under Diodore of Tarsus (Antiochene School).
- Friend of Theodore of Mopsuestia, who stressed grammatical-historical context for interpretation of Scripture and opposed allegorization.
- He desired monastic life and became a hermit which damaged his health.
- He became a deacon in 381, a priest in 386, and a bishop (patriarch) in 398.



His Writings

- During 386–98 while a priest, he became known as "golden mouthed" due to his ability to preach and his great powers of oratory.
- He delivered series of "Homilies" on Genesis, Matthew, John, Romans, Galatians, Corinthians, Ephesians, Timothy and Titus. He was known as the greatest of Christian expositors—these are preserved. (He is known more as a preacher than as a theologian. This is in contrast to Augustine who held to a more allegorical hermeneutic, and is known more as a theologian.)
- He was against allegorical exegesis and insisted on literal interpretation.
- His honesty, asceticism, and tactlessness did not always win him friendship with other bishops. This led to false charges of doctrinal heresy and his removal as bishop. His continued openness about his beliefs led to his exile to Antioch which even the people of Constantinople and the Bishop of Rome (Innocent I) could not stop. This was not enough punishment and he was forced to travel on foot in winter weather causing his death.
- His chief contributions include his preaching, his exegesis, his liturgical reforms, and his personal holiness.
- **Key Quote on Expository Preaching:** “For we ought to unlock the passage by first giving a clear interpretation of the words. What then does the saying mean? . . . We must not attend to the words merely, but turn our attention to the sense, and learn the aim of the speaker, and the cause and the occasion, and by putting all these things together turn out the hidden meaning.” (*Against Marcionists and Manichaens*, Section 1)

* * * *

{ EXCURSUS: CHRYSOSTOM ON SAVING FAITH }

John Chrysostom on the nature of justification by faith alone:

(regarding the faith of Abraham)

(Chrysostom again) The patriarch Abraham himself before receiving circumcision had been declared righteous on the score of faith alone: before circumcision, the text says, “Abraham believed God, and credit for it brought him to righteousness.” (John Chrysostom, Cited from *Fathers of the Church*, Vol. 82, *Homilies on Genesis 18-45*, 27.7 (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1990), 167.)

(exposition on Romans 4):

Now since the Jews kept turning over and over the fact, that the Patriarch, and friend of God, was the first to receive circumcision, he wishes to show, that it was by faith that he too was justified. And this was quite a vantage ground to insist upon. For a person who had no works, to be justified by faith, was nothing unlikely. But for a person richly adorned with good deeds, not to be made just from hence, but from faith, this is the thing to cause wonder, and to set the power of faith in a strong light. (John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, Homily 8; re: Rom. 4:1–2.)

(Chrysostom again) What is the “law of faith?” It is, being saved by grace. Here he shows God’s power, in that He has not only saved, but has even justified, and led them to boasting, and this too without needing works, but looking for faith only. (John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, 7.27.)

(on Romans 11:6)

Why then are you afraid of drawing nigh, since you have no works demanded of you? . . . Let us then give thanks, that we belong to them that are being saved, and not having been able to save ourselves by works, were saved by the gift of God. But in giving thanks, let us not do this in words only, but in works and actions. For this is the genuine thanksgiving, when we do those things whereby God is sure to be glorified, and flee from those from which we have been set free.

(on Corinthians)

(Chrysostom again) God allowed his Son to suffer as if a condemned sinner, so that we might be delivered from the penalty of our sins. This is God’s righteousness, that we are not justified by works (for then they would have to be

perfect, which is impossible), but by grace, in which case all our sin is removed. (John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians*, 11:5; NPNF 1 12:334; ACCS NT 7:252; cited from Thomas Oden, *The Justification Reader*, 61.)

(on Galatians 3)

(*Chrysostom again*) And this he removes, with great skill and prudence, turning their argument against themselves, and showing that those who relinquish the Law are not only not cursed, but blessed; and they who keep it, not only not blessed but cursed. They said that he who kept not the Law was cursed, but he proves that he who kept it was cursed, and he who kept it not, blessed. Again, they said that he who adhered to faith alone was cursed, but he shows that he who adhered to faith alone, is blessed. And how does he prove all this? for it is no common thing which we have promised; wherefore it is necessary to give close attention to what follows. He had already shown this, by referring to the words spoken to the Patriarch, ‘In thee shall all nations be blessed,’ (Genesis 12:4.) at a time, that is, when Faith existed, not the Law. (John Chrysostom, *Commentary on Galatians*, 3:8.)

(on Ephesians 2:8)

Even faith, [Paul] says, is not from us. For if the Lord had not come, if he had not called us, how should we have been able to believe? “For how,” [Paul] says, “shall they believe if they have not heard?” (Rom. 10:14). So even the act of faith is not self-initiated. It is, he says, “the gift of God” (Eph. 2:8c). (John Chrysostom, *Homily on Ephesians 2:8*; IOEP 2:160; ACCS NT 8:134; cited from Thomas Oden, *The Justification Reader*, 44.)

Elsewhere Chrysostom writes, “For by faith alone He saved us. . . . Instead of a certain manner of life, He brought in faith. For that He might not save us to no purpose, He both Himself underwent the penalty, and also required of men the faith that is by doctrines” (cf. Chrysostom’s Homily on Ephesians 2:11–12)

(on Ephesians 2:10)

(*Chrysostom again*) God’s mission was not to save people in order that they may remain barren or inert. For Scripture says that faith has saved us. Put better: Since God willed it, faith has saved us. Now in what case, tell me, does faith save without itself doing anything at all? Faith’s workings themselves are a gift of God, lest anyone should boast. What then is Paul saying? Not that God has forbidden works but that he has forbidden us to be justified by works. No one,

Paul says, is justified by works, precisely in order that the grace and benevolence of God may become apparent. (John Chrysostom, *Homily on Ephesians*, 4.2.9. cited from Mark J. Edwards, ed., ACCS, NT VI: Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 134. See also John Chrysostom. F. Field, ed., *Interpretatio omnium Epistolarum Paulinarum per Homilias Facta* (Oxford J. H. Parker, 1845-1862), 2:160.)

(on Colossians 1:26–28)

(Chrysostom again) To have brought humanity, more senseless than stones, to the dignity of angels simply through bare words, and faith alone, without any hard work, is indeed a rich and glorious mystery. It is just as if one were to take a dog, quite consumed with hunger and the mange, foul and loathsome to see, and not so much as able to move but lying passed out, and make him all at once into a human being and to display him upon the royal throne. (John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Colossians 1:26–28*; Cited from Joel C. Elowsky, *We Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 98.)

(on 1 Timothy 1:15–16)

(Chrysostom again) For as people, on receiving some great good, ask themselves if it is not a dream, as not believing it; so it is with respect to the gifts of God. What then was it that was thought incredible? That those who were enemies and sinners, justified by neither the law nor works, should immediately through faith alone be advanced to the highest favor. On this head [topic] accordingly Paul has discoursed at length in his Epistle to the Romans, and here again at length. “This is a faithful saying,” he says, “and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” As the Jews were chiefly attracted by this, he persuades them not to listen to the law, since they could not attain salvation by it without faith. Against this he contends, for it seemed to them incredible that a person who had misspent all his former life in vain and wicked actions should afterwards be saved by his faith alone. On this account he says, “It is a saying to be believed.” (John Chrysostom, *Homilies on 1 Timothy 1:15–16*; cited from Joel C. Elowsky, *We Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 98.)

On a somewhat related note, Chrysostom elsewhere explains that faith alone saves, even apart from something as important as water baptism. He writes, “Attend to this, you who come to baptism at the close of life, for we indeed pray that after baptism you may have also this deportment, but you are seeking and doing your utmost to depart without it. For, what though you be justified: yet is it of faith only. But we pray that thou should have as well the confidence that comes of good works” (John Chrysostom, *On the Second Epistle of St. Paul The Apostle to the Corinthians*, Homily 2.8).

VI. Augustine of Hippo (354–430)

His Life

- Born to a Christian mother, named Monica. His father would come to Christ through Monica’s testimony. Monica also became a major spiritual influence on her son. She prayed deeply (with tears) and consistently for her son’s conversion.
- Augustine became a student of rhetoric and a teacher of literature, oratory and philosophy.
- Extremely worldly early life. We know this because of his *Confessions*, which emphasize the sinfulness of his youth.
- He lived for 14 years with a woman out of wedlock and had an illegitimate son, Adeodatus, who lived 18 years.
- He joined the Manichaean heresy and became an ascetic.



Stephen J. Nichols: “If we were to look in on Augustine’s life at certain times, however, we would be quite surprised to find out that the one we were observing would become the towering figure of church history. In his early adulthood, he’s running from God. The Scriptures lack rhetorical punch for him, the work of the theologians leaves him intellectually unsatisfied, and a Christian ethic imposes far too much restriction on him—especially when he looks upon his mistress. Christianity is both too much and not enough for Augustine. This despite the lifelong prayers and pleas of his saintly mother, Monica.

Augustine himself would agree with our surprise. In fact, he would state it much more starkly. . . . Herein is Augustine’s story. It is the story of the Hound of Heaven—Augustine applied that term to God with the utmost reverence—tracking him down” (*Pages from Church History* [Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2006] pp. 66–67)

- Factors leading to his conversion:
 - Constant prayers of his mother.
 - Conversion of a friend, Victorinus.
 - Testimony of Ambrose, bishop of Milan, and a preacher.
 - Exhortation from his friend, Allochus, to read his Bible.

- One day, while walking, he heard a child say, “pick it up and read it.” He opened his Bible to Romans 13:13-14 and was saved (386 AD).
- He and Allochus were baptized on Easter Sunday, 387, by Ambrose. Augustine would have been in his early 30s.

His Teachings

- Most influential of the fathers of the western church.
- After 396, he became the Bishop of Hippo (Africa) where he continued until his death. Hippo Regius is modern day Annaba, Algeria.
- He is known for many things including his great spirituality.
- Among his significant works are his *Confessions of St. Augustine* (397–400) and his *City of God*. The latter is a defense of Christians who were accused of sacking Rome in 410.
- His writings are voluminous and massively influenced almost every sphere of Western thought. His writings develop a Christian philosophy of history and formulate doctrinal positions which became the basis of controversy.

Stephen J. Nichols: “That Augustine would come to be such a central figure is due to the fact that he wrote so broadly and so early. He did not coin the term *Trinity*. Tertullian takes that honor. But Augustine was the first, apart from the revelation of the Trinitarian doctrine by Scripture’s authors, to offer the fullest treatment of it and the most enduring arguments for it. He expressed this in his work *On the Trinity*, ten years in the making. He also offered one of the first fully developed and truly Christian philosophies of history and of society. This shines through in his work *The City of God*, another lengthy project that entailed thirteen years” (*Pages from Church History*, 68–69).

- Dispute with Pelagius
 - A very significant controversy involving the monk Pelagius (354–415)
 - Pelagius held several important views:
 - Adam was created with free will (“the image of God”)—the ability to choose.
 - Adam’s fall made only himself a sinner—not depraved.

- All children are born as Adam was before the fall—no original sin.
 - The human race does not die in consequence of Adam's fall – denying the noetic effects of sin.
 - The law as well as the gospel leads to heaven—salvation by works.
- Out of this came:
 - **Augustinianism** – emphasized the depravity of human nature due to the sin of Adam, the necessity of divine predestination, and the priority of faith over reason.
 - **Pelagianism** – emphasized human ability and free will rather than depravity and sinfulness, even the possibility of living without sin. The effects of Adam's sin upon his descendants was simply that of a bad example.
 - **Semi-Pelagianism** – a middle position emphasizing that faith begins independently of God's grace, although such grace is subsequently necessary for salvation. A position including Catholics and Arminianism. The view was set forth in the 5th and 6th centuries and the name coined in the 16th century.

In his own words (regarding Total Depravity):

Man's nature, indeed, was created at first faultless and without any sin; but that nature of man in which everyone is born from Adam, now wants the Physician, because it is not sound. All good qualities, no doubt, which it still possesses in its make, life, senses, intellect, it has of the Most High God, its Creator and Maker. But the flaw, which darkens and weakens all those natural goods, so that it has need of illumination and healing, it has not contracted from its blameless Creator—but from that original sin, which it committed by free will. Accordingly, criminal nature has its part in most righteous punishment. For, if we are now newly created in Christ, we were, for all that, children of wrath, even as others, “but God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, by whose grace we were saved.” (*On Nature and Grace, against Pelagius*, chapter 3)

In his own words (from his *Confessions*):

Great are You, O Lord, and greatly to be praised; great is Your power, and of Your wisdom there is no end. And man, being a part of Your creation, desires to praise You, man, who bears about with him his mortality, the witness of his sin, even the witness that You “resist the proud,” —yet man, this part of Your creation, desires to praise You. You move us to delight in praising You; for You have formed us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in You Lord. . . . And those who seek the Lord shall praise

Him. For those who seek shall find Him, and those who find Him shall praise Him. Let me seek You, Lord, in calling on You, and call on You in believing in You; for You have been preached unto us. O Lord, my faith calls on You,—that faith which You have imparted to me, which You have breathed into me through the incarnation of Your Son, through the ministry of Your preacher (*Confessions*, 1.1).

Just for fun (on the importance of learning biblical languages):

The great remedy for ignorance of proper signs [words and symbols in Scripture] is knowledge of languages. And men who speak the Latin tongue, of whom are those I have undertaken to instruct, need two other languages for the knowledge of Scripture, Hebrew and Greek, that they may have recourse to the original texts if the endless diversity of the Latin translators throw them into doubt. Although, indeed, we often find Hebrew words untranslated in the books as for example, Amen, Halleluia, Racha, Hosanna, and others of the same kind. Some of these, although they could have been translated, have been preserved in their original form on account of the more sacred authority that attaches to it, as for example, Amen and Halleluia. Some of them, again, are said to be untranslatable into another tongue, of which the other two I have mentioned are examples. For in some languages there are words that cannot be translated into the idiom of another language. And this happens chiefly in the case of interjections, which are words that express rather an emotion of the mind than any part of a thought we have in our mind. And the two given above are said to be of this kind, Racha expressing the cry of an angry man, Hosanna that of a joyful man. But the knowledge of these languages is necessary, not for the sake of a few words like these which it is very easy to mark and to ask about, but, as has been said, on account of the diversities among translators. (*On Christian Doctrine*, 2.11)

{ ADDENDUM }

THE LIFE AND IMPACT OF AUGUSTINE

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SOVEREIGN JOY:
A STUDY OF SOVEREIGN GRACE AS THE GIFT OF JOY IN THE THOUGHT OF
AUGUSTINE

God ordains that we gaze on His glory,
dimly mirrored in the ministry of His flawed servants.
He intends for us to consider their lives
and peer through the imperfections of their faith
and behold the beauty of their God.
– John Piper –

Introduction

In the sixth century, Saint Isidore the Archbishop of Seville inscribed the following above the cabinet which contained all the works of Augustine: “He who claims to have read all this is a liar.”¹⁹⁰ Following suit, John Piper, in his biographical sketch of Augustine writes, “Virtually everyone who speaks or writes on Augustine has to disclaim thoroughness.”¹⁹¹ I will be no different. The following study of Augustine will by no means exhaustively cover his life, his theology, or his impact on the world. Perhaps entire libraries would be required for such a daunting and improbable task. Neither will I challenge Saint Isidore by giving any inclination that I have read even close to what would be necessary to both adequately understand and thoroughly present the full significance of the life and thought of Augustine of Hippo. Nevertheless, I do trust that by God’s grace the following overview of Augustine’s life and some of the major focuses of his thought and theology will be beneficial for the reader.

This syllabus will be presented in three parts. The first part will include an overview of Augustine’s life, highlighting more of the historical-biographical component of his story than anything else. This is aided immensely by the detail of his *Confessions*. In the second part, I will present the major facets of Augustine’s theology: the absolute sovereignty and supremacy of divine grace, the corresponding totality of man’s depravity and sinfulness, and the centrality of joy and the affections in the Christian life. After this, I will seek to present Augustine’s unique intertwining of God’s sovereignty and the believer’s joy, and will examine his Biblical, yet far too rarely emphasized, conviction that God’s sovereign grace is experienced as the gift of joy in Him. Along with T. Kermit Scott, I acknowledge that “while these doctrines are certainly not the whole of Augustinianism (which would include his views of the church, political life, spirituality, monastic discipline and other subjects), they are, I think, its most distinctive features and the basis for his ideas on most other subjects.”¹⁹² Finally, in the third part of the syllabus, I will present the impact that Augustine has had on the world and the relevance of his life and thought for twenty-first century Christians.

¹⁹⁰ T. Kermit Scott, *Augustine: His Thought in Context* (New York: Paulist Press, 1995), 153.

¹⁹¹ John Piper, *The Legacy of Sovereign Joy: God’s Triumphant Grace in the Lives of Augustine, Luther, and Calvin* (Wheaton IL: Crossway Books, 2000), 45.

¹⁹² Scott, *His Thought in Context*, 156.

His Life

Early Life (354-370)

- Aurelius Augustinus, whom the world commonly knows as Augustine, was born on November 13, AD 354¹⁹³ in the North African town of Thagaste. Thagaste was a hill town about 45 miles inland from the Mediterranean¹⁹⁴ in the province of Numidia Consularis, a cross-roads and market¹⁹⁵ not far from Carthage¹⁹⁶. It is modern-day Souk-Ahras in eastern Algeria.¹⁹⁷
- His father Patricius (or Patrick) was “a middle class Roman civil servant with some standing in the community.”¹⁹⁸ He was a town counselor, which was considered to be a minor public office, and was of modest means.¹⁹⁹
- Patricius was not a Christian, but was thoroughly pagan, and regularly practiced pagan worship and sacrifice as part of the Roman world. He often countered the Christian influence of Augustine’s mother throughout their home life. And though he cared very little about his son’s spiritual development, he desired that Augustine be well educated. He was especially concerned that his son be skilled in rhetoric.²⁰⁰
- His mother Monica played an extremely important role in his life. Humanly speaking, it was through her constant instruction in the Scriptures, her Christian influence, and supremely her consistent and persistent prayers that Augustine was saved.
- As Nichols puts it, Monica “is the ever-present human instrument of the Hound of Heaven. As Augustine travels in pursuit of a professional career, Monica is not far behind. She constantly prays for her son; she arranges for others to talk with him... and she herself prods and nudges as only mothers can do. When Augustine is



¹⁹³ B. B. Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine* (Philadelphia, PA: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1974), 305.

¹⁹⁴ Stephen Cooper, *Augustine for Armchair Theologians* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 13.

¹⁹⁵ Henry Chadwick, *Augustine: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986) 7.

¹⁹⁶ Roger Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology: Twenty Centuries of Tradition and Reform* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1999), 256.

¹⁹⁷ Bryan Litfin, *Getting to Know the Church Fathers: An Evangelical Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2007), 217.

¹⁹⁸ Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology*, 257.

¹⁹⁹ Stephen Nichols, *Pages from Church History: A Guided Tour of Christian Classics*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2006), 78.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

converted, he immediately seeks her out. . . . Throughout all of the turns and twists, against all the barriers and roadblocks, Monica never let up in her prayers and never lost hope in God’s power to save.”²⁰¹

- In Augustine’s account of his own journey through his rebellion and into the presence of God, he gives much credit to his mother’s tears and prayers:

*You stretched out Your hand from on high and pulled my soul out of these murky depths because my mother, who was faithful to You, was weeping for me more bitterly than ever mothers wept for the bodily death of their children. In her faith and in the spiritual discernment she possessed by Your gift she regarded me as dead; and You heard her, O Lord, You heard her and did not scorn those tears of hers which gushed forth and watered the ground beneath her eyes wherever she prayed.*²⁰²

- During the time of her son’s rebellion, Monica importuned a bishop to talk to Augustine and persuade him away from his harmful convictions. Apparently, this bishop was known to do so with those wayward folks who might profit from his counsel. However, he considered Augustine, at that point, to be so prideful and unteachable that he refused and counseled her simply to pray for him. Augustine himself recounts of Monica’s faithfulness: “These assurances did not satisfy her. She pleaded all the more insistently and with free-flowing tears that he would consent to see me and discuss matters with me. A little vexed, he answered, ‘Go away now; but hold on to this: it is inconceivable that he should perish, a son of tears like yours.’”²⁰³

Rebellion (370-386)

- When Augustine was 16, he left Thagaste to study at the academy in Carthage. Although he was raised by his mother to be a Christian (at least in the outward sense), it was in Carthage during the time of his studies that he wandered from any semblance of being a practicing follower of Christ.
- Church historian Roger Olson puts it as follows: it was at the academy in Carthage “where he alternated between trying to ‘scratch the itching sore of lust’ and attempting to discover the meaning of life through studying philosophy and religion.”²⁰⁴ The lust of the flesh and the boastful pride of life captivated his affections in his younger years.

The Lust of the Flesh

- While in Carthage, at around 17 or 18, he entered into a steady, relationship with a girlfriend whom he never married. Though they were living together and the relationship was sexual, he would live faithfully with this woman (whom he never names in his *Confessions*) for thirteen years. Soon after the commencement of their relationship

²⁰¹ Nichols, *Pages from Church History.*, 77.

²⁰² Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Maria Boulding (New York: Vintage Books, 1997), 51 (III.11.19).

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 52-53 (III.12.21).

²⁰⁴ Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology*, 257.

(around the year 371), they had a son and named him Adeodatus, which means *gift of God*.

- Litfin pointedly describes Augustine’s life with his mistress in Carthage as “his first real attempt to satisfy the restlessness in his soul: through sex.”²⁰⁵ Augustine himself would lament this time of immorality as he reflected on it after his conversion:

*I refused to satisfy my internal hunger with your spiritual food, my God, and I was unaware of any need. ... My soul was sick and covered in sores, and it rubbed against material things in a desperate attempt to relieve the itching. ... To love and be loved in return was what excited me, especially if I could enjoy my lover’s body. So I polluted the stream of friendship with the filth of lust and obscured its brightness with foul passions.*²⁰⁶

The Pride of Life

- Warfield remarks that “from his youth he was consumed by an insatiable thirst for knowledge.”²⁰⁷ Yet this insatiable thirst was further increased while Augustine was in Carthage. Around 373 and 374, when Augustine was 19 years old, he read Cicero’s *Hortensius*, and “was so inflamed that he thenceforth devoted his life to the pursuit of truth.”²⁰⁸

*The book changed my way of feeling and the character of my prayers to You, O Lord, for under its influence my petitions and desires altered. All my hollow hopes suddenly seemed worthless, and with unbelievable intensity my heart burned with longing for the immortality that wisdom seemed to promise. ... By [the call of wisdom] I was aroused and kindled and set on fire to love and seek and capture and hold fast and strongly cling not to this or that school, but to wisdom itself, whatever it might be.*²⁰⁹

- The only thing that checked his enthusiasm, Augustine goes on to say, was that he found no mention of the name of Christ in Cicero’s *Hortensius*, and this led him to the Scriptures he had heard so much of in his youth.
- However, “the lowly Scriptures – especially as read in the rough Old Latin Version – had nothing to offer to the finical rhetorician, and his eyes were holden that he could not penetrate their meaning: he was offended by their servant-form and – seeking wisdom, not salvation – turned from them in disgust.”²¹⁰
- “He was repelled by the obscurity of [the Bible’s] content and the barbarous style of the rather primitive version made by half-educated missionaries in the second century. The

²⁰⁵ Litfin, *Getting to Know the Church Fathers*, 217.

²⁰⁶ As quoted in Litfin, *Getting to Know the Church Fathers*, 217-218.

²⁰⁷ Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine*, 305.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Augustine, *Confessions*, 41-42 (III.4.7)

²¹⁰ Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine*, 354.

Old Latin Bible was not a book to impress a man whose mind was full of elegant Ciceronian diction and Virgilian turns of phrase.”²¹¹

When I studied the Bible and compared it with Cicero’s dignified prose, it seemed to me unworthy. My swollen pride recoiled from its style and my intelligence failed to penetrate to its inner meaning. Scripture is a reality that grows along with little children, but I disdained to be a little child.”²¹²

- The result was a formal break between Augustine and the faith of his mother.

Enamored with Manichaeism

- In reaction to his disappointment with Scripture, he found himself enamored with a Christian heresy called Manichaeism, named after the third-century Persian philosopher, Mani, who founded it.
- Manichaeism sought to syncretize Christianity and Gnosticism with Zoroastrianism, and, by some accounts, also Judaism and Platonism.²¹³ Their Gnostic influence was felt in their radical dualism, as they conceived of no supreme, good, omnipotent power but an eternal struggle between the realms of light and darkness. “Before the world began, Light deceived Darkness, causing the Darkness to consume some of the Light. The purpose of the world and creation is to overcome this Darkness, to redeem the Light.”²¹⁴
- “The Manichaeans were the rationalists of the day. Professing the highest reverence for Christ and continually bearing His name on their lips, they yet set forth, under his cloak, a purely naturalistic system.”²¹⁵
- Part of the blend of a naturalistic rationalism with a disdain for the physical, the Manichaeans had rejected the Old Testament as God’s Word. To them, it was “unspiritual and disgusting. . . . Christ did not need the witness of the Hebrew prophets: He spoke for Himself, directly to the soul, by His elevated message, by His Wisdom and His miracles. God needed no other altar than the mind, particularly a mind such as the young Augustine’s.”²¹⁶
- Because of the platonic, dualistic influence, the Manichaeans identified the soul and the immaterial with the realm of Light, and the body and the material with the realm of Darkness. Thus, along with the Gnostics, they believed Jesus had not come in the flesh, but only appeared to be human. And so if we are to “overcome the Darkness,” we must treat the body severely in order to liberate our soul. It was a sort of ascetic legalism.

²¹¹ Chadwick, *A Very Short Introduction*, 11-12.

²¹² Augustine, *Confessions*, 42 (III.5.9)

²¹³ Nichols, *Pages from Church History*, 74.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine*, 355.

²¹⁶ Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1967), 43.

- One might not expect that a religion with such an emphasis on asceticism and a depriving the flesh of its desires would appeal to a young man enslaved to lust – unless, quips biographer Henry Chadwick, “unless it were that one could attribute all one’s lower impulses to the powers of darkness and disown personal responsibility.”²¹⁷ As Litfin notes, “it gave him a clear conscience with respect to his sexual addiction. He could claim that his fleshly body had overpowered the good inclination within him, so he just couldn’t help sinning. His true self was the ‘good soul’ inside of him, which remained untainted by his outward moral failings.”²¹⁸ Augustine would align himself with the Manichaeans for the next ten years.
- Augustine’s mother was so grieved about his enthusiastically imbibing and identifying with heretical teachings that she actually kicked him out of the house, though never ceased praying for him with tears.²¹⁹ Eventually, she received him back when she knew that “his defection was not hopeless.”²²⁰
- As Litfin would put it, “Augustine was too much of an intellectual to remain with the Manichees for long. Eventually their trite platitudes became apparent to him, and their superficial answers to perplexing questions turned him off.”²²¹ When Augustine finally had the chance to put his nagging, soul-wrenching questions to the Manichaeans’ leading philosopher, Faustus, he found that as they had no answers for him, he had no place for them.²²²

In reaction to this disappointment [in Scripture] I fell among a set of proud madmen, exceedingly carnal and talkative people in whose mouths were diabolical snares and a sticky mess compounded by mixing the syllables of Your name, and the names of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, who is our Paraclete and Consoler. These names were never far from their mouths, but amounted to no more than sound and the clacking of tongues, for their hearts were empty of the truth. They would say, ‘Truth, truth!’ and had plenty to tell me on the subject, but truth had no place in them. . . . I was hungering and thirsting for You, not for Your creations, not even for Your spiritual creations, but for Yourself, O Truth, in whom there is no variation, no play of changing shadow; and all they set before me were dishes of glittering myths.²²³

Embracing Neo-Platonism

- Shortly after falling in with the Manichaeans, in 376 Augustine began teaching at the academy in Carthage, and would continue doing so until 383 when he would sail to Rome. He would break from the Manichaeans in the next year.

²¹⁷ Chadwick, *A Very Short Intro*, 12.

²¹⁸ Litfin, *Getting to Know the Church Fathers*, 218-219.

²¹⁹ Augustine, *Confessions*, 51 (III.11.19).

²²⁰ Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine*, 355.

²²¹ Litfin, *Getting to Know the Church Fathers*, 219.

²²² Nichols, *Pages from Church History*, 79; Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology*, 262.

²²³ Augustine, *Confessions*, 42-43 (III.6.10)

- In that next year, he secured a professorship of rhetoric, or communication, in Milan, “the seat of the imperial court”²²⁴ in the Western Roman Empire. He held this position from 384 to 388. These years would be arguably the most important years of his life.
- While in this teaching post, at 31 years old, Augustine discovered the philosophy of what we would today call Neo-Platonism, which was championed by a philosopher named Plotinus (205-270) and was being championed and presented by his student, Porphyry of Tyre.²²⁵
- This was another discovery – on the order of the discovery of Cicero’s *Hortensius* – that contributed powerfully to the development of Augustine’s thought and his journey in search of true wisdom. Contrary to the purely naturalistic rationalism of the Manichaeans, “this was nothing less than the discovery of metaphysics,” says Warfield. “Up to this time Augustine’s learning had been largely empirical and his thought was confined to crassly materialistic forms. Now the writings of the Neo-Platonists came into his hands and revealed to him an entirely new world – the world of spirit.”²²⁶
- Plotinus’s teaching included some familiar Gnostic categories, such as the radical dualism that highlighted a fundamental opposition between spirit and matter, as well as the idea of aeon-like emanations from the Absolute Being constituting creative agencies in the world. The first such agency was *nous*, or pure intelligence. “From this flows the soul of the world; from this, in turn, flow the souls of humans and animals, and finally matter.”²²⁷
- Though there would be much from this pagan philosophy that Augustine would eventually find to contradict with the truth of Biblical Christianity, his infatuation with Neo-Platonism “gave him one of the most important keys to unlock the door that opened onto his mother’s religious faith.”²²⁸
- That is, it argued for an immaterial spiritual reality, which – in a sense – moved him closer to a Biblical philosophy as compared to the thoroughly materialistic philosophy of the Manichaeans. Also, Neo-Platonism answered one of Augustine’s nagging questions that the Manichaeans failed to answer: the problem of evil. The Neo-Platonists posited that evil was not a substance, but an absence of good. And so the question of a good God *creating* evil was answered in Augustine’s mind: evil is not a created thing, and so is not a blight on a good God’s résumé.²²⁹

²²⁴ Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology*, 257.

²²⁵ Chadwick, *A Very Short Introduction*, 9.

²²⁶ Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine*, 360-361.

²²⁷ Piper, *The Legacy of Sovereign Joy*, 49.

²²⁸ Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology*, 257.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*; Augustine, *Confessions*, 45 (III.6.12).

A Mother, a Mistress, and a Marriage

- In the spring of 385, Monica came to Milan to visit her son. One of her primary objectives while visiting was to arrange a proper marriage for Augustine with a well-to-do Christian family. Even though she was undoubtedly trying to help and move her son in the direction of a more respectable lifestyle, “this put Augustine into a heart-wrenching crisis and set him up for even deeper sin, even as his conversion was on the horizon.”²³⁰
- An arranged marriage to a Christian girl would leave no place for the woman he had lived with for the past fifteen years. He tells the heartbreaking story of sending her back to Africa, never to see her dear companion or her only son again.

*Meanwhile my sins were multiplying, for the woman with whom I had been cohabiting was ripped from my side, being regarded as an obstacle to my marriage. So deeply was she engrafted into my heart that it was left torn and wounded and trailing blood. She had returned to Africa, vowing to You that she would never give herself to another man, and the son I had fathered by her was left with me.*²³¹

- And that was not all. Not only did he send this poor woman away from the only man she had ever known and the only son she would ever have, but he did not even remain faithful until the girl he was promised to marry was of marriageable age.

*But I was too unhappy to follow a woman’s example [of vowing to never have another]: I faced two years of waiting before I could marry the girl to whom I was betrothed, and I chafed at the delay, for I was no lover of marriage but the slave of lust. So I got myself another woman, in no sense a wife, that my soul’s malady might be sustained.*²³²

- In the spring of 385, Monica came to Milan to visit her son. One of her primary objectives while visiting was to arrange a proper marriage for Augustine with a well-to-do Christian family. Even though she was undoubtedly trying to help and move her son in the direction of a more respectable lifestyle, “this put Augustine into a heart-wrenching crisis and set him up for even deeper sin, even as his conversion was on the horizon.”²³³
- Church historian Stephen Nichols helpfully and succinctly sums up what I think is a popular sentiment regarding this stage of rebellion in Augustine’s life: “In his early adulthood, he’s running from God. The Scriptures lack rhetorical punch for him, the work of the theologians leaves him intellectually unsatisfied, and a Christian ethic imposes far too much restriction on him—especially when he looks upon his mistress. Christianity is both too much and not enough for Augustine. This despite the lifelong prayers and pleas of his saintly mother, Monica. ... If we were to look in on Augustine’s life at [these

²³⁰ Piper, *The Legacy of Sovereign Joy*, 51.

²³¹ Augustine, *Confessions*, 118 (VIII.15.25).

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Nichols, *Pages from Church History*, 66.

times], we would be quite surprised to find out that the one we were observing would become the towering figure of church history.”²³⁴

- Yet, towering he would become. It is the next scene of his life that makes all the difference in the world.

Conversion and Early Christian Life (386-394)

- “The Manichean philosophy had proven hollow, the prospect of career success held no lasting appeal, and sex had become a source of relational pain. In the face of such spiritual restlessness, Augustine turned to the one person in Milan who seemed to possess an Abiding peace: the great bishop Ambrose, whose preaching would soon light a fire in Augustine’s soul.”²³⁵

Meeting Ambrose

- As Augustine was in Milan serving as a professor of rhetoric, he was constantly in search of ways to hone and improve his own skills. To that end, he “began studying the rhetorical style of northern Italy’s greatest Christian preacher and bishop, the saintly Ambrose.”²³⁶
- The strategic entrance of Ambrose into Augustine’s life at this point cannot be overlooked. Through His gracious providence the sovereign God was perfectly orchestrating one of the most famous and influential conversions in history. “A gifted theologian and eloquent speaker, Ambrose comes into Augustine’s life just as he is becoming dissatisfied with non-Christian philosophies. When he first hears Ambrose, he becomes convinced that he owes it to himself to take another look at the Bible and at Christianity.”²³⁷
- At first, Augustine had no interest in *what* Ambrose was saying, but only *how* he said it. Yet he himself would say, “Unknowingly I was led by You to him, so that through him I might be led, knowingly, to You.”²³⁸
- Eventually, though, the message that Ambrose preached penetrated Augustine’s understanding. He began to be convinced that “he had been wrong about Christianity. He had too easily dismissed it as a religion for weak and silly people with no sophistication. Ambrose proved that one could be intellectual, articulate and courageous and be a Christian.”²³⁹

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ Litfin, *Getting to Know the Church Fathers*, 222.

²³⁶ Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology*, 257.

²³⁷ Nichols, *Pages from Church History*, 79.

²³⁸ Augustine, *Confessions*, 93 (V.13.23).

²³⁹ Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology*, 258.

I was taking no trouble to learn from what Ambrose was saying, but interested only in listening to how he said it... As his words, which I enjoyed, penetrated my mind, the substance, which I overlooked, seeped in with them, for I could not separate the two. As I opened my heart to appreciate how skillfully he spoke, the recognition that he was speaking the truth crept in at the same time, though only by slow degrees.²⁴⁰

Augustine's Conversion

Now I will relate how You set me free from a craving for sexual gratification which fettered me like a tight-drawn chain, and from my enslavement to worldly affairs: I will confess to Your name, O Lord, my helper and my redeemer.²⁴¹

- As Ambrose's preaching continued to sink in, Augustine enjoyed two extremely influential conversations with men he had occasion to meet while holding his professorship in Milan. Simplicianus, a father in the faith to Ambrose who spoke very highly of the Platonist philosophers, recounted the conversion of the rhetorician Victorinus, and Ponticianus, a court official delighted to learn that Augustine was reading the epistles of Paul, related the conversion of Anthony and the Egyptian monks.
- Litfin remarks that he "had to be confronted with the utter futility of his career aspirations. At the pinnacle of his professional success, he encountered some moving testimonies of great men who had put away their secular ambitions for the sake of Christ."²⁴²
- While listening to the testimonies of the rhetorician Victorinus and Anthony and the Egyptian monks, as told by his friends Simplicianus and Ponticianus, how they had come under the conviction of the Scriptures and be converted, Augustine could bear it no longer. He confronted his dear friend Alypius, who was from his hometown and was one of his first students, with the convictions of his own soul.

Within the house of my spirit the violent conflict raged on, the quarrel with my soul that I had so powerfully provoked in our secret dwelling, my heart, and at the height of it I rushed to Alypius with my mental anguish plain upon my face. "What is happening to us?" I exclaimed. "What does this mean? What did you make of it? The untaught are rising up and taking heaven by storm, while we with all our dreary teachings are still groveling in this world of flesh and blood!"

"Adjacent to our lodgings was a small garden. ... The tumult in my breast had swept me away to this place, where no one would interfere with the blazing dispute I had engaged in with myself until it should be resolved. ... All I knew was that I was going mad, but for the sake of my sanity, and dying that I might live."²⁴³

²⁴⁰ Augustine, *Confessions*, 94 (V.14.24).

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 155 (VIII.6.13).

²⁴² Litfin, *Getting to Know the Church Fathers*, 224.

²⁴³ Augustine, *Confessions*, 160-161 (VIII.8.19).

- Augustine records the next moments as a battle between the pleasures of his soul. What had thus far halted his conversion was the pleasure of sin competing with the pleasures of knowing and enjoying God in Christ.

The frivolity of frivolous aims, the futility of futile pursuits, these things that had been my cronies of long standing, still held me back, plucking softly at my garment of flesh and murmuring in my ear, “Do you mean to get rid of us? Shall we never be your companions again after that moment... never... never again? From that time onward so-and-so will be forbidden to you, all your life long.” ... “Do you imagine you will be able to live without these things?”²⁴⁴

- At this point, Piper comments, “But he began to see more clearly that the gain was far greater than the loss, and by a miracle of grace he began to see the beauty of chastity in the presence of Christ.”²⁴⁵

The taunts had begun to sound much less persuasive, however; for a revelation was coming to me from that country toward which I was facing, but into which I trembled to cross. There I beheld the chaste, dignified figure of continence. Calm and cheerful was her manner, though modest, pure and honorable her charm as she coaxed me to come and hesitate no longer, stretching kindly hands to welcome and embrace me.²⁴⁶

- And that was the last straw:

I flung myself down somehow under a fig tree and gave free rein to the tears that burst from eyes like rivers... I uttered cries of misery: “Why must I go on saying, ‘Tomorrow...tomorrow’? Why not now? Why not put an end to my depravity this very hour?” Suddenly I heard a voice from a house nearby—perhaps a voice of some boy or girl, I do not know—singing over and over again, “Pick it up and read, pick it up and read.” My expression immediately altered and I began to think hard whether children ordinarily repeated a ditty like this in any sort of game, but I could not recall ever having heard it anywhere else. I stemmed the flood of tears and rose to my feet, believing that this could be nothing other than a divine command to open the Book and read the first passage I chanced upon. ...



Strung into action, I returned to the place where Alypius was sitting, for on leaving it I had put down there the book of the apostle’s letters. I snatched it up, opened it and read in silence the passage on which my eyes first lighted: “Not in dissipation and drunkenness, nor in debauchery and lewdness, nor in

²⁴⁴ Augustine, *Confessions*, 166 (VIII.26).

²⁴⁵ Piper, *The Legacy of Sovereign Joy*, 52.

²⁴⁶ Augustine, *Confessions*, 166 (VIII.26).

arguing and jealousy; but put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh or the gratification of your desires.” I had no wish to read further, no was there need. No sooner had I reached the end of that verse than the light of certainty flooded my heart and all dark shades of doubt fled away.²⁴⁷

- In that moment, God had shone in Augustine’s heart to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ (2 Corinthians 4:6).
- Warfield wrote of his conversion: “Thus a soul was brought to its God, and made so firmly His that throughout a long life of service to Him it never knew the slightest wavering of its allegiance.”²⁴⁸ Nichols cleverly quips, “In the garden paradise was lost, and in a garden it was, for Augustine, regained.”²⁴⁹
- On the following Easter (in 387)²⁵⁰, Augustine was baptized along with his friend Alypius in the Milan Cathedral by Ambrose, with his mother in attendance.²⁵¹ Later that year, Monica died a happy woman, safely resting in the knowledge that the grace of God had come to the son of her tears.

His Early Christian Life

- After his conversion, Augustine seemed settled on a monastic lifestyle. He tried converting his small villa in Milan into a monastery, but eventually returned to North Africa to establish a monastery there.²⁵²
- In this regard, Warfield comments that he “established at his native town a sort of religio-philosophical retreat for himself and his friends.”²⁵³ It is evident from his remarks that Augustine was not looking to live in the spotlight, but in relative obscurity, quietly pursuing God.
- Having been converted and baptized with Augustine, Alypius returned with him to North Africa and became the Bishop of Thagaste, the region next to Hippo. “They not only remained friends, but also became great allies as they worked for the church, establishing firm doctrine, handling disputes, and battling heresies.”²⁵⁴
- Yet in 391, Augustine was virtually forced to receive ordination as a priest by the congregation in Hippo. “One Sunday while he was worshipping with them, they literally laid hands upon him and dragged him forward to be ordained by the bishop despite his tears and protests.”²⁵⁵

²⁴⁷ Augustine, *Confessions*, 167-168 (VIII.12.28-29).

²⁴⁸ Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine*, 363.

²⁴⁹ Nichols, *Pages from Church History*, 76.

²⁵⁰ Piper, *The Legacy of Sovereign Joy*, 54.

²⁵¹ Nichols, *Pages from Church History*, 79

²⁵² Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology*, 259.

²⁵³ Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine*, 305.

²⁵⁴ Nichols, *Pages from Church History*, 79-81.

²⁵⁵ Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology*, 259.

The Bishop of Hippo (395-430)

- Augustine chose to settle in Hippo because he knew that the congregation there already had a bishop, and he did not want to be in the spotlight.
- However, “when the elderly bishop of Hippo desired a cobishop, Augustine was once again pressed into service. Against his will he was consecrated a bishop of Hippo in 395 and succeeded the bishop when he died the next year.”²⁵⁶ Considering how central a doctrine God’s sovereignty would become for him in the coming years, it only seems fitting that he was pressed into Christ’s service against his will. God was indeed the “Hound of Heaven,” as Augustine would reverently call Him.
- In a sermon he delivered to his congregation long after his arrival, he said, “I did what I could to seek salvation in a humble position rather than be in danger in high office. . . . I felt secure, for the place already had a bishop. I was grabbed. I was made a priest. . . . and from there I became your bishop.”²⁵⁷
- Professor Stephen Cooper recounts Augustine’s daily activities as Bishop of Hippo: He spent mornings receiving people who brought their problems to the bishop, spiritual and financial, large and small. Afternoons were for his many writing projects, and he often had several going at once. Augustine also kept up the regimen of a monastic life. He had set up a monastery in the church garden and lived among his presbyters, the clergy working under him. They maintained rounds of prayer alongside their regular duties”²⁵⁸
- In about 400, the *Confessions*, that “treasure of church history that no Christian should fail to read at some point,”²⁵⁹ was published.

Against Heresies

- He would have preferred the life of a monk, but the doctrinal controversies of the day wouldn’t allow Augustine such a placid, removed lifestyle. He was drawn in to debate with “just about every heresy plaguing the church.”²⁶⁰ Piper puts it strikingly, “Controversy was Augustine’s daily vocation. Near the end of his life, he listed over eighty heresies that he had fought against.”²⁶¹

²⁵⁶ Ibid., 259-260

²⁵⁷ Quoted in Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 138.

²⁵⁸ Stephen Cooper, *Augustine for Armchair Theologians* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 191.

²⁵⁹ Litfin, *Getting to Know the Church Fathers*, 216.

²⁶⁰ Nichols, *Pages from Church History*, 82.

²⁶¹ Piper, *The Legacy of Sovereign Joy*, 60.

354 – Born at Thagaste	390 – Son Adeodatus dies
370 – Begins studies at Carthage	391 – Ordained as a priest largely against his will
371 – His son Adeodatus is born to his mistress	395 – Becomes Bishop of Hippo largely against his will
373 – Becomes enamored with Manichaeism	400 – Writes <i>Confessions</i>
376-383 – Teaches at Carthage	410 – Visigoths sack Rome, August 26
383 – Sails to Rome	412 – Starts <i>City of God</i> ; Writes <i>On the Spirit and the Letter</i>
384 – Breaks with Manichaeism	415 – Writes <i>On Nature and Grace</i>
384-388 – Becomes professor of rhetoric at Milan	418 – Writes <i>On the Grace of Christ and Original Sin</i>
Embraces Neoplatonism	421 – Writes <i>The Enchiridion: On Faith, Hope and Love</i>
Consistently hears Ambrose preach	425 – Completes <i>City of God</i>
385 – Monica arrives in Milan and begins to make plans for Augustine to marry	427 – Writes <i>On Grace and Free Will</i>
386 – Dismisses his mistress	429 – Writes <i>On the Predestination of the Saints</i>
Conversion in the Garden	430 – Dies at Hippo, August 28, amidst Vandal invasion
387 – Baptized on Easter Sunday, April 24	
Monica dies later in the year	
388 – Returns to North Africa and settles at Hippo	

- Chief among those heresies were his old comrades the Manichaeans, the Donatists, and the man-exalting free-will doctrine of Pelagius and his followers.
- His main work against the Manichaeans was *Concerning the Nature of Good*, written around 405. He used the NeoPlatonic idea that evil is not a substance (but an absence of good – an absence of God) to refute the Gnostic dualism inherent in Manichaeism.
- In his series of debates with the Donatists his doctrine of the sovereign grace of God led his contentions. The Donatists, following the Novationists of the previous century, refused to re-admit “lapsed” believers into the fellowship of the Church. They also regarded any sacraments performed by lapsed priests or bishops as null and void. Following Cyprian, Augustine denounced the notion of a pure church: “To this Donatist dream of the church of the saints, Augustine opposes another: the Universal Church, spread throughout the world and containing within itself both good and evil until the final separation of the Last Day.”²⁶²
- Even if his ecclesiology differs from my own – seeing that the field in the parable of the wheat and the tares is the *world* and not the *Church* – he courageously, it was his utter commitment to the sovereignty of divine grace that led him to uphold orthodoxy against a growing threat. As Cooper puts it, “He went at it with all the vigor of a convert, holding that God’s grace, and not human purity, validated the church and its sacraments.”²⁶³
- In other words, while its easy for those of us with a Baptist ecclesiology to side with the Donatists against a more sacramentalist and political church, Augustine fought this battle as one protecting the church from a moralistic legalism. While he would never have condoned impurity or compromise (himself veering to the ascetic side perhaps a bit too much in his own personal life), he did not want the notion creeping in that the church was

²⁶² Quoted in Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology*, 265.

²⁶³ Cooper, *Augustine for Armchair Theologians*, 195.

something one had to make himself fit for. Only the grace of God in Christ could do that. And it was that – the supremacy of sovereign grace – that drove him in his involvement with the Donatists.

- Eventually, the emperor sided with the Catholics against the Donatists and forcefully closed down Donatist churches. Motives as pure as Augustine’s could not be attributed to the imperial court, however, as it was obvious that the unity of the empire depended much on the unity of the Church. Because of Constantine’s “Christianizing” of the empire, a schism in the Church was a schism in the State, and that could not be tolerated.
- Regarding the Pelagian controversy, it began when the British monk, Pelagius, visited Rome to find many Christians living worldly and indifferent lives. As he was wondering what could be the cause of this, he came across Augustine’s famous prayer, “Command what you will, and give what you command,” and was mortified.²⁶⁴ He thought that if people thought themselves unable to fight immorality in and of themselves, they would naturally become complacent and apathetic.
- Pelagius responded to this perceived danger by writing *On Nature* and *On Free Will*, in which he attacked Augustine’s notion of grace (to be explored in greater detail in the following section), and argued that “humans can live sinless lives through their ‘natural endowments’ and are responsible to do so.”²⁶⁵
- Such a theological trajectory led him to deny original sin, saying that Adam’s sin had no effect on anyone but him, and to champion the idea that humanity is basically good, born sinless, and enter into sin entirely by our free choice.
- This led to the full-out controversy so infamously known to history as the battle between Augustine and Pelagius. Augustine responded with works such as *On the Spirit and the Letter* (412), *On Nature and Grace* (415), *On the Grace of Christ and Original Sin* (418), *On Grace and Free Will* (427), and *On the Predestination of the Saints* (429).²⁶⁶ In these works he championed the Biblical doctrine that no one can please God apart from a prior and distinct work of grace. Precisely because Adam’s sin had affected the entire human race, it is “not possible not to sin” unless a sovereign, gracious God intervenes on humanity’s behalf.
- Pelagius was tried and acquitted for heresy by a synod of bishops at Diospolis in Palestine in 415. However, he was condemned by the bishop of Rome in 417, by the



²⁶⁴ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 179.

²⁶⁵ Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology*, 268.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 270.

Council of Carthage in 418, and officially and decisively condemned by the Council of Ephesus in 431.

- After Pelagius’s condemnation in 418, though, Augustine’s part in this battle continued against those who espoused a moderate form of Pelagius’s views, the Semi-Pelagians. As church historian Roger Olson tells it, Augustine went on to refute “not only Pelagius’s alleged heresy of sinless perfection apart from assisting grace, but also all forms of synergism.”²⁶⁷
- As unseemly as “theological debate” may seem – especially to contemporary Christians in today’s politically correct and pathologically tolerant society – it is important to remember that for Augustine “the battle for omnipotent grace was not theoretical or academic; it was practical and pressing. At stake was holiness and heaven.”²⁶⁸ It was because of these ultimately high stakes that “Augustine directed all his considerable theological firepower against this pernicious teaching.”²⁶⁹
- In fact, Augustine’s involvement in this controversy was similarly driven by his theology of the sovereign grace of God and joy in Him. When a friend named Paulinus asked Augustine why he concerned himself so much with the Pelagian heresy, he replied, “First and foremost because no subject gives me greater *pleasure*. For what ought to be more *attractive* to us sick men, than *grace*, grace by which we are healed; for us lazy men, than grace, grace by which we are stirred up; for us men longing to act, than grace, by which we are helped?”²⁷⁰
- In regards to how history would receive Augustine’s doctrine of human depravity and sovereign grace, B. B. Warfield most helpfully summarizes:

As over against the Pelagians, the indispensableness of grace was quickly established; as over against the Semi-Pelagians, its prevenience [i.e., its preceding the human’s choice] was with almost equal rapidity made good. But there advanced paused. If the necessity of prevenient grace was thereafter (after the Council of Orange, 529) the established doctrine of the Church, the irresistibility of this prevenient grace was put under the ban, and there remained no place for a complete ‘Augustinianism’ within the Church. ... Therefore, when the great revival of religion which we call the Reformation came, seeing that it was, on its theological side, a revival of ‘Augustinianism,’ as all great revivals of religion must be (for ‘Augustinianism’ is but the thetical expression of religion in its purity), there was nothing for it but the rending of the Church.”²⁷¹

Later Years

- In his post as bishop he preached and wrote faithfully, established a monastery, and trained many men for the ministry who were installed all over Africa.²⁷² He served the

²⁶⁷ Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology*, 271.

²⁶⁸ John Piper, *The Legacy of Sovereign Joy*, 20.

²⁶⁹ Litfin, *Getting to Know the Church Fathers*, 229.

²⁷⁰ Quoted in Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 355, emphases added.

²⁷¹ Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine*, 322-323.

²⁷² Piper, *The Legacy of Sovereign Joy*, 55.

Christians at Hippo as a presbyter and then as a bishop for the next four decades²⁷³, a task in which he continued until his death.²⁷⁴

- In 410, the city of Rome was sacked by the Visigoths, and the empire that once seemed insuperable had been compromised. Though the final fall of the Roman Empire would come more than sixty years later (476), the Visigoth invasion marked the beginning of its collapse.
- As a result, the Romans blamed the Christians for the downfall of the empire. “The gods, so the logic goes, were angered by the tolerance of Christianity in the empire and withdrew their protective hand. Others blamed Christians more directly: the Christian ethic of turning the other cheek does not necessarily make for a suitable world-conquering empire.”²⁷⁵
- This prompted Augustine to write what many call his magnum opus, *The City of God*, which he began in 412 and completed in 425. This was an apologetic, outlining the worlds of difference between the City of God and the City of Mankind. His thesis was that no human civilization is God’s kingdom.
- “This interpretation of history and civilizations was a great inspiration and comfort to many Christians who observed the once great Roman Empire crumbling and falling into ruins around them. Even many Christians had come to identify the Christianized Roman Empire with the kingdom of God, and its fall to barbarian tribes was a great disillusionment. To them Augustine said, ‘Don’t worry. God’s kingdom is not affected by the demise of the Roman Empire, for it is not of this world.’”²⁷⁶
- Such a message is particularly relevant to 21st century Americans. Many Americans have long acted like America has replaced Israel as God’s chosen nation, and now fear and tremble at the direction the government is taking it, both morally and politically. Yet Augustine reminds us in *The City of God* that our confidence is not properly placed in any worldly system of government, but only in the Gospel. We need not fear, for Christ will build His Church, and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.
- In the summer of 430, the Vandals invaded the North African coast and made their way to Hippo only to meet a city fortified by the sage defense strategy of the city’s aged bishop.



²⁷³ Litfin, *Getting to Know the Church Fathers*, 228
²⁷⁴ Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine*, 306.
²⁷⁵ Nichols, *Pages from Church History*, 69.
²⁷⁶ Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology*, 276.

- “He had heard of two other Catholic bishops tortured to death in the Vandal invasion, but when his friends quoted to him the words of Jesus, ‘Flee to another city,’ he said, ‘Let no one dream of holding our ship so cheaply, that the sailors, let alone the Captain should desert her in time of peril.’”²⁷⁷ This generation should pray for something of his faith, resolve, and fearlessness.
- During the invasion, it was mid-August when Augustine caught a severe fever that would take his life in the span of ten days.
- In those ten days leading up to his death, because he could not get out of bed or hold his books, “he had ordered the four psalms of David that deal with [penitence] to be copied out. From his sick-bed he could see these sheets of paper every day, hanging on his walls, and would read them, crying constantly and deeply.”²⁷⁸
- And so the great Augustine of Hippo died on August 28, 430.

His Theology

The Sovereignty of Divine Grace & The Totality of Human Depravity

- Philosopher and Augustine scholar T. Kermit Scott has rightly said that the main feature of Augustine’s theology is “its emphasis on the absolute supremacy of God and the accompanying absolute helplessness and dependency of the human soul on the grace of God.”²⁷⁹
- Augustine’s view of God’s sovereignty dominated all of his thinking, as it should. Scott goes on to say: “While Augustine makes a titanic effort to preserve both human freedom and the goodness of God, it is clear that his God is, above all, the imperial ruler of the universe, and what cannot be sacrificed at any price is the absolute *power* of that God. This is the guiding thread of Augustine’s thought, that which gives shape to those doctrines most associated with his name.”²⁸⁰
- Church historian Roger Olson would put the importance of these doctrines this way: “Augustine’s entire soteriology flows from two major beliefs: the absolute and total



²⁷⁷ Piper, *The Legacy of Sovereign Joy*, 41.

²⁷⁸ Quoted in Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 432.

²⁷⁹ Scott, *His Thought in Context*, 153.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 13.

depravity of human beings after the Fall, and the absolute and total power and sovereignty of God.”²⁸¹

- Those doctrines most associated with his name have come to be understood as the Evangelical doctrines of grace. Besides his tremendous impact on the Reformation of the sixteenth century – inspiring the doctrines of Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, and others – the great Princeton theologian and defender of orthodoxy, B. B. Warfield, notes that the most significant fact about Augustine was that he was the first among the Church teachers to give “adequate expression to that type of religion which has since attached to itself the name of “evangelical.”²⁸²
- If properly perceived, the weight of Warfield’s words is staggering. He is saying that it was Augustine’s doctrine of grace that first gave adequate expression to the Gospel – to the Evangel – itself. His was *evangelical religion*; “the religion, that is to say, of faith, as distinct from the religion of works. ... The great contribution which Augustine has made to the world’s life and thought is embodied in the theology of grace.”²⁸³

Rooted in Relationship

- It would not be proper to say that Augustine’s twin doctrines of sovereign grace and human depravity were founded upon his own experience. Surely, as we will see, these doctrines are taught by the Scriptures themselves.
- It would be equally improper, however, to imagine that he came to hold so fast to these doctrines from disinterested and dispassionate study. Augustine clung to them with all his might because his own life was a testimony to human depravity and the sovereign grace of God.
- This we know chiefly from his *Confessions*, where he tells the story of his entire life as a divine comedy. On the one hand, “*Confessions* tells a very human story on a very human plane. But that is not all. It also tells a story on the divine plane. Against the backdrop of this setting, behind all of the twists and turns of the plot, and through the various characters of the drama, Augustine reveals that God was all the while directing his circuitous journey straight to Himself.”²⁸⁴
- John Piper says of him: “His passion was to display above all things the glory of God through the exaltation of His omnipotent grace. Augustine’s entire life was one great ‘confession’ of the glory of God’s grace.”²⁸⁵
- In the *Confessions*, “he laid out in intimate detail his sins from almost infancy into adult life and emphasized at every point his own total depravity and the power of God’s grace

²⁸¹ Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology*, 271.

²⁸² Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine*, 319.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, 319-320.

²⁸⁴ Nichols, *Pages from Church History*, 81.

²⁸⁵ Piper, *The Legacy of Sovereign Joy*, 24.

to heal and transform. The *Confessions* reveals that Augustine was a pessimist about humanity, including his own, and an optimist about grace.²⁸⁶ So should we all be (Mt 19:26; Ac 5:38-39).

- From start to finish, through all the ups and downs of his life, he happily confessed his own utter inability to do anything about his sinfulness, and testified of God’s meticulously sovereign orchestration of all the details of his life.
 - He opened his *Confessions* by declaring that God has made all of us for Himself, that we are restless till we find rest in Him, and that He has created us to find joy in His praise.²⁸⁷
 - He confesses his own sinfulness, selfishness, and inability even as an infant.²⁸⁸
 - He acknowledges that God Himself was actively “sprinkling very bitter disappointments over all my unlawful pleasures so that I might seek a pleasure free from all disappointment.”²⁸⁹
 - His credits God with “stretch[ing] out Your hand from on high and pull[ing] my soul out of these murky depths” because He heard and answered the prayers of His mother. Even her prayers were gifts of God’s grace.²⁹⁰
 - He says of the great preacher Ambrose, under whose preaching he was to be converted, yet whom he sought out not for his preaching but for his rhetorical style: ““Unknowingly I was led by You to him, so that through him I might be led, knowingly, to You.”²⁹¹
 - As he begins to recount his conversion, He exclaims, “O Lord, my Helper and my Redeemer, I shall now tell and confess to the glory of *Your name* how *You* released me from the fetters of lust which held me *so tightly shackled* and from *my slavery* to the things of this world.”²⁹²
 - The pinnacle of his testimony to God’s absolute sovereignty: “During all those years [of rebellion], where was my free will? ... How sweet all at once it was for me to be rid of those fruitless joys which I had once feared to lose! ... You drove them from me, you who are the true, sovereign joy.”²⁹³
 - He speaks of his own faith as “Your gift to me, which You have breathed into me through the humanity of Your Son and the ministry of Your preacher.”²⁹⁴
 - And his famous refrain acknowledges that in and of ourselves we are powerless to obey even the good commands given to us by God. He must grant what He requires: “On your exceedingly great mercy rests all my hope. Give what you command, and then command whatever you will. You order us to practice continence. A certain writer tells us, ‘I knew that no one can be continent except by God’s gift, and that it is already a mark of wisdom to recognize whose gift this is.’”²⁹⁵

²⁸⁶ Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology*, 256.

²⁸⁷ Augustine, *Confessions*, 3 (I.1.1).

²⁸⁸ Ibid., 10-11 (I.7.11-12).

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 26 (II.4).

²⁹⁰ Augustine, *Confessions*, 51 (III.11.19).

²⁹¹ Ibid., 93 (V.13.23).

²⁹² As quoted in Piper, *The Legacy of Sovereign Joy*, 24, emphases mine.

²⁹³ Augustine, *Confessions*, 170 (IX.1).

²⁹⁴ Ibid., 1 (I.1.1).

²⁹⁵ Ibid., 223 (X.29.40).

- And so Augustine’s theology of sovereign grace was borne out of a living relationship with the *God* of sovereign grace, the Hound of Heaven.²⁹⁶

Fueled by the Pelagian Controversy

- Yet it was not merely, or perhaps even primarily, because of God’s own gracious dealings with him that Augustine wrote volumes on man’s depravity and God’s sovereignty. What prompted the first adequate expression of evangelical religion, as Warfield put it (see above), was the Pelagian Controversy.
- R. C. Sproul sets the stage as follows: “The controversy began when the British monk, Pelagius, opposed at Rome Augustine’s famous prayer: ‘Grant what Thou commandest, and command what Thou dost desire.’ Pelagius recoiled in horror at the idea that a divine gift (grace) is necessary to perform what God commands. For Pelagius and his followers responsibility always implies ability. If man has the moral responsibility to obey the law of God, he must also have the moral ability to do it.”²⁹⁷
- Such a theological trajectory led him to deny original sin. Pelagius believed that Adam’s sin affected Adam only; there was no race-wide spiritual death in Genesis 3. Thus, humans are born innocent – as Adam was before the fall – and, as the contemporary quip puts it, “basically good.” We enter into sin entirely by our free choice. Otherwise, God would be unjust to punish us for it.
- Augustine responded to this man-centered, legalistic heresy with works such as *On the Spirit and the Letter* (412), *On Nature and Grace* (415), *On the Grace of Christ and Original Sin* (418), *On Grace and Free Will* (427), and *On the Predestination of the Saints* (429).²⁹⁸ These works would be a treasure chest of Augustine’s Biblical theology of grace.

Original Sin

- Against Pelagius’s teaching that Adam’s sin affected no one but himself, Augustine presented the Biblical teaching that all of humanity sinned “in Adam” (Rom 5:12ff). Because Adam was the representative of the human race in the garden, when he sinned (freely, according to his will), we sinned, and so when he died spiritually, all of humanity died spiritually along with him. Adam and Eve were created sinless, but since then every member of the human race except One was born dead in their transgressions and sins, by nature a children of wrath” (Eph 2:1-3).

²⁹⁶ Cf. Nichols, *Pages from Church History.*, 77.

²⁹⁷ R. C. Sproul, “Augustine and Pelagius,” *Tabletalk* 6 (June 1996): 12.

²⁹⁸ Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology*, 270.

After his sin [Adam] became an exile from this place and bound also his progeny, which by his sin he had damaged within himself as though at its root, by the penalty of death and condemnation. As a result, any offspring born of him and the wife through whom he had sinned, who had been condemned together with him, born through the concupiscence of the flesh which was their punishment, carrying within it a disobedience similar to that which they had showed, would contract original sin, which would drag it through various errors and pains to that final punishment with the [fallen] angels, his corruptors, masters, and accomplices.²⁹⁹

- Elsewhere, he says:

Human nature was in the beginning created blameless and without any defect. But that human nature, in which each of us is born of Adam, now needs a physician, because it is not in good health. All the goods which it has in its constitution: life, the senses, and the mind, it has from the sovereign God, its creator and maker. But the defect which darkens and weakens those natural goods so that there is need for enlightenment and healing did not come from its blameless maker. It came from the original sin which was committed by free choice. And thus a nature subject to punishment is part of a punishment that is completely just. After all, if we are no a new creature in Christ, we were, nonetheless, by nature children of [wrath], just as the others. But God who is rich in mercy, on account of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead by sins, brought us to life with Christ, by whose grace we have been saved.³⁰⁰

Total Depravity

- The result of Adam’s fall was the imputation of original sin to the entire human race. From that moment, humanity had become totally depraved. Mankind became enslaved to sin, alienated from God, and totally unable to reconcile themselves to Him such that without a supernatural work of divine grace, all would perish apart from Him and endure eternal punishment for their sins.
- R. C. Sproul comments, “Augustine’s view of the Fall was opposed to both Pelagianism and Semi-Pelagianism. He said that mankind is a *massa peccati*, a ‘mess of sin,’ incapable of raising itself from spiritual death. For Augustine man can no more move or incline himself to God than an empty glass can fill itself.”³⁰¹
- Usually, commonsense (i.e., non-Biblical) arguments against total depravity appeal to the perceived innocence of children. How could a baby, some reason, be guilty and held responsible for moral evil? Augustine held his view of total depravity consistently, commenting on even the utter selfishness and sinfulness of infants (including himself!):

²⁹⁹ Augustine, “The Enchiridion on Faith, Hope, and Charity,” in *The Works of Augustine Volume 8: On Christian Belief*, ed. Boniface Ramsey (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2005), 289.

³⁰⁰ Augustine, “On Nature and Grace,” in *The Works of Saint Augustine Volume 23: Answer to the Pelagians*, ed. John E. Rotelle (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1997), 226 (III.3).

³⁰¹ Sproul, “Augustine and Pelagius,” 13.

I would throw a tantrum because my elders were not subject to me, nor free people willing to be my slaves; so I would take revenge on them by bursting into tears. ...

Who is there to remind me of the sin of my infancy (for sin there was; no one is free from sin in your sight, not even an infant whose span of earthly life is but a single day).

The only innocent feature in babies is the weakness of their frames; the minds of infants are far from innocent. I have watched and experienced for myself the jealousy of a small child: he could not even speak, yet he glared with livid fury at his fellow nursling. ...

And if I was even conceived in iniquity, and with sin my mother nourished me in the her womb (Ps 51:5), where, I beg of You, my God, where was I, Your servant, ever innocent?³⁰²

The Bondage of the Will

- Total depravity is experienced by human beings in part by the bondage of their will. Unlike Adam, who had free will before sin entered the world, all people after him are born enslaved to sin. Their wills are corrupted to seek after and desire evil. The sinner, dead in his sin, is neither *able* nor *willing* to come to God for forgiveness, but desires to continue in sin.
- Did Augustine deny, then, that humans have free will? Well, it depends on what you mean by the word. If by free will you mean the libertarian concept of ultimate and decisive self-determination, then no, Augustine did not believe in free will. That is precisely what it means to be enslaved: your will is not decisively determinative but is enslaved to something else.
- However, if by free will you mean an ability to choose what one desires, then yes, Augustine believed in free will. The will is free to act within the bounds of its nature. For humanity apart from the grace of God, that is a *sin* nature. So, we may (and do) freely choose to sin, and so incur responsibility.
- Sproul explains it this way: “Augustine did not deny that fallen man still has a will and that the will is capable of making choices. He argued that fallen man still has a free will (*liberium arbitrium*) but has lost his moral liberty (*libertas*). The state of original sin leaves us in the wretched condition of being unable to refrain from sinning. We still are able to choose what we desire, but our desires remain chained by our evil impulses. He argued that the freedom that remains in the will always leads to sin. Thus in the flesh we are free only to sin, a hollow freedom indeed. It is freedom without liberty, a real moral bondage. True liberty can only come from without, from the work of God on



³⁰² Augustine, *Confessions*, 7-11 (I.8-I.12).

the soul. Therefore we are not only partly dependent upon grace for our conversion but totally dependent upon grace.”³⁰³

- “Free will,” in Augustine’s mind, is simply doing what one wants to do. T. Kermit Scott offers another helpful summary of his thought: “I am free with respect to any action to the extent that my wanting and choosing to perform that action are sufficient for my performing it.’ ... For Augustine, people are free to sin but not free not to sin. That is because they want to sin. The Fall has so corrupted their motives and desires that sinning is all they want to do apart from God’s intervening grace. Thus they are sinning ‘freely.’”³⁰⁴
- This “freedom,” however, is not a freedom we would want to celebrate, for in reality it is bondage.³⁰⁵ Thus, speaking most precisely, we may say that people have a will – an inclination to do this or that – and thus are not merely robots. However, that will is not free. “Because of the inherited depravity and corruption of sin, fallen humans are not free not to sin: ‘A man’s free will,’ he wrote against Pelagius, ‘avails for nothing except to sin.’”³⁰⁶

Sovereign Election and the Gift of Faith

- If a man’s will avails for nothing except to sin, the only way anyone is saved and reconciled to God through Christ is by sovereign grace alone. Contrary to contemporary evangelicalism’s pop-theology, God, not man, is the decisive determiner of who will be saved. “For Augustine, God alone is the all-determining reality and whatever happens...must be rooted in His sovereign will and power.”³⁰⁷
- Scott summarizes Augustine’s reasoning: “If we maintain that the will of a human being is not in God’s power but is controlled wholly by the person, then it is possible for God to be frustrated. And that is just absurd.”³⁰⁸ Indeed it is (Job 42:2; Psalm 33:11; Isaiah 46:9-10; Daniel 4:35).
- Discussing Romans 9, Augustine writes the following in *On Divers Questions to Simplicianus*, published in 396:

*In the solution of this question, we struggled indeed for the free choice of the human will; but the grace of God conquered: otherwise the apostle could not have been understood to speak with obvious truth when he says, “For who maketh thee to differ? And what has thou that thou didst not receive? But if thou didst receive it why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?”*³⁰⁹

³⁰³ Sproul, “Augustine and Pelagius,” 13, 52.

³⁰⁴ Scott, *His Thought in Context*, 162.

³⁰⁵ Nichols, *Pages from Church History*, 71.

³⁰⁶ Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology*, 272. He quotes from Augustine, *On the Spirit and the Letter*, 5.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 273.

³⁰⁸ Scott, *His Thought in Context*, 181.

³⁰⁹ Quoted in Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine*, 377.

- Picking up on Augustine’s irony, Warfield, humorously comments, “Driven thus by purely exegetical considerations – working, no doubt, on a heart profoundly sensible of its utter dependence on God. Augustine was led somewhat against his will to recognize that the ‘will to believe’ is itself from God. Accordingly, in this ‘question’ he teaches at length that whether man despises or does not despise the call does not lie in his own power.”³¹⁰ For, he reasons:

*If it lies in the power of him that is called [to not] obey, it is possible to say, “Therefore it is not of God that showeth mercy, but of man that willeth and runneth” [Rom 9:16] because the mercy of him that calls is in that case not enough unless it is followed by the obedience of him that is called. ... God has mercy on no one in vain: but so calls him on whom He has mercy.*³¹¹

- He goes on:

*Clearly it is vain for us to will unless God have mercy. But I do not know how it could be said that it is vain for God to have mercy unless we willingly consent. If God has mercy, we also will, for the power to will is given with the mercy itself. It is God that worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure [Philippians 2:13]. If we ask whether a good will is a gift of God, I should be surprised if anyone would venture to deny that. But because the good will does not precede calling, but calling precedes the good will, the fact that we have a good will is rightly attributed to God who calls us, and the fact that we are called cannot be attributed to ourselves. So the sentence, ‘It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that hath mercy’ [Romans 9:16] cannot be taken to mean simply that we cannot attain what we wish without the aid of God, but rather than without his calling we cannot even will.*³¹²

- Therefore, man’s ability to orient his will away from sin and towards God and spiritual things is entirely dependent on a prior act of God’s mercy. Even the faith by which we are justified is a gift of divine grace.

*The Spirit of grace, then, causes us to have faith so that through faith we may obtain by prayer that we can do what we are commanded. The apostle himself continuously set faith above the law because we cannot do what the law commands unless, by asking with faith, we obtain the ability to do so. For the Almighty sets in motion even in the innermost hearts of men the movement of their will, so that He does through their agency whatsoever He wishes to perform through them.*³¹³

- Thus, we have in Augustine’s doctrines of human depravity and divine grace, the foundation for the Reformation doctrines that would come to be known as the five points of Calvinism. Man’s total depravity has been made clear, as well as the Father’s unconditional election of some and not others from eternity past. God’s grace is

³¹⁰ Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine*, 378.

³¹¹ Quoted in Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine*, 378.

³¹² Augustine, *To Simplicianus*, II.12; quoted in Scott, *His Thought in Context*, 181.

³¹³ Augustine, “Grace and Free Choice,” in *The Works of Saint Augustine Volume 26: Answer to the Pelagians, IV*, ed. John E. Rotelle (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1999), 89-90 (XXVIII).

absolutely sovereign and thus irresistible. Apart from this grace man can do absolutely nothing, so there is no potential, universal atonement for him to activate by his faith. And finally, since there was nothing man could do to earn his salvation, there is nothing he can do to lose it. He is made to persevere to the end by divine grace.

Theodicy: The Problem of Evil

- With God as absolutely and meticulously sovereign over all events – even the human will – how does Augustine avoid styling God as the author of sin? After all, if “the Almighty sets in motion even in the innermost hearts of men the movement of their will, so that He does through their agency whatsoever He wishes to perform through them,”³¹⁴ does that not mean, since men will to sin, that He performs sin?
- Augustine answered that by leaning on his NeoPlatonic philosopher friends. He insisted that *evil* is not a created thing, *per se*, but is merely the absence of good – that is, the absence of God.
- Thus, he would say of God, “You treat [man] mercifully because you made him, though the sin that is in him is not of Your making.”³¹⁵ And again, “O Lord God, you are the disposer and creator of everything in nature, but of our sins the disposer only.”³¹⁶
- However, whether one accepts or rejects that explanation, Augustine’s presentation of God as the ultimate cause of all things is a description God Himself is happy to accept. For He declares, “There is no one besides Me. I am Yahweh, and there is no other, the One forming light and creating darkness, causing well-being and creating calamity; I am Yahweh who does all these” (Isaiah 45:6-7; cf. Lam 3:37-38; Rom 8:28).
- The tension that we perceive is allayed by understanding the difference between (1) God’s will of decree and His will of precept, and (2) ultimate vs. proximate causes.
- God’s sovereign will of decree is God’s will in the sense that Paul speaks of it in Romans 9:19: it is inviolable nobody can resist it. What God has decreed will come to pass. Whatever takes place in history happens because God has decreed it to happen from eternity. On the other hand, God’s prescriptive will is what God commands. God wills that His commandments be followed, and yet they not always are followed. This means that God’s will of decree has ordained that human beings violate His will of precept.
- This is not the same, though, as causing them to sin. Certainly, in an ultimate sense, God is the uncaused Cause of all the things, the unmoved Mover of all of His creation. Yet even in His sovereign decree that sin exist through human means, He never becomes the proximate, or immediate, cause of that sin. Thus, God’s absolute sovereignty – even His eternal decree which included the ordaining that sin and evil be – does not make Him the author or instigator of sin.

³¹⁴ Ibid., 99 (XX.41).

³¹⁵ Augustine, *Confessions*, 9 (I.7.11).

³¹⁶ Ibid., 13 (I.10.16).

The Centrality of Joy and the Affections

- In the words of Church historian and Augustine scholar Henry Chadwick, Augustine “pioneered a highly positive evaluation of human feelings. We owe to him our use of the word ‘heart’ this sense.”³¹⁷
- Thomas Hand, commenting on Augustine’s definition of prayer as the mind’s affectionate reaching out for God, exclaims, “How like Augustine to introduce that word ‘affectionate’! He never really succeeded in separating theology from devotion or logic from love. For him, to speak or to speculate about God merged spontaneously and irresistibly into the affectionate reaching out of his mind for God.”³¹⁸
- Similarly, B. B. Warfield credits Augustine with founding “a new Christian piety...and a new theology corresponding to this new type of piety; a theology which, recalling man from all dependence on his own powers or merits, casts him decisively on the grace of God alone for salvation.” He goes on to qualify that such a theology is not new with Augustine, but was Paul’s doctrine also. However, in Augustine’s time, this new piety of deep religious affection and new theology of radical sovereign grace “came with all the force of a new discovery” because the Church had been “dominated in all its thinking by the dregs of Stoic rationalism.”³¹⁹
- Augustine even spoke the language of the affections. When speaking of Ambrose’s preaching, he says, “At that time his gifted tongue never tired of dispensing the *richness* of your corn, the *joy* of your oil, and the sober *intoxication* of your wine.”³²⁰
- At the heart of Augustine’s theology and understanding of the Christian life is his view on the centrality of joy and the affections. This is because, quite simply, that God Himself ought to be at the heart of theology and the Christian life, and God Himself is, as Augustine himself put it, “the true, sovereign joy.”³²¹ Thus, one’s religious affections, to borrow a phrase from Jonathan Edwards, are of paramount importance.

Everyone Desires to Be Happy

- At the heart of Augustine’s emphasis on joy lay a fundamental assumption about human nature: “Every man, whatsoever his condition, desires to be happy. There is no man who does not desire this, and each one desires it with such earnestness that he prefers it to all other things; whoever, in fact desires other things, desires them for this end alone.”³²² He would express this maxim in multiple ways:

³¹⁷ Chadwick, *A Very Short Introduction*, 4.

³¹⁸ Thomas A. Hand, *Augustine on Prayer* (New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1996), 20.

³¹⁹ Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine*, 321.

³²⁰ Quoted in Piper, *The Legacy of Sovereign Joy*, 49.

³²¹ Augustine, *Confessions*, 170 (IX.1).

³²² Quoted in Hand, *Augustine on Prayer*, 13.

What is a life of happiness? Surely [it is] what everyone wants, absolutely everyone without exception. ... It is known to everyone, and if they could all be asked in some common tongue whether they wish to be happy, they would undoubtedly all reply that they do. ...

Thus all agree that they want to be happy, just as they would, if questioned, all agree that they want to enjoy life, and they think that a life of happiness consists of this enjoyment. One person pursues it in this way, another in that, but all are striving for the same goal, enjoyment.³²³

[The human soul] tends towards what it loves, so that attaining it, it may find rest. ... Just as the body gravitates according to its weight, so also the soul, in whatever direction its movement tends, is carried along by love.³²⁴

- Thus, invariably and without exception, *life* is about the affections. We are by nature designed to seek after joy, complacency, delight, and happiness. Whatever we do, we do it because we believe it will satisfy the cravings of our souls.

Happiness is Only Found in God

- However, as Augustine would learn all too painfully, true joy, complacency, delight, and happiness are only found in God Himself. Every human being seeks to satisfy the longings of his soul, but only he who comes to know and worship the true God through Jesus Christ is the one who will find such satisfaction.
- In that famous opening paragraph of the *Confessions*, he declares that our hearts are restless until they rest in Him. That is, God has so designed human beings that the deep longings and desires for happiness and joy that are built into the very fabric of our souls are only met and satisfied by Him. We, like Solomon, will pursue satisfaction in everything under the sun, but unless we recognize that true happiness is only found in God, we too will be striving after the wind.

A happy life is to be sought from the Lord our God. Many different people have given many different answers when discussing wherein true happiness resides. But why should we go to many teachers or consider many answers to this question? It has been briefly and truly stated in Holy Scripture: Happy the people whose God is the Lord (Psalm 144:15).³²⁵

You Yourself are their joy. This is the happy life, and this alone: to rejoice in You, about You and because of You. This is the life of happiness, and it is not to be found anywhere else.³²⁶

- And so it is not uncommon for Augustine to refer to God as the treasure chest of his holy joy. In the *Confessions*, he called God “my holy sweetness,”³²⁷ “O God most beautiful,”³²⁸ and “O my joy.”³²⁹ And in a most beautiful quote, he contrasts the counterfeit beauty

³²³ Augustine, *Confessions*, 216-218 (X.20.29-21.31).

³²⁴ Quoted in Hand, *Augustine on Prayer*, 14.

³²⁵ Quoted in Hand, *Augustine on Prayer*, 24.

³²⁶ Augustine, *Confessions*, 218 (X.22.32).

³²⁷ Augustine, *Confessions*, 5 (I.4.4).

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, 10 (I.12).

of so many various sins with God as true beauty, and shows how the satisfaction we seek in our sin is truly and entirely found in God Himself:

For in vice their lurks a counterfeit beauty: pride, for instance—even pride apes sublimity, where as You are the only God, most high above all things. As for ambition, what does it crave but honors and glory, while You are worthy of honor beyond all others, and eternally glorious? The ferocity of powerful men aims to inspire fear; but who is to be feared except the one God? Can anything be snatched from His power or withdrawn from it—when or where or whither or by whom?

Flirtatiousness aims to arouse love by its charming wiles, but nothing can hold more charm than your charity, nor could anything be loved to greater profit than your truth, which outshines all else in its luminous beauty. Curiosity poses as pursuit of knowledge, whereas you know everything to a supreme degree. Even ignorance or stupidity masquerades as simplicity and innocence, but nothing that exists is simpler than Yourself; and what could be more innocent than You, who leave the wicked to be hounded by their own sins?

Sloth pretends to aspire to rest, but what sure rest is there save the Lord? Lush living likes to be taken for contented abundance, but You are the full and inexhaustible store of a sweetness that never grows stale. Extravagance is a bogus generosity, but You are the infinitely wealthy giver of all good things. Avarice strives to amass possessions, but You own everything. Envy is a contentious over rank accorded to another, but what ranks higher than You? Anger seeks revenge, but whoever exacts revenge with greater justice than Yourself? Timidity dreads any unforeseen or sudden threat to the things it loves, and takes precautions for their safety; but is anything sudden or unforeseen to You? Who can separate what You love from You? Where is their ultimate security to be found, except with You?³³⁰

The Christian Must Pursue His Greatest Happiness

- In Augustine’s mind, God is so glorious that to experience Him is to enjoy Him. As he said above, God Himself is our joy. Thus, just as it is the Christian’s duty to pursue God and be devoted to glorifying Him, so it is the Christian’s duty to pursue his own greatest happiness.
- Piper writes, “Augustine...conceived of the quest of his life as a quest for a firm and unshakable enjoyment of the true God. This would be utterly determinative in his thinking about everything.”³³¹
- Augustine says it plainly: the definition of being a Christian is relentlessly pursuing the joyful blessings of God’s promises.

He who does not think of the world to come, he who is a Christian for any other reason than that he may receive God’s ultimate promises, is not yet a Christian.³³²

³²⁹ Ibid., 25 (II.2.2).

³³⁰ Augustine, *Confessions*, 33 (II.13).

³³¹ Piper, *The Legacy of Sovereign Joy*, 50.

³³² Quoted Chadwick, *A Very Short Introduction*, 59.

- And what is God’s ultimate promise but the gift of Himself? His promise is that all who trust in Christ for righteousness will have God for their God, and that He will dwell among them and that they will be His people. According to Augustine, the definition of being a Christian is to shape your entire life around pursuing your greatest benefit in Christ.
- As striking as it may be, it is important to hear the normative implications in Augustine’s words. That is to say, actively pursuing your own greatest joy is not merely icing on the cake; rather, we are *morally bound* to this pursuit.
- Thomas Hand summarizes Augustine’s thoughts well here: “In this life, therefore, our most important and pressing duty is to unite ourselves to God by love. Going in quest of God, striving to adhere to him, reaching out for him, makes us good; attaining him seeing him, securely possessing him makes us happy.”³³³
- Note the combination of the language of morality and the language of the affections. Our most important and pressing *duty* is to unite ourselves to God by *love*. What defines a man as *good* is the *quest* of God Himself, *striving* to be near Him. And such a quest, such striving, is fueled by the outcome: attaining, possessing, and seeing Him, is our *happiness*. Therefore, according to Augustine, it is every man’s duty to seek his own greatest happiness; no man is moral unless he is engaged in this pursuit.
- Thus, all of life is about beholding the beauty of the Lord. Indeed, Augustine defined *life* in such terms:

*Open the ears of my heart and say to my soul, “I am your salvation.” Let me run toward this voice and seize hold of You. Do not hide Your face from me: let me die so that I may see it, for not to see it would be death to me indeed.*³³⁴

- We must fight for our joy as fighting for our very lives. When Augustine was battling against his sexual immorality, he understood that the battle was one of competing pleasures. Note the war waged: How will I find the strength to enjoy God more than I enjoy sex?³³⁵

*I looked for a way to gain the strength I needed to enjoy you, but I did not until I embraced the mediator between God and humankind, the man Christ Jesus.*³³⁶

- Indeed, he even defined love for God in terms of enjoying Him:

³³³ Hand, *Augustine on Prayer*, 19.

³³⁴ Augustine, *Confessions*, 6 (I.5.5).

³³⁵ Piper, *The Legacy of Sovereign Joy*, 51.

³³⁶ Augustine, *Confessions*, 139 (VII.18.24).

“I call [love to God] the motion of the soul toward the enjoyment of God for his own sake, and the enjoyment of one’s self and of one’s neighbor for the sake of God.”³³⁷

- It was the pursuit of his own pleasure that strengthened him to engage in the many debates and altercations of the Pelagian controversy. When a friend asked him why he even bothered with the polemical disputes, he answered, “First and foremost because no subject gives me greater **pleasure**. For what ought to be more **attractive** to us sick men, than grace, grace by which we are healed; for us lazy men, than grace, grace by which we are stirred up; for us men longing to act, than grace, by which we are helped?”³³⁸ You see, for Augustine, there was no dichotomy of “enjoying grace” on the one hand and “fighting for grace” on the other. His pursuit of consummate joy in God drove both.

Sovereign Grace Experienced as the Gift of Joy in God

- While Augustine’s emphasis on the key doctrines of the sovereign grace of God and the centrality of joy in the believer’s life is relatively well-acknowledged, his notion of the interrelatedness of the two is more subtle and less recognized.
- Perhaps better than anyone in church history before or since, he enjoyed a subtlety of understanding that saw God’s sovereignty and the believer’s joy as inextricably united. Augustine recognized that human beings experience God’s sovereign grace as the gift of joy in Him. To truly understand Augustine’s thought and the theology that resulted from it, we must understand this relationship.

Depravity is a Failure to Delight in the Supremely Delightful

- Augustine understood the essence of man’s sinfulness – the very foundation of our total depravity and the state from which God’s sovereign grace is needed to save us – as being a failure to seek pleasure in God. Said another way, depravity is a failure to delight in what is supremely delightful.

In this lay my sin, that not in Him was I seeking pleasures, distinctions and truth, but I myself and the rest of His creatures, and so I fell headlong into pains, confusions and errors.”³³⁹

- All sin, then, is a failure to look for *pleasure, beauty, and truth* in God. This is precisely what we read in Romans 1, where the Apostle Paul defines all of life as worship of the Creator or the creature – seeking pleasure in God versus seeking pleasure in everything but God.

³³⁷ Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, III.10.16, quoted in John Piper, *Taste & See: Savoring the Supremacy of God in All of Life* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 2005), 204.

³³⁸ Quoted in Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 355.

³³⁹ Augustine, *Confessions*, 24 (I.20.31).

I was in love with my own ruin, in love with decay: not with the thing for which I was falling into decay but with decay itself, for I was depraved in soul, and I leapt down from your strong support into destruction, hungering not for some advantage to be gained by the foul deed, but for the foulness of it.³⁴⁰

- Here, he specifically uses the word *depraved* to describe his infatuation with decay. This is precisely what it means to be sinfully depraved: preferring the gratification that sin provides over against the gratification that obedience to God provides. If we sin, it is because we find sin more satisfying, gratifying, and joy-giving than a right relationship with God.
- The problem is that, objectively, sin *is not* more satisfying than God. Herein is spiritual death: a blindness that sees repulsiveness as beauty and beauty as repulsive. Contrarily, spiritual life imparted by the miracle of regeneration is the giving of eyes to see, such that we see the ugliness of sin for what it is as well as the glory of Christ for what it is, and preferring Christ, living our lives to satisfy our souls in Him rather than sin. Until then, our souls are unhealthy:

I had no desire for the food that does not perish, not because I had my fill of it, but because the more empty I was, the more I turned from it in revulsion. My soul's health was consequently poor.³⁴¹

God's Grace Frees us to Delight in Him

- Thus Augustine believed that the natural human heart was bound by the Fall of Adam to delight only in sin. “A man’s free-will,” he wrote, “avails for nothing except to sin.”³⁴² The will is so corrupted by original sin that it is impossible that we should delight in God (i.e., that which is truly delightful) on our own. This is precisely why we need grace, and that is precisely why grace comes to us: to give us true, lasting joy in God.
- Looking back on his rebellion, Augustine presents that God Himself sovereignly and graciously causes all of our pursuits of joy outside of Him to fail to satisfy us. He referred to God as “mercifully angry, sprinkling very bitter disappointments over all my unlawful pleasures” for the express purpose of leading him to “seek a pleasure free from all disappointment,” that is, pleasure in God.³⁴³
- He recognized God’s causing him to be displeased in his “unlawful pleasures” as grace. He goes on to say that God graciously uses “pain to make Your will known to us, and [You] strike only to heal, and even kill us lest we die away from you. Where as I, and how far was I exiled from the joys of Your house.”³⁴⁴
- Elsewhere he reiterates that God’s grace is the act of freeing people to find joy in Him.

³⁴⁰ Ibid., 30-31 (II.4.9).

³⁴¹ Augustine, *Confessions*, 37 (III.1.1).

³⁴² Augustine, “The Spirit and the Letter,” in *The Works of Saint Augustine: Volume 23*, 152 (III.5).

³⁴³ Augustine, *Confessions*, 26 (II.4).

³⁴⁴ Ibid., 26-27 (II.4).

If those things delight us which serve our advancement towards God, that is due not to our own whim or industry or meritorious works, but to the inspiration of God and to the grace which he bestows.³⁴⁵ Now, in order that such a course may engage our affections, God's 'love is shed abroad in our hearts' not through the free-will which arises from ourselves, but 'through the holy Ghost, which is given to us' (Romans 5:5).³⁴⁶

- Note the interaction between the affections, depravity, and sovereignty in that last quote. The goal is to have our *affections* engaged. We are powerless to properly engage our affections because our *depravity* corrupts our will. Thus, the Spirit must *sovereignly* give us the *love* of God.
- And so God's sovereignty is manifest in overcoming the deadness of our hearts, hearts that only delighted in what never truly satisfies, such that we see and perceive things as they actually are, and not the way our corrupt minds distort them. He sovereignly gives us the eyes to see Christ as glorious and satisfying as He is, and to see sin as repulsive and worthless as it is, so that we run *from* our sin *to* Christ, our true, everlasting joy. Thus, according to Augustine, the Christian experiences God as his *sovereign joy*.

The Intertwining Sovereignty and Joy

- To grasp Augustine's understanding of the relatedness of sovereignty and joy, we turn to a famous paragraph in the *Confessions*, of which John Piper says, "This may be one of the most important paragraphs for understanding the heart of Augustine's thought, and the essence of Augustinianism."³⁴⁷

During all those years [of rebellion], where was my free will? What was the hidden, secret place from which it was summoned in a moment, so that I might bend my neck to your easy yoke? ... How sweet all at once it was for me to be rid of those fruitless joys which I had once feared to lose! ... You drove them from me, you who are the true, sovereign joy. You drove them from me and took their place, you who are sweeter than all pleasure, though not to flesh and blood, you who outshine all light, yet are hidden deeper than any secret in our hearts, you who surpass all honor, though not in the eyes of men who see all honor in themselves. ... O Lord my God, my Light, my Wealth, and my Salvation.³⁴⁸

- Immediately Augustine sets this magnificent hymn of praise to God's grace in the context of his own depravity. He recognizes that in his slavery to sin, he had no free will. His will was not truly free because it was bound to pursue that which he had set his heart on. Immediately we see the relationship between Augustine's acknowledgment of God's sovereignty and of the centrality of affections.

³⁴⁵ Augustine, *To Simplicianus*, II.21, quoted in Scott, *His Thought in Context*, 203.

³⁴⁶ Augustine, "The Spirit and the Letter," in *The Works of Saint Augustine: Volume 23*, 152 (III.5).

³⁴⁷ Piper, *The Legacy of Sovereign Joy*, 57.

³⁴⁸ Augustine, *Confessions*, 170 (IX.1).

- Then, he exclaims of the sweetness of receiving the gift of salvation by God’s sovereign grace while contrasting that with the fruitless joys of his sin. And he declares that God sovereignly drove those fruitless joys from him. Here again, we see his experience of God’s grace as the gift of joy in Him that is superior to joy in sin.
- He calls God “the true, sovereign joy.” At the apex of all Augustine’s thought we find sovereign grace and joy converging with each other in God Himself. To know God was to experience Him in both His absolute power and sovereignty, but never separated or distinct from the abiding, satisfying, joy that is to be found in Him.
- He calls the God who took the place of all his fruitless joys “sweeter than all pleasure,” and yet reminds us that those who are merely flesh and blood – those who have not been born of water and the Spirit – do not experience Him as so sweet. Thus even here Augustine reminds us again of God’s sovereignty. Grace is needed to grant that a person be born of the Spirit before he experiences God as sweeter than all pleasure.
- The same parallel relationship is given in the next phrase, for God is He who “surpasses all honor.” He is magnificently glorious, yet – he hastens to add – “not in the eyes of men who see all honor in themselves.” Grace is needed to free us from the slavery of self-worship before we can comprehend God as glorious.
- The two concepts are absolutely inseparable. Piper comments, “This is Augustine’s understanding of grace. *Grace is God’s giving us sovereign joy in God that triumphs over joy in sin.* In other words, God works deep in the human heart to transform the springs of joy so that we love God more than sex or anything else.”³⁴⁹
- A comment from Bryan Litfin also demonstrates the intertwining of God’s sovereignty and the believer’s joy: “Augustine’s theology was a theology of God’s abounding love. This divine love is so deep that it inspires a holy awe in the hearts of those on whom his grace has been lavished. Only when we recognize the sin into which we are born, and the sin which we ourselves commit, can we appreciate the profundity of God’s love. It awakens in us a mystical passion to behold his own beauty ever more. Humanity’s highest good is to contemplate the face of God. ‘For me to cleave to God is good’ (see Ps. 73:28). The ability to love God with such great fervor is a gift shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.”³⁵⁰
- He begins by saying that divine love (sovereign grace) inspires holy awe (the believer’s joy). He goes on to say that only when we recognize our depravity can we truly appreciate (joy) the profundity of God’s love (sovereign grace). That love awakens a mystical passion within the believer to behold the beauty of God forever (joy). Litfin closes by saying that the ability to love God (joy) is a gift of sovereign grace from the Holy Spirit.

³⁴⁹ Piper, *The Legacy of Sovereign Joy*, 57.

³⁵⁰ Litfin, *Getting to Know the Church Fathers*, 231.

- Piper does a superb job of fleshing out the implications of Augustine’s “Grace-as-Sovereign-Joy” theology, and it serves as a helpful summary of this section:

“The fact that grace governs life by giving a supreme joy in the supremacy of God explains why the concept of Christian freedom is so radically different in Augustine than in Pelagius. For Augustine, freedom is to be so much in love with God and his ways that the very experience of choice is transcended. The ideal is not the autonomous will posed with sovereign equilibrium between good and evil. The ideal of freedom is to be so spiritually discerning of God’s beauty, and to be so in love with God that one never stands with equilibrium between God and an alternate choice. Rather, one transcends the experience of choice and walks under the continual sway of sovereign joy in God. In Augustine’s view, the self-conscious experience of having to contemplate choices was a sign not of the freedom of the will, but of the disintegration of the will. The struggle of choice is a necessary evil in this fallen world until the day comes when discernment and delight unite in a perfect apprehension of what is infinitely delightful, namely, God.”³⁵¹

His Impact & Relevance

Attempting to state the impact that Augustine has had on Christianity, on the entirety of Western thought and civilization, and on the world, as well as to summarize his relevance for contemporary evangelicalism is a daunting and overwhelming task. Perhaps the best way to start is to pass the buck to an assembly of witnesses whose corporate testimony to Augustine’s impact and relevance is better received than any commentary a seminary student could offer.

The Testimony of a Great Cloud of Witnesses

- Leading Reformed pastor and theologian John Piper calls Augustine’s conversion “one of the most important days in church history” and calls the *Confessions* “one of the great works of grace in history.”³⁵²
- He also comments on Augustine’s reputation in his own day, one which Christian pastors pray would, by God’s grace, be true of them: “He had served the church for almost forty years, and was known throughout the Christian world as a God-besotted, biblical, articulate, persuasive shepherd of his flock and a defender of the faith against the great doctrinal threats of his day.”³⁵³
- Church historian Roger Olson speaks of Augustine having “gained a reputation as one of Christendom’s wisest leaders,” even in his own day.³⁵⁴

³⁵¹ Piper, *The Legacy of Sovereign Joy*, 62.

³⁵² Piper, *The Legacy of Sovereign Joy*, 51.

³⁵³ *Ibid.*, 42.

³⁵⁴ Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology*, 260.

- Church historian Justo Gonzalez speaks of Augustine as the mark of an entire era of history: “Augustine is the end of one era as well as the beginning of another. He is the last of the ancient Christian writers, and the forerunner of medieval theology. The main currents of ancient theology converged in him, and from him flow the rivers, not only medieval scholasticism, but also of sixteenth-century Protestant theology.”³⁵⁵
- The great Princeton theologian and warrior against 19th century liberalism, B. B. Warfield, said, “The whole development of Western life in all its phases, was powerfully affected by his teaching.”³⁵⁶
- Church historian and Augustine student Henry Chadwick comments on the range of Augustine’s impact by speaking of the great men of history whom he influenced: “Anselm, Aquinas, Petrarch (never without a pocket copy of the *Confessions*), Luther, Bellarmine, Pascal, and Kierkegaard all stand in the shade of his broad oak. His writings were among the favourite books of Wittgenstein. He was the *bête noire* [object of aversion] of Nietzsche. . . . He was ‘the first modern man’ in the sense that with him the reader feels himself addressed at a level of extraordinary psychological depth and confronted by a coherent system of thought, large parts of which still make potent claims to attention and respect.”³⁵⁷
- Warfield, commenting on Augustine’s influence on the church, notes the breadth of Augustine’s work, and therefore the breadth of his impact: “The most amazing variety of doctrine, on almost every conceivable subject, throughout the Middle Ages, and later in the Church of Rome, has sought support for itself in some saying or other of his; and both sides of almost every controversy have appealed with confidence to his teaching.”³⁵⁸
- Thomas Aquinas, hailed as *the* great thinker of the middle ages and a great doctor of the Church, was said never to have to refer to Augustine by name. He referred to him simply as “The Theologian.”³⁵⁹
- Agostino Trapè, known in Italy as the most passionate scholar of Augustine and the expounder of his writings, speaks of Augustine’s universal relevance: “He is a philosopher, but not a cold thinker; he is a theologian, but also a master of the spiritual life; he is a mystic, but also a pastor; he is a poet, but also a controversialist. Every reader thus finds something attractive and even overwhelming: depth of metaphysical intuition, rich abundance of theological proofs, synthetic power and energy, psychological depth shown in spiritual ascents, and a wealth of imagination, sensibility, and mystical fervor.”³⁶⁰

³⁵⁵ Quoted in Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology*, 255.

³⁵⁶ Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine*, 310.

³⁵⁷ Chadwick, *A Very Short Introduction*, 4.

³⁵⁸ Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine*, 309-310.

³⁵⁹ Nichols, *Pages from Church History*, 65.

³⁶⁰ Agostino Trapè, *Saint Augustine: Man, Pastor, Mystic* (New York: Catholic Book Publishing, 1986),

- 19th century theologian Adolf Harnack said that Augustine was the greatest man “between Paul the Apostle and Luther the Reformer, the Christian Church has possessed.”³⁶¹
- Warfield credits Augustine with first giving expression to truly Evangelical theology, and thus a theology truly faithful to the Gospel as handed down from the Apostles: “It is not Augustine the traditionalist, or Augustine the thinker, but Augustine the religious genius, who has most profoundly influenced the world. The most significant fact about him is that he, first among Church teachers, gave adequate expression to that type of religion which has since attached to itself the name of ‘evangelical’; the religion, that is to say, of faith, as distinct from the religion of works. ... The great contribution which Augustine has made to the world’s life and thought is embodied in the theology of grace.”³⁶²
- Bryan Litfin says of Augustine that which every Christian prays – by the grace of God – would said of him: “To truly understand Augustine, you must get to know the God who was his all-encompassing passion.”³⁶³
- And finally, the publishers of *Christian History* magazine simply say, “After Jesus and Paul, Augustine of Hippo is the most influential figure in the history of Christianity.”³⁶⁴

His Influence on the Protestant Reformation

- Augustine had a profound influence on what would become the great Protestant Reformation of the 16th century. The doctrine of grace upon which the Reformation stood, “came from Augustine’s hands in its positive outline completely formulated,” wrote B. B. Warfield.³⁶⁵ When Luther nailed the 95 Theses to the Wittenberg Castle Church door, he was not starting a revolution, but only continuing what Huss, Wycliffe, Waldo, Anselm, and ultimately Augustine had begun.
- R. C. Sproul reminds us that “in his assessment of Augustine’s influence on church history, the great Princeton Theologian and defender of orthodoxy against liberalism B. B. Warfield wrote, ‘It is Augustine who gave us the Reformation.’”³⁶⁶
- In the same vein, John Piper writes, “Under Christ, Augustine’s influence on Luther and Calvin was second only to the influence of the apostle Paul. ... The great German and the great Frenchman drank from the great African, and God gave the life of the Reformation.”³⁶⁷

³⁶¹ Quoted in Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine*, 306.

³⁶² Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine*, 319-320.

³⁶³ Litfin, *Getting to Know the Church Fathers*, 231.

³⁶⁴ Piper, *The Legacy of Sovereign Joy*, 43. (He cites *Christian History*, Vol. VI, No. 3, p. 2.)

³⁶⁵ Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine*, 322.

³⁶⁶ Sproul, “Augustine and Pelagius,” 11, quoting Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine*, 322.

³⁶⁷ Piper, *The Legacy of Sovereign Joy*, 24.

- Johann von Staupitz, who was a dear counselor and spiritual father to Martin Luther, was a vicar of the Augustinian Order of monks at the monastery in Erfurt. After Luther's crisis experience with St. Anne and the thunderstorm, Luther himself was an Augustinian monk.
- Piper notes, "The standard text on theology that Calvin and Luther drank from was *Sentences* by Peter Lombard. Nine-tenths of this book consists of quotations from Augustine, and it was for centuries *the* textbook for theological studies."³⁶⁸
- Furthermore, in his writings, John Calvin quoted Augustine more than he quoted any other theologian.³⁶⁹ In his biography of Calvin, T. H. L. Parker notes, "In the 1536 edition of the *Institutes* [Calvin] quotes Augustine 20 times, three years later 113, in 1543 it was 128 times, 141 in 1550 and finally, no less than 342 in 1559."³⁷⁰
- Augustine's work on man's total depravity and God's absolute sovereignty in salvation that was birthed out of the Pelagian controversy of his day was precisely what was needed to break Christianity from the shackles of Roman semi-Pelagianism a thousand years later. Reformed theology stands on Augustine's shoulders. This is why Warfield could write that he "has determined the course of [the Church's] history in the West up to the present day,"³⁷¹ and why Piper's is not overstating when he says, "Augustine towers over the thousand years between himself and the Reformation, heralding the Sovereign Joy of God's triumphant grace for all generations."³⁷²

The Antidote for the Modern Pelagianism

- Though the Pelagian heresy died on paper in 431 at the Council of Ephesus and the semi-Pelagian heresy in 529 at the Synod of Orange, the influence of man-centeredness and human potential inherent in those doctrines has been felt throughout the history of the church up through the present day.
- Warfield would write in his day that "the greatest peril to the Reformation was *and remains* the diffused anti-'Augustinianism' in the world."³⁷³ Even in the 300 years after the Reformation, Warfield recognized that a failure to grasp Augustine's radical commitment to the doctrine of sovereign grace was *the* plague Protestantism was facing.
- Sproul comments, "Modern Evangelicalism sprung from the Reformation whose roots were planted by Augustine. But today the Reformational and Augustinian view of grace is all but eclipsed in Evangelicalism."³⁷⁴

³⁶⁸ Ibid., 24-25; cf. Trapè, *Man, Pastor Mystic*, 333-334; cf. Chadwick, *A Very Short Introduction*, 3.

³⁶⁹ Sproul, "Augustine and Pelagius," 11.

³⁷⁰ T. H. L. Parker, *Portrait of Calvin* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1954), 44.

³⁷¹ Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine*, 306.

³⁷² Piper, *The Legacy of Sovereign Joy*, 24.

³⁷³ Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine*, 323, emphasis added.

³⁷⁴ Sproul, "Augustine and Pelagius," 52.

- This is so because the worldview that underlies Pelagius’s attack on grace is the same worldview that pervades contemporary humanism. Sproul continues:

“Humanism in all its subtle forms, recapitulates the unvarnished Pelagianism against which Augustine struggled. ... The basic assumptions of this view persisted throughout church history to reappear in Medieval Catholicism, Renaissance Humanism, Socinianism, Arminianism, and modern Liberalism. The seminal thought of Pelagius survives today not as a trace or tangential influence but is pervasive in the modern church. Indeed, the modern church is held captive by it. ... The irony may be that though modern Evangelicalism loudly and repeatedly denounces Humanism as the mortal enemy of Christianity, it entertains a Humanistic view of man and of the will at its deepest core.”³⁷⁵

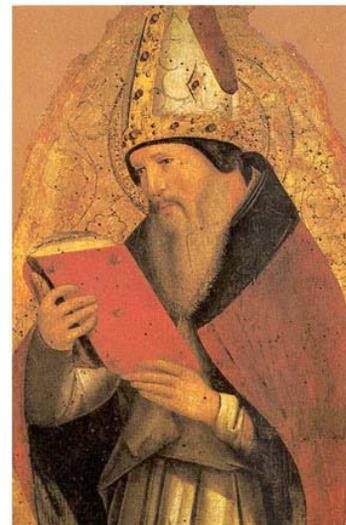
- Such a diagnosis is as staggering as it is disconcerting. Yet Sproul’s proposed remedy underscores the relevance of Augustine for our day: “We need an Augustine or a Luther to speak to us anew lest the light of God’s grace be not only over-shadowed but be obliterated in our time.”³⁷⁶

Various Lessons in Brief

- There are many other beneficial lessons we can learn from Augustine which we do not have time to develop in full. I list a few of them here.

An Absolute God-Centeredness

- In the closing lines of the first paragraph of the *Confessions*, Augustine declares of God, “You made us for Yourself.”³⁷⁷ At the very outset of this great confession to God of all the work He has accomplished in Augustine’s life, Augustine highlights the God-centeredness of all creation. God made us for Himself. All things are from Him, through Him, and *to* Him. God’s ultimate purpose in creation was to glorify Himself.
- This kind of thinking is contrary to the popular contemporary evangelical thought that posits that *we* human beings are the great end of creation. “God made us because He loved us so much and desired a relationship with us,” the thought goes. It is one thing to agree that *people* should be radically devoted to glorifying God, but for many even conservative, otherwise orthodox, sound evangelicals, the notion of *God* being radically devoted to



³⁷⁵ Ibid., 12, 52.

³⁷⁶ Sproul, “Augustine and Pelagius,” 52.

³⁷⁷ Augustine, *Confessions*, 3 (I.1.1).

glorifying *Himself* is repugnant. In their minds, it makes God a narcissist.

- But such an objection falls by the wayside when we consider that God has designed that His glory would itself be our good. Immediately before declaring, “You made us for Yourself,” Augustine writes, “You arouse us so that praising You may bring us joy.”³⁷⁸
- In other words, God’s glory and our happiness (or our good) are not different things. Our greatest happiness *is* to see God’s glory manifested and expressed for us to enjoy, because the beauty of that vision is that in which we were created to find our greatest satisfaction. And so God is gracious and loving *precisely because* He chiefly regards Himself, and no one else, in all He does. Here again, then, we find that pursuing God’s glory means pursuing our greatest happiness.

Treasure the Giver above the Gifts

- So many Christians seek after peace, success, comfort, security, contentment, friendship, forgiveness, and rescue from hell. Yet in so doing they refuse to hear the command of Jesus to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. In seeking these, they betray that their delight is actually in God’s *gifts* and not God Himself.
- Yet constantly running through Augustine’s theology is the notion that God’s greatest gift to humanity is the gift of Himself. Therefore, we should receive and enjoy all the other good gifts that He gives us *for the sake of* the One who gives them. God’s gifts are designed to point us to the Giver. Therefore, our joy in God’s gifts must be a joy in God Himself.

*If sensuous beauty delights you, praise God for the beauty of corporeal things, and channel the love you feel for them onto their Maker, lest the things that please you lead you to displease Him.*³⁷⁹

*For anyone who loves something else along with You, but does not love it for Your sake, loves You less.*³⁸⁰

*Suppose brethren, a man should make a ring for his betrothed, and she should love the ring more wholeheartedly than the betrothed who made it for her. . . . Certainly, let her love his gift: but, if she should say, “The ring is enough. I do not want to see his face again,” what would we say of her? . . . The pledge is given her by the betrothed just that, in his pledge, he himself may be loved. God, then, has given you all these things. Love Him who made them.*³⁸¹

- And far from letting his vision of the Giver eclipse his appreciation of the gifts, it only intensified it. “Augustine’s relentless focus on the City of God did not prevent him from seeing the beauties of this world and enjoying them for what they are—good gifts of God pointing us ever to the Giver and the superior joys of his presence.”³⁸² – Piper, *Legacy* 72.

³⁷⁸ Ibid.

³⁷⁹ Augustine, *Confessions*, 65 (IV.12.18).

³⁸⁰ Ibid., 223 (X.29.40).

³⁸¹ Quoted in Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 326.

³⁸² Piper, *The Legacy of Sovereign Joy*, 72.

- And so Augustine teaches us that God *Himself* is the Good News of the Gospel. Contrary to popular evangelical thought, the Gospel does not merely *use* God to get us to our everlasting happiness *apart* from Him, as if heaven was just the consummation of all our earthly pleasures and God was our ticket to getting there. No, *He Himself* is the Gift above all gifts. And without Him, none of those other gifts are desirable. Christ died to *bring us to God* (1Pet 3:18). *He* is whom we have in heaven (Ps 73:24).

Implications for Evangelism

- If Augustine is correct in his fundamental assumption that everyone without exception desires and seeks happiness, and if he is correct that human depravity is the corruption of our will such that we are bound to seek happiness in sin – where we cannot get any true happiness – then our preaching of the Gospel (which is designed to overcome depravity and give spiritual life) will emphasize that true satisfaction and happiness comes in God Himself.
- This is not what Luther would call a theology of glory, nor what many in our own day would call a health-wealth-and-prosperity Gospel. Rather, it is a recognition that the sinner seeks happiness but is blind to know he seeks for it everywhere but the right place, and it is then presenting to him his most satisfying, abiding happiness as *God Himself*.
- “He is happy who possesses God,” Piper quotes of Augustine, yet “not because God gives health, wealth, and prosperity, but because God *is* our soul’s joyful resting place. To make this known and experienced through Jesus Christ is the goal of evangelism and world missions.”³⁸³

The Centrality of Joy and the Affections in the Christian Life

- As mentioned earlier, Thomas Hand said of Augustine, “He never really succeeded in separating theology from devotion or logic from love. For him, to speak or to speculate about God merged spontaneously and irresistibly into the affectionate reaching out of his mind for God.”³⁸⁴
- Therein lay something of what separates Augustine out from the myriad theologians of history as well as of our day. Augustine’s “failure” to separate the heart from the head is truly a great success at emphasizing both the intellect and the affections without losing either. Speaking of Jonathan Edwards, church historian Stephen Nichols writes, “[He] remarkably managed to hold together what we tend to split apart. He saw Christianity as engaging both head and heart, while much of popular evangelicalism suffers greatly from pendulum swings in this regard.”³⁸⁵ The same can be said of Augustine.

³⁸³ Piper, *The Legacy of Sovereign Joy*, 70.

³⁸⁴ Hand, *Augustine on Prayer*, 20.

³⁸⁵ Stephen Nichols, “Jonathan Edwards: His Life and Legacy,” in *A God Entranced Vision of All Things*, eds. John Piper and Justin Taylor (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 36.

Conversion

- Augustine confesses that he was miserable even in his wanton pursuit of sexual satisfaction, and that in his misery he even prayed for chastity. Yet, he prayed this way: “Grant me chastity and self-control, but please not yet.”³⁸⁶
- This demonstrates that at that time Augustine’s heart was still in love with its idols. Even though he knew his immorality was the source of his misery, and knew that it was right to pray that God should remove such sins from him, he also knew that he wanted to wallow in them a bit longer. His desires were still enslaved to sin.
- This speaks to 21st-century Christianity by teaching us that mere head knowledge and intellectual assent to facts – even spiritual facts! – does not make one a Christian. Augustine is underlining that one is not a Christian until he *ceases* to worship his sin and receives Christ as his sole object of worship. Salvation is about worship, and worship is about the affections.
- Further, as he listened to Ambrose’s preaching and continued studying, comparing the ideas of Christianity with those he himself came to adopt, at one point he had a crisis experience in which he recognized that God is the God who is. Yet, this was not his conversion, for of it he says,

*I found it amazing that though I now loved Your very self, and not some figment of imagination in place of You, I could not continue steadfastly in the enjoyment of my God. I was drawn toward You by Your beauty but swiftly dragged away from You by my own weight, swept back headlong and groaning onto these things below myself; and this weight was a carnal habit.*³⁸⁷

- What this amazingly insightful testimony teaches us is that intense experiences define neither Christianity itself nor one’s standing as a Christian. Instead, Augustine teaches us that what distinguished him from true Christians at this point was a relationship of *enjoyment* of God. He continued to *prefer* sin. Loving the world and the things in the world, he proved that the love of the Father was not in him (1Jn 2:15-17). Oh how contemporary evangelicalism needs to hear this message! How many professing Christians base their assurance of salvation upon an intense past experience, but do not continue steadfastly in *enjoying* God, and find more satisfaction in their sin than in Him! We are not true Christians while, though we believe we see the beauty of Jesus, the beauty of other lusts consistently attracts us more.

Sanctification: How We Pursue Holiness in the Christian Life

- What Augustine teaches us through his emphasis on joy and the affections is that joy must lie at the heart of our experience of sanctification in our Christian lives. *Our* pursuit of holiness must be the pursuit of our joy.

³⁸⁶ Augustine, *Confessions*, 159 (VIII.17).

³⁸⁷ Augustine, *Confessions*, 138 (VII.17.23).

- “What follows from Augustine’s view of grace as the giving of a sovereign joy that triumphs over ‘lawless pleasures’ is that the entire Christian life is seen as a relentless quest for the fullest joy in God.”³⁸⁸ Augustine would simply say, “The whole life of a good Christian is a holy desire.”³⁸⁹
- Piper paraphrases, “In other words, the key to Christian living is a thirst and a hunger for God. And one of the main reasons people do not understand or experience the sovereignty of grace and the way it works through the awakening of sovereign joy is that their hunger and thirst for God is so small.”³⁹⁰
- So many professing Christians would admit to feeling the way Piper describes. One looks around at her Christian friends and wonders how they can be so joyful and seemingly carefree while she is laboring and languishing under a burden of anxiety. She questions her own Christian experience and wonders whether she’s saved, and so she goes about her Christian life defeated, without hope, having resigned herself to the fact that she is ‘just not that kind of person.’ Or, another Christian, of a constitution not prone to self-pity but to self-promotion, ridicules his friends’ display of joy as merely emotion-driven hype without substance. He retreats not into the pride of self-pity but the pride of self-righteousness, effectively becoming a Pharisee by laboring to keep the commands of Christ in his own strength. Augustine’s harmony of the experience of grace as sovereign joy is the remedy for both of these.
- Olson compares Pelagius’s view of man’s ability to Kantian morality: “The famous modern German philosopher Immanuel Kant paraphrased basic attitude in his aphorism ‘ought implies can.’”³⁹¹ This Pelagian-Kantian understanding of morality has certainly persisted into the present day and even has infiltrated the contemporary church.
- Yet Augustine’s notion that God must “give what He commands”³⁹² is foreign to many evangelicals. Many even conservative, orthodox evangelicals believe that if God has commanded something, we are entirely able to obey it. But this is precisely what Augustine battled against. In fact “ought” does *not* imply “can.” “Ought” implies “can’t.” *Grace* is needed for us to be able to do what we ought. Augustine prays:

*I long for you to grow sweeter to me than all those allurements I was pursuing. You have enabled me to love you with all my strength and with passionate yearning grasp your hand, so that you may rescue me from every temptation until my life’s end.*³⁹³

- In other words, he will obey when God is sweeter and more alluring than the allurements of sin. He will be rescued from temptation by loving God with all his strength and by

³⁸⁸ Piper, *The Legacy of Sovereign Joy*, 62-63.

³⁸⁹ Hand, *Augustine on Prayer*, 20.

³⁹⁰ Piper, *The Legacy of Sovereign Joy*, 62-63.

³⁹¹ Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology*, 270.

³⁹² Augustine, *Confessions*, 223 (X.29.40).

³⁹³ *Ibid.*, 18-19 (I.15.24).

grasping God’s hand with passionate yearning. The fight for joy in God *is* the fight for holiness. And note, he is not speaking about his justification, but his progress in the Christian life having already been saved.

- This is of paramount importance, because it undergirds much of our thinking about sanctification. So many people who rightly confess Christ’s lordship and desire to submit to Him as their master, make out that submission to be a burdensome, laborious task. It’s as if there is a latent belief that they have been given all the grace they are going to get at conversion, and now for sanctification they are on their own. And so when they continue to sin, failing to obey their Lord and Savior, they become discouraged and conclude that obedience to Christ is a burden to be endured. But Christ tells us that His yoke is *easy* and His burden is *light*. The Apostle John states it plainly: “His commandments are not burdensome” (1Jn 5:3).
- But how can they not be burdensome? This is precisely where Augustine’s concept of grace comes in. And not just grace, but grace as the gift of sovereign joy. God’s grace to us in the Christian life is the giving of the Holy Spirit to present the glory of Christ to our unveiled faces, such that seeing that glory, we are strengthened and motivated and fully equipped to obey our Lord with joy. Obedience becomes *delightful*, because we now obey in the hope that obedience brings more of Christ to enjoy.
- As Piper summarizes, “Augustine’s vision of salvation through Jesus Christ and of living the Christian life is rooted in his understanding and experience of grace—the divine gift of triumphant joy in God. The power that saves and sanctifies is the work of God deep beneath the human will to transform the springs of joy so that we love God more than sex or seas or scholarship or food or friends or fame or family or money. Grace is the key because it is free and creates a new heart with new delights that govern the will and the work of our lives.”³⁹⁴
- He goes on to make an extremely helpful application of Augustine’s thought to our daily Christian experience:

“Loving God, in Augustine’s mind, is never reduced to deeds of obedience or acts of willpower. He never makes the mistake of quoting John 14:15 and claiming that love *is* the same as keeping Christ’s commandments, when the text says that keeping Christ’s commandments *results* from loving Christ. . . . Nor does he make the mistake of quoting 1 John 5:3 and overlook the point that loving God means keeping his commandments *in such a way* that his commandments are not burdensome. Loving God is being so satisfied in God and so delighted in all that he is for us that his commandments cease to be burdensome. Augustine saw this. And we need him badly today to help us recover the root of all Christian living in the triumphant joy in God that dethrones the sovereignty of laziness and lust and greed.”³⁹⁵

³⁹⁴ Piper, *The Legacy of Sovereign Joy*, 72.

³⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 57-58.

- What a world of difference this makes in one’s life! It transforms a languishing, burdened life of minimal effectiveness of Christ into an impassioned pursuit of the thrill of holy joy in God through obedience to His commandments!
- He raises the bar of obedience from mere formal adherence to external duties and teaches us that our primary duty is to *delight* in God. Joyless obedience to a supremely enjoyable God is not obedience:

Even after [the Christian’s] duty and his proper aim shall begin to become known to him, unless he also take delight in and feel a love for it, he neither does his duty, nor sets about it, nor lives rightly.³⁹⁶

No one is doing right who acts unwillingly, even if what he does is good in itself.³⁹⁷

- As we mentioned before, when a friend asked him why he battled so fiercely with Pelagius, he replied that it was because no subject gives him greater *pleasure* than grace.³⁹⁸ The pursuit of his greatest pleasure – the pursuit of holy joy in God – was what drove him to defend the doctrine of grace.
- And so we who speak of knowing God’s grace but have not been stirred to *joy* in Him and the work that He gives us, as Augustine speaks of here, do most assuredly misunderstand grace, and have reason to examine ourselves.

Sovereign Joy

- If R. C. Sproul is right that Pelagianism has survived through the humanistic core of the contemporary “Christian” worldview and that Augustine’s doctrine of grace is “all but eclipsed in Evangelicalism” today, we do indeed need a healthy dose of Augustinian grace to influence our theology and our worldview. However, perhaps what has kept the contemporary Reformed view of grace from triumphing over the Pelagian humanism that is so rampant is that our conception of grace is only half-Augustinian. We need to recover the understanding of grace as the gift of sovereign joy.
- Piper comments, “Perhaps the prescription for the cure is for the church, and especially the lovers of God’s sovereignty, to recover a healthy dose of Augustine’s doctrine of ‘sovereign joy.’ Far too much Christian thinking and preaching in our day (including Reformed thinking and preaching) has not penetrated to the root of how grace actually triumphs, namely, through joy, and therefore is only half-Augustinian, and half-biblical, and half-beautiful.”³⁹⁹

³⁹⁶ Augustine, *On the Spirit and the Letter*, quoted in Scott, *His Thought in Context*, 208.

³⁹⁷ Augustine, *Confessions*, 15 (I.12.19).

³⁹⁸ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 355.

³⁹⁹ Piper, *The Legacy of Sovereign Joy*, 56.

- And so I heartily agree with Sproul’s diagnosis: “We need an Augustine or a Luther to speak to us anew lest the light of God’s grace be not only over-shadowed but be obliterated in our time.”⁴⁰⁰
- Yet I also agree with Piper’s response to Sproul’s call: “Yes we do. But we also need tens of thousands of ordinary pastors [and laypeople], who are ravished with the extraordinary sovereignty of joy that belongs to and comes from God alone. . . . And we need to rediscover Augustine’s peculiar slant—a very biblical slant—on grace as the free gift of sovereign joy in God that frees us from the bondage of sin. We need to rethink our Reformed view of salvation so that every limb and every branch in the tree is coursing with the sap of Augustinian delight.”⁴⁰¹
- How might contemporary Reformed Evangelicals sap their branches to the root of Augustinian delight? Perhaps the first step is to understand the five points of Calvinism in terms of sovereign joy. “We need to make plain that:
 - *total depravity* is not just badness, but blindness to beauty and deadness to joy;
 - and *unconditional election* means that the completeness of our joy in Jesus was planned for us before we ever existed;
 - and that *limited atonement* is the assurance that indestructible joy in God is infallibly secured for us by the blood of the covenant;
 - and *irresistible grace* is the commitment and power of God’s love to make sure we don’t hold on to suicidal pleasures, and to set us free by the sovereign power of superior delights;
 - and that the *perseverance of the saints* is the almighty work of God to keep us, through all affliction and suffering, for an inheritance of pleasures at God’s right hand forever.”⁴⁰²
- And the next step we might take to understand why this concept of sovereign, triumphant joy in God has been missing in Reformed circles is to ask ourselves “whether this is so because we have not experienced the triumph of sovereign joy in our own lives. . . . Or are we in bondage to the pleasures of this world so that, for all our talk about the glory of God, we love television and food and sleep and sex and money and human praise just like everybody else?”⁴⁰³
- It is a soul-searching, even stinging, question. Has the *glory* of the sovereign God *gripped* our souls? Or has the knowledge of His sovereignty only challenged our intellect? Contemporary Evangelicalism must heed Augustine’s exemplary call to keep head and heart together, to relentlessly pursue our greatest happiness and satisfaction and joy from the God about whom we can articulate so much. We must treasure God’s grace as the gift of sovereign joy in Him.

⁴⁰⁰ Sproul, “Augustine and Pelagius,” 52.

⁴⁰¹ Piper, *Taste & See*, 73.

⁴⁰² Piper, *Taste & See*, 73.

⁴⁰³ *Ibid.*, 73-74.

I close with the words of B. B. Warfield, who, writing of Augustine’s motives in writing his *Confessions*, well summarizes my motives in endeavoring into this study of his life, thought, and relevance: “This whole account . . . is written, let us remind ourselves, not that we may know Augustine, but that we may know God: and it shows us Augustine only that we may see God.”⁴⁰⁴

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{ ADDENDUM }

AUGUSTINE AND MIRACLES IN CHURCH HISTORY

* *Originally posted on the Cripplegate blog.*

Recently I received the following question by email:

I was wondering what your thoughts are on Augustine's "City of God", book 22, chapter 8 where he records many miracles taking place in Carthage. Some sound doubtful — making the symbol of a cross over the malady. I've always found Augustine trustworthy but am sensing some overtones of superstition. Are there other sources that might shed some light on his testimony?

I've been asked similar questions before, regarding miracle and healing accounts throughout different eras of church history. Though each instance is different, Augustine's testimony in *The City of God* provides an interesting case study.

From a cessationist perspective, here are a few thoughts in response to Augustine's healing accounts:

1. In everything, the Word of God is our authority. Human experiences, whether contemporary or historical, must be evaluated against the teaching of Scripture. Augustine is one of the most well-known church fathers. Yet, he is neither inspired nor authoritative. Thus, his teachings must be measured against the truth of Scripture. (cf. 1 Thess. 5:21–22)
2. Unlike the record of miracles in the Bible – which are absolutely true – the report of supernatural phenomena throughout church history is impossible to verify and subject to human error. Augustine was undoubtedly sincere when he claimed that various miracles occurred in Carthage during his lifetime. But that does not mean his interpretation of what happened was correct. Being centuries removed from the situation makes it impossible for us to fully investigate all that he describes; but we can still evaluate his conclusions against the truth of God's Word.
3. It is important to note that cessationists do not deny the possibility that God can (and does) work miracles in the world today, in the broad sense of special acts of providence and answers to prayer. (The miracle of regeneration, for example, is a supernatural act performed by God each time a sinner comes to saving faith.) So, the mention of "miracles" in church history sources does not — in and of itself — undermine the cessationist position. (Cessationists might question whether the term "miracle" is the best term to describe special acts of providence, since biblical miracles were markedly different than the "miracles" of church history.)
4. Cessationists teach that the miraculous *gifts* of the Spirit (such as the gifts of healing, tongues, and prophecy) ceased shortly after the apostolic age. Biblically defined, the gift of healing involved a human agent who – by God's power – miraculously delivered sick people from real

diseases in a way that was undeniable and instantaneous. It was given as a sign to authenticate the ministry of Christ and the apostles at the foundation stage of church history. Cessationists are convinced that there are no *miracle-workers* or *healers* in the world today like there were during apostolic times.

5. Importantly, Augustine’s miracle accounts do not involve miracle workers who possessed the gift of healing. Instead, these accounts are presented as unexpected and providential acts of God which were not dependent on an intermediary healer. In that sense, they are categorically different than the type of healing miracles that are described in the Gospels or the book of Acts. Nothing in Augustine’s account suggests that the “gift of healing” was involved in the episodes he recounted.

6. As a side note, in response to those who wish to categorize Augustine as a continuationist, it is helpful to note that he clearly states that certain charismatic gifts (like the gift of tongues) had ceased after the time of the apostles. For example, regarding tongues-speaking, he states:

In the earliest time the Holy Ghost fell upon them that believed: and they spoke with tongues which they had not learned ‘as the Spirit gave them utterance.’ These were signs adapted to the time. For it was proper for the Holy Spirit to evidence Himself in all tongues, and to show that the Gospel of God had come to all tongues [languages] over the whole earth. The thing was done for an authentication and it passed away. (Ten Homilies on the first Epistle of John VI, 10).

7. But there is still a major problem with Augustine’s report of miracles. His description is highly mystical and replete with superstitious elements. In recording these healings, he attributes them to things like prayer to the saints, the power of relics, and the use of religious symbols. Such descriptions are deeply troubling and call into serious question the veracity of his supposed miracles. Added to that, most of what he reports is from second or third-hand sources, which again casts doubt on the factual accuracy of his interpretations.

8. Generally speaking, the superstition that characterized medieval Christianity gained a foothold in the church after the Roman Empire became “Christian.” As pagans were forced to become Christian they synthesized their paganism with their Christianity. The church became contaminated. Even someone as notable as Augustine (in the 5th century) was affected by it.

So where does that leave us?

A. On the one hand, cessationists would affirm that God can heal people providentially in sudden and unexpected ways — both today and throughout church history. While the *gift of healing* is no longer active (meaning that the “faith-healers” of the modern charismatic movement are frauds), God can and sometimes does answer prayer in providentially extraordinary ways. Sometimes people refer to these special acts of providence as “miracles” — though that label is not always helpful in light of the contemporary charismatic movement’s abuse of the term.

B. On the other hand, with regard to Augustine’s account in particular, the superstitious elements that he highlights (like praying to the saints and finding healing power in relics) are completely unbiblical. They find their source in pagan influences, and they ought to be rejected outright.

C. Those superstitious elements call into question the veracity of all of Augustine’s miracle reports — since his interpretation of the events was prejudiced by the religious superstitions of fifth-century Roman society (which was actively looking for miracles at every turn). Augustine himself seems ready to label anything and everything a “miracle,” even if there are other explanations for what took place. In that way, his miracle reports seem somewhat similar to modern Roman Catholic or Pentecostal miracle reports — in which superstitious and mystical presuppositions produce dangerously flawed conclusions.

D. While we appreciate Augustine for many wonderful contributions to historical theology (such as his articulation of the doctrines of grace), his report of divine healings is one area in which he is considerably less helpful. In this case, his reporting of the events is so riddled with superstition that it casts a dark shadow of doubt over his interpretation of those events.

{ LECTURE 12 }

CONTROVERSIES AND COUNCILS
From Nicaea to Constantinople III

* * * * *

(*Notes for this section primarily adapted from Jim Stitzinger's class notes)

The Councils

1. Council of Nicea (325)

REVIEW

a. Introduction

1) Also known as New Constantinople, Nicea is located near Nicomedia and Constantinople—a very important council.

2) The issue—the Deity of Christ.

Resolving the question of how Christ's deity can be preserved (on the one hand), and the unity of the Godhead can be preserved on the other

b. The Position

1) **Hetro-ousios**—Different substance. Logos (Christ) is not co-eternal, co-essential with, or co-equal with the Father. Psalm 2:7; Acts 7:33. He was a son born, did not always exist. A "logical" position; "If the Father begat the Son, he that was begotten had a beginning of existence: and from this it is evident, that there was a time when the Son was not. It therefore necessarily follows that he had his subsistence from nothing." The position of Arius (256-336) and Eusebius of Nicomedia. Arius was a presbyter of the Antioch Church.

2) **Homo-ousios**--Same substance. Logos (Christ) is co-eternal with the Father, never to change. Mal. 3:6, Heb. 13:8 and I Cor. 1:24. The position of Alexander of Alexandria, Hosius of Cordova, and Athanasius (an archdeacon who was small, young and brilliant and was not permitted a voice or seat at the council.) Despite this he had the most zeal and promise.

3) **Homoi-ousios**--Similar substance. Logos is of like substance with the Father. This position held to a subordinate Trinity teaching Christ's nature

was divine but not deity. Rather than co-eternal, Christ was viewed as an act or event.

c. The Council

- 1) The disputing first led to a council called by Alexander, Bishop of Alexandria. 100 bishops of Egypt attended who excommunicated Arius and his followers (Eusebius of Nicomedia.)
- 2) More disputing occurred causing the Emperor Constantine to call a major council in Nicea. 318 bishops attended along with presbyters and deacons—totalled 2,000 in all. The event lasted 41 days. 18 Arian bishops came.
- 3) The emperor wavered back and forth as the two major positions were debated. It became obvious that this compromise position would not pass as Homo-ousios supporters insisted on the inclusion of this word.

c. The Results of the Council

- 1) The council thus adopted the *Nicene Creed* with its short but direct statement of deity but which lacked precision. It did not speak to the question of the deity of the Holy Spirit giving rise to controversy and subordinationism in the Trinity being taught in the Eastern Church. Constantine's purpose was church unity—not theological purity!
- 2) The position of Arius was rejected with only two Egyptian bishops and Arius not signing the creed. These were banished to Illyria. Arius' books were burned.
- 3) The date of Easter was appointed.
- 4) Bishops of Rome, Antioch and Alexandria called metropolitans (high authority.)
- 5) Did not settle the controversy.
 - a) Athanasius became Bishop of Alexandria and the leading spokesman for the orthodox view. Due to opposition from Arius, he was deposed and restored five times until his death.
 - b) Arius was still very influential.
 - c) While the council passed the Nicene creed; a statement of orthodoxy; many were still leaning toward the middle position of Eusebius.

2. Council of Constantinople I (381)

a. The Issue:

- 1) The Arian controversy is still the issue though Arius died in 336. This was partially due to the popularity of the semi-Arian view.
- 2) Between 335 and 360, at least eight smaller councils and a number of synods were held to deal with the problem.
- 3) A new issue—Apollinarianism—which taught that Christ had no human nature.

b. The Positions

- 1) **Arianism** -- though intellectually weak, was well-represented with bishops. Arians (Eudoxians) and semi-Arians (Pneumatomachi) were both at issue.
- 2) **Apollinarianism** -- Apollinarius, Bishop of Laodicea, bitterly opposed Arius affirming the full deity of Christ. He nevertheless injected a new problem teaching that Christ had deity, but in humanity Christ had only body—no soul/spirit. Thus, Christ lacked a human nature, having instead the "Divine Logos," and only having the flesh of a human body.
- 3) **Orthodox Position** -- supporting the Nicene Creed dominated the council. This position was strongly supported by the Cappadocian Fathers; Basil the Great of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzum, and Gregory of Nyssa. These brilliant theologian/philosophers argued successfully for years before the council, devastating the Arian position.

c. The Council

- 1) Called by the emperor Theodosius I who himself was educated in the Nicene faith. Prior to the council he had required all subjects to confess the orthodox faith and threatened all heretics with punishment.
- 2) 150 orthodox bishops and 36 heretical bishops attended.
- 3) Lasted 3 months

d. The Results

- 1) Affirmed the Nicene position of full deity of Christ. This marked the final victory of Orthodoxy. After this time only a few barbarian peoples of Gaul and Spain were affected.

- 2) Apollinarianism was condemned, safeguarding the humanity of Christ. This condemnation followed the earlier condemnation of the Alexandrian Council of 362. The significance of this council was that the problem of the two natures received its first real airing. The issue of the two natures is still confused and at places incorrect. Clarification was still needed.
- 3) The creed adopted by this council is still known as the *Nicaeno-Constantinopolitan Creed*. It was improved, especially with respect to the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures. This creed gradually replaced the earlier creed in the churches. Like the earlier Nicene Creed, it did not contain the *filioque* clause, “and the Son”, (see note below). A few have suggested that the N-C Creed actually comes out of Chalcedon in 451 but there is strong evidence that it was in existence from 381.

Note: The Filioque clause was added to the N-C Creed by the Western Church at the Synod of Toledo in 589 to prevent *subordinationism* which was creeping into the Eastern Church. The growing subordinationism of the Eastern Church led to Eastern rejection of the clause. The clause establishes the *consubstantiality* of the three persons of the Godhead. While the filioque clause was added in 589, the Western Church did not use the Creed with the filioque until the 11th century. When they did so, it caused the great schism of East and West, ending then relative harmony that existed until the 9th century and precipitating the split in 1054.

The Scriptures clearly teach deity of the Spirit and associate Him with the Father and the Son (John 15:26; Rom 8:9; Gal 4:6). To say the Spirit proceeds from the Son alone and the Son proceeds from the Father alone, is to subordinate the Spirit and the Son.

- 4) Affirmed that the order of patriarchs was first Rome, then Constantinople, then Alexandria (still no papal idea.)
- 5) Condemned both Novatians and Montanists.

3. Council of Ephesus (431)

a. The Issue

- 1) The Alexandrian church began using the title “theotokos” to refer to Mary, in order to emphasize that Jesus was fully God at His birth.
- 2) The Antiochenes objected to the term because it emphasized Christ’s deity over His humanity.

Moreover, it had the potential to create a wrong impression about Mary.

b. The Positions

- 1) **Theotokos** - Mary bore God. When Christ was born and took on human form, He was God-man -- the idea of the incarnation in which Christ had both human and divine natures (deity and humanity.)

This position was accused of mixing and confusing the two natures (closer to one divine nature.)

In addition, it created the potential danger of venerating Mary to an unbiblical status (as evidenced in later Roman Catholics). Supported first by Proclus of Constantinople and later Cyril of Alexandria. Fighting was bitter and wicked.

- 2) **Anthropotokos** - Mary bore man (Jesus). The idea that Mary gave birth to a man whom the logos began to dwell in after His baptism. This position stressed the humanity of Christ. Represented by Theodore of Mopsuestia (350-428) of Antioch.
- 3) **Christotokos** - Mary bore Christ. Similar to Anthropotokos but according to its main proponent, Nestorius, it was a middle position. The idea that Mary gave birth to Christ who was both God and man. He argued that the eternal God could not be born and thus God assumed the human nature. There was thus a duality of natures which were conjoined together but not mixed or confused. Critics claimed that Nestorius overemphasized the separation between the two natures of Christ, thus implying that Christ was two separate persons.

b. The Council

- 1) Called by Theodosius II.
- 2) Nestorius was vehemently opposed by Cyril. (This was the outworking of the rivalry between Antioch/Constantinople and Alexandria.)
- 3) The council was opened with only the 60 bishops of Cyril there. Nestorius was banished, anathematized, deposed, excommunicated, and exiled to a monastery in Antioch before any Pro-Nestorian, Syrian bishops could arrive (they were late).
- 4) Upon the Syrian bishops' arrival, a meeting was called where Cyril was excommunicated. There was some later reconciliation between the Syrian bishop, John of Antioch, and Cyril.

- 5) The Council thus affirmed *theotokos* but little was actually accomplished as Nestorius went back to a large, independent following. The council was only negative, condemning Nestorius and lacked anything positive.
- 6) Nestorius was an honest man and probably not far from the truth! (Schaff III, p 740)

4. Council of Chalcedon (451)

a. Introduction

- 1) A result of the lack of accomplishment at Ephesus. No positive statement of refutation had emerged from Ephesus.
- 2) Both the Antiochan (Nestorian) and Alexandrian (Cyril) positions were drifting into stranger error.

b. The Positions

- 1) **Monophysite Party** - viewed Christ in the incarnation as having only one nature, the nature of God that became flesh and man. Hence, God is born, God suffered, God was crucified and died. The deification of the human in Christ, confounding the two natures. Cyril died in 444 and thus the position was represented by his archdeacon Dioscurus (intellectually and theologically weak.) Also associated with this view was Eutyches. This position was known as Eutychianism.
- 2) **Nestorian Party** - views Christ as having a double personality of human and divine. The view stressed the unfused union of two natures in one person, producing a dual personality. This was a moderation of the older Nestorian position and stressed the separation of the two natures. Main proponent was Theodoret (c.393-458).
- 3) **Middle position** - offered by Leo, Bishop of Rome
 - a) Must recognize both the true humanity and true deity of Christ.
 - b) Two distinct natures - one personality - Christ perfect in both. The Hypostatic Union-- the union of Jesus= divine and human natures in one person (Hypostatic having to do with nature or essence).
 - c) Born of the Virgin Mary.
 - d) Two natures without confusion, change, division or separation.

c. The Council

- 1) Prior to the council, a second council met at Ephesus where the position of Cyril was put forth with such fanaticism that Theodoret was badly mistreated and the middle position of Leo was not represented. It has been known in history as the "Council of Robbers" or the "Robber Synod."
- 2) Leo I, Bishop of Rome (not emperor), called for a general council to settle the issue. 500-600 bishops attended from October 8–November 1 in Chalcedon.
- 3) Leo I sat in Rome from 440-461 and displayed ability, boldness and strength not seen before in Rome.
- 4) Leo's *Tome* was presented which outlined his middle position of "two natures, without confusion, without severance, and without division."

d. The Result

- 1) The bishops overwhelmingly accepted this position as "the faith of the Fathers", the orthodox position. The emperor was present and enforced the decision as law.
- 2) All Eutychian bishops were banished and their books burned. Although their view was not stopped, Chalcedonian Christology became the orthodox doctrine of Christendom. Later councils gave precision to what was laid down here.
- 3) While Chalcedon did not have complete acceptance, it did form the bedrock of future thought. For this reason, it is often appealed to as foundational and decisive. (The Hypostatic Union of Christ -- 2 natures; 1 person) Schaff III, p 768
- 4) Bishops listed in order of importance: Rome, Constantinople (New Rome), Alexandria.

5. Council of Constantinople II (553)

a. The Issue

- 1) After Chalcedon, some continued to debate the integrity of Christ's human nature

- 2) The *monophysites* persisted with their idea of one nature after the incarnation (2 before) as taught by Eutyches.
- 3) The orthodox (Chalcedonian) position also continued with strength.
- 4) Monophysites broke out in bloody fighting, mostly in the oriental church.
- 5) Monophysites raged in various factions including the Severians, Phantasiasts, and the Julianists.

b. Positions

- 1) **Monophysites** - The continued followers of Eutyches who insisted on one nature in Christ, clad in human flesh—a composite nature. These said Chalcedon lead to two persons; two sons of God. Their liturgical shibboleth--"God has been crucified."
- 2) **Dyophysites** - Adherents to the Council of Chalcedon—one person; two natures. This position was supported by followers of Leontius of Byzantium, who taught Christ's humanity was in-personal and who also brought into the Chalcedonian tradition the Monophysite emphasis on the unity of Christ. He stressed *enhypostasia*—the humanity of Christ was made personal by its union with deity (Antiochian Theology).

Enhypostasia made Christ's humanity inpersonal (that is, less than whole) finding its subsistence in the divine logos—a fusing of the natures.

c. The Council

- 1) The emperor, Justinian I (527-565), was at first an admirer of Chalcedon, but was turned toward the Monophysitic position by his wife, Theodora, a strong supporter.
- 2) In his *Three Chapters*, Justinian strongly condemned the Nestorians and also condemned those who wrote against Cyril.
- 3) Justinian then called a council in 553 to end the controversy. There were 164 bishops meeting in eight sessions.
- 4) The council supported the *Three Chapters* condemning the Nestorians (Antiochian Theology) saying only, "God was crucified; one of the Trinity has suffered." The net result was that the dyophysitic position of Chalcedon was given a monophysitic interpretation, confusing the human with the divine. There was no clear decision.

d. The Result

- 1) The controversy continued with Chalcedonian dyophysitism reacting to form dyothelitism.
- 2) The monophysites left the council to continue their belief as a number of sects in the East. These included the Jacobites, Abyssinians, and Armenians. This produced a distinction in the Eastern Orthodox Church.

5. Council of Constantinople III (680)

a. Introduction

- 1) Called as a result of forty more years of fighting over the nature of Christ.
- 2) Some suggest the council was politically motivated in an effort to unite the earlier monophysites with the orthodox church.

b. Positions

- 1) **Monothelites** -- Growing out of the Monophysitic position of one nature of Christ, the human and divine wills of Christ are merged into one will. Supported by Sergius (610-638) and Macarius, patriarch of Antioch.
- 2) **Dyothelites** -- Two distinct, inseparable natures in Christ and, therefore, two separate wills—the divine and the human. The Orthodox, Catholic view (Chalcedon).

c. The Council

- 1) Called by the Emperor Constantine IV with the support of the Pope (Agatho).
- 2) There was no real contest as the Monothelitic view was not well substantiated and bitterly denounced.
- 3) The Monothelitic position was anathematized by the council along with Pope Honorius I (625-638) because he supported it. A strong argument from history against papal infallibility! Some Monothelitic followers went on to become tri-theists e.g. John Aseunages
- 4) Dyothelitism was supported affirming two wills—the human will is subordinate to the divine will—the two walking in perfect harmony.

Charts of the Councils (by Kenny Fox)**Ecumenical Councils of the Apostolic Church**

Council Name	Date	Key Participants	Central Focus	Major Outcomes
JERUSALEM	49/50	Elders at Jerusalem church Apostles Paul and Barnabas Peter James	Should Gentile Christians be circumcised according to the Law in order to be saved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recorded in Acts 15 & Galatians 2. Judaizers were forbidden to trouble the Gentiles with keeping the Law. Gentile Christians must abstain from: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Things sacrificed to idols. Eating meat containing blood. Animals that have been strangled. Fornication.

Ecumenical Councils of the Post-Nicene Church

Council Name	Date	Key Participants	Central Focus	Major Outcomes
NICEA	325	Arius Alexander Eusebius of Nicomedia Eusebius of Caesarea Hosius Athanasius	Relationship between the Father and the Son	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nicene Creed composed, which stated Jesus was <i>homoousios</i> (Son is coequal, coeternal, and consubstantial with the Father). Arius (priest from North Africa, who proposed that Jesus was a created being) was condemned. Established date for Easter.
CONSTANTINOPLE I	381	Meletius Gregory of Nazianzus Gregory of Nyssa	Holy Spirit's relationship with the Father and the Son (<i>filioque</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revised Nicene Creed to include Holy Spirit as coequal, coeternal, and consubstantial with the Father and Son. Ended Trinitarian controversy. Affirmed deity of Holy Spirit. Apollinarianism (Jesus had a human body but a divine mind/spirit) is condemned.
EPHESUS	431	Cyril Nestorius	Nestorius said Jesus had two separate parts (One part divine the other part human)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nestorianism (Jesus existed as two persons, human and divine, rather than two natures of one divine person) is condemned. The term <i>Theotokos</i> (mother of God) is applied to the Virgin Mary. All creeds banned beside Nicene. Cyril (Alexandrian school) defeated Nestorius (Constantinople school).
CHALCEDON	451	Pope Leo I Dioscurus Eutyches	Unity between the Two natures of Christ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Affirmed that Christ two natures (deity and humanity) exist “without confusion, change, division, and separation.”

CONSTANTINOPLE II	553	Patriarch Eutychius of Constantinople	“Three Chapters” Controversy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The “Three Chapters” were condemned (Theodore of Mopsuestia, Theodoret of Cyrus, and Ibas of Edessa) in order to placate the Monophysites.
CONSTANTINOPLE III	680-681	George I Pope Agatho	Debate b/w the human and divine wills of Christ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monothelism (natures of Christ did not matter because He only had one will) was condemned. Achieved Christological unity with Rome and Constantinople.
NICEA II	787	Patriarch Tarasios of Constantinople Papal legates for Pope Adrian I	Iconoclastic controversy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Authorized veneration of icons and statues. Especially those of Christ, Mary, holy angels, and the saints.

Ecumenical Councils of the Medieval Church

Council Name	Date	Key Participants	Central Focus	Major Outcomes
LATERAN I	1123	Pope Callistus II	Investiture controversy (conflict b/w church and emperor)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concordat of Worms is confirmed. Priests are forbidden to marry. Crusaders are granted indulgences. Simony (buying an office or position within the church) is condemned.
LATERAN II	1139	Pope Innocent II	Internal schism caused by Antipope Anacletus II	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Followers of Anacletus II are anathematized. Lateran I decisions confirmed. Regulated clerical dress.
LATERAN III	1179	Pope Alexander III	Schisms caused by the Cathari & Waldenses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Catharism & Waldensianism condemned. Cardinals can only elect the new pope by a two-thirds vote.
LATERAN IV	1215	Pope Innocent III	Investiture controversy (conflict b/w church and laity)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Est. doctrine of transubstantiation. Est. papal primacy. Est. the Inquisition. Confession at least once a year.
LYONS I	1245	Pope Innocent IV	Discuss the emperor and the crusades	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emperor Frederick II condemned. Planned for a new crusade (the Seventh Crusade).
LYONS II	1274	Pope Gregory X James I of Aragon	Conquest of Holy Land and union b/w the eastern church and the western church	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Church reaffirmed the filioque clause. The Eastern Church (Rome) and the Western Church (Constantinople) attempted to reunite. Tithe to pay for crusade to Holy Land.
	1311-	Pope Clement V	Knights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knights Templar (military order that escorted pilgrims from Europe to

VIENNE	1312		Templar	Jerusalem) was disband. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New crusade attempted but failed. • Beguines & Beghards condemned.
PISA	1409	Peter D’Ailly Peter Philargi Guy de Maillesec	Papal Schism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not official ecumenical council. • Deposed Gregory XII of Rome and Benedict XIII of Avignon and appointed Alexander V, leaving the church with three popes.
CONSTANCE	1414-1418	John XXIII Sigismund Peter D’Ailly John Gerson	Papal Schism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deposed all three popes and elected Pope Marin V. • Condemned & burned John Huss at the stake.
BASEL/ FERRARA	1431-1449	Pope Martin V Pope Eugene IV Julian Cesarini Nicholas of Cusa	Problem with Hussites and the schism b/w east and west church	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pope reasserted his authority. • Settled dispute with Hussites. • Reconciliation b/w the east and west was reached but short-lived. • Doctrine of purgatory established.

Ecumenical Councils of the Modern Roman Catholic Church

Council Name	Date	Key Participants	Central Focus	Major Outcomes
COUNCIL OF TRENT	1545-1563	Pope Paul III Pope Julius III Pope Pius IV James Laynez Giovanni Morone	Protestant Reformation and church reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tradition equal to Scripture. • Vulgate is official Bible of church. • Original sin and justification by faith alone were rejected. • Catholic Church possessed correct interpretation of the Bible.
FIRST VATICAN COUNCIL	1869-1870	Pope Pius IX Henry Manning Karl J. Hefele Felix Dupanloup	Papal infallibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When the pope speaks on matters of faith and morals (<i>ex cathedra</i>), what he says is considered infallible and binding on the universal church.
SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL	1962-1965	Pope John XXIII Pope Paul VI Karl Rahner Hans Küng	Updating church in faith and life (<i>aggiornamento</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bible translation/reading encouraged. • Veneration of Mary. • Protestants labeled “separated brethren.” • Dialogue encouraged between other faiths. • Catholic Church is reaffirmed as the only way of salvation.

Works referenced:

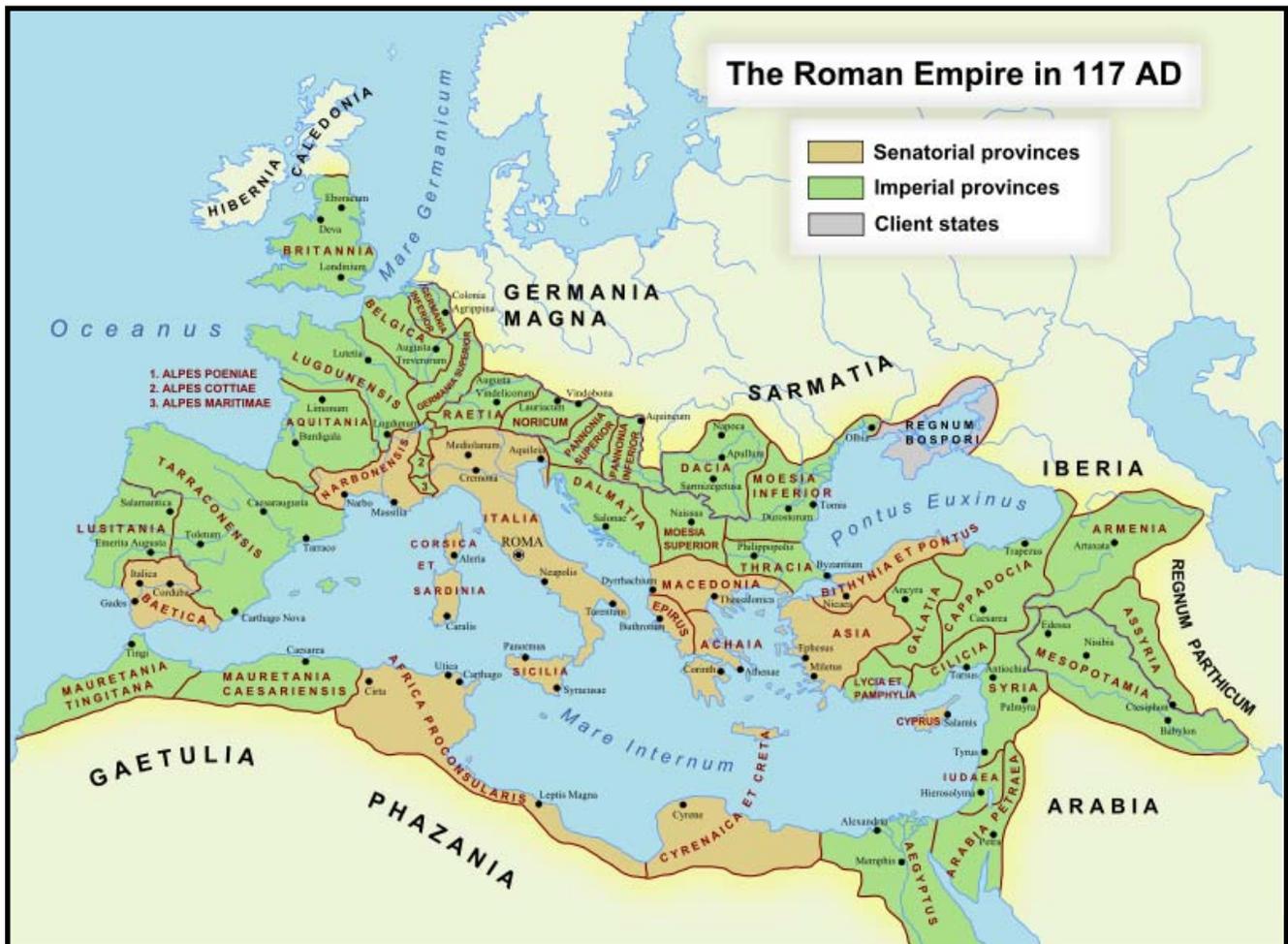
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{ LECTURE 13 }
THE FALL OF ROME & THE RISE OF ISLAM

* * * * *

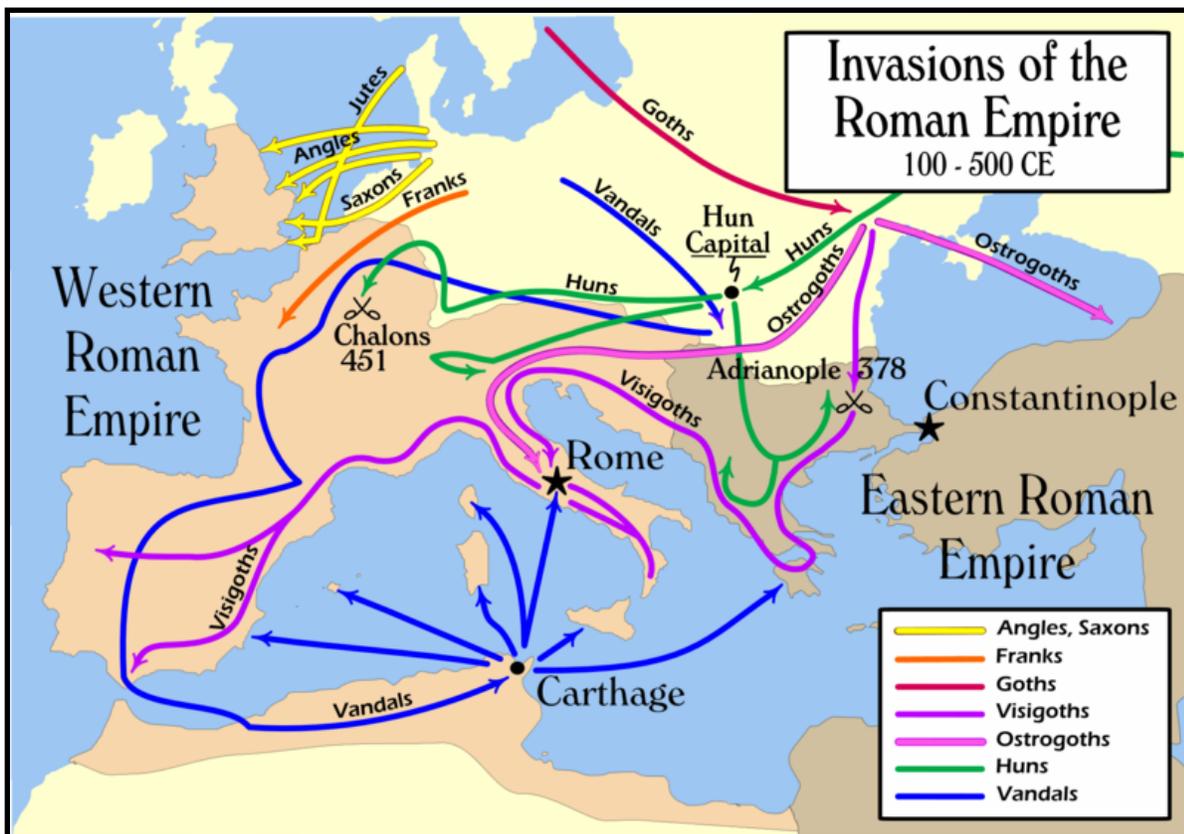
I. The Fall of the Roman Empire

- At the height of its power, the Roman Empire stretched across three continents, from Britain in the west to Syria in the east.



- Over time, especially during the fourth and fifth centuries, the Western Roman Empire experienced a gradual but significant influx of Germanic tribesmen.
- The Visigoths began actively attacking northern Italy after the death of Theodosius I in 395.
- By 409, the Vandals, Alans, and Suevi had invaded Gaul and Spain with little resistance.

- In 410, the Visigoths finally reached Rome and sacked the city.
- During this time, Roman Britain was abandoned, being overrun by the Angles and Saxons.
- In 429, the Vandals crossed over from Spain and captured Carthage, where they established a powerful naval presence in the Mediterranean. (This was right around the time of Augustine’s death.)
- In 444, the Huns (led by Attila) invaded Gaul; and in 451 invaded Italy. Attila marched on Rome but was persuaded by Leo I (the bishop of Rome) not to take the city.
- In 455, the Vandals attacked Rome and plundered the city.
- By 476, the city of Rome was under the rule of the barbarians and Roman control over the West had essentially ended.



- The Eastern Empire would not fall until 1453 with the capture of Constantinople by the Ottoman Turks.

- By 476, the Western Roman Empire had been split up into a number of “barbarian” kingdoms.



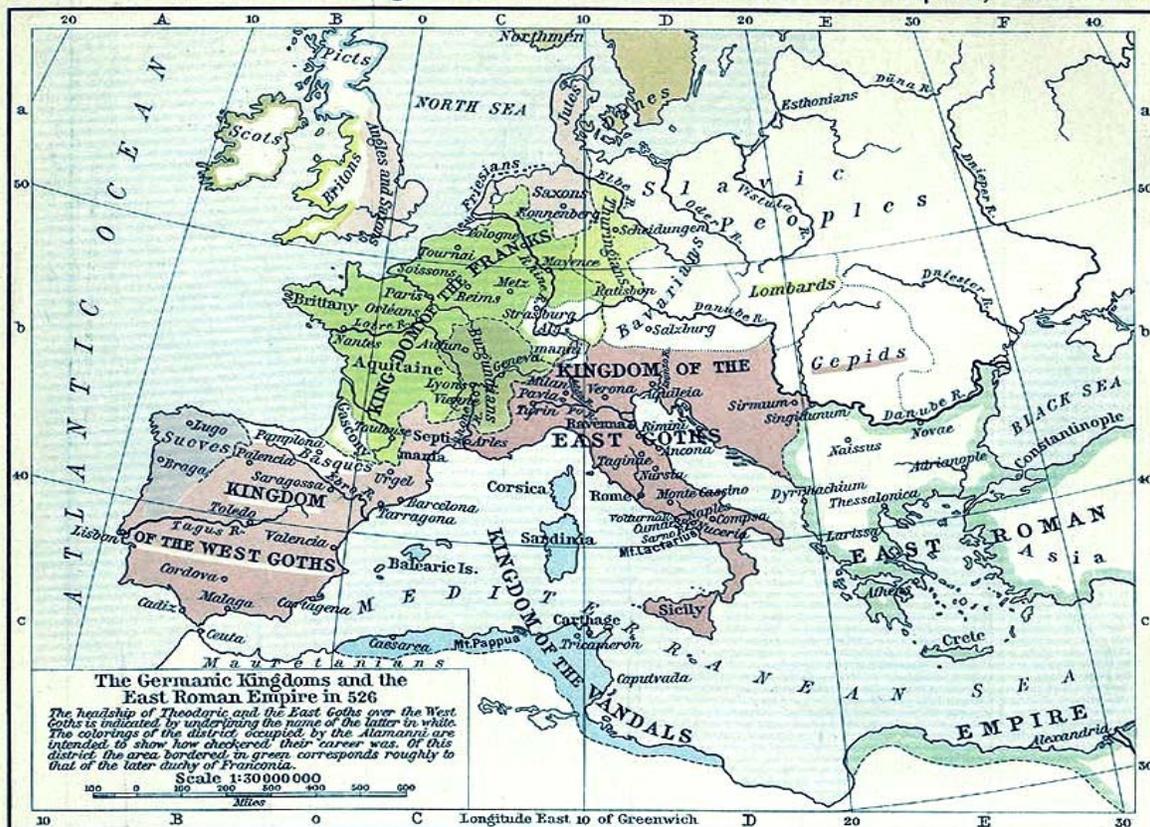
- As the Roman influence diminished, Germanic kingdoms in Europe were established. These kingdoms shared certain Roman customs, including Latin as a written language (hence, the Romance Languages) and Christianity.

- In 800, the Franks took control of a significant amount of territory in Europe. On Christmas Day, 800, the pope crowned Charlemagne (“Charles the Great”) the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire.

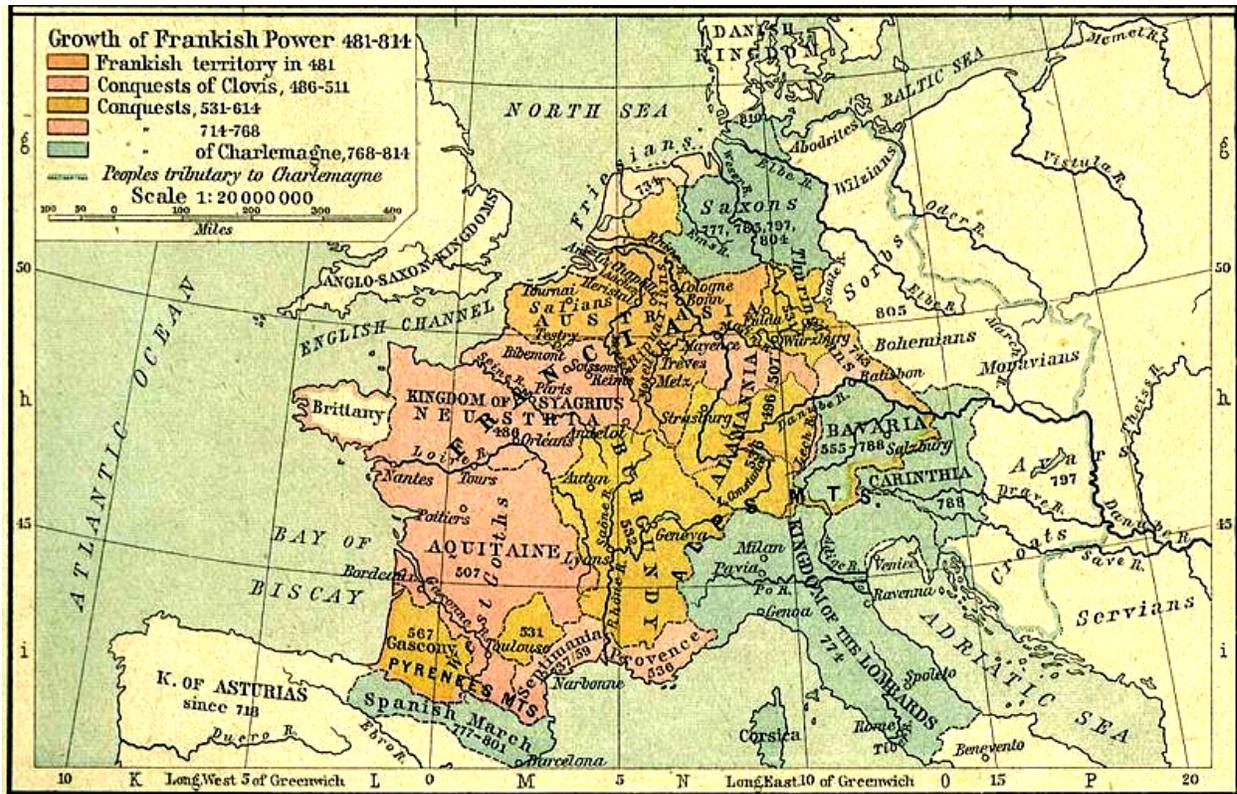


- Charles was born in 742 and reigned over the Franks from 768 to 814. He was the first to unite Western Europe since the time of the Roman Empire.

52 The Germanic Kingdoms and the East Roman Empire, 526—600.



- Charles the Great is considered by many to be the Father of both the French and German Monarchies, and has even been called the “Father of Europe.”



II. The Rise of Islam

Beginnings with Mohammed

- Mohammed was born in Mecca in 570 and grew up as a shepherd-boy
- Under the tutelage of his uncle (Abu Talib) Mohammed became a wealthy merchant
- At 25 years old, he married 40-year-old Khadijah
- In 605, he helped to settle a tribal dispute over the restoration of the black stone
- He had frequent epileptic attacks. At first he thought this was the devil but at age 40, he said it was “god” communicating to him (610). He said “god” was transmitting visions to him through his wife Khadija. The message was that Mohammed was the prophet of the Arabian god Allah. Belief in Allah already existed many years

"Mohammed was endowed with a nervous constitution and a lively imagination. It was not at all unnatural for him to come after a time to regard himself as actually called of God to build up his people in a new faith. Mohammed, as we gather from the oldest and most trust-worthy narratives, was an epileptic, and as such, was considered to be possessed of evil spirits. At first, he believed the sayings, but gradually he came to the conclusion, confirmed by his friends, that demons had no power over so pure and pious a man as he was, and he conceived the idea that he was not controlled by evil spirits, but that he was visited by angels whom he, disposed to hallucinations, a vision, an audition, afflicted with the morbid state of body mind, saw in dreams. Or even while awake, conceived he saw. What seemed to him good and true after such epileptic attacks, he esteemed revelation in which he, at least in the first stage of his pathetic course, firmly believed and which imparted to his pensive, variable character, the necessary courage and endurance to brave all mortifications and perils." (McClintock Vol 6: 406)

Note: Allah was an old High god viewed as the true god. The Koran rewrites history to include Allah as the god of national Israel. The place of the O.T. was added later to accommodate opposition to Mohammedanism teaching.

- He began to preach publically and attract followers. It was his followers who wrote down his words in the Qur'an. He reportedly received his revelations from an angel.



- The Prophet, Mohammed, was active in Mecca and Medina (both in western part of modern Saudi Arabia, along the Red Sea) with his new faith. Many followed and many

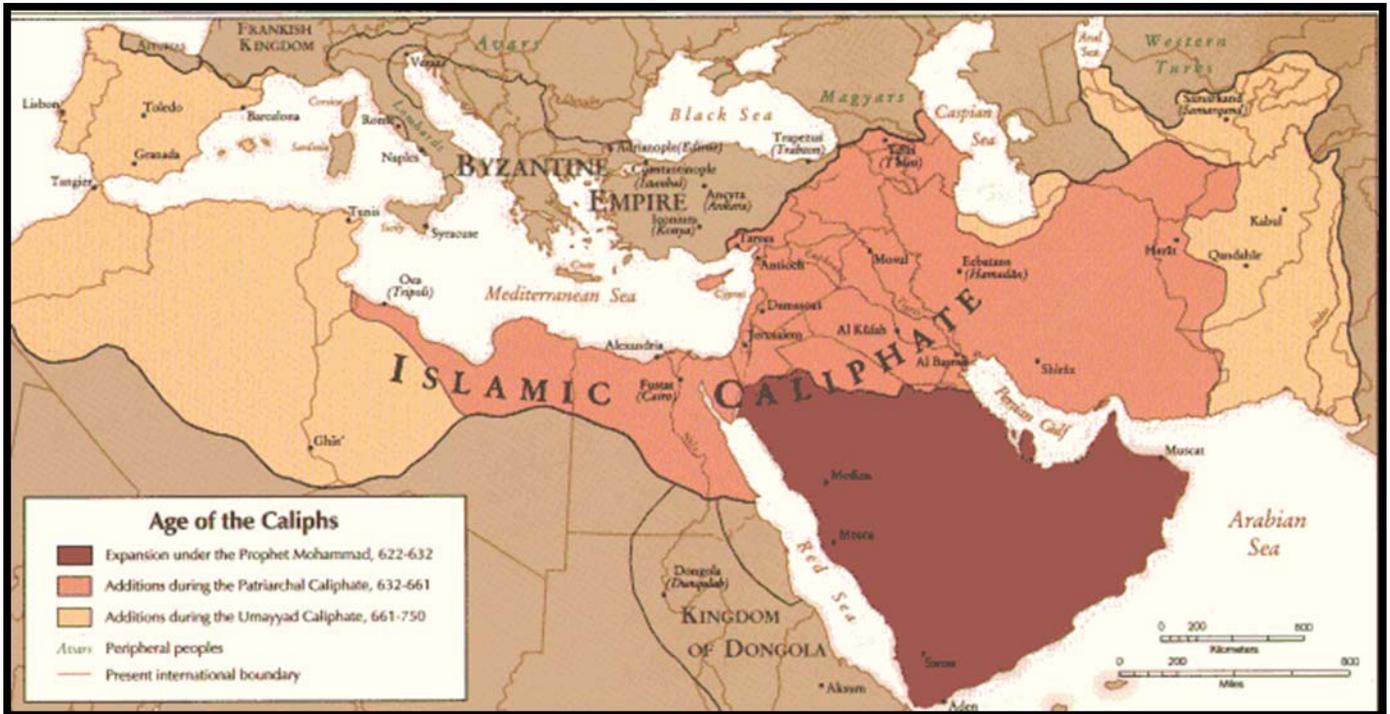
opposed. His preaching was not well received and, thus, he resorted to propaganda. In Medina (620) he became a ruler and legislator.

- In 620, Khadija died and Mohammed married 2 wives, then built his harem to 12 wives.
- Mohammed finally launched a military campaign to subdue the world. With his army of 305 followers and the motto "Islam, tribute or the sword", he began to attack (630).
 - In one day, his men massacred 600 resisting Jews while enslaving the women and children.
 - By 632 he assaulted Mecca, destroying 360 idols and capturing the Kaaba (famous black stone). The Kaaba being an ancient stone of pagan worship. Islam then taught that Abraham built the Kaaba with the help of Ishmael. All of Arabia recognized Mohammed as ruler.
 - When he died in 632, he was planning a great campaign against the Eastern empire. Islam captured many Christian strongholds.
 - Force made him successful--his armies were fanatical.
 - Within a century, Islam had spread (by force) from Spain to India. By 715, all of North Africa had fallen and the Arab forces moved across the Strait of Gibraltar, through Spain and into southern Gaul.
 - In 732, the advance was halted by Charles Martel at the Battle of Tours.

Early History after Muhammad

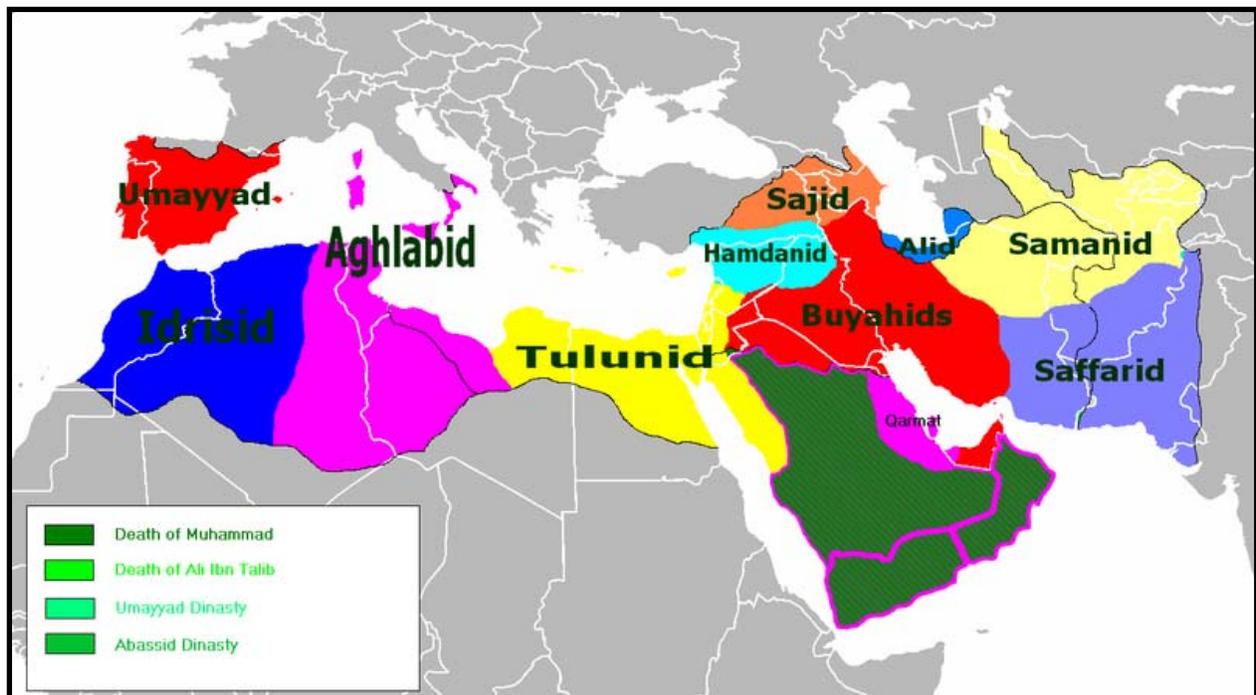
- Muhammad began preaching Islam at Mecca and then later at Medina
- From there, he united the Arab tribes into a political/religious confederacy
- Muhammad died in 632 from illness; after his death, there was disagreement about who would succeed him as the Muslim leader
- Abu Bakr, one of Muhammad's closest friends, emerged as the new leader (or "caliph"); he died in 634

- He was succeeded by Umar ibn al-Khattab, Uthman ibn al-Khattab, and finally Ali ibn Abi Talib (Ali was the cousin and son-in-law of Muhammad); all 3 of these early Muslim leaders were assassinated (Umar in 644; Uthman in 656; and Ali in 661).
- Ali was also involved in the first Muslim Civil War (or “First Fitna”).
- Under these four successors of Muhammad; (known as the “Rightly Guided Caliphs”), the Muslim Empire grew quickly into the Persian and Byzantine (Eastern Roman) Empires
- After Ali’s death, Mu’awiyah (a governor) seized control; this began the Umayyad Dynasty
- When Muhammad died, there was some disagreement as to whether or not Abu Bakr should be the leader; or whether Ali (Muhammad’s son-in-law) should have succeeded him immediately
- Those who embraced the leadership of Abu, Umar, and Uthman are known as Sunni Muslims. Those who embraced only the leadership of Ali are known as Shi’ite Muslims. The Shi’ite followers believe Mohammed’s successors are the Imams (Sinless).
- After Mu’awiyah died in 680, another civil war broke out (known as the “Second Fitna”); after this, the Umayyad dynasty continued to control the Muslim empire until 750
- Under Umayyad rule, non-Arabs were not given the same social and economic status as Arab muslims, even if they converted to Islam
- Some of the descendants of Abbas ibn Abd al-Muttalib (Muhommad’s uncle) started a rebellion by gaining support from these non-Arabs and from poor-Arabs who did not like being discriminated against
- Thus, the Umayyad was overthrown and replaced by the Abbasid dynasty; the centuries that followed are known as the “Islamic Golden Age”
- The capital city of Abbasid dynasty was Babylon.



After the Abbasid Dynasty

- After 950, the Abbasid Dynasty began to break up into independent Islamic states.



- In 1055, the Seljuq Turks gained control of the former Abbasid caliphate.

III. The Teachings of Islam *(These notes adapted from Jim Stitzinger's class syllabus notes.)*

- The Koran (Qur'an) (recitations)
 - It contains material drawn from Judaism and Christianity--characteristics of 6th century Arabs in Mecca. For many years, it only existed in Arabic but recently was translated into English made up of 114 sure (chapters). No translations are considered authorized or authoritative.
 - Supposedly given by Gabriel over a two-year period.
 - Basic to the Muslim faith is The LAW (Shari'a) which is understood as common law rather than civil law (e.g. U.S. Law). The law is understood as a total way of life as explicitly or implicitly commanded by God. It is at this point that Shi'ites and Sunnites do not agree.

- The 6 Articles of Faith:
 - God: There is only one God who is *Allah*. He is all powerful but not personal and cannot be known.
 - Angels: Existence of angels is fundamental. The angel Gabriel appeared to Muhammad.
 - Scripture: There are four inspired books: Torah of Moses, Psalms of David, Gospel of Jesus Christ, and the Koran. Only the last was not corrupted by Jews and Christians and thus stands.
 - Prophets: God has spoken through six great prophets: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad. Muhammad is last and greatest.
 - The Last Days: These will be days of resurrection and judgment. Those who obey receive Paradise and pleasure, those who do not will be tormented in hell.
 - Fate: All is predestinated and life is mere fatalism as one lives out his fate. The decrees of God (Kismet) are a central teaching of Islam.

- Five pillars of the faith: (essential for salvation)
 - Profession of the faith or Creed (Kalima) – “There is no god but Allah, and Mohammed is his prophet.” Shi’ites enforce/evangelize by force at the behest of the Imam. Factions among Sunnites prevent their uniting in war.
 - Worship (Namaz)—ritual prayer-5 times per day facing Mecca.
 - Almsgiving (Zakat)—to own people (deeds and rights of love).
 - Fasting (Ramadan)—during the month of Ramadan (fast during the day and eat at night).
 - Pilgrimage (Hajj)—to Mecca one in a lifetime. Activities include visiting the Sacred Mosque and kissing the Black Stone (Ka'aba); a form of worship.

NOTE: A sixth duty is Jihad, the Holy War. This duty requires one to go to war to spread Islam or defend it against infidels. Those who die in Jihad are guaranteed eternal life in Paradise.

- An Analysis to some Doctrines taught in the Koran
 - God: a stern monotheism-only true god; all others are idols. The Trinity is hated. A “god” who is unknowable is described in the Koran as if he can be known!
 - Christ: a prophet only (you are an infidel if you teach the deity of Christ.) You will thus be tortured and damned in hell.
 - Salvation: salvation by works, prayer, fasting, alms, etc.
 - Heavens: teach a resurrection and a sensuous paradise where these things abound: women, food, perfume, (non-alcoholic drinks). Men recline on soft couches and receive wine from maidens. They may marry as many maidens as they please.
 - Hell: A place of torment where unbelievers and sinners will burn in fire.
 - Alms: The required giving at least 1/14 of one's income to one in need. This is duty and does not require thanks or appreciation as the one receiving helps provide salvation for the one giving.
 - Ethics: fasting, prayer, no alcoholic drinks

- Polygamy and concubines were practiced by Mohammed and encouraged. Monogamy is increasing, however, but prostitution is also.
- Slavery is practical and approved.
- Killing of unbelievers is sacred. Those who die in battle go right to the sensual heaven. Men were enthusiastic to lay down their lives for the cause.
- Church and State are inseparable. There is no religious liberty.
- Islam spread quickly for several reasons, including:
 - The fact that people were ignorant of the Bible.
 - Corruption of Eastern Christianity. The theological disputations sapped the church of spirituality—judgment of God.
 - Use of military force—conquered peoples required to convert.

Comparison Chart between Christianity and Islamic Doctrine

(Chart from www.carm.org; It reflects a general representation of Islamic beliefs)

	Christianity	Islam
Afterlife	Christians will be with the Lord in heaven (<u>Phil. 1:21-24</u>), in our resurrected bodies (<u>1 Cor. 15:50-58</u>). Non-Christians will be cast into hell forever (<u>Matt. 25:46</u>).	There is an afterlife (75:12) experienced as either an ideal life of Paradise (29:64), for faithful Muslims or Hell for those who are not.
Angels	Created beings, non-human, some of which, fell into sin and became evil. They are very powerful. The unfallen angels carry out the will of God.	Created beings without free will that serve God. Angels were created from light.
Atonement	The sacrifice of Christ on the cross (<u>1 Pet. 2:24</u>) whereby His blood becomes the sacrifice that turns away the wrath of God (<u>1 John 2:2</u>) from the sinner when the sinner receives (<u>John 1:12</u>), by faith (<u>Rom. 5:1</u>), the work of Christ on the cross.	There is no atonement work in Islam other than a sincere confession of sin and repentance by the sinner.
Bible	The inspired and inerrant word of God in the original manuscripts (<u>2 Tim. 3:16</u>).	Respected word of the prophets but the Bible has been corrupted through the centuries and is only correct in so far as it agrees with the Koran.
Crucifixion	The place where Jesus atoned for the sins of the world. It is only through this sacrifice that anyone can be saved from the wrath of God (<u>1 Pet. 2:24</u>).	Jesus did not die on the cross. Instead, God allowed Judas to look like Jesus and he was crucified instead.
Devil	A fallen Angel who opposes God in all ways. He also seeks to destroy humanity (<u>Isaiah 14:12-15</u> ; <u>Ezek. 28:13-15</u>).	Iblis, a fallen jinn. Jinn are not angels nor men, but created beings with free wills. Jinn were created from fire, (2:268; 114:1-6).
God	God is a trinity of persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The <u>Trinity</u> is not three gods in one god, nor is it one person who took three forms. Trinitarianism is strictly monotheistic. There is no other God in existence.	God is known as Allah. Allah is one person, a strict unity. There is no other God in existence. He is the creator of the universe (3:191), sovereign over all (6:61-62).
Heaven (Paradise)	The place where God dwells. Heaven is the eventual home of the Christians who are saved by God's grace. It is heaven because it is where God is and Christians will enjoy eternal Fellowship with Him.	Paradise to Muslims, a place of unimaginable bliss (32:17), a garden with trees and food (13:35;15:45-48) where the desires of faithful Muslims are met, (3:133; 9:38; 13:35; 39:34; 43:71; 53:13-15).
Hell	A place of torment in fire out of the presence of God. There is no escape from Hell (<u>Matt. 25:46</u>).	Hell is a place of eternal punishment and torment (14:17; 25:65; 39:26), in fire (104:6-7) for those who are not Muslims (3:131) as well as those who were and whose works and faith were not sufficient (14:17; 25:65; 104:6-7).
Holy Spirit	Third person of the Trinity. The <u>Holy Spirit</u> is fully God in nature.	The arch-angel Gabriel who delivered the words of the Koran to Muhammad.
Jesus	Second person of the <u>Trinity</u> . He is the word who	A very great prophet, second only to

	became flesh (<u>John 1:1, 14</u>). He is both God and man (<u>Col. 2:9</u>).	Muhammad. Jesus is not the son of God (9:30) and certainly is not divine (5:17, 75) and he was not crucified (4:157).
Judgment Day	Occurs on the day of resurrection (John 12:48) where God will judge all people. Christians go to heaven. All others to hell (<u>Matt. 25:46</u>).	Occurs on the day of resurrection where God will judge all people. Muslims go to paradise (3:142, 183-185, 198). All others to hell (3:196-197). Judgment is based on a person's deeds (5:9; 42:26; 8:29).
Koran, The	The work of Muhammad. It is not inspired, nor is it scripture. There is no verification for its accurate transmission from the originals.	The final revelation of God to all of mankind given through the archangel Gabriel to Muhammad over a 23 year period. It is without error and guarded from error by Allah.
Man	Made in the image of God (<u>Gen. 1:26</u>). This does not mean that God has a body, but that man is made like God in abilities (reason, faith, love, etc.).	Not made in the image of God (42:11). Man is made out of the dust of the earth (23:12) and Allah breathed life into man (32:9; 15:29).
Muhammad	A non-inspired man born in 570 in Mecca who started the Islamic religion.	The last and greatest of all prophets of Allah whose Qur'an is the greatest of all inspired books.
Original Sin	This is a term used to describe the effect of Adam's sin on his descendants (<u>Rom. 5:12-23</u>). Specifically, it is our inheritance of a sinful nature from Adam. The sinful nature originated with Adam and is passed down from parent to child. We are by nature children of wrath (<u>Eph. 2:3</u>).	There is no original sin. All people are sinless until they rebel against God. They do not have sinful natures.
Resurrection	Bodily resurrection of all people, non-Christians to damnation and Christians are resurrected to eternal life (<u>1 Cor. 15:50-58</u>).	Bodily resurrection, some to heaven, some to hell (3:77; 15:25; 75:36-40; 22:6).
Salvation	A free gift of God (<u>Eph. 2:8-9</u>) to the person who trusts in Christ and His sacrifice on the cross. He is our mediator (<u>1 Tim. 2:5</u>). No works are sufficient in any way to merit salvation since our works are all unacceptable to God (<u>Isaiah 64:6</u>).	Forgiveness of sins is obtained by Allah's grace without a mediator. The Muslim must believe Allah exists, believe in the fundamental doctrines of Islam, believe that Muhammad is his prophet, and follow the commands of Allah given in the Koran.
Son of God	A term used to designate that Jesus is divine though he is not the literal son of God in a physical sense (<u>John 5:18</u>).	A literal son of God. Therefore, Jesus cannot be the son of Allah.
Trinity	One God in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit	The Father, Jesus, and Mary
Word, The	"In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God...and the word became flesh and dwelt among us..." (<u>John 1:1, 14</u>).	Allah's command of existence which resulted in Jesus being formed in the womb of Mary.

{ ADDENDUM }
 ADDITIONAL ANALYSIS OF THE QURAN
From ‘Reasons We Believe’

* * * * *

The God of the Bible describes Himself as one who is incomparable. “To whom then will you liken God, or what likeness compare with him? . . . ‘To whom then will you compare me that I should be like him? says the Holy One’” (Isaiah 40:18, 25; cf. Exodus 15:11; Deuteronomy 3:24; Psalm 89:6). Later in Isaiah, God again asks, “To whom will you liken me and make me equal, and compare me, that we may be alike?” (Isaiah 46:5).

Though the answer is obvious, the Bible answers those questions without hesitation: “There is none holy like the LORD; there is none besides you; there is no rock like our God” (1 Samuel 2:2). “Therefore you are great, O LORD GOD. For there is none like you, and there is no God besides you” (2 Samuel 7:22). “O LORD, God of Israel, there is no God like you, in heaven above or on earth beneath” (1 Kings 8:23a). “There is none like you, O LORD; you are great and your name is great in might” (Jeremiah 10:6). Many other passages could be cited, but the point is clear. The God of the Bible is unlike anything in His creation, or any other supposed deity. In the words of David, “There is none like you among the gods, O Lord, nor are there any works like yours. . . . For you are great and do wondrous things; you alone are God.” (Psalm 86:8–10)

It follows, then, that because God is unique (being infinitely greater than any other imagined “god”), that His Word would also be unique (among every other religious book). An examination of His Word should “leave little question about the uniqueness of the Bible among all human writings, including the most revered scriptures of other religions.”⁴⁰⁵ If it is indeed the Word of God, than the self-authenticating voice of God will necessarily shine through.⁴⁰⁶

⁴⁰⁵ Robert L. Saucy, “How else is the Bible Unique?” 48–49.

We could easily point out some of the Bible’s amazing characteristics: its historical credibility, prophetic accuracy, consistent message, profound richness, moral ethic, and spiritual power. But how does it compare to other religious books? Is the Bible unique? Or are there other scriptures that come close? Theology professor Robert Saucy frames the discussion with these words, “If we are to hear the voice of God, His Word should be manifestly unique. If we compare the Bible with the other claimants, that is exactly what we find. The Scriptures bear the marks of a supernatural book.”⁴⁰⁷

For the sake of space, we will look at the Qur’an, which some regard as the Bible’s closest “competitor” (and which over one billion Muslims believe to be the word of God). As the central religious text of the Islamic faith, the Qur’an is believed by Muslims to be “the last book of guidance from Allah, sent down to Muhammad (*pbuh*) through the angel Gabriel (*Jibra’il*). Every word of the Qur’an is the word of Allah.”⁴⁰⁸

But did the Qur’an truly come from God?

The Qur’an teaches that previous revelation also came from God, including the writings of Moses (2:87; 3:3), David (4:163), and the gospel of Jesus (5:46–48). Elsewhere the Qur’an affirms these previous scriptures (2:91; 3:14, 84; 4:47), asserting that God has protected his revelation in them (5:48; 18:28). It also teaches that “Muhammad is to consult the scriptures

⁴⁰⁶ Cf. Robert L. Saucy, “Are the Bible’s Teachings Unique?” 35–42 in *Understanding Christian Theology* edited by Charles R. Swindoll and Roy B. Zuck (Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, 2003). On page 35 he writes, “Since these various writings [of different religions] have differing messages, they cannot all be from God, who cannot lie. How then can we know which ‘scripture’ is in reality the voice of God? We cannot, of course, appeal to some higher authority [than God Himself] . . . [Thus,] the voice of God to us must be self-authenticating. That is, when God addresses us as His creatures, we must be able to recognize His words as the voice of God. They must stand out from other words.”

⁴⁰⁷ Robert L. Saucy, *Is the Bible Reliable?* (Wheaton, Ill: Victor Books, 1978), 31. In his chapter on “The Uniqueness of the Bible,” Saucy notes that the teachings of the Bible, the biblical account of man, the biblical concept of salvation, the evidence of prophecy, the unity of the Bible, and the influence of the Bible all mark it as unique.

⁴⁰⁸ Ghulam Sarwar, *Islam: A Brief Guide*. Cited from Colin Chapman, *Cross and Crescent* (Downer’s Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 84.

already revealed if he is in doubt about what is revealed to him” (10:94–95).⁴⁰⁹ Thus, the Qur’an claims to be in perfect harmony with the revelation God gave earlier through Moses, David, and Jesus (2:136).

When confronted with the fact that the Qur’an is at odds with the Old and New Testaments, Muslims contend that it is the Bible that has been corrupted.⁴¹⁰ Hence, it is argued, the Jewish and Christian scriptures have been tainted, not the Qur’an. But there are significant problems with this claim.

For starters, the Qur’an implies that the Old Testament was trustworthy at the time of Mary (66:12), John the Baptist (19:12), Jesus (3:48–50; 5:113; 61:6), and even at the time of its own composition, since it commands Jews and Christians to follow what had been revealed to them in their Scriptures (5:47, 68). The Qur’an also claims that the gospel confirms the truth of the Torah (5:49), and calls Jews and Christians “People of the Scripture” (2:44, 113, 121; 3:78, 79; 5:43; 6:92; 7:157; 10:95). Steven Masood, who converted to Christianity from a sectarian Muslim background, notes that,

The Qur’an testifies that its main purpose is to provide a revelation for Arabic speaking people, who could not understand (or did not have access to) the Scriptures of the Jews and Christians (Surah 46:11–12; 41:2–3; 20:112; 39:29; 12:2). There is no suggestion that this new revelation (the Qur’an) was needed to *replace* any corrupted Scripture. In fact, the Qur’an claimed to be a *verification* of the earlier revelations such as in the Torah and the Gospel, that went before it (Surah 10:37; 12:111).⁴¹¹

The Qur’an thus implies that the Old and New Testaments had not yet been “corrupted” when the Qur’an was completed (in the late sixth or early seventh century).

⁴⁰⁹ Collin G. Chapman, *Cross and Crescent* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP, 2003), 92.

⁴¹⁰ For a full discussion on this topic, see Chawkat Moucary, *The Prophet and the Messiah* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2001).

⁴¹¹ Steven Masood, *The Bible and the Qur’an* (Cumbria, UK: Authentic Media, 2002), 70–71. Dr. Masood was converted to Christianity from a sectarian Muslim background and has taught comparative religions courses at Columbia International University.

Moreover, the Qur'an claims "to be the guardian of previous Scriptures, therefore any Muslim who claims that there has been a corruption of the text of the Torah [of Moses] or the Injil [Gospel] also, inevitably, charges the Qur'an with failure in its role in 'guarding' them (Surah 5:48)."⁴¹² The Qur'an therefore bears witness to the veracity of the Old and New Testaments, at least as they existed in the sixth century A.D.

The Qur'an says that no one can change the Word of God. If the Jews did corrupt the Word of God then it would mean that the Qur'anic statement is unreliable, a concept that would be blasphemy to Muslims. The only possible conclusion in the light of the Qur'an is therefore that the copies of the pre-Islamic Scriptures (known as the Torah and the Injil) were available in the days of Muhammad as they are available today i.e. that they are valid. Since Christians have ample documentary evidence from before Muhammad's time, they can confidently assert that their Scriptures are trustworthy.⁴¹³

This, then presents a major problem for those who hold to the inerrant inspiration of the Qur'an, especially when one considers the textual evidence for the Bible. The papyri and older manuscripts of the New Testament, as well as the translation of the Latin Vulgate, the work of Origen on the Old Testament text, the Syriac Peshitta translation of both testaments, the Greek translations of the Old Testament in the Septuagint, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the Samaritan Pentateuch all predate the Qur'an and demonstrate that the texts of the Old and New Testaments that existed when the Qur'an was written are the same texts we still have today. No major changes (especially of the nature demanded by Muslim beliefs) have been made to the Bible in its entire history, either before or after the Qur'an.⁴¹⁴

By its own admission, the Qur'an must be consistent with previous revelation from God. But it does not take long to see that the Bible and the Qur'an are not compatible. [This] "should

⁴¹² Ibid., 72.

⁴¹³ Ibid., 80-81.

⁴¹⁴ This paragraph adapted from correspondence with William D. Barrick, Professor of Old Testament at The Master's Seminary. Dr. Barrick spent two decades as a missionary in Bangladesh, a predominantly Muslim country, and has given seminars on Islamic teachings and practice.

come as no surprise to well-informed Muslims who know that, in the final analysis, the claims of Christianity and Islam are incompatible,” writes Syrian-born scholar Chawkat Moucarry, who earned his doctorate in Islamic studies from the University of Sorbonne, Paris. “This incompatibility is behind the Islamic assumption that, in one way or another, the Bible has been corrupted.”⁴¹⁵ When it is demonstrated that the Bible has not been corrupted, both from the claims of the Qur’an and from the textual evidence for the Bible, it is the Qur’an—not the Bible—that is discredited.

In addition to being incompatible with previous revelation from God, the Qur’an contains its own internal contradictions, such as urging religious tolerance in one place (2:256) and then commanding Muslims to fight and kill those who do not believe (9:29; 9:5). In another place (7:54 and 32:4), the Qur’an claims that the earth was made in six days. But in 41:9–12, it teaches that eight days were needed to create the world.⁴¹⁶

The Qur’an also purports certain scientific inaccuracies, claiming that human beings are formed from a clot of blood (23:14), that the sun rests in a muddy spring in the west (18:86), that mountains were created to hold down the earth and prevent earthquakes (31:10-11; cf. 16:15; 21:31; 78:6-7; 88:17, 19), that there are literally seven heavens (2:29; 17:44; 41:12; 23:17, 86; 67:3; 71:15-16), and that meteors are a form of divine retribution being hurled at devils who might try to spy on the heavenly council (37:6-10; 72:8-9; cf. 15:16-18; 67:5; 86:2-3).⁴¹⁷

The Qur’an contains historical errors as well. As one non-Christian author explains,

⁴¹⁵ Chawkat Moucarry, *The Prophet and the Messiah*, 264.

⁴¹⁶ For more on this point, see Norman L. Geisler and Abdul Saleeb, *Answering Islam* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2002), 201-203.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid, 203-205. Several examples also taken from William Campbell, *The Qur’an and the Bible in the Light of History & Science* (Middle East Resources, 2002), section 4 chapter 2.

At sura 40.38; the Koran mistakenly identifies Haman, who in reality was the minister of the Persian King Ahasuerus (mentioned in the book of Esther), as the minister of the Pharaoh [*sic*] at the time of Moses.

We have already noted the confusion of Mary, the mother of Jesus, with the Mary who was the sister of Moses and Aaron. At sura 2.249, 250 there is obviously a confusion between the story of Saul as told therein, and the account of Gideon in Judg. 7.5.

The account of Alexander the Great in the Koran (18.82) is hopelessly confused historically; we are certain it was based on the Romance of Alexander. At any rate, the Macedonian was not a Muslim and did not live to an old age, nor was he a contemporary of Abraham, as Muslims contend.⁴¹⁸

Examples such as these undermine the Qur'an's claim to be the word of God.

If space permitted, we could also consider other religious texts, such as the Hindu Veda or the Book of Mormon. In each case, we would again find that the supposed inspired text falls far short of the Bible. Consider, as just one example, the test of predictive prophecy. . . .

Perhaps the greatest difference between the Bible and all other religious books is that the Bible teaches a message of salvation by grace, whereas every other religious system teaches salvation by human works (Micah 7:18; Ephesians 2:4–10; Titus 3:3–7). “All other religions we know of teach salvation by meritorious works. Christianity is the only religion that teaches salvation solely by grace through faith alone.”⁴¹⁹ This again is evidence of the uniqueness of the true God and His true Word, the Bible. As theology professor Robert Saucy concludes, “Such salvation is so strange to the natural man and yet so grand and satisfying to the deep aspirations in the hearts of all people that it cannot have been authored by mere humans.”⁴²⁰

⁴¹⁸ Ibn Warraq, *Why I Am Not a Muslim* (Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 1995), 158 – 59. In *What the Koran Really Says* (Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 2002), Warraq shows additional evidence of contradictions, obscurities, and inaccuracies in the Qur'an.

⁴¹⁹ John Ankerberg and John Weldon, *Fast Facts on Defending Your Faith* (Eugene, Ore., Harvest House, 2002), 32.

⁴²⁰ Robert L. Saucy, “Are the Bible's Teachings Unique?” 42.

{ LECTURE 14 }

THE CHURCH AND THE MIDDLE AGES (PART 1)
Key Figures and Events from the Fifth to Fifteenth Centuries

* * * * *

I. **The Power of the Papacy Reaches New Heights** (Leo the Great [400–461])

- Leo became the bishop of Rome on September 29, 440
 - He had already been involved in the Nestorian dispute (John Cassian had dedicated his refutation of Nestorianism to Leo)
 - In 445, he came into conflict with Dioscorus, the bishop of Alexandria (successor to Cyril of Alexandria), and contended that Alexandria should submit to Rome just as Mark (the founder of the church in Alexandria) would have submitted to Peter (the founder of the church in Rome)
 - The Egyptian Christians of Alexandria, of course, saw the ancient patriarchates (Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem) as equal. But Leo insisted that Rome had primacy over the others (based on apostolic succession back to Peter).
 - For example, in 446 Leo wrote a letter to Anastasius in which he asserted: “The care of the universal Church should converge towards Peter's one seat, and nothing anywhere should be separated from its Head” (*Letter XIV*).
- **Leo Strengthens Rome’s Position in the West (445–450)**
- Convinced that the Church of Rome should have primacy over all of the churches, Leo relied on political support in the West to strengthen Roman influence there.
 - In 445, he obtained a decree from Valentinian III (one of the last of the Western Roman emperors) which declared the primacy of Rome (based on succession from Peter) and threatened objectors with legal repercussions (including accusations of treason)
 - As a result, the church in Gaul (and in the rest of the Western Roman Empire) came under the ultimate authority of the Church at Rome

- **Leo Strengthens Rome’s Position in the East (449–451)**

- **The Second Council of Ephesus (449)**

- When Dioscorus convened the Second Council of Ephesus beginning on August 8, 449, to decide whether or not Eutyches should have been condemned (as he had been previously by Flavian, the Patriarch of Constantinople).
- Dioscorus wanted the view that Christ has only one nature to be declared orthodox; and wanted anyone who held to two natures to be anathematized.
- Leo sent representatives to the Council along with a letter explaining his position. But Dioscorus refused to allow the letter to be read, in part because Eutyches complained that he did not trust the representatives from Rome.
- Flavian (of Constantinople) was not given an opportunity to defend his condemnation of Eutyches. And Theodoret of Cyrus (who was not at the council) was excommunicated in absentia (as were others of the Antiochan school).
- Later reports about the Council indicated that it was characterized by physical violence and that many monks agreed with Dioscorus because they were afraid of being hurt or killed. Flavian himself may have been mortally wounded when the violence erupted.
- Both Flavian and Theodoret appealed to Leo I. When Leo learned what had happened, and that his *Tome* had not been read at the Council, he announced that the findings of the Council were null and void.
- After the Council ended, Flavian was deported into exile and died shortly thereafter.
- The injustices of Ephesus were condemned and righted at the Council of Chalcedon held two years later in 451.

- **The Council of Chalcedon (451)**

- Chalcedon was near Constantinople. Today it is part of the city of Istanbul, Turkey.
- The emperor Theodosius II had authorized the Second Council of Ephesus, and he opposed Leo’s attempts to convene a new council.

- But when Theodosius II died unexpectedly, he was succeeded by Marcian who favored the views of Flavian. Marcian allowed the bishops who had been excommunicated at Ephesus II to return to their dioceses.
- Though Marcian asked Leo to oversee the council, Leo instead sent delegates to represent him. (This was probably due to the political situation in Rome at the time.) Anatolius, the new Patriarch of Constantinople, was also favorable to the views of Leo.
- Some 370 bishops attended (over against the 130 who were present at the Second Council of Ephesus).
- Leo's *Tome* was overwhelmingly approved as the orthodox position.
- The Council of Chalcedon produced the following confession:

“Following the holy Fathers, we unanimously teach and confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ: the same perfect in divinity and perfect in humanity, the same truly God and truly man, composed of rational soul and body; consubstantial with the Father as to his divinity and consubstantial with us as to his humanity; "like us in all things but sin." He was begotten from the Father before all ages as to his divinity and in these last days, for us and for our salvation, was born as to his humanity of the virgin Mary, the Mother of God.

We confess that one and the same Christ, Lord, and only-begotten Son, is to be acknowledged in two natures without confusion, change, division, or separation (*in duabus naturis inconfuse, immutabiliter, indivise, inseparabiliter*). The distinction between natures was never abolished by their union, but rather the character proper to each of the two natures was preserved as they came together in one person (prosopon) and one hypostasis.”

- The Council of Chalcedon assured Constantinople of having priority among the churches in the Roman Empire, under Rome but above both Alexandria and Antioch.
- The Council of Chalcedon also greatly strengthened the influence of the bishop of Rome in the eastern half of the Roman Empire.

○ **Leo Saves Rome with Political Prowess (452)**

- In 452, Attila the Hun invaded Italy and threatened to attack Rome.
- Leo met him and convinced him to withdraw.
- Legends have grown up around this meeting, suggesting that an angel threatened to kill Attila’s army if he did not relent; or alternatively suggesting that Attila was so impressed with the Christian bishop that he relented of his own accord
- It is more likely that Leo was able to convince Attila by offering him a large amount of gold, and by pointing out the fact that Attila’s army was starting to get stretched thin.
- Whatever the case, Leo’s prestige and political power grew greatly as a result.
- Several years later, in 455, Leo was unsuccessful in convincing the Vandals not to sack the city of Rome. However, the extent of the damage done to the city and its citizens was reduced on account of his influence. He, moreover, convinced them not to burn the city.

Justo Gonzalez: “These episodes—and others like it—gave Leo great authority in the city of Rome. That he was able to do these things was due both to his personal gifts and to the political situation of the time, when the civil authorities proved incapable of performing their duties. But in Leo’s mind there was a deeper reason. He was convinced that Jesus had made Peter and his successors the rock on which the church was to be built, and that therefore the bishop of Rome, Peter’s direct successor, is the head of the church. Thus, in Leo’s writings one finds all the traditional arguments that would repeatedly be mustered in favor of papal authority” (*The Story of Christianity*, 243).

○ **Leo’s Significance**

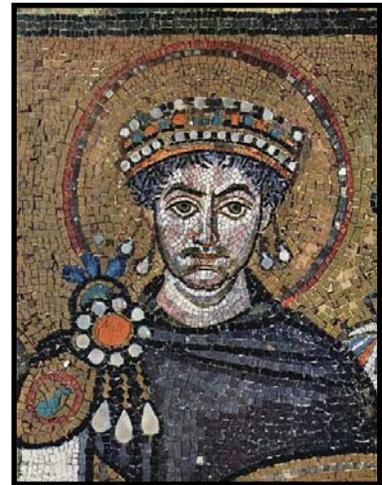
- From a Christological perspective, Leo played a significant role in the adoption of the Chalcedonian Creed.
- From an ecclesiological perspective, Leo was a staunch advocate of Roman superiority based on Petrine supremacy. His interpretation of Matthew 16:16–19 led him to conclude that Peter was the leader of the Apostles. Thus, his successors should also be considered the leaders of the Church.

- From a Protestant perspective, we would certainly disagree with both Leo’s interpretation and application of Matthew 16:16–19.
- Moreover, we would assert that the idea of “apostolic succession” does not rule out the possibility of apostasy. A parallel example might be given: The high priest of Jesus’ day could legitimately claim priestly succession back to Aaron. Yet, the high priest of Jesus’ day was also apostate.
- Finally, it is important to remember that orthodoxy is evaluated through comparison to the Scriptures, not through a supposed line of succession.

II. The Eastern Empire Regains Its Former Glory (Justinian the Great [483–565])

o Early Reign (527–532)

- Justinian had been very close with his uncle, Justin, who was the emperor before him.
- In 525, he married Theodora; she was not part of the aristocratic class and thus Justinian received criticism. She would be a major influence in Justinian’s reign until her death in 548.
- Justinian became emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire on April 1, 527
- Early in his career, Justinian set about to revise all of Roman Law (with the help of a man named Tribonian). The result, known as the *Corpus juris civilis*, made its way to Italy and from there into Europe (where it provided the basis for much European law). It is still influential today.
- He is considered a saint by the Eastern Orthodox Church, though he was not always popular with his contemporaries (including an account possibly written by the historian Procopius)
- At one point (in 532) some businessmen in Constantinople became dissatisfied with Justinian and staged riots in the city (known as the Nika riots). Justinian responded by having at least 30,000 citizens killed, including the man who would have replaced him if he had been deposed.



○ **Military Conquests (527–562)**

- As a Christian Roman Emperor, Justinian felt that it was his divine obligation to restore the parts of the Roman Empire that had been lost
- He was not personally involved in these military campaigns; but his armies (under his general Belisarius, conquered large sections of territory)
- In 532, Justinian negotiated a peace treaty with the Sassanid Empire (to the East) and was thus able to concentrate on military activities to the West
- From 533–34, Belisarius and his forces retook North Africa from the Vandals; though long-term peace and stability would not really be established there until 548; it is estimated that the military endeavor cost about 100,000 pounds of gold
- From 535–540, the armies of Justinian fought with the Ostrogoths for control of Italy. Eventually, Belisarius reached the Ostrogoth capital city of Ravenna (in north eastern Italy). The Ostrogoth's offered to make him the new emperor of the Western Roman Empire. Belisarius pretended to accept their offer and then, once in Rome, he reclaimed it for Justinian.



- In the map above, the red section indicates the Eastern Roman Empire when Justinian came to the throne. The orange sections indicate territories that were regained through his military conquests.
- In 540, a strain of the bubonic plague affected the empire, and fighting was temporarily halted.

- When new hostilities broke out in the East (with the Sassanids), Belisarius returned there and fought against the Sassanids for several years. Eventually peace was again restored, finally bringing about the Fifty Years Peace in 562.
 - From 541 to 554, war again broke out in Italy with the Ostrogoths. Under Belisarius and then Narses, the Byzantine armies were able to again gain control of Italy. The campaign reportedly cost 300,000 pounds of gold.
 - Though Justinian’s efforts were successful during his lifetime, they were short-lived. Within 150 years, their advances in Africa and Spain would be permanently lost.
 - Ironically, some historians believe that due to the expense of his military efforts, he may have actually made the Eastern Roman Empire more susceptible to attack (by stretching its resources too thin); thus, his attempts to expand the empire may have actually contributed to its decline.
- **Theological Influence**
- Justinian saw the division over the Monophysite controversy as dangerous to the stability of his kingdom
 - He attempted to maintain Chalcedonian orthodoxy (which he knew would gain him favor with the church at Rome) while not alienating the Monophysites (who had a great deal of popularity in the East); in the end, he failed to fully satisfy either camp
 - At the Second Council of Constantinople in 553, the Monophysite position was condemned as heretical; though the Western Church (namely, Rome) felt that his condemnation of the *Three Chapters* went contrary to Chalcedon.
 - Justinian, for his part, actively suppressed heretical groups and gave special legal advantages to Christian clergy and to monks. Other religious groups (including the pagan teachings of the Old Roman Empire) were vigorously opposed.

III. **The Western Church Expands Its Mission** (Gregory the Great [540–604])

- **Early Life**
- Gregory was just a boy when the armies of Justinian recaptured Rome
 - He was the son of Christian parents, and he excelled in education

- At one point, he became involved in Roman politics and even served as the Prefect of the City of Rome
- When his father died, Gregory converted the family home into a monastery; and Gregory himself entered into it as a monk
- He was eventually ordained as a deacon by Pope Pelagius II, who sought Gregory's help in resolving disputes in northern Italy related to the Three Chapters controversy
- In 579, Gregory was chosen by Pelagius II to be the ambassador from the Church of Rome to the Court of Constantinople; part of Gregory's mission was to obtain military aid from the emperor (Maurice) against the Lombards (who threatened to overtake Rome); but conflicts to the East made it impossible for the emperor to send military forces
- Gregory returned to Rome in 585 and was named Pelagius's successor in 590



○ **Gregory's Tenure as the Bishop of Rome (590–604)**

- Gregory I began his tenure as the bishop of Rome on September 3, 590.
- At that time, the Roman Church's prominence had been in decline; and Gregory, for his part, admitted to having no ambition to be the bishop of Rome. He instead preferred the quiet contemplation of monastic life.
- Gregory's influence helped to again assert the primacy of the Roman Church. He did much to improve the condition of the city itself.

Justo Gonzalez: Since there was nobody else to do it, [Gregory] organized the distribution of food among the needy in Rome, and he also took measures to guarantee the continuing shipments of wheat from Sicily. Likewise, he supervised the rebuilding of the aqueducts and of the defenses of the city, and the garrison was drilled until morale was restored. Since there was little help to be expected from Constantinople, he then opened direct negotiations with the Lombards, with whom he secured peace. Thus, by default, the Pope was acting as ruler of Rome and the surrounding area" (*The Story of Christianity*, 246).

- This was partly due to the successful missionary endeavors (primarily to the barbarian tribes in Europe) that took place under his leadership. Among the most famous of these is the mission of Augustine of Canterbury (not to be confused with Augustine of Hippo) to the Angles and Saxons in modern-day England. From England, additional missionaries brought Christianity to northern Germany and the Netherlands.
- *Note:* Ireland had already become Christian by this time, thanks largely to the work of Patrick (387–493), a Roman citizen (born in Britain) who had been captured by Irish raiders at the age of 14 and taken back to Ireland as a slave. He eventually escaped from Ireland and was reunited with his family. Later he returned to Ireland as a missionary.
- From a Roman Catholic perspective, the practice of private penance (in place of public penance) began to develop during Gregory’s time. He also referenced Purgatory frequently, and taught that good works in this life could lighten the torments of the purging to come. He was a wholehearted follower of Augustine of Hippo; such that what Augustine taught as possibility (e.g. Purgatory), Gregory taught as certainty.
- From a political perspective, Gregory began to forge good relations with the Franks—which would become important later (as the Roman Church would become allied with these Germanic Kings).
- He is also credited with working to improve communication and relations between the Church in the West and the Church in the East.
- Regarding Gregory’s tenure:

Justo Gonzalez: “Gregory considered himself above all a religious leader. He preached constantly in the various churches in Rome, calling the faithful to renewed commitment. He also took measures to promote clerical celibacy, which was slowly becoming the norm throughout Italy, and which many claimed to follow but did not. Also, as bishop of Rome, Gregory saw himself as patriarch of the West. He did not claim for himself universal authority as Leo had done earlier. But he took more practical steps, which did in fact increase his authority in the West. In Spain, he was instrumental in the conversion of the Visigothic King Recared to Nicene Catholicism. To England, he sent Augustine’s mission, which would eventually extend the authority of Rome to the British Isles. . . . However, it is not only for these reasons that Gregory is called ‘the Great.’ He was also a prolific writer whose works were very influential throughout the Middle Ages” (*The Story of Christianity*, 246–47).

- **John Calvin’s Perspective on Gregory**
 - John Calvin cites Gregory on a number of occasions in his *Institutes* in order to show how corrupt the Roman Catholic Church had become since the time of Gregory.
 - Calvin seems to be citing Gregory primarily in order to make a rhetorical point. Calvin is not necessarily endorsing everything that Gregory taught.
 - Below are two such examples:

Regarding the fact that many Roman Catholic priests were neglecting their responsibility as teachers of God’s Word:

It appears that in the time of Gregory some of the seeds of this corruption existed, the rulers of churches having begun to be more negligent in teaching; for he thus bitterly complains: “The world is full of priests, and yet laborers in the harvest are rare, for we indeed undertake the office of the priesthood, but we perform not the work of the office” (Gregor. Hom. 17). Again, “As they have no bowels of love, they would be thought lords, but do not at all acknowledge themselves to be fathers. They change a post of humility into the elevation of ascendancy.” Again, “But we, O pastors! what are we doing, we who obtain the hire but are not laborers? We have fallen off to extraneous business; we undertake one thing, we perform another; we leave the ministry of the word, and, to our punishment, as I see, are called bishops, holding the honor of the name, not the power.” Since he uses such bitterness of expression against those who were only less diligent or sedulous in their office, what, pray, would he have said if he had seen that very few bishops, if any at all, and scarcely one in a hundred of the other clergy, mounted the pulpit once in their whole lifetime? For to such a degree of infatuation have men come, that it is thought beneath the episcopal dignity to preach a sermon to the people. In the time of Bernard things had become still worse. Accordingly, we see how bitterly he inveighs against the whole order, and yet there is reason to believe that matters were then in a much better state than now. (Calvin’s *Institutes*, 4.5.12)

Regarding the Corrupt State of the Papacy in General:

But that I may not be forced to discuss and follow out each point singly, I again appeal to those who, in the present day, would be thought the best and most faithful defenders of the Roman See, whether they are not ashamed to defend the existing state of the Papacy, which is clearly a hundred times more corrupt than in the days of Gregory and Bernard, though even then these holy men were so much displeased with it. Gregory everywhere complains (Lib. 1 Ep. 5; *item*, Ep. 7, 25, &c.) that he was distracted above measure by foreign occupations: that under color of the episcopate he was taken back to the world, being subject to more worldly cares than he remembered to have ever had when a laic; that he was so

oppressed by the trouble of secular affairs, as to be unable to raise his mind to things above; that he was so tossed by the many billows of causes, and afflicted by the tempests of a tumultuous life, that he might well say, “I am come into the depths of the sea.” It is certain, that amid these worldly occupations, he could teach the people in sermons, admonish in private, and correct those who required it; order the Church, give counsel to his colleagues, and exhort them to their duty. Moreover, some time was left for writing, and yet he deploras it as his calamity, that he was plunged into the very deepest sea. If the administration at that time was a sea, what shall we say of the present Papacy? For what resemblance is there between the periods? Now there are no sermons, no care for discipline, no zeal for churches, no spiritual function; nothing, in short, but the world. And yet this labyrinth is lauded as if nothing could be found better ordered and arranged. What complaints also does Bernard pour forth, what groans does he utter, when he beholds the vices of his own age? What then would he have done on beholding this iron, or, if possible, worse than iron, age of ours? How dishonest, therefore, not only obstinately to defend as sacred and divine what all the saints have always with one mouth disapproved, but to abuse their testimony in favor of the Papacy, which, it is evident, was altogether unknown to them? Although I admit, in respect to the time of Bernard, that all things were so corrupt as to make it not unlike our own. But it betrays a want of all sense of shame to seek any excuse from that middle period—namely, from that of Leo, Gregory, and the like—for it is just as if one were to vindicate the monarchy of the Caesars by lauding the ancient state of the Roman empire; in other words, were to borrow the praises of liberty in order to eulogize tyranny. (Calvin’s Institutes, 4.7.22)

IV. Islam Emerges a Major Threat (Mohammed [570–632])

- Please see the earlier class notes on Islam. We are including this short reference in the notes here to show the chronology of these events in the Middle Ages.

Justo Gonzalez: Early in the seventh century, it seemed that order was about to be restored in most of the ancient Roman Empire. The Arian invaders had embraced Nicene orthodoxy. The Franks, who from the beginning had been converted to that faith, were beginning to unite in Gaul. In the British Isles, the first fruits of Augustine’s mission could be seen. The Byzantine Empire still enjoyed many of the results of Justinian’s conquests—particularly in North Africa, where the Vandal kingdom had disappeared.

Then something unexpected happened. Out of Arabia . . . a tidal wave of conquest arose that threatened to engulf the world. In a few years, the Persian Empire had vanished, and many of the ancient Roman territories were in Arab hands. . . . Mohammed claimed that he was not preaching a new religion, but simply the culmination of what God had revealed in the Hebrew prophets and in Jesus, who was a great prophet, although not divine as Christians claimed. (*The Story of Christianity*, 248–49)

{ LECTURE 15 }

HOW THE FUTURE GOT LOST IN HISTORY:
A Premillennialist Perspective on the Rise of Amillennialism

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I. Definition of Terms

Note: The following definitions come from Grenz, Guretzki, and Nordling’s *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms*. These definitions will provide the foundation for the subsequent material found in this lecture regarding the Millennium.

a. Amillennialism

“The belief that the thousand years mentioned in Revelation 20 do not represent a specific period of time between Christ’s first and second comings. Many Amillennialists believe instead that the millennium refers to the heavenly reign of Christ and the departed saints during the Church Age. Amillennialists usually understand Revelation 20 to mean that the return of Christ will occur at the end of history and that the church presently lives in the final era of history” (p. 9).

b. Premillennialism

“The view that the millennium follows the return of Christ, which therefore makes his return “premillennial.” In the teaching of some premillennialists the millennium will begin supernaturally and cataclysmically, preceded by signs of apostasy, worldwide preaching of the gospel, war, famine, earthquakes, the coming of the antichrist and the great tribulation. Jesus will then return and rule on the earth with his saints for one thousand years, during which time peace will reign, the natural world will no longer be cursed and evil will be suppressed. After a final rebellion, God will crush evil forever; judge the resurrected, nonbelieving dead; and establish heaven [the New Earth] and hell [the Lake of Fire]” (p. 94).

c. Postmillennialism

“The view that Christ’s second coming will follow the millennium; that is, his return is postmillennial. Postmillennialists assert that the millennium will come by the spiritual and moral influence of Christian preaching and teaching in the world. This will result in increased conversions, a more important role of the church in the world, earthly prosperity, the resolution of social ills and a general adoption of Christian values. Evil will diminish until the time of Christ’s second coming, which will mark as well the resurrection of the dead and the last judgment” (p. 93).

- ❖ At the 2007 Shepherds’ Conference, John MacArthur addressed the issue of Premillennialism versus Amillennialism (and Postmillennialism) by asking a series of questions:
 - Were the Old Testament saints Amillennialists?
 - Were the Jews of the Intertestamental Period Amillennialists?
 - Was Jesus an Amillennialist?
 - Were the Apostles (after Pentecost) Amillennialists?
- ❖ Dr. MacArthur concluded that the answer was “No” to each of these questions. (To here his case, the audio of that message can be downloaded from the Shepherds’ Conference website.)
- ❖ As he concluded his message, he also asked the question, “Were the leaders of the early church Amillennialists?”
 - Again, the answer given was “No.”
 - Premillennialism is the predominant view of presented in early patristic literature. In describing the Ante-Nicene age, historian Philip Schaff observes:

“The most striking point in the eschatology of the ante-Nicene age is the prominent chiliasm, or millenarianism, that is the belief of a visible reign of Christ in glory on earth with the risen saints for a thousand years, before the general resurrection and judgment. It was indeed not the doctrine of the church embodied in any creed or form of devotion, but a widely current opinion of distinguished teachers, such as Barnabas, Papias, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Methodius, and Lactantius.”

Masselink, *Why Thousand Years?* 26-27 (AMIL)

“The Chiliastic conception immediately found acceptance in the Christian church. ... The Apostolic history shows us that many of the old church fathers were leaning toward this view. So for example Corinthes, who is thought to have been a contemporary of the Apostle John, believed that Christ would have an earthly reign lasting a thousand years with His seat in Jerusalem. Papias in the middle of the second century holds the same view. Likewise Justin Martyr (about 150 A.D.) says that the majority of the Christians at his time were looking forward to an earthly kingdom, but he adds that there were also good Christians who had other opinions. Irenaeus (latter part of 2nd century) believed that after the destruction of the Roman Empire, Christ would return and would literally bind Satan” (pp. 26–27).

Alger, *The Destiny of the Soul* (AMIL)

“Almost all the early Fathers believingly looked for a millennium, a reign of Christ on earth with his saints for a thousand years. Daille has shown that this belief was generally held, though with great diversities of conception as to the form and features of the doctrine. It was a Jewish notion which crept among the Christians of the first century and has been transmitted even to the present day. Some supposed the millennium would precede the destruction of the world, others that it would follow that terrible event, after a general renovation. None but the faithful would have part in it; and at its close they would pass up to heaven. Irenaeus quotes a tradition, delivered by Papias, that “in the millennium each vine will bear ten thousand branches, each branch ten thousand twigs, each twig ten thousand clusters, each cluster ten thousand grapes, each grape yielding a hogshead of wine; and if any one plucks a grape its neighbors will cry, Take me: I am better!” This, of course, was a metaphor to show what the plenty and the joy of those times would be. According to the heretics Cerinthus and Maricon, the millennium was to consist in an abundance of all sorts of sensual riches and delights. Many of the orthodox Fathers held the same view, but less grossly; while others made its splendors and its pleasures mental and moral. Origen attacked the whole doctrine with vehemence and cogency. His admirers continued the warfare after him, and the belief in this celestial Cocaigne [*sic*] suffered much damage and sank into comparative neglect. The subject rose into importance again at the approaching close of the first chiliad of Christianity, but soon died away as the excitement of that ominous epoch passed with equal disappointment to the hopes and the fears of believers. A galvanized controversy has been carried on about it again in the present century. . . . The doctrine itself is a Jewish-Christian figment supported only by a shadowy basis of fancy.” (pp. 403–404).

Grenz, *The Millennial Maze* (AMIL)

“In the vicinity of Ephesus, the location of the seven churches addressed by the book of Revelation (now western Turkey), a millenarian tradition developed that shares certain features with modern premillennialism. This tradition focused on the material blessings that will accompany the future rule of Christ over the renewed physical earth following the resurrection at the end of this age” (p. 38).

❖ The majority of early church fathers held premillennial views

○ Papias (c. 60–130)

Matthison, *Postmillennialism* (POSTMIL)

“Papias is the only subapostolic father whose millennial position can be identified with any degree of certainty. Fragments of his writings can be found only in the documents of other church fathers, but from these we can determine fairly accurately what he believed. These fragments indicate that Papias held to an early form of premillennialism or chiliasm. He looked forward to the fulfillment of many Old Testament prophecies following the return of Christ. He, was, however, prone to extremes in his interpretations. His descriptions of the Millennium so abound with crass, exaggerated literalism that Eusebius later referred to his version of millenarianism as ‘bizarre’ (*Ecclesiastical History*, 3.39.11)” (pp. 25–26).

Grenz, *The Millennial Maze* (AMIL)

“The church father Papias, for example, a contemporary of Polycarp of Smyrna who tradition claims was a disciple of John, set forth as a teaching derived from apostolic times “that there will be a certain period of a thousand years after the resurrection from the dead when the kingdom of Christ must be set up in a material order on this earth” [as cited by Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.39]. Papias poured into this thousand-year period mentioned in the book of Revelation certain features of the expectations for the messianic era articulated by Isaiah and other Old Testament prophets: ‘all the animals, feeding only on the produce of the earth, shall live in peaceful harmony together, and in perfect subjection to man’” (p. 39).

Eusebius (c. 275–339) regarding Papias: “Papias, who is now mentioned by us, affirms that he received the sayings of the apostles from those who accompanied them, and he moreover asserts that he heard in person Aristion and the presbyter John. Accordingly he mentions them frequently by name, and in his writings gives their traditions. . . . Amongst these he says that there will be a millennium after the resurrection from the dead, when the personal reign of Christ will be established on this earth.”

○ Justin Martyr (c. 100–165)

Justin Martyr: “And Trypho [the Jew] to this replied, ‘I remarked to you sir, that you are very anxious to be safe in all respects, since you cling to the Scriptures. But tell me, do you really admit that this place, Jerusalem, shall be rebuilt; and do you expect your people to be gathered together, and made joyful with Christ and the patriarchs, and the prophets, both the men of our nation, and other proselytes who joined them before your Christ came? or have you given way, and admitted this in order to have the appearance of worsting us in the controversies?’

Then I answered, ‘I am not so miserable a fellow, Trypho, as to say one thing and think another. I admitted to you formerly, that I and many others are of this opinion, and [believe] that such will take place, as you assuredly are aware; but, on the other hand, I signified to you that many who belong to the pure and pious faith, and are true Christians, think otherwise. Moreover, I pointed out to you that some who are called Christians, but are godless, impious heretics, teach doctrines that are in every way blasphemous, atheistical, and foolish. But that you may know that I do not say this before you alone, I shall draw up a statement, so far as I can, of all the arguments which have passed between us; in which I shall record myself as admitting the very same things which I admit to you. For I choose to follow not men or men’s doctrines, but God and the doctrines [delivered] by Him. For if you have fallen in with some who are called Christians, but who do not admit this [truth], and venture to blaspheme the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; who say there is no resurrection of the dead, and that their souls, when they die, are taken to heaven [never to be resurrected]; do not imagine that they are Christians. . . . But I and others, who are right-minded Christians on all points, are assured that there will be a resurrection of the dead, and a thousand years in Jerusalem, which will then be built, adorned, and enlarged, [as] the prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah and others declare. (*Dialogue with Trypho*, chap. 80)

- Irenaeus (c. 130–202)

Matthison, *Postmillennialism* (POSTMIL)

“The eschatology of Justin received its most developed second-century exposition in the writings of Irenaeus, the bishop of Lyons. According to Irenaeus, the end of the present age will be marked by a three-year reign of the Antichrist, who will desecrate the temple in Jerusalem. His reign will be cut short by the return of Christ, who will cast him into the lake of fire. At this point, Christ will inaugurate the millennial age. When the Millennium is over, there will be a general resurrection, the final judgment, and the inauguration of the eternal state (*Against Heresies*, 5.30.4)” (p. 27).

Irenaeus: “But when this Antichrist shall have devastated all things in this world, he will reign for three years and six months, and sit in the temple at Jerusalem; and then the Lord will come from heaven in the clouds, in the glory of the Father, sending this man and those who follow him into the lake of fire; but bringing in for the righteous the times of the kingdom, that is, the rest, the hallowed seventh day; and restoring to Abraham the promised inheritance, in which kingdom the Lord declared, that ‘many coming from the east and from the west should sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.’” (*Against Heresies*, 5.30.4)

- Tertullian (c. 160–220)

Tertullian: “In the Revelation of John, again, the order of these times is spread out to view, [noting] that, after the casting of the devil into the bottomless pit for a while, the blessed prerogative of the first resurrection may be ordained from the thrones; and then again, after the consignment of him [the devil] to the fire, that the judgment of the final and universal resurrection may be determined out of the books.” (*On the Resurrection of the Flesh*, chap. 25)

[Elsewhere, Tertullian notes] “that a kingdom is promised to us upon the earth, although before heaven, only in another state of existence; inasmuch as it will be after the resurrection for a thousand years.” (*Against Marcion*, 3.25)

- Lactantius (c. 240–320)

Lactantius: “Therefore peace being made, and every evil suppressed, that righteous King and Conqueror will institute a great judgment on the earth respecting the living and the dead, and will deliver all the nations into subjection to the righteous who are alive, and will raise the righteous dead to eternal life, and will Himself reign with them on the earth, and will build the holy city, and this kingdom of the righteous shall be for a thousand years. (*The Epitome of the Divine Institutes*, chp. 72)

❖ Additional Notes:

- John Chrysostom on the future salvation of the Jews

John Chrysostom (349–407): [Regarding the fact] that they [the Jews] shall believe and be saved, he [Paul] brings Isaiah to witness, who cries aloud and says, *There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.*” (*Isaiah 59:20.*) ... If then this has been promised, but has never yet happened in their case, nor have they ever enjoyed the remission of sins by baptism, certainly it will come to pass.

- Ephraem of Nisibis (306–373) (or perhaps someone else writing in the style of Ephraem) on the rapture of the church

All the saints and elect of God are gathered together before the tribulation, which is to come, and are taken to the Lord, in order that they may not see at any time the confusion which overwhelms the world because of our sins.”(Pseudo-Ephraem, *On the Last Times 2*)

James Stitzinger, “The Rapture in Twenty Centuries of Biblical Interpretation,” *TMSJ* 13/2 (Fall 2002), 155: A cursory examination of the early church fathers reveals that they were predominantly premillennialists or chiliasts.¹⁹ Clear examples in the writings of Barnabas (ca. 100-150), Papias (ca. 60-130), Justin Martyr (110-165), Irenaeus (120-202), Tertullian (145-220), Hippolytus (c. 185-236), Cyprian (200-250), and Lactantius (260-330) make this understanding impossible to challenge successfully.

Beyond the witness of early church **HISTORY**, there are at least two other other reasons why we would hold to a Premillennial perspective:

- A. **HERMENEUTICS** – Premillennialism results from a straightforward reading of the text, when it is applied consistently and in accordance with the progress of revelation
 1. Based on the progress of revelation, Premillennialists emphasize “that the Old Testament be taken on its own terms and not reinterpreted in light of the New Testament” (John Feinberg, “Systems of Discontinuity,” in *Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments*, ed. John S. Feinberg (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1988), 67-85.)

Erickson, *Christian Theology*

Later revelation builds on earlier revelation, complementing and supplementing, rather than contradicting it (pp. 222-23).

John Feinberg, “Systems of Discontinuity”

Nondispensationalists begin with NT teaching as having priority and then go back to the OT. Dispensationalists often begin with the OT, but wherever they begin they demand that the OT be taken on its own terms rather than reinterpreted in the light of the NT. (p. 75)

2. Based on a straightforward reading of Scripture, consistently applied, Premillennialists are convinced that a literal hermeneutic leads to a premillennial eschatology.

- a. It is important to understand what we mean by a “literal hermeneutic.”

Elliott E. Johnson, *Expository Hermeneutics*

The term *literal* has been understood in at least two ways: (1) the clear, plain sense of a word or phrase as over against a figurative use, and (2) a system that views the text as providing the basis of the true interpretation. This twofold use of “literal” has resulted in a great deal of confusion. Removed from its proper hermeneutical discourse, the phrase “literal interpretation of the Bible” is often and erroneously taken (as by the secular media) in the first sense and is construed as devaluing any figurative understanding of biblical language.

Our attention will be focused on the second sense of “literal,” a system which, as conceived in the Protestant Reformation, promotes two important values:

1. A literal hermeneutic rests in the *right and responsibility* of the priesthood of the individual believer. The prerogatives of the priest as set forth in the Scriptures included his hearing the voice of God in the interpretation of divine revelation. This necessarily involved some means of testing the validity of that interpretation;
2. A literal hermeneutic places primary importance on the *historical* realm within which God’s original revelation was expressed. The historical realm provides both the context of the original expression and the particular stage in the progress of biblical revelation when the message was expressed. (p. 9)

Hamilton, *The Basis of Millennial Faith* (AMIL)

Now we must frankly admit that a literal interpretation of the Old Testament prophecies gives us just such a picture of an earthly reign of the Messiah as the premillennialist picture. That was the kind of a Messianic kingdom that the Jews of the time of Christ were looking for, on the basis of a literal interpretation of the Old testament promises (p. 38).

Masselink, *Why Thousand Years* (AMIL)

If all prophecy must be interpreted in a literal way, the Chiliastic views are correct; but if it can be proved that these prophecies have a spiritual meaning, then Chiliasm must be rejected (p. 31).

- c. In all of this, the authorial intent of the message (along with the understanding of the message by the original audience) is critical to the literal hermeneutic.

Johnson, *Expository Hermeneutics*

When we speak of verbal communication, we have in mind not simply the transmission of information through the symbols of language, but especially the sharing of meaning between an author and a reader. Biblical hermeneutics involves studying the way that information is conveyed from the author (in *what* he says, *how* he chooses to say it, and *why*) so that the reader (who brings his own background and assumptions and biases to the situation) will understand what the author intended to communicate. (pp. 9–10)

- Of primary concern to the Premillennialist, then, is what the OT prophet intended to communicate, and how his message was understood by the original recipients of that message. How would the original hearers of verses like these have interpreted them? How did the apostles interpret such promises (cf. Acts 1:6; Rom. 11:26)?

Ezekiel 37:25–28 – “They will live on the land that I gave to Jacob My servant, in which your fathers lived; and they will live on it, they, and their sons and their sons’ sons, forever; and David My servant will be their prince forever. I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will place them and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in their midst forever. My dwelling place also will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people. And the nations will know that I am the LORD who sanctifies Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forever.”

Jeremiah 31:35–36 – Thus says the LORD, who gives the sun for light by day and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar; the LORD of hosts is His name: “If this fixed order departs from before Me,” declares the LORD, “Then the offspring of Israel also will cease from being a nation before Me forever.”

- d. Recent Amillennialists assert that the Old Testament must be interpreted through the New Testament. Thus, the straightforward understanding of a given OT prophetic text (as it would have been understood by its original readers) is downplayed. What is emphasized, instead, is the *true meaning* of OT texts—being interpreted through the lens of the New Testament.

Strimple, “Amillennialism”

But is it correct to interpret such Old Testament prophecies as descriptions of a future millennial kingdom that Christ will establish on this earth at his second coming? To answer that, the crucial question the Christian must ask, of course, is this: How does the *New Testament* teach us to interpret such passages? In the New Testament Christ’s church has been given, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that post-resurrection, post-Pentecost revelation that is absolutely authoritative, her infallible guide in all matters of faith and life, including this vitally important matter of how to interpret Old Testament prophecy (pp. 84-85).

In the New Testament we see the true meaning of all these Old Testament types, and the central figure in biblical prophecy is the Lord Jesus Christ. It is Christ, not the Hebrew people, who is the subject of the Old Testament prophets (p. 87).

It is the inspired interpretation of Old Testament prophecy by the New Testament apostles that is the authoritative guide for our interpretation (p. 96).

- ❖ Such an approach assumes that the writers of the New Testament rejected a literal fulfillment of OT Testament prophecies.
 - Direct statements in the NT point to a literal fulfillment of the OT prophecies (cf. Rom. 11:26–29; Rev. 20:1–6).

(NOTE: If more recent revelation is to be given hermeneutical priority over older revelation, than shouldn't we start with Revelation 20 and work backwards from there?)

Craig Blaising, *Three Views of the Millennium and Beyond*

Considering that this book [Revelation] is a late revelation from the Lord himself to the churches (Rev. 1:1; 22:16), with the admonition that the words are “faithful and true” (22:6), we ask, is this wise [to discount it]? Should not one be open to what the Lord himself says about how (i.e., the manner and the time) he will fulfill those things that he has previously revealed, especially as it is the most detailed explanation given on the topic? (pp. 151–52).

- The NT does not provide a consistent pattern for how to interpret the OT (Cf. Arnold Fructenbaum, *Israelology*, 843-844).

OT prophecy is used in each of the following ways by NT authors

- Literal prophecy is literally fulfilled (ex: Matt 2:5-6 with Micah 5:2)
- Literal event is typically fulfilled (ex: Matt 2:15 with Hosea 11:1)
- Literal prophecy is given further application (ex: Matt 2:17-18 with Jer 31:15)
- Summation (ex: Matt 2:23)
- The NT authors worked under INSPIRATION, while today's exegetes only work under ILLUMINATION.
- No NT writer ever says that an OT promise to Israel has been abrogated, nor should the NT be taken as normative unless explicitly stated.
- A spiritual approach to hermeneutics reduces objectivity while increasing possible interpretations (as evidenced in the citation below).

Grenz, *The Millennial Maze* (AMIL)

Other Christians adhere to a second viewpoint, commonly termed “amillennialism.” The word itself means literally “no millennium.” Its proponents do not anticipate a literal one-thousand-year golden age sometime in the future, but find some other significance to the symbol in Revelation 20. Some Amillennialists interpret the figure as referring to a specific period of time in the past during which Christ held sway in his church. Or it could symbolize the church age in its entirety, so that the reign mentioned is either one dimension of the experience of the church as a whole or of the individual believer. Others interpret the thousand years as the reign of departed saints in the heavenly realm during this age. Or the chapter may be a vision of the eternal kingdom of God. In any case, all Amillennialists anticipate that the Second Coming of Christ will mark the beginning of eternity without an intervening interregnum (p. 25).

THUS, spiritualization reduces hermeneutics to human creativity rather than Biblical authority.

Benware, *Understanding End Times Prophecy* (PREMIL)

He [Walvoord] then goes on to observe that once spiritualization of prophecy is allowed it is very difficult to regulate. He is correct because, when an interpreter leaves literal interpretation, he also leaves the guidelines and restraints of history and grammar. There is truth to the idea that when one spiritualizes the Scriptures the interpreter becomes the final authority instead of Scripture itself (p. 110).

SUMMARY: Old Testament promises, taken at face-value (as they would have been understood by the original audience), lead to a Premillennial viewpoint. The New Testament does not annul the OT promises, but rather affirms them. The burden of proof, then, falls on the amillennialist — to demonstrate that what God promised is (in actuality) somehow different than what He will bring to pass.

Amillennialists will perhaps reply that they are interpreting the Old Testament in the way the NT authors interpreted it. But this becomes very difficult in light of the fact that the NT authors do not approach the Old Testament in a consistent way, nor do they give us normative instruction to spiritualize the OT.

* * * * *

B. **HOPE** – Premillennialists are concerned that, if the promises to Israel were such that they did not mean what the original audience understood them to mean, how can believers today be assured that the promises given to us mean what we understand them to mean.

❖ God’s attributes, characterized by perfect truthfulness, make premillennialism the preferred choice (Titus 1:2; Rom 11:26-29)

AFTER ALL...

❖ Amillennialists, such as Hamilton (p. 38), admit that the Jews of the Old Testament expected a literal fulfillment of the millennial kingdom.

❖ Were they deceived in believing that the millennial land promises of the OT would be literally fulfilled?

❖ Furthermore, for God to fulfill promises, which appeared literal, in a spiritual manner calls into question the literal fulfillment of God’s promises for the church (e.g. the resurrection, glorification, etc.).

- ❖ Moreover, God proved His faithfulness by literally fulfilling prophecies concerning Christ’s first coming (cf. Matt 2:5-6; John 7:42), why should His second coming be different?
- ❖ Thus, God’s trustworthiness demands that people can take Him at His Word.

Benware, *Understanding End Times Prophecy* (PREMIL)

A literal approach to the prophetic Scriptures leads one to believe that the promises made to Israel have not been fulfilled in the past and are not being fulfilled today. This mandates that they be fulfilled sometime in the future to national Israel (p. 101).

If the promises given in the Old Testament could not be taken at face value by those who received them, then what guarantee do we have when we take the New Testament promises at face value? Isn’t it possible that New Testament prophecy (like Old Testament prophecy) doesn’t really mean what it says? How much stock can I put in the literalness of 1 Corinthians 15; 2 Peter 3; or Revelation 21-22 *if* it’s possible that those prophecies were never intended as literal?

* * * * *

III. The point of all of this ...

Based on the introduction (above) the following syllogism can be established.

- A. IF HISTORY (from a survey of the early church fathers), HERMENEUTICS (from an understanding of the progression of revelation and a consistently applied literal approach), and HOPE (from a confidence in God’s faithfulness to literally fulfilling His promises) leads to the Premillennial perspective ... [AND]
- B. IF Amillennialism was not held by the Old Testament writers, the InterTestamental Jews, Jesus Himself, the Apostles, or the early church fathers . . .
- C. THEN there must be other, outside influences which lead intelligent Bible scholars to reject premillennialism in favor of the Amillennialist position

* * * * *

IV. HISTORICAL INFLUENCES

A. Replacement Theology (Barnabas)

- ❖ Barnabas lived from the later half of the 1st century until the early half of the 2nd. His *Epistle of Barnabas* is variously dated from A. D. 70–131 (cf. Kromminga, 30).

- ❖ On the one hand, Barnabas' theology is very confusing, making it hard to determine his actual millennial position.

Mathison, *Postmillennialism* (POSTMIL)

Barnabas's writings on the subject are not developed enough to place him clearly in any modern eschatological category (p. 25).

- ❖ Some Premillennialists have even claimed him as an advocate.

Kromminga, *The Millennium in the Church* (AMIL)

Quite often the name of Barnabas is included in the list of ancient chiliasts. His *Epistle* is on[e] of the earliest Christian writing[s] outside the Bible which we have. It is variously dated; most commonly between A. D. 96 and A. D. 131, while Lightfoot dates it shortly after A. D. 70. ...

Chapter IV of his *Epistle* has a reference to Daniel's vision of the four world empires, and chapter XV has the speculation of the correspondence of the days of creation with an equal number of millennia of history (p. 30).

- ❖ YET, Barnabas also lays the foundation for some later Amillennial approaches.
 - After all, he displays a tendency toward allegorical hermeneutics.

Kromminga, *The Millennium in the Church* (AMIL)

So, likewise, in chapt. XI [of the *Epistle of Barnabas*] Zeph. 3:19 and Ezek. 47:12 are unhesitatingly interpreted as fulfilled in the believers in this dispensation in the impartation of the Holy Spirit and the cleansing from sin in baptism, and in the promise of everlasting life through faith in Jesus. ... Here the spiritual interpretation of the promise prevails throughout, but its fulfillment extends beyond the present of these promises in the New Testament Church now, and whatever of literal fulfillment of them may yet be coming he awaited in the eternal state. In all this he conformed to the amillennarian pattern. Or, let us say, that in all this Barnabas set forth the pattern which has become traditional for Amillennialism. Leaving aside the question what the Bible teaches, we must say that, as far as our documentary evidence goes, Barnabas is the father of its amillennial understanding (p. 37).

Kromminga, *The Millennium in the Church* (AMIL)

The marked antijudaism of Barnabas calls for yet further attention. It pervades his entire Epistle. It comes out in a variety of ways. Besides what has been said it should be recognized in his spiritualization of the Old Testament fasts, chapt. II, in such a manner, that the Jewish fasts are rejected by Jehovah, while the fasting which pleases Jehovah is ascribed to the Christians as a goal set before them (p. 38).

- The explanation for such interpretations comes from Barnabas' circumstances.

Kromminga, *The Millennium in the Church* (AMIL)

There is something intriguing in the historical situation in which Barnabas' *Epistle* was written. It is assumed generally, that Alexandria was its birthplace, and Alexandria was one of the main Jewish centers in that early age; a center, moreover, which had gained greatly in importance from the destruction of Jerusalem in A. D. 70. . . . It is not at all inconceivable, that the Christians in Alexandria and its territory felt the unrest that must have stirred Jewry in those days; nor would it be surprising if it should turn out, that the Jewish expectations had, through Jewish converts, found a foothold in the Christian Church of Alexandria itself. In fact, such an influence passing through Jewish Christians from the Jews to the Church would have been the most natural result of the situation and the connections.

In support of such Jewish hopes, shared by some Jewish Christians, the claim which Barnabas combats may very well have been made, that "the covenant is with them as well as with us." Thus we would have a satisfactory explanation of Barnabas' most earnest opposition to such a claim. . . . It is far from impossible, that Barnabas viewed these Jewish expectations as the great delusion which is to result in the great apostasy which will bring forth the antichrist or, as Barnabas has it, the last stumbling-block and the black one, chapt. IV. If such were his thoughts, it is perfectly plain, that then there could be no room in them at all for a future thousand years (pp. 39-40).

- *Additional Thoughts on the Development of Replacement Theology (Supersessionism)*

- ❖ Dr. Michael Vlach's dissertation on Replacement Theology gives a helpful summary. He notes:

"As Jewish animosity toward Christians continued and it became increasingly clear that the Jews would not believe in Christ, many Christians began to view the Jews as their enemies. . . . In addition to its anti-Jewish stance, the predominantly Gentile church continued with its insistence that the Jews had been rejected by God and that the church was now the true Israel. For example, the *Epistle of Barnabas* stated the new covenant was never intended for Israel. Instead, it was intended for the church, the true inheritor of the promise through Christ." (pp. 39–40).

- ❖ Dr. Vlach continues by noting a number of places where anti-Jewish sentiments were expressed in patristic writings:

"During the Patristic Era it became increasingly common for church leaders to stereotype the Jews as 'Christ-killers.' Melito of Sardis (c. A.D. 150) stated, 'The King of Israel slain with Israel's right hand! Alas for the new wickedness of the new murder.' Ignatius (c. A.D. 36–108) wrote that Jesus Christ suffered, 'at the hands of the Christ-killing Jews' [*Epistle to the Magnesians* 11]. Wycliffe summarizes this trend:

As Christians abandoned the mission to their fellow Jews and proselytized among the Gentiles they shifted blame for the crucifixion of Jesus from

the Romans to the Jews—not just some Jews, but the Jewish people as a whole. The Jews were branded as deicides—killers of God. This accusation became a deep source of hatred against the Jews. [*The Jews in the Time of Jesus*, 191]”

- ❖ Thus, some of the earliest premillennialists were, at the same time, supersessionists. Dr. Vlach notes that Irenaeus, Tertullian, Cyprian, and Lactantius each promoted a supersessionist approach.

Irenaeus: “For inasmuch as the former [the Jews] have rejected the Son of God, and cast Him out of the vineyard when they slew Him, God has justly rejected them, and given to the Gentiles outside the vineyard the fruits of its cultivation” (*Against Heresies*, 36.2).

Tertullian: “Israel has been divorced” (*An Answer to the Jews*, 1).

Cyprian: “I have endeavored to show that the Jews, according to what had before been foretold, had departed from God, and had lost God’s favor, which had been given them in past time, and had been promised them for the future; while the Christians had succeeded to their place, deserving well of the Lord by faith, and coming out of all nations and from the whole world” (*Three Books of Testimonies against the Jews*).

Cyprian (again): “We Christians, when we pray, say Our Father; because He has begun to be ours, and has ceased to be the Father of the Jews, who have forsaken Him” (*On the Lord’s Prayer*).

Lactantius: “But it is plain that the house of Judah does not signify the Jews, whom He casts off, but us, who have been called by Him out of the Gentiles, and have by adoption succeeded to their place, and are called sons of the Jews” (*The Divine Institutes*, 4.20).

ALSO:

Clement of Alexandria: Clement taught that because Israel “denied the Lord” the nation thereby “forfeited the place of true Israel” (*The Instructor*, 2.8).

- ❖ Dr. Vlach further points to Justin Martyr as “the first Christian writer to explicitly identify the church as ‘Israel’” (p. 42).

Justin Martyr: “For the true spiritual Israel, and descendants of Judah, Jacob, Isaac, and Abraham . . . are we who have been led to God through this crucified Christ” (*Dialogue with Trypho*, 11).

Justin Martyr (again): “Since then God blesses this people [i.e. Christians], and calls them Israel, and declares them to be His inheritance, how is it that you [Jews] repent not of the deception you practice on yourselves, as if you alone were the Israel?” (*Dialogue with Trypho*, 123)

Justin Martyr (again): “We, who have been quarried out from the bowels of Christ, are the true Israelite race” (*Dialogue with Trypho*, 135).

- ❖ Regarding Justin, Dr. Vlach explains: “Justin’s hermeneutical approach to the Old Testament was also important in the development of supersessionism. He reapplied Old Testament promises so that the church, not Israel, was viewed as the beneficiary of its promised blessings” (p. 43).
- ❖ Dr. Vlach continues by showing that Origen and Augustine both promoted and advanced these supersessionist views. Augustine has a particular contribution in that he attempts to explain why Israel has survived (if the nation has been replaced by the church). His explanation is that the Jews exist as witnesses to verify the OT prophecies about Jesus. Vlach explains, “The Jews, according to Augustine, shielded Christians from accusations that Christians invented Old Testament prophecies that pointed to Jesus. Thus, the existence of non-Christian Jews was not a problem but an essential testimony to the truth of Christianity” (p. 48).
- ❖ Augustine’s view of the Jews, in particular, had a great influence in the medieval era.

B. Allegorical Hermeneutics: (Origen)

- ❖ Clement of Alexandria: Origen’s forerunner

Tatford, *Will There Be a Millennium?* (PREMIL)

The first prominent opponent [of a literal millennium] was Clement of Alexandria, who had been influenced by Platonic idealistic philosophy and had adopted the Greek allegorical method of interpretation of the Scriptures. Clement’s teaching was carried much farther by his pupil Origen (who had also been affected by the system of allegorisation [*sic*] originally formulated by Aristobulus in 160 B.C.) (p. 24).

- ❖ Origen (A. D. 185-284): the man who popularized allegorical hermeneutics
 - He was the leader of the Alexandrian School.

Benware, *Understanding End Times Prophecy* (PREMIL)

Origen (A.D. 185-254) and other scholars in Alexandria were greatly influenced by Greek philosophy and attempted to integrate that philosophy with Christian theology. Included in Greek philosophy was the idea that those things that were material and physical were inherently evil. Influenced by this thinking, these Alexandrian scholars concluded that an earthly kingdom of Christ with its many physical blessings would be something evil (p. 103).

Bowman and Penney, “Amillennialism” (PREMIL)

This type of allegorical interpretation can be seen in Plato’s time when the blatant hedonism of the deities were interpreted symbolically in order to make them acceptable. Unable to reconcile their views with the literal interpretation of Scripture, early Jewish commentators began to allegorize. The rabbis of Alexandria, Egypt, began to teach allegorically in order to counter Gentile criticism of the Old Testament. ... Origen was a prime mover in making allegory the key method of interpreting the Bible (37-38).

Masselink, *Why Thousand Years* (AMIL)

The Gnostic philosophy of this period [3rd century] and the Alexandrian school with its allegorical interpretations of the scripture were also a great detriment to the progress of Chiliasm (p. 27).

- Origen’s views led to a belief that “the literal interpretation of the prophetic books was impossible” (Tatford, 24).

C. Historical “Proofs” (The Fall of Jerusalem and Constantine’s Kingdom)

❖ The Fall of Jerusalem (A. D. 70)

- Because the Jews were dispersed from their homeland after A. D. 70, some theologians found evidential “proof” that God was done with Israel.
- This line of thought continued all the way up until the late 1940s.

Chafer, “The Jew: A World Issue” (PREMIL) [This article was written in 1945.]

Just because the Jew is out of his land and away from his covenant blessings under Jehovah’s chastisement, shortsighted and unbelieving men assume that if God ever had a specific purpose for Israel it is outgrown now and only ancient history. The nations have yet to learn that God’s gifts and calling respecting Israel are without repentance. His purpose is never changed (p. 129).

❖ The Christian Kingdom of Constantine (A. D. 324)

- Once this was set up, a literal Millennial kingdom of Christ no longer seemed necessary.

Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, as cited in Bowman and Penney

In Alexandria, Origen opposed chiliasm as a Jewish dream and spiritualized the symbolical language of the prophets. . . . But the crushing blow came from the great change in the social condition and prospects of the church in the Nicene age. After Christianity, contrary to all expectations, triumphed in the Roman empire, and was embraced by the Caesars themselves, the millennial reign, instead of being anxiously waited and prayed for, began to be dated either from the first appearance of Christ, or from the conversion of Constantine and the downfall of paganism, and to be regarded as realized in the glory of the dominant imperial state-church (pp. 37-38).

Tatford, *Will There Be a Millennium?* (PREMIL)

Attempts to defend the doctrine of a literal millennial reign of Christ were vitiated to a great extent by the conversion of the Emperor Constantine in 324 A.D. and the cessation of persecution in consequence of the complete change of the official attitude to Christianity. In the enjoyment of imperial patronage, it seemed evident to many that the kingdom had arrived and that the millennial blessings foretold by the prophets were to become the possession of God's people here and now. Indeed, Eusebius, the father of church history, specifically stated that the kingdom had already come. In 373 A.D. a Church Council at Rome condemned chiliasm and gave its support to the view that the kingdom was synonymous with the church, thus laying the foundation for the claim by Pope Gregory VII several centuries later to be supreme over all secular powers (p. 24).

D. Sensual Aversions (Augustine)

- ❖ Augustine is often viewed by amillennialists as the “Father of Amillennialism.”
- ❖ He may have been influenced by the Donatists.

Erickson, *Christian Theology* (PREMIL)

The first three centuries of the church were probably dominated by what we would today call premillennialism, but in the fourth century an African Donatist named Tyconius propounded a competitive view. Although Augustine was an arch opponent of the Donatists, he adopted Tyconius's view of the millennium. This interpretation was to dominate eschatological thinking throughout the Middle ages (p. 1213).

- ❖ He was influenced by Greek philosophy and the Alexandrian hermeneutic.

Benware, *Understanding End Times Prophecy* (PREMIL)

Although Origen and others began to question the premillennial view, it was Augustine who systematized and developed amillennialism as an alternative to premillennialism. Like Origen, Augustine had been educated in Greek philosophy and could not escape its influence, which is probably why he viewed premillennialism with suspicion, seeing it as a view that promoted a time of carnal enjoyment. . . . Augustine's attitude, as well as his theology, has since that time dominated much of the church. Furthermore, he found Origen's allegorical method of interpretation a helpful tool in sidestepping the teachings of certain millennial passages. So Augustine came to reject the premillennial idea of an earthly reign of Christ, which had been held in the church for several centuries (p. 104).

- ❖ YET his major objection was the sensualism associated with Premillennialism.

Augustine *City of God* XX, 7 (cited by Walvoord, 50)

This opinion [a future literal millennium after the resurrection] might be allowed, if it purposed only spiritual delight unto the saints during this space (and we were once of the same opinion ourselves); but seeing the avouchers hereof affirm that the saints after this resurrection shall do nothing but revel in fleshly banquets, where the cheer shall exceed both modesty and measure, this is gross and fit for none but carnal men to believe. But they that are really and truly spiritual do call those of this opinion Chiliasts.

Mathison, *Postmillennialism* (POSTMIL)

Early in his Christian life, Augustine had been attracted to millennialism, but he later rejected it. His rejection of it, it seems, was largely due to some of the excessively carnal versions of millennialism that were current in his day. He changed his position and adopted instead a symbolic approach to the twentieth chapter of Revelation. In *The City of God*, Augustine teaches that the first resurrection mentioned in Revelation 20 is a spiritual resurrection, the regeneration of spiritual dead persons (20:6). In contrast to premillennialism, he teaches that the second resurrection occurs at the second coming of Christ, not a thousand years later (p. 30).

Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom* (PREMIL)

Thus on trivial grounds Augustine abandons the literal interpretation of Revelation 20. Somehow, for all his genius, he did not see that he could abandon this false teaching without abandoning the doctrine of a literal millennium (p. 50).

- ❖ Whatever his reasons, by adopting Amillennialism, Augustine set the stage for prevailing millennial view of the Middle Ages (and the medieval Roman Catholic Church).

E. Catholic Confirmation (Medieval Catholic Church)

- Augustine's eschatology became the status quo for the medieval church.

Masselink, *Why Thousand Years* (AMIL)

[Although Chiliasm] found acceptance by a number of sects in the middle ages, ... from the time of Augustine up to the Reformation, Chiliasm had little influence in the Christian church (p. 28).

Mathison, *Postmillennialism* (POSTMIL)

The Middle Ages (c. 1000-1500) were not a time of dramatic eschatological development. A modified Augustinian eschatology, which closely linked the institutional Roman Catholic Church with the kingdom of God, was the predominant position (p. 33).

- Thus, Aquinas (1225-1274) argued that there would not be a future earthly millennial kingdom (in his *Supplement* to the *Summa Theologica*, Q. 91 as cited in Mathison, 35).

Grenz, *The Millennial Maze* (AMIL)

[The Medieval church] no longer interpreted history by means of the image of a cosmic drama—as a drama complete with plot and climax—that lay behind millennialism. In its stead, most had substituted the image of the pilgrim people of God seeking a destination beyond history. Consequently, in the dominant medieval outlook the historical epoch since Christ's advent had no cosmic significance. It was simply the space between the two grand events of history, the Incarnation and the last judgment.

In keeping with this outlook, church theologians gave little attention to predictions concerning the end of the age and a future golden era on earth. The dominant eschatology was a modified Augustinianism that linked the institutional church to the kingdom of God. Participation in the rites of the church, it was believed, brought the believer into contact with the kingdom. ...

Not only did the nonmillenarian outlook become the standard for orthodoxy; beginning with the Council of Ephesus in the fifth century and throughout the Middle Ages, church leaders sought to suppress millenarianism. They promoted this campaign even to the point of altering the writings of premillennialists among the early church fathers, such as Irenaeus (pp. 45-46).

F. Revolutionary Aversions / Catholic Hangover (The Reformation)

- ❖ Premillennialism was rejected by the Reformers.

Masselink, *Why Thousand Years* (AMIL)

The doctrine [of Chiliasm], as we mentioned before, was rejected by both Luther and the other reformers with such absoluteness that it never appeared in any of their confessions.... The Augsburg Confession explicitly states that they reject all those who spread the Jewish opinion, that prior to the resurrection of the dead the pious shall receive the administration of the world and then shall bring the ungodly under subjection, (Augsburg Confession, last Art.) (p. 28).

Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom* (PREMIL)

It is clear that the great Protestant leaders such as Calvin, Luther, and Melancthon are properly classed as amillennial. As far as millennial teaching was concerned, they were content to follow the Roman Church in a weakened Augustinian viewpoint (p. 54).

- ❖ Such was, somewhat, a Roman Catholic hangover (although Cox, 2, disagrees).

Grenz, *The Millennial Maze* (AMIL)

Officially the churches of the Reformation continued the dominant nonmillennialism of the medieval Roman Catholic church. Wary of the chaos they perceived would arise from the revolutionary ideas of the more radical reformers [e.g. Thomas Münzer and his rebellion of 1534], both Luther and Calvin spurned millenarianism in all forms (p. 49).

- ❖ Such also involved the fear of political repercussions, especially after the Münzer Rebellion of 1534, led by Thomas Münzer (c. 1490-1525).

Mathison, *Postmillennialism* (POSTMIL)

Münzer, a radical millenarian, revolutionary, and mystic, who claimed that present revelation was more important than the Scriptures, believed that he was inspired by the Holy Spirit to bring in a new age. ... Münzer's views were adamantly rejected by both Luther and Calvin. The Münzer Rebellion of 1534, in which radical Anabaptists led by Jan Matthys took over the city and declared it to be the New Zion, was considered by the leading Reformers to be the logical outworking of such extremely millenarian theology. It discredited millenarianisms in the eyes of both Protestants and Catholics for years to come (pp. 40-41).

- ❖ Martin Luther (1483-1546) altered Augustine's views slightly, but nevertheless maintaining the basic Catholic foundation.

Brady, "Luther and the State: The Reformer's Teaching in Its Social Setting"

As Luther during the 1510s found his way from Ockham through Augustine to Paul, he transformed the typically Augustinian antithesis—spirit-flesh, eternal-temporal, heavenly-earthly, future-present, hidden-pen, invisible-visible, inward-outward, gospel-law—into a grand vision of reality cloven into two kingdoms [the temporal and the spiritual] (p. 33).

Mathison, *Postmillennialism* (POSTMIL)

Despite his apocalyptic tendencies, Luther agreed with the common Catholic rejection of chiliasm. There were, however, several important developments in Luther's thought which differentiated it from official Catholic doctrine. The most significant of these were:

1. He identified the institution of the papacy as the Antichrist
2. He interpreted the book of Revelation as a prophecy of the entire history of the church
3. He believed that the Millennium was fulfilled in the early history of the church and ended either with the rise of the Turks or with the institution of the papacy (p. 38).

- ❖ Luther's Anti-Semitism is also well-known (though perhaps not directly tied to his eschatological views):

Luther, "The Jews and Their Lies"

Alas, it cannot be anything but the terrible wrath of God which permits anyone to sink into such abysmal, devilish, hellish, insane baseness, envy, and arrogance. If I were to avenge myself on the devil himself I should be unable to wish him such evil and misfortune as God's wrath inflicts on the Jews, compelling them to lie and to blaspheme so monstrously, in violation of their own conscience. Anyway, they have their reward for constantly giving God the lie. ...

I brief, dear princes and lords, those of you who have Jews under your rule if my counsel does not please your, find better advice, so that you and we all can be rid of the unbearable, devilish burden of the Jews, lest we become guilty sharers before God in the lies, blasphemy, the defamation, and the curses which the mad Jews indulge in so freely and wantonly against the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, his dear mother, all Christians, all authority, and ourselves. ...

First to set fire to their synagogues or schools and to bury and cover with dirt whatever will not burn, so that no man will ever again see a stone or cinder of them. ... Second, I advise that their houses also be razed and destroyed. For they pursue in them the same aims as in their synagogues. ... Third, I advise that all their prayer books and Talmudic writings, in which such idolatry, lies, cursing and blasphemy are taught, be taken from them. ... Fourth, I advise that their rabbis be forbidden to teach henceforth on pain of loss of life and limb. ... Fifth, I advise that safe conduct on the highways be abolished completely for the Jews. ... Sixth, I advise that usury be prohibited to them, and that all cash and treasure of silver and gold be taken from them and put aside for safekeeping (online edition).

- ❖ John Calvin (1509-64) considered premillennialism to be so childish it was not worth even considering.

John Calvin, *Institutes* II: 250-51 as cited by Walvoord, 56

...not long after arose the Millenarians, who limited the reign of Christ to a thousand years. Their fiction is too puerile to require or deserve refutation. Nor does the Revelation, which they quote in favor of their error, afford them any support; for the term of a thousand years, there mentioned, refers not to the eternal blessedness of the Church, but to the various agitations which awaited the Church in its militant state upon earth. But the whole Scripture proclaims that there will be no end of the happiness of the elect, or the punishment of the reprobate. ... Those who assign the children of God a thousand years to enjoy the inheritance of the future life, little think what dishonor they cast on Christ and his kingdom.

- ❖ This, in spite of the fact that he rejected Origen's allegorical hermeneutic:

John Calvin (1509–1564):[The] error of allegory has been the source of many evils. Not only did it open the way for the adulteration of the natural meaning of Scripture but also set up boldness in allegorizing as the chief exegetical virtue.

(Calvin again): We must...entirely reject the allegories of Origen, and of others like him, which Satan, with the deepest subtlety, has endeavored to introduce into the Church, for the purpose of rendering the doctrine of Scripture ambiguous and destitute of all certainty and firmness

(Calvin again): Let us know that the true meaning of Scripture is the genuine and simple one, and let us embrace and hold it tightly. Let us . . . boldly set aside as deadly corruptions, those fictitious expositions which lead us away from the literal sense.

YET Calvin was not consistent in this application of a literal hermeneutic to prophetic passages. Commenting on the future promises given to Israel in Amos 9, Calvin says:

Here the Prophet describes the felicity which shall be under the reign of Christ: and we know that whenever the Prophets set forth promises of a happy and prosperous state to God's people, they adopt metaphorical expressions, and say, that abundance of all good things shall flow, that there shall be the most fruitful produce, that provisions shall be bountifully supplied; for they accommodated their mode of speaking to the notions of that ancient people; it is therefore no wonders if they sometimes speak to them as to children. At the same time, the Spirit under these figurative expressions declares, that the kingdom of Christ shall in every way be happy and blessed, or that the Church of God, which means the same thing, shall be blessed, when Christ shall begin to reign.

. . . Further, what is here said of the abundance of corn and wine, must be explained with reference to the nature of Christ's kingdom. As then the kingdom of Christ is spiritual, it is enough for us, that it abounds in spiritual blessings: and the Jews, whom God reserved for himself as a remnant, were satisfied with this spiritual abundance.

If anyone objects and says, that the Prophet does not speak here allegorically; the answer is ready at hand, even this, — that it is a manner of speaking everywhere found in Scripture, that a happy state is painted as it were before our eyes, by setting before us the conveniences of the present life and earthly blessings: this may especially be observed in the Prophets, for they accommodated their style, as we have already stated, to the capacities of a rude and weak people. (Calvin's Commentary on Amos 9:13-15)

Calvin adopted a similar approach to Augustine, seeing the physical promises to Israel as speaking of spiritual promises to the Church—since physical blessings might be interpreted as appealing to the flesh. In his commentary on Joel 3, discussing the prophecies in vv. 18 – 19, Calvin says:

But we must remember that when the Prophets so splendidly extol the blessings of God, they intend not to fill the minds of the godly with thoughts about eating and drinking; but profane men lay hold on such passages as though the Lord intended to gratify their appetite. We know, indeed, that God's children differ much from swine: hence God fills not the faithful with earthly things, for this would not be useful for their salvation. At the same time, he thus enlarges on his blessings, that we may know that no happiness shall in any way be wanting to us, when God shall be propitious to us. We hence see that our Prophet so speaks of God's earthly blessings, that he fills not the minds of the godly with these things but desires to raise them above, as though he said, that the Israelites would in every way be happy, after having in the first place been reconciled to God.

❖ *NOTE: Calvin did believe in a future for the Jews at the end of the church age.*

Calvin: “When the Gentiles shall come in, the Jews also shall return from their defection to the obedience of faith; and thus shall be completed the salvation of the whole Israel of God, which must be gathered from both; and yet in such a way that the Jews shall obtain the first place, being as it were the first-born in God's family.... God distinctly claims for Himself a certain seed, so that His redemption may be effectual in His elect and peculiar nation. . . . God was not unmindful of the covenant which He had made with their fathers, and by which he testified that according to his eternal purpose He loved that nation; and this he confirms by this remarkable declaration, –that the grace of divine calling cannot be made void.”

- ❖ On the whole, the Magisterial Reformers held on to the Amillennial beliefs of their Roman Catholic predecessors. Premillennial views were associated with radical Anabaptist groups.

G. Theological Systemization (Covenantalism)

- Covenantalism arose, as a system, in the mid-1600s under the development of two men, Johannes Cocceius (1603-1669) and Hermann Witsius (1636-1708) (cf. Harbin, 33).
- Some Amillennialists wish to distance themselves from Covenantalism.

Cox, *Amillennialism Today* (AMIL)

Covenant theology is not a basic doctrine of amillennialism. ... Covenant theology, then, is not to be associated per se with amillennialism. The two doctrines do not stand or fall together (p. 2).

- Nevertheless, a link often exists between those who are amillennial and those who are covenantal.

Ryrie, “The Necessity of Dispensationalism” (PREMIL)

Covenant theologians are well known for their stand on allegorical interpretation especially as it relates to the prophetic Word, and they are equally well known for their amillennialism which is only the natural outcome of allegorizing (p. 153).

- The “special hermeneutics” of Covenant theology provides a reinforcing foundation for amillennial thought.

Harbin, “The Hermeneutics of Covenant Theology” (PREMIL)

As already noted, many [covenantal] writers suggest that prophecy calls for a special method of interpretation. This is the foundation for the distinction between amillennialism and premillennialism. ... Thus...a “special hermeneutics” of symbolism for prophecy...is suggested by covenant theologians (pp. 40-41).

- ❖ Since the mid-1800s there has been some division among Amillennialists.

Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom* (PREMIL)

For the most part amillenarians of today, such as Allis and Berkof, claim to follow in the hallowed tradition of Augustine while admitting the need for adjustment of his view to the actual modern situation. ... A new type of amillennialism has arisen, however. Allis traces this view to Duesterdieck (1859) and Kliefoth (1874) and analyzes it as a reversal of the fundamental Augustinian theory that Revelation 20 was a recapitulation of the church age. The new view, instead, follows the line of teaching that the millennium is distinct from the church age though it precedes the second advent. To solve the problem of correlation of this interpretation with the hard facts of a world of unbelief and sin, they interpreted the millennium as a picture not of a time-period but of a state of blessedness of the saints in heaven (p. 56).

- ❖ Nevertheless, both types of amillennialism have many presuppositional similarities.

V. Suggested Modern Influences (Presuppositions) of Amillennialism

- ❖ Again reiterating that Premillennialism is the logically, philosophically, historically, theologically, and hermeneutically better choice (see Introduction), the following reasons are suggested as influences (presuppositions) behind modern Amillennialism.

A. Majority Opinion Throughout History

- ❖ It is suggested that some Amillennialists hold this view because of its historical prestige (as opposed to Premillennialism).

Campbell and Townsend, *The Coming Millennial Kingdom* (PREMIL)

Previous to the last century, premillennialism was widely known but was generally reckoned as characteristic of sectarian groups tending to deviate from traditional orthodoxy—the *schwaermerei*, to use a term of Luther's. Occasionally, scholars of outstanding note opted for premillennialism, but they were reckoned as aberrations. They failed to make any great impact on the world of biblical and evangelical scholarship (p. 7).

- ❖ OR possibly because it is the majority view.

Benware, *Understanding End Times Prophecy* (PREMIL)

If all Christendom could be gathered together and a vote taken on which of the three millennial views was favored, amillennialism would easily win. Amillennialism is clearly the majority view, since it is held by the Roman Catholic Church, the Greek Church, and a large segment of Protestantism (p. 103).

- ❖ OR possibly because of the great men that have held to such a view (hero-worship).

Cox, *Amillennialism Today* (AMIL)

The name is new, and there have been times in history when these teachings were not pronounced with vigor. But amillennial teachings are as old as Christianity itself. Amillennialism has always been the majority view of the historic Christian church, even as it remains today. What has come to be known as amillennialism was held by the great majority of the church fathers, the Protestant reformers, and the most reputable Bible commentaries (p. 7)

Cox, *Amillennialism Today* (AMIL)

Let me hasten to say that we do not rest our case on the fact that these beliefs have been held by any man or group of men. The all-important question is “What saith the scripture?” While it is good and comforting to know that great conservative students of the Bible have held like beliefs as ours, this does not make it true to the Word of God (p. 9).

- ❖ But, the question is, if Cox does not get his theology from a normal understanding of that Word, then what factors influence his arbitrary interpretation? Possibly, part of the answer to that question lies in the comfort he receives from knowing that, by and large, church history (at least after Augustine) has been favorable to his view?

B. Replacement Theology

- ❖ Amillennialism seems to both promote and be reinforced by an indifferent, or antithetical, predisposition toward the Jewish people (since they have been replaced by the church).

Feinberg, *Millennialism: The Two Major Views* (PREMIL)

All amillennialists, however, find fault with the position that the premillennialists give to the Jew. It is said that the pre-eminence of the Jew in the premillennial system is easily understood, since the whole doctrine of chiliasm is an outgrowth of pre-Christian Jewish writings. Much refutation is not necessary to answer this argument, for the premillennialists merely recognize that, if God speaks about a certain people through two-thirds of His revelation and promises them certain blessings which we noted in our survey of the premillennial view of the kingdom in the Old Testament, that He means for them to have just that much prominence. The millennialists do not find it their duty to instruct the Word as to the eminence it should or should not give to any nation (p. 229).

Rabbi Abraham T. Feldman cited by Evans, 137

To the Jew the Cross is the symbol of persecution, of oppression, of discrimination, of the pyre and the gibbet. It is by the sign of that Cross of Peace that hundreds of Jewish communities were annihilated, thousands of Jews were slaughtered, millions of Jews robbed of life and happiness, by those who failed to grasp the significance and meaning of the death and Resurrection of Him whom they worship.

Marvin R. Wilson “An Evangelical View of the Current State Of Evangelical-Jewish Relations”

What can evangelicals learn from all this? For one thing, they can be especially aware of the dangers that a certain kind of theological anti-Semitism potentially brings in its wake. Theological anti-Semitism comes about when the majority religion tries to suppress the minority faith. For centuries there have been those in the Church who have assumed a position of “triumphalism” regarding the Jew. In the view of these Christians, Jews did not accept the messianic claims of Jesus. So, as unbelievers they are now rejected by God. Their chosenness and uniqueness as a contemporary people is now passe. Jews remain “enemies of God” because of their responsibility for the death of Jesus. Bearing their guilt as “Christ-killers,” Jews continue to survive only as a matter of divine decree. Hence as a living faith Judaism ceased to exist two thousand years ago. In its place the Church proudly stands as the new and true Israel, heir of all God’s covenant promises to Israel (p. 148).

Trevor Craigen, Book Review of Larsen’s, *Jews, Gentiles & the Church* (PREMIL)

The wealth of information, the pertinent comments, questions, and evaluations on this subject of Israel and the church and on the abundant detail in God’s revealed promises and prophecies may cause one to wonder whether amillennialism, postmillennialism, or any other system or worldview embracing “replacement/displacement theology” is guilty of leaning toward anti-Semitism. Advocates of such systems would, of course, vigorously deny that label, but reflecting upon Romans 11 (52) raises the question of whether they fall under God’s charge of arrogance, conceit, and self-esteemed wisdom. Larsen reminds the reader that the future of Israel taught so clearly in Scripture forbids her being submerged into “an amorphous ideal people of God or the church” (200). He notes that divine prophecies cannot apply in spiritual fulfillment to the church. He pulls no punches when citing H. L. Ellison on Ezekiel 36–37: “Unless...[expositors] can give full weight both to the transformed land of Israel in Ezekiel 36 and to the national resurrection of Israel in chapter 37,...[they have] no right to banish the Israel of the Old Covenant from the picture in favor of the Church” (190). Well said! (p. 274)

C. Spiritual Hermeneutic (Inconsistent Application of Literal Hermeneutics)

- ❖ A third underlying influence of modern Amillennialism is its espousal of spiritualizing certain prophetic texts. (This influence seems to be directly linked with Covenantalism.)

Hokema, “Amillennialism” (AMIL)

Amillennialists, on the other hand, believe that though many Old Testament prophecies are indeed to be interpreted literally, many others are to be interpreted in a nonliteral way (p. 172).

Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom* (PREMIL)

The amillennial method of interpreting Scripture is correctly defined as the spiritualizing method. It is clear, however, that conservative Amillennialists limit the use of this method, and in fact adopt the literal method of interpreting most of the Scriptures. The methods followed by the allegorizing school of Alexandria which characterized the early Amillennialists are now repudiated by all modern scholars (p. 62).

Benware, *Understanding End Times Prophecy* (PREMIL)

The first and great issue is the method of interpretation used by amillennialism. Amillennialists, as we have observed already, employ a dual system of hermeneutics. While they approach a great deal of Scripture using literal interpretation (including many prophetic portions), they feel it is legitimate and necessary to interpret other prophetic passages spiritually. The passages that are spiritualized deal with the millennial kingdom, which if interpreted literally would clearly lead one to a premillennial position (p. 110).

❖ Furthermore, the link between Covenantalism and Amillennial seems clear.

Hokema, “Amillennialism” (AMIL)

Amillennialists do not believe that sacred history is to be divided into a series of distinct and disparate dispensations but see a single covenant of grace running through all of that history. This covenant of grace is still in effect today and will culminate in the eternal dwelling together of God and his redeemed people on the new earth (p. 186).

Keith A. Matthison, *Postmillennialism* (POSTMIL) [Postmil. is an offshoot of Amil.]

The dispensational approach to scripture has resulted in a multitude of erroneous doctrines. Dispensationalism does not adequately portray the unity of God’s redemptive work, opting instead for a compartmentalized structure which obscures many of the intricate threads that are woven together throughout Scripture.

The covenantal approach to Scripture recognizes the discontinuities in Scripture without destroying the underlying unifying themes and promises. It maintains that in the person and covenantal work of Jesus Christ, we find the central, unifying theme of Scripture and the fulfillment of all of God’s redemptive promises. It is this approach that will be followed in the remainder of this work (p. 19).

Ryrie, “The Necessity of Dispensationalism” (PREMIL)

Covenant theologians are well known for their stand on allegorical interpretation especially as it relates to the prophetic Word, and they are equally well known for their amillennialism which is only the natural outcome of allegorizing (p. 153).

D. Desire for Simplicity

❖ Amillennialists see the complexities of Premillennialism as overly convoluted.

Hamilton, *The Basis of Millennial Faith* (AMIL)

We must dwell still further upon this incongruous spectacle, in order to emphasize the hopeless maze of difficulties into which a literal interpretation of *all* the Old Testament prophecies plunges us (p. 42).

❖ Thus, they foresee all major future events as occurring at the same time.

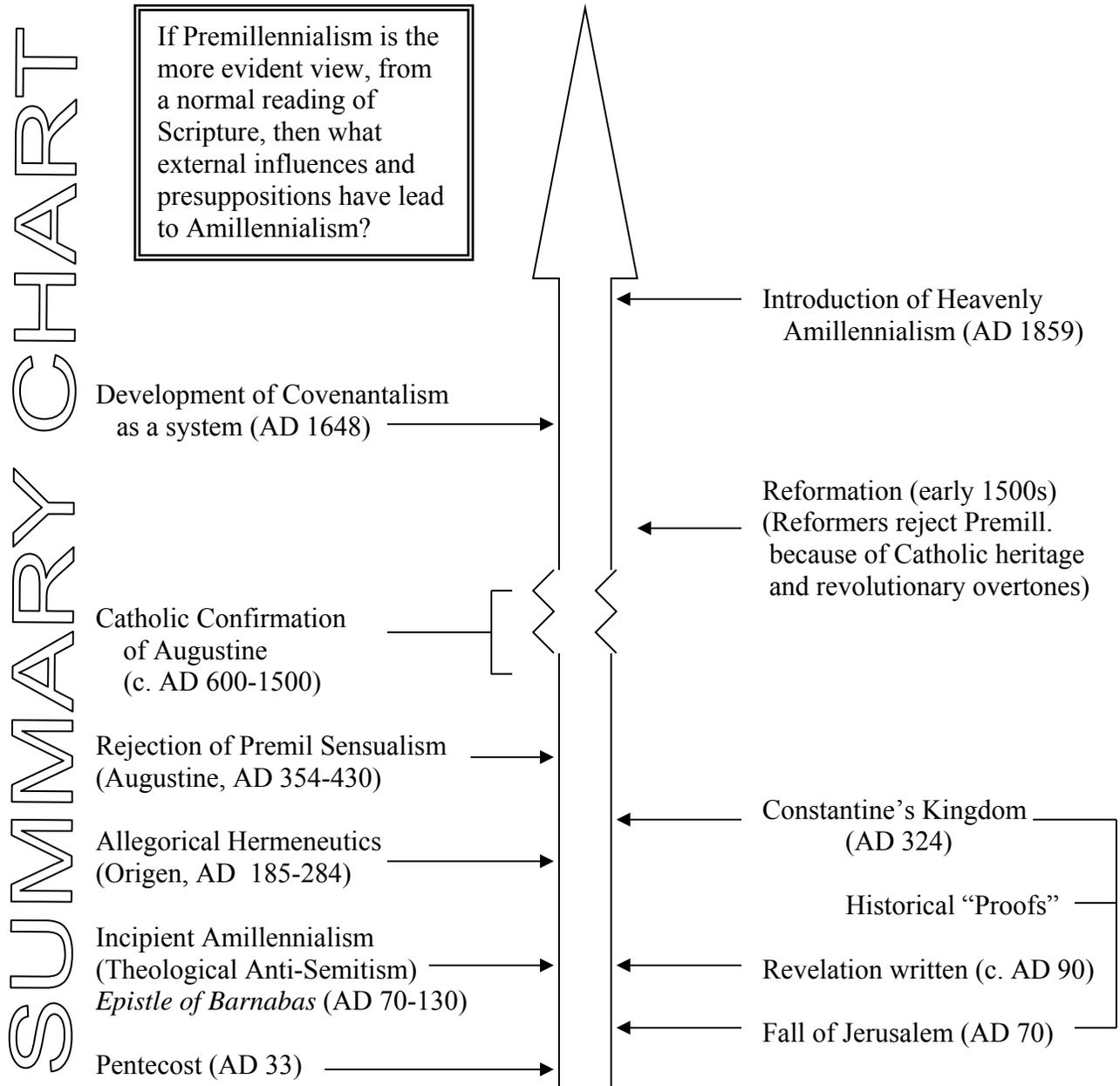
Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (HIST PREMIL)

In conclusion, Amillennialists say that Scripture seems to indicate that *all the major events yet to come* before the eternal state will occur at once (p. 1116).

VI. Conclusion

- ❖ Although not all of the above influences and presuppositions necessarily fit each individual Amillennialist, they nevertheless seem to provide a general basis for the factors impacting Amillennialism as a whole.
- ❖ These factors grow out of a well-established historical tradition, a tradition which must be properly understood if the Amillennialism of today is to be properly understood.
- ❖ Although Premillennialism is the better choice (see introduction), Amillennialism developed through outside influences and continues to thrive because of these same external presuppositions.
- ❖ Thus, to attack Amillennialism is, in essence, to attack another person's understanding of hermeneutics, historical theology, and position in God's program. Furthermore, it attacks some of the dearest heroes of the faith (Augustine and the Reformers) while also disrupting the logical simplicity of the Amillennial system. It is no wonder, then, that the Millennial debate remains such a hot topic.

Modern Amillennialism			
Majority View in History (including “Hero Worship”)	Replacement Theology (God’s promises to Israel given to the church)	Spiritualized (“Special”) Hermeneutics (including link to Covenant Theology)	Desire for Logical Simplicity (Premill. seen as convoluted)



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{ ADDENDUM }

HISTORICAL QUOTES OF INTEREST TO PREMILLENNIALISTS

Eusebius (c. 275–339) regarding Papias (c. 60–c. 135): Papias, who is now mentioned by us, affirms that he received the sayings of the apostles from those who accompanied them, and he moreover asserts that he heard in person Aristion and the presbyter John. Accordingly he mentions them frequently by name, and in his writings gives their traditions. . . . Amongst these he says that there will be a millennium after the resurrection from the dead, when the personal reign of Christ will be established on this earth.

Justin Martyr (c. 100–165): But I and others, who are right-minded Christians on all points, are assured that there will be a resurrection of the dead, and a thousand years in Jerusalem, which will then be built, adorned, and enlarged, [as] the prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah and others declare.

Lactantius (c. 240–c. 320): Therefore peace being made, and every evil suppressed, that righteous King and Conqueror will institute a great judgment on the earth respecting the living and the dead, and will deliver all the nations into subjection to the righteous who are alive, and will raise the righteous dead to eternal life, and will Himself reign with them on the earth, and will build the holy city, and this kingdom of the righteous shall be for a thousand years.

Philip Schaff (1819–1893): The most striking point in the eschatology of the ante-Nicene age is the prominent chiliasm, or millenarianism, that is the belief of a visible reign of Christ in glory on earth with the risen saints for a thousand years, before the general resurrection and judgment. It was indeed not the doctrine of the church embodied in any creed or form of devotion, but a widely current opinion of distinguished teachers, such as Barnabas, Papias, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Methodius, and Lactantius....

John Chrysostom (349–407): [Regarding the fact] that they [the Jews] shall believe and be saved, he [Paul] brings Isaiah to witness, who cries aloud and says, *There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.*” (Isaiah 59:20.) ... If then this has been promised, but has never yet happened in their case, nor have they ever enjoyed the remission of sins by baptism, certainly it will come to pass.

Ephraem of Nisibis (306–373): All the saints and elect of God are gathered together before the tribulation, which is to come, and are taken to the Lord, in order that they may not see at any time the confusion which overwhelms the world because of our sins.”(Pseudo-Ephraem, *On the Last Times 2*)

James Stitzinger, “The Rapture in Twenty Centuries of Biblical Interpretation,” *TMSJ* 13/2 (Fall 2002), 155: A cursory examination of the early church fathers reveals that they were predominantly premillennialists or chiliasts.¹⁹ Clear examples in the writings of Barnabas (ca. 100-150), Papias (ca. 60-130), Justin Martyr (110-165), Irenaeus (120-202), Tertullian (145-220), Hippolytus (c. 185-236), Cyprian (200-250), and Lactantius (260-330) make this understanding impossible to challenge successfully.

Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274): It is possible to designate a terminus, because it seems that the blindness of the Jews will endure until all the pagans chosen for salvation have accepted the faith. And this is in accord with what Paul says below about the salvation of the Jews, namely, that after the conversion of the pagans, all Israel will be saved.

John Calvin (1509–1564):[The] error of allegory has been the source of many evils. Not only did it open the way for the adulteration of the natural meaning of Scripture but also set up boldness in allegorizing as the chief exegetical virtue.

(Calvin again): We must...entirely reject the allegories of Origen, and of others like him, which Satan, with the deepest subtlety, has endeavored to introduce into the Church, for the purpose of rendering the doctrine of Scripture ambiguous and destitute of all certainty and firmness

(Calvin again): Let us know that the true meaning of Scripture is the genuine and simple one, and let us embrace and hold it tightly. Let us . . . boldly set aside as deadly corruptions, those fictitious expositions which lead us away from the literal sense.

(Calvin again): When the Gentiles shall come in, the Jews also shall return from their defection to the obedience of faith; and thus shall be completed the salvation of the whole Israel of God, which must be gathered from both; and yet in such a way that the Jews shall obtain the first place, being as it were the first-born in God's family.... God distinctly claims for Himself a certain seed, so that His redemption may be effectual in His elect and peculiar nation. . . . God was not unmindful of the covenant which He had made with their fathers, and by which he testified that according to his eternal purpose He loved that nation; and this he confirms by this remarkable declaration, –that the grace of divine calling cannot be made void.

The Geneva Study Bible (16th century): He [Paul] speaks of the whole nation, not of any one part. . . . The blindness of the Jews is neither so universal that the Lord has no elect in that nation, neither will it be continual: for there will be a time in which they also (as the prophets have foretold) will effectually embrace that which they now so stubbornly for the most part reject and refuse.

William Perkins (1558–1602): The Lord says, All the nations shall be blessed in Abraham: Hence I gather that the nation of the Jews shall be called, and converted to the participation of this blessing: when, and how, God knows: but that it shall be done before the end of the world we know.

Richard Sibbes (1577–1635): And when the fullness of the Gentiles is come in, then comes the conversion of the Jews. Why may we not expect it? they were the people of God. We see Christ believed on in the world. We may therefore expect that they will also be called, there being many of them, and keeping their nation distinct from others.

Samuel Rutherford (c. 1600–1661): O to see the sight, next to Christ's Coming in the clouds, the most joyful! . . . O day! O longed for and lovely day - dawn! O sweet Jesus let me see that sight which will be as life from the dead, thee and thy ancient people in mutual embraces. O that there were nations, kindred, tongues, and all the people of Christ's habitable

world, encompassing his throne with cries and tears for the spirit of supplication to be poured down on the inhabitants of Judah for that effect.

Elnathan Parr (d. 1630): [On Romans 11:26, Parr writes:] That all the elect shall be saved? Who ever doubted that? But of the calling of the Jews there is doubt. He calls their salvation a secret or mystery but there is nothing mysterious about all the elect being saved. He shows that there is an unbroken reference to Israel/Jacob, that is, ethnic Israel. [From verses 25-28 Parr concludes,] Before the end of the world the Jews in regard to their multitude will be called.

According to the Banner of Truth article on Parr's interpretation of Romans 11:26: In this [Parr] is followed by Matthew Poole and Matthew Henry. . . . [More recent] expositors who endorse Parr's interpretation are Charles Hodge, Robert Haldane, John Brown of Edinburgh, H G C Moule, Frederic Godet, W G T Shedd, Prof John Murray, Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones, C E B Cranfield, James Dunn and Thomas R Shreiner in his recently published commentary on Romans.

John Owen (1616–1683): When preaching before the House of Commons in 1649, John Owen spoke of] the bringing home of his ancient people to be one fold with the fullness of the Gentiles....in answer to millions of prayers put up at the throne of grace for this very glory, in all generations. [Days of prayer and humiliation were kept in Scotland, one particular object being] that the promised conversion of His ancient people of the Jews may be hastened.

Matthew Poole (1624–1679): [On Romans 11:26] By Israel here (as in the precedent verse) you must understand, the nation and people of the Jews. And by all Israel is not meant every individual Israelite, but many, or (it may be) the greatest part of them. So all is to be taken in Scripture: see John 6:45; 1 Tim 2:6, and elsewhere. Look, as when he speaks of the conversion of the Gentiles, and the coming in of their fulness, there are many (too many of them) still unconverted; so, notwithstanding the general calling of the Jews, a great many of them may remain uncalled. As it is written; the apostle had this by revelation, but he proves it also by Scripture. All are not agreed from whence these testimonies are taken; the former is found (with some little variation) in Isa 59:20: as for the latter, some think it is taken from Jer 31:33. Others think, that he joineth two places in Isaiah together, (as he did before, Rom 11:8,) and the last words are taken out of Isa 27:9. The Seventy have the very words used by the apostle. These prophecies and promises, though they were in part fulfilled when Christ came in the flesh, (see Acts 3:26,) yet there will be a more full and complete accomplishment thereof upon the Jewish nation and people towards the end of the world.

Increase Mather (1639–1723): That there shall be a general conversion of the tribes of Israel, is a truth which in some measure hath been known and believed in all ages of the church of God, since the Apostles' days.

Matthew Henry (1662–1714): Another thing that qualifies this doctrine of the Jews rejection is that though for the present they are cast off, yet the rejection is NOT final; but, when the fullness of time is come, they will be taken in again. They are not cast off for ever, but mercy is remembered in the midst of wrath.

(Henry, again): The Jews shall continue in blindness, till God hath performed his whole work among the Gentiles, and then their turn will come next to be remembered. This was the purpose and ordination of God, for wise and holy ends; things should not be ripe for the Jews' conversion till the church was replenished with the Gentiles, that it might appear that God's taking them again was not because he had need of them, but of his own free grace . . . [Some] think that it is yet to have its accomplishment towards the end of the world—that those Jews which yet wonderfully remain distinct from the rest of the nations by their names, customs, and religion, and are very numerous, especially in the Levant parts, shall, by the working of the Spirit with the word, be convinced of their sin, and brought generally to embrace the Christian faith, and to join in with the Christian churches, which will contribute much to their strength and beauty. Alas! who shall live when God doeth this?

Cotton Mather (1663–1728): This day, from the Dust, where I lay prostrate before the Lord, I lifted up my Cries . . . for the conversion of the Jewish nation, and for my own having the Happiness, at some time or other, to Baptize a Jew that should by my ministry be brought home unto the Lord.

Thomas Boston (1676–1732): There is a day coming when there shall be a national conversion of the Jews or Israelites. The now blinded and rejected Jews shall at length be converted into the faith of Christ

James Robe (1688–1753): Me thinks I hear the nation of the Jews (for such is the cry of their case) crying aloud to you from their dispersion, . . . we have now been rejected of God for more than sixteen hundred years, because of our unbelief, and for this long, very long while, wrath to the uttermost hath been lying upon us! There are many promises and predictions that we shall be grafted in again. . . . Pray therefore, and wrestle with God, that he may, according to his promise, pour forth upon the Spirit of grace and supplication, that we may look upon him whom we have pierced, and mourn. . . . Help us with your prayers.

According to Ian Murray, *The Puritan Hope*, 43: This same belief concerning the future of the Jews is to be found very widely in seventeenth-century Puritan literature. It appears in the works of such well-known Puritans as John Owen, Thomas Manton and John Flavel. . . . It is also handled in a rich array of commentaries, both folios and quartos – David Dickson on the Psalms, George Hutcheson on the Minor Prophets, Jeremiah Burroughs on Hosea, William Greenhill on Ezekiel, Elnathan Parr on Romans and James Durham on Revelation: a list which could be greatly extended.

According to J. Van Den Berg, *Puritan Eschatology*, 140: For . . . virtually all Dutch theologians of the seventeenth century, 'the whole of Israel' indicated the fullness of the people of Israel 'according to the flesh': in other words, the fullness of the Jewish people. This meant that there was a basis for an expectation of a future conversion of the Jews—an expectation which was shared by a large majority of Dutch theologians.

John Gill (1697–1771): The space of a thousand years is [in Revelation 20] to be taken, not indefinitely, but definitely, for just this number of years exactly, as appears from their having the article prefixed to them; and are called afterwards, no less than four times, *ta cilia eth*, "the thousand years," or these thousand years, Revelation 20:3 and from the things which are

attributed to the beginning and ending of these years, which fix the epoch, and period of them; . . . [They] are to be understood literally and definitely, as before, of just such an exact number and term of years.

(Gill again): And so all Israel shall be saved. . . . Meaning not the mystical spiritual Israel of God, consisting both of Jews and Gentiles, who shall appear to be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation, when all God’s elect among the latter are gathered in, which is the sense many give into; but the people of the Jews, the generality of them, the body of that nation, called “the fullness” of them, Romans 11:12, and relates to the latter day, when a nation of them shall be born again at once; . . . when they as a body, even the far greater part of them that shall be in being, shall return and seek the Lord their God, and David their King; shall acknowledge Jesus to be the true Messiah, and shall look to him, believe on him, and be saved by him from wrath to come.

Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758): . . . the Jews in all their dispersions shall cast away their old infidelity, and shall have their hearts wonderfully changed, and abhor themselves for their past unbelief and obstinacy. They shall flow together to the blessed Jesus, penitently, humbly, and joyfully owning him as their glorious King and only Savior, and shall with all their hearts, as one heart and voice, declare his praises unto other nations. . . . Nothing is more certainly foretold than this national conversion of the Jews in Romans 11.

Charles Hodge (1797–1878): The second great event, which, according to the common faith of the Church, is to precede the second advent of Christ, is the national conversion of the Jews. . . . The restoration of the Jews to the privileges of God’s people is included in the ancient predictions and promises made respecting them. . . . The future restoration of the Jews is, in itself, a more probable event than the introduction of the Gentiles into the church of God.

Robert Murray M’Cheyne (1813–1843): Converted Israel . . . will give life to the dead world. . . . just as we have found, among the parched hills of Judah, that the evening dew, coming silently down, gave life to every plant, making the grass to spring and the flowers to put forth their sweetest fragrance, so shall converted Israel be when they come as dew upon a dead, dry world. The remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from the Lord, as the showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men.

John Braidwood (early 19th century): Viewed nationally, the Jews are the most miserable of all nations. The Messiah wept over Jerusalem, their capital, before the curse fell on it: ought not we to weep over the accumulated progressive woe springing from the curse, and drinking up the nation’s spirit for eighteen centuries? . . . Their covenant prospects are bright beyond all conception. On the grand day of their realization, will anyone of us all regret that we pitied Israel apostate and outcast?

J.C. Ryle (1816–1900): It always seemed to me that as we take literally the texts foretelling that the walls of Babylon shall be cast down, so we ought to take literally the texts foretelling that the walls of Zion shall be built up—that as according to prophecy the Jews were literally scattered, so according to prophecy the Jews will be literally gathered—and that as the least and minutest predictions were made good on the subject of our Lord’s coming to suffer, so the minutest predictions shall be made good which describe our Lord’s coming to reign. And I have long felt

it is one of the greatest shortcomings of the Church of Christ that we ministers do not preach enough about this advent of Christ, and that private believers do not think enough about it.

Charles Spurgeon (1834–1892): I think we do not attach sufficient importance to the restoration of the Jews. We do not think enough of it. But certainly, if there is anything promised in the Bible it is this.

(Spurgeon again): The day shall yet come when the Jews, who were the first Apostles to the Gentiles, the first missionaries to us, who were far off, shall be gathered in again. Until that shall be, the fullness of the Churches' glory can never come. Matchless benefits to the world are bound up with the restoration of Israel; their gathering in shall be as life from the dead.

Gerhardus Vos (1862–1949): . . . with respect to national privilege, while temporarily abolished now that its purpose has been fulfilled, there still remains reserved for the future a certain fulfillment of the national elective promise. Israel in its racial capacity will again in the future be visited by the saving grace of God [Rom. 11.2, 12, 25]. (Source: *Biblical Theology, Old and New Testaments*, 79.)

John Murray (1898–1975): If we keep in mind the theme of this chapter [Rom. 11] and the sustained emphasis on the restoration of Israel, there is no other alternative than to conclude that the proposition, ‘all Israel shall be saved’ is to be interpreted in terms of the fullness, the receiving, the in-grafting of Israel as a people, the restoration of Israel to gospel favor and blessing and the correlative turning of Israel from unbelief to faith and repentance. . . . In a word, it is the salvation of the mass of Israel that the apostle [Paul] affirms. . . .

. . . it does not follow that Israel no longer fulfills any particular design in the realization of God’s worldwide saving purpose. . . Israel are both “enemies” and “beloved” at the same time, enemies as regards the gospel, beloved as regards the election. . . “Beloved” thus means that God has not suspended or rescinded his relation to Israel as his chosen people in terms of the covenants made with their fathers.

Jürgen Moltmann (1926–Present): There can be no question of God’s having finally rejected the people of his choice—he would then have to reject his own election (11.29). . . . Israel’s promises remain Israel’s promises. They have not been transferred to the church. Nor does the church push Israel out of its place in the divine history. In the perspective of the gospel, Israel has by no means become ‘like all the nations.’

William Hendrickson (20th century): God did not then, does not now, and never will completely reject Israel. . . . “All Israel” indicates the mass of Jews living on earth in the end-time. The full number of elect Gentiles will be gathered in. After that the mass of the Jews–Israel on a large scale–will be saved. This will happen just previous to, or at the very moment of, Christ’s Return.

R.C. Sproul (1939–Present): **And so all Israel will be saved.** The context indicates that Paul must be speaking of the Jewish people. He does not mean every Jew that ever lived, but the nation of Israel. Now why do I say that ‘Israel’ in this phrase refers to the Jews? All through his discussion Paul is talking about Israel in part: part of Israel has been blinded, part of Israel has

been cut away, part of Israel has been stubborn, part of Israel has been excluded from the kingdom of God and its blessings. The Jews as a people are presently under judgment. But as there was a national judgment, so there will be a national restoration. Their rejection, even though it was a national rejection, did not include the rejection of every individual. So the restoration doesn't necessarily mean that every individual Jew will be saved, but the nation as a nation will be restored to God.

I remember sitting on my porch in Boston in 1967, and watching on television the Jewish soldiers coming into Jerusalem, dropping their weapons and rushing to the Wailing Wall, and weeping and weeping. Immediately I telephoned one of my dear friends, a professor of Old Testament theology, who does not believe that modern day Israel has any significance whatsoever. I asked him, 'What do you think now? From 70 AD until 1967, almost 1900 years, Jerusalem has been under the domination and control of Gentiles, and now the Jews have recaptured the city of Jerusalem. Jesus said that Jerusalem will be trodden under foot by the Gentiles, until the fullness of the Gentiles be fulfilled. What's the significance of that?' He replied, 'I am going to have to rethink this situation.' It was indeed startling.

Floyd E. Hamilton in *The Basis of Millennial Faith*, p. 38 (pub. 1942): Now we must frankly admit that a literal interpretation of the Old Testament prophecies gives us just such a picture of an earthly reign of the Messiah as the premillennialist picture. That was the kind of a Messianic kingdom that the Jews of the time of Christ were looking for, on the basis of a literal interpretation of the Old Testament promises (p. 38).

William Masselink, *Why Thousand Years*, p. 31 (pub. 1930): If all prophecy must be interpreted in a literal way, the Chilastic views are correct; but if it can be proved that these prophecies have a spiritual meaning, then Chiliasm must be rejected.

Kim Riddlebarger (from his blog): We cannot repeat the mistakes of the prior generations of amillennarians (such as Bavinck and Berkhof) who both said one of the sure signs that dispensationalism was false was that the dispensationalists kept predicting that Israel will become a nation. As we all know, Israel became a sovereign nation in 1948 despite Berkhof's and Bavinck's views to the contrary.

{ LECTURE 16 }

THE CHURCH AND THE MIDDLE AGES (PART 2)
Key Figures and Events from the Fifth to Fifteenth Centuries

* * * * *

V. **The Iconoclast Controversy Erupts in the East** (730–842)

- Debate broke out in the Eastern Church over the use of icons (images that depicted Christ and other biblical saints); those who endorsed the use of icons were known as *iconodules* while those who opposed the use of icons were *iconoclasts*
- As the use of icons became more and more prevalent, controversy erupted as to their use; for example, in 695 the Byzantine emperor Justinian II minted gold coins with the face of Christ on them
- The iconoclast controversy was, in large part, an extension of the Chalcedonian debate regarding the nature of Christ.
 - The iconoclasts were convinced that the two natures of Christ could not be adequately represented in an image, sculpture, or painting. To make an icon was to only represent his human side, and thus separate the human from the divine. Thus, they asserted that icons should be rejected. This was all the more true, they believed, because the Second Commandment forbids the use of images, and the Old Testament forbids any worship of idols.
 - The iconodules, on the other hand, believed that the incarnation superseded the Second Commandment, since Jesus Christ is the image of the invisible God. Moreover, they argued that the icons were not idols (which are physical representations of false gods) since icons represent actual people.
- Around 730, Emperor Leo III ordered that an icon of Christ (which was prominently featured at the entrance to the palace of Constantinople) be replaced with a simple cross. Part of his motivation seems to have been superstitious—Leo thought some of his recent military setbacks may have come from an overemphasis on the veneration of icons throughout the empire.



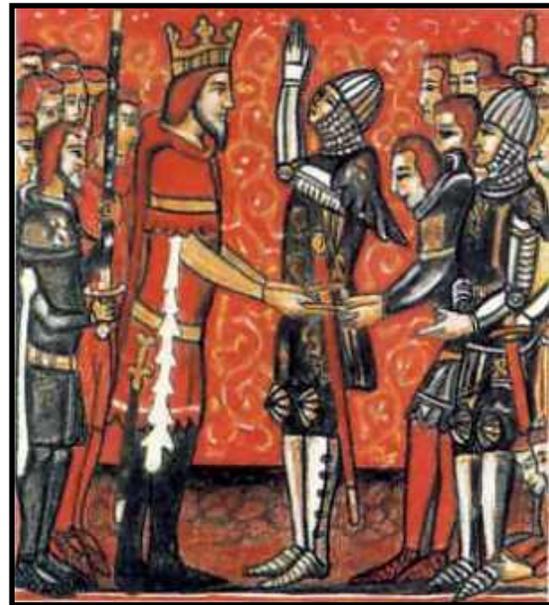
- A ban was placed on icons and Germanus I, the Patriarch of Constantinople, lost his position. When news of this reached the West, Pope Gregory III condemned Leo's actions.
- When Leo died in 740, his son Constantine V (741–775) established the iconoclast position as dogma at the Council of Hieria in 754. Constantine actively worked to rid the empire of icons and many were destroyed.
- Against Constantine's policies, an underground movement of iconodules began to grow, of whom the most prominent voice was John of Damascus (a Syrian monk whose writings remain very influential in modern Eastern Orthodox circles)
- Constantine's son, Leo IV (775–780) continued his father's iconoclastic policies. However, his wife Irene was secretly an iconodule. When Leo IV died, she became a co-regent with their son Constantine VI.
- Irene organized a new church council, known as the Second Council of Nicea (787) which overturned the ruling of the Council of Hieria and took the title, "The Seventh Ecumenical Council." The Eastern Orthodox Church considers this to be the last ecumenical church council. The Roman Catholic Church also participated in the council (Pope Adrian I sent two legates to represent him), and therefore recognizes the council as ecumenical.
- But the iconoclasts were not done. In 814, emperor Leo V again reinstated a ban on icons (probably again motivated by military interests—fearing divine displeasure for excessive veneration to icons). Soon appeals were being made to the iconoclast council of 754.
- Leo was succeeded by his son, Michael II, and grandson, Theophilus. When Theophilus died in 842, his wife Theodora became co-regent with their son Michael III. In 843, Theodora had icons restored in the empire (following in the footsteps of Irene from fifty years earlier).
- Icons have featured as a primary part of Eastern Orthodox theology and practice ever since.

VI. **The Western Church Crowns a Holy Roman Emperor** (Charlemagne [742–814])

- While the Eastern Church was arguing about icons, the Western Church was making official inroads with the Franks.
- By the late 6th century, Francia had emerged as a powerful kingdom in what had once been part of the Western Roman Empire

- In 687, a man named Pippin of Herstal became the sole governor of the Franks (under the token reign of the Merovingian kings)
- Pippin’s son, Charles Martel, succeeded him as the governor. Charles is best remembered for defeating Muslim forces in 732 at the Battle of Tours (and thus halting the advance of Islam into Europe)
- Charles’s two sons (Carloman and Pippin the Short) succeeded him in governing the Frankish kingdom. When Carloman stepped down from his post, Pippin the Short was anointed King of the Franks in 754.
- Thus, the Merovingian dynasty ended and the Carolingian dynasty (named for Charles Martel) began. The transition was supported by both Pope Zachary and Pope Stephen II after him.

- Charlemagne, the oldest son of Pippin the Short, began his reign in 768. He co-ruled the empire with his brother Carloman until 771 when his brother died.



- In 772, Pope Hadrian demanded that the Lombards give certain lands back to the papacy. The Lombards refused and began to take Papal lands. Their armies headed for Rome.
- The pope appealed to Charlemagne who brought his armies to the pope’s defense. The Lombards were defeated
- In 799, Pope Leo III was run out of Rome; he came to Charlemagne and convinced the Frankish king to bring him back to Rome and restore him; after being restored in December, 800, Leo crowned Charlemagne the “Emperor of the Romans” on Christmas Day
- This was considered a major offense by the Byzantine rulers, who considered themselves to be the true rulers of the Roman Empire. Charlemagne, for his part, sent ambassadors to Constantinople to propose marriage to Irene, but the people of Constantinople would not allow it.
- Charlemagne spent most of his reign at war, expanding the territories of the Frankish Empire, and converting many of the Germanic tribes to Nicene Christianity.

- Charlemagne’s reign ushered in a renaissance of sorts, as the learning of the monasteries made its way into the Frankish culture.

Christopher Catherwood: One of the major legacies of North African Christianity remains with us, although now in the twenty-first century this phenomenon has begun a sharp decline. This is monasticism.

The notion of living cut off from the rest of the world, in isolation from it, was unknown to the early church and indeed contradicts Scripture since Christians are supposed to be salt and light in the communities in which God has placed them. . . . Historians differ as to when monasticism began, but most of them think it was around the fourth century, in northern Africa. Monasticism had been practiced in Asia for a long time—Buddhist monasteries date back for centuries, for example, and similar eastern imports include the halo around the heads of saints in pictures, which is also Buddhist in origin.

Initially the movement began with hermits living on their own in the desert. These include Anthony (256–356) and Simon Stylites (c. 390–456) who became famous for his unusual lifestyle of living on the top of a pillar.

Monasticism as we know it probably started around 320 with a community in the Egyptian desert founded by Pachomius, who lived about 290–346. This community became distinguished when the great Bible translator Jerome translated its rules into Latin. Bible memorization was compulsory to gain entrance, and anyone illiterate wishing to join was taught to read and write.

We must as Protestants be fair to some of monasticism’s greatest achievements. The monks were careful to preserve the written Word of God, and we owe the survival of countless collections of Scripture to the monks who did so much to perpetuate them and protect them, especially in the West, from marauding pagan invaders.

When the barbarian invasions came at the end of the Roman Empire in the west (and those of Islam two centuries later), it was often the libraries of the great monasteries that helped preserve not just the Scriptures but Western civilization itself. This was especially so in Europe, as all other forms of knowledge, especially secular, had been utterly destroyed. The achievement of Martin of Tours (who died in 397) in bringing the monastic movement to the West is therefore historically very important, as monks preserved literacy at a time when the invaders were illiterate.

By 800 and the accession to the new Holy Roman Emperor of its first ruler, Charlemagne, the preservation in monasteries of so much learning created a major outpouring of knowledge, usually described as the Carolingian Renaissance. Countless documents from Roman times were rediscovered, and it is more than likely that many monasteries had actually preserved the Latin originals, which were then copied en masse and distributed throughout the empire. (*Church History: A Crash Course for the Curious* [Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2007], 70–72.)

- How are evangelicals to assess this period of Christian development?

Christopher Catherwood: In western and central Europe, the great edifice of Roman power collapsed, with nothing solid to succeed it until 800. In that year the ruler of the Franks, Charles the Great (*Carolus Magnus* in Latin; Charlemagne), declared himself to be Holy Roman Emperor, a title that was to last for over a thousand years, down to 1806.

One key point needs to be made for us as evangelical Christians: do we believe that no one was saved, born again, and went to heaven in that thousand-year period? . . . [I]t is important to contemplate this theologically. We rightly revere, look back to, and defend the Reformation. But in so doing we need to be careful about saying that there were no Christians over so long a prior time frame. Surely we cannot say that whatever the doctrinal quirks of the medieval church, and we will not deny them, no one was redeemed for over a millennium.

What secular historians call Late Antiquity—the time between the fall of Rome [in 476] and the origins of the Holy Roman Empire—was a period of slow but steady conversions as pagan peoples heard the gospel for the first time and became Christians. We have looked at some of this already in considering how England became Christian, and the same gradual process took place in other parts of western Europe as well. . . . Brave monks would venture into the great forests, some would be martyred, and others proved successful, with one of the biggest tribes, the Franks, converting around 496.

When we talk of peoples becoming Christian, we need to recall that similar large-scale conversions of people groups still occur, often now in less developed parts of the world. We may feel more comfortable with individual conversions, and one does wonder at the authenticity of so many in a single ethnic or similar group professing faith simultaneously. Yet it does seem that such things can be genuine if God is truly behind them.

Also growing rapidly at this time was the power of the Bishop of Rome, the Pope, since it was his office that was the one major remnant from the days of the Roman Empire, along with the order and stability that empire brought with it. Now that western Europe was cut off politically, culturally, and increasingly theologically from the other powerful centers of ancient Christianity, those who deemed themselves the Pope's equals were far removed, and the Pope's power in western Europe grew accordingly. (*Church History: A Crash Course for the Curious* [Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2007], 59–61.)

VII. **The Papacy Grows More and More Corrupt** (800–1000)

(Note: These notes adapted from Professor Stitzinger's class syllabus)

- Adrian I (772–795)
 - He ruled over a state church and was first to be called Holy Father
 - He taught Nepotism (the giving of authority to own relatives.) He tried to put his own cousins into office.

- Leo III (795–816)
 - He succeeded Adrian. Upon coming to the office, he made an allegiance with Charlemagne (742-814, Emperor in Rome) by sending him the keys to Peter's tomb.
 - In 799, followers of Adrian met Leo in the streets of Rome and assaulted him with the goal of depriving him of his eyes and tongue.
 - Leo III fled to Charlemagne who reinstated him in Rome.
 - Charlemagne (immoral man) then came to pray before Peter's altar of prayer.
 - In December 800, Leo III crowned Charlemagne with the imperial crown.
 - This marks the unofficial beginning of the Holy Roman Empire; the actual beginning of the Holy Roman Empire came in 962, with Otto I (the Great) of Germany, being crowned by Pope John XII as emperor.
 - A "Divine Theocracy" between Leo III and Charlemagne
- Paschal I (817–824)
 - He was responsible for murdering 2 officers to get elected.
 - No investigation was allowed because the "Pope has power over souls of men."
- Adrian II (867–872)
 - The Pope has an illegitimate son from the wife of Legate Eleutherius.
 - Legate Eleutherius stole the pope's daughter (40 year old maid). He later murdered the pope's wife and daughter.
- Others:
 - Stephen VII (896–897), lasted 2 years and then was murdered by John IX.
 - John IX (898–900), lasted 2 years and then was killed by Leo V.
 - Leo V (903), lasted 2 months and then was murdered by Christophocus.
 - Christophocus (903–904), became pope for one year and then was deposed.

- Sergius III (904–911), killed Christophocus and was pope for 7 years.
- John XIV (983–984), was murdered. The 10th century was the darkest of Dark Ages.
- Summary
 - The papacy was totally degraded from 880–1000. This was one of the most barbaric periods in history with 30 popes reigning, many of them for less than 3 years each.
 - From the time of Martin II (882–884) on, the papacy became the “bone of contention among rival factions.” Popes murdered each other. Leo V (903) reigned two months and was murdered by his chaplain.

VIII. **The Church of the Roman Empire Officially Splits in Two** (1054)

- History
 - The Eastern and Western Church had experienced tension and distancing for some time (in part due to various theological disputes and a difference in language—the East spoke Greek, the West spoke Latin)
 - In 1054, tensions reached their height between Pope Leo IX and Patriarch Michael Cerularius of Constantinople.
 - Leo sent delegates to Constantinople demanding that Cerularius recognize the Church of Rome as the head of all the churches. Cerularius refused.
 - As a result, Cardinal Humbert (the leader of the Roman delegation) excommunicated the Patriarch. In turn, the Patriarch excommunicated the Roman legates.
 - These events are generally regarded as constituting the Great Schism between the East and the West. However, when Western Crusaders besieged and sacked Constantinople in 1204, the breach became irreparable.
 - Still, there were attempts at reunification, in 1274 at the Second Council of Lyon and in 1439 at the Council of Florence. When Constantinople fell to the Turks in 1453 attempts at reunification ended, at least until modern times.
 - Major theological divisions center on the *Filioque* Clause and papal authority

Four Distinct Emphases in Eastern Orthodoxy
(adapted from an audio lecture by Dr. David Calhoun)

- In the West, there is an emphasis on sin, grace, justification, salvation, and the sacraments.
 - In the East, the emphasis is on different distinctives.
1. Mystery (*apothaticism*)
 - An emphasis on negative theology, the shadow rather than the light; though there is revelation, there is also mystery.
 - The Eastern Church celebrates, emphasizes and adores the mystery. The Western Church is always trying to understand the problem; the Eastern Church prefers to maintain the mystery and worship God as a result.
 2. Tradition
 - In the Western Church, the Reformation eventually questions the church's emphasis on tradition.
 - In the Eastern Church, there has never been a check placed on tradition.
 - In the East, tradition is considered the witness of the Spirit. (The Eastern Church believes the Spirit inspired the Seven Ecumenical Councils, such that the miracle of Pentecost occurred again at each of those councils.)
 - Thus, the Ecumenical Councils are considered to be on par with Scripture. To change the confessions of these Councils is viewed with the same concern as changing the Scripture. In the Eastern mind, there is no such thing as *sola Scriptura* (or a closed canon) because God continues to speak through the church.
 3. Theosis
 - This is a Greek term referring to “deification” and is really the summary of Eastern Orthodox understanding of salvation
 - Sinful man is changed to become “like God”
 - This concept is often expressed more strongly than this: God became man so that man might become God
 - Western theologians are uncomfortable with the strong expressions of this idea in Eastern theology—because the language is suggestive of heresy; in the West, the mystics use similar language and are accused of pantheism
 4. Icons
 - Images of Christ and the saints are present everywhere as objects of veneration
 - The Eastern Church generally portrays Christ in His power (as the King and Judge), whereas the West generally portrays Him suffering on the cross
 - The use of icons caused great controversy in the East in the 8th and 9th centuries

{ LECTURE 17 }

THE CHURCH AND THE MIDDLE AGES (PART 3)
Key Figures and Events from the Fifth to Fifteenth Centuries

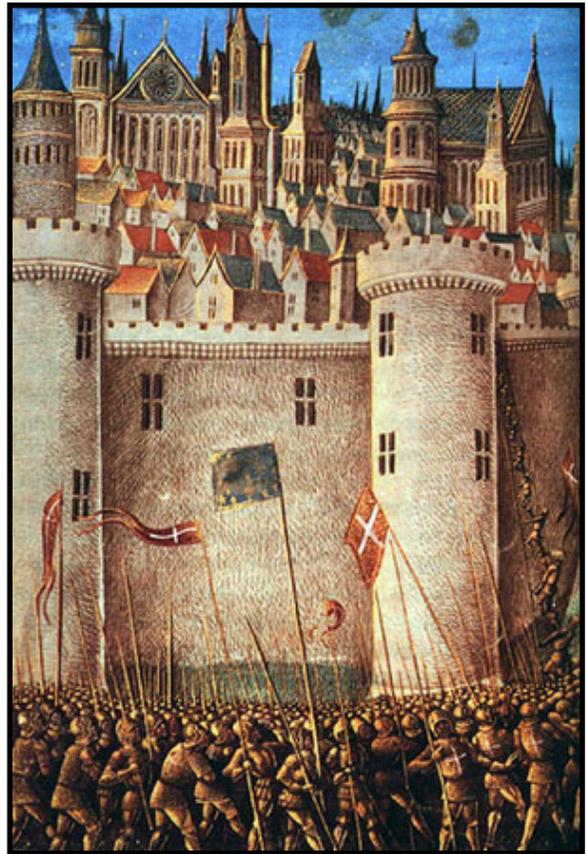
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IX. **The Crusades attempt to Reconquer the Holy Land** (1095–1291)

(Portions of these notes adapted from Prof. Stitzinger's notes and David Highfield's class project).

• Overview:

- A series of Military expeditions to recover the Holy Land from the Moslems.
- The Crusades began in 1095 at the Council of Clermont and continued until the fall of Acre in 1291.
- The first crusade was largely the effort of Pope Urban II who urged the Frankish nobles to recover Jerusalem from the Muslims. Godfrey of Bouillon, began in 1095 and made it to Jerusalem in 1099, overcoming strong Turkish opposition.
- The second crusade lasted from 1147–48 and was motivated by Bernard of Clairvaux, recapturing Edessa from the Turks.
- The third Crusade lasted from 1189–92 and retook Jerusalem.
- The fourth Crusade was motivated by Innocent III in 1200–1204 and resulted in the barbaric sacking of Constantinople and amounted to "Christians against Christians."
- The children's Crusade of 1212 resulted in thousands of children from France and Germany being sold into slavery or slaughtered.
- The fifth Crusade of 1219-1221 was launched against Egypt resulted in the taking of Damietta.



- The sixth Crusade occurred in 1229 and resulted in the Frederick II taking Jerusalem for the last time which he held until 1244.
- The seventh Crusade occurred in 1248 under Louis IX of France and resulted in his defeat in Egypt.
- The Turks (Muslims) continued to drive the Franks from the East until the battle of Tripoli in 1289 and Acre in 1291. The Ottoman Turks continued in strength for many years. The Crusades produced hatred of Christians by Muslims and ended in the Turks having advances in the East.
- Holy War:
 - By the beginning of the second millennium, Christians in Western Europe were eager to retake lands that had been lost to the Muslims—especially the Holy Land
 - The concept of “holy war” is a Muslim concept; yet the Christians soon found themselves willing to adopt it in their efforts to fight fire with fire

Christopher Tylerman: Bernard [abbot of Clairvaux], in his recruiting preaching and letters for the Second Crusade in 1146–7, showed intimate knowledge of the New Testament, not least the Epistles of St Paul. The Apostle was fond of martial metaphors, but his message was wholly contrary to the abbot of Clairvaux’s. . . . What may appear today to many Christians and perhaps most non-Christians as an irreconcilable paradox between holy war and the doctrines of peace and forgiveness proclaimed in the Lord’s Prayer, the Sermon on the Mount and many other Gospel passages has not always been so obvious or recognized. This was certainly the case in educated circles around Urban II at the end of the eleventh century. (*God’s War: A New History of the Crusades*, p. 28)

- The Catholic Church at this time taught that NT passages related to peace and forgiveness were to be applied at a personal level, and not to the public as a whole. Thus, it was not inconsistent (from their perspective) for individual Christians to be called to show love to others while simultaneously issuing a public call to arms against their national and religious enemies.
- Seeing themselves as the new Israel, they looked to OT passages in which God commissioned Israel to fight, finding justification there for their military endeavors
- The concept of the “Just War” had a long history in Christianity, going back to the time of Augustine (finding its origins with Constantine). Augustine’s four-fold requirements for a just war were (1) a just cause; (2) a defensive battle (or a battle to regain what had been lost); (3) sanctioned by a legitimate authority; (4) fought by those who have right motives

- Holy war was given more credibility when war heroes such as Clovis the Frank (c. 500 AD); Oswald king of Northumbria (c. 635); and Charlemagne (d. 814) became Christians.
- Increasing invasions by “pagans and infidels” against a “Holy Roman Empire” called for men to fight for Christendom.
 - Christendom was threatened in the last few centuries of the first millennium by Muslims, Vikings and Magyars, thus giving more impetus for holy war.
 - In the fighting against the physical enemies of Christendom, the distinction was further blurred between the spiritual battle and the physical.
- Such factors set the stage for the Crusades

The First Crusade (1095–1099)

- **The Byzantine Empire calls for help**
 - Jerusalem and much of the world was under the control of Muslims for hundreds of years. The Jews and Christians in Jerusalem were allowed to worship freely and go about their business without hindrance.
 - It wasn't until the more brutal Seljuk Turks (Muslims, also known as Abbasid) gained possession of Palestine, and started to persecute the Jews and Christians there, that Europe started taking an interest in responding to the Muslims.
 - When the Seljuk Turks started threatening the security of the Byzantium, Alexius, the emperor at Constantinople called for aid from Pope Urban II.

The Oxford History of Islam, 337: Many complex factors went into the call of Pope Urban II for a crusade against the Muslims, who since 638 had occupied Jerusalem. For more than four centuries Christians had been allowed to practice their religion freely in that city. In 1076, however, Jerusalem was taken by the Seljuk Turks, who were said to have desecrated the holy places of Christianity and treated the Christian population with brutality. Pilgrims returning from Jerusalem brought sad news of their fellow Christians there. Although the notion of avenging these wrongs and regaining the holy city for Christianity had been seeping into western consciousness for some time, it was not until the preaching of such monks as Peter the Hermit of Amiens that popular opinion began to rise in support of such an effort. Encouraged by an appeal for assistance from the emperor Alexis I in Constantinople, Pope Urban II promised his help and sent out the call for the first crusade. At the Council of Clermont in 1095 the Pope was greeted with great enthusiasm when he called for an international crusade to recapture Jerusalem from the infidels.

The Crusades⁴²¹

CRUSADE	DATES	CHIEF MOTIVATORS	NOTABLE PARTICIPANTS	GOAL	RESULTS
FIRST CRUSADE	1095-1099	Urban II Peter the Hermit	Walter the Penniless Peter the Hermit Raymund of Toulouse Godfrey Tancred Robert of Normandy	Liberate Jerusalem from the Turks.	Peter the Hermit led a horde of peasants toward the Holy Land but most died or were slaughtered en route. Crusaders captured Nicea, Antioch, Edessa, Jerusalem; established feudal Crusader kingdoms.
SECOND CRUSADE	1147-1148	Bernard of Clairvaux Eugene III	Konrad III Louis VII	Retake Edessa from Turks.	Mistrust between Western Crusaders and Eastern guides led to decimation of Crusader army; attempt to take Damascus failed.
THIRD CRUSADE	1189-1192	Alexander III	Frederick Barbarossa Philip Augustus Richard I	Retake Jerusalem from Saladin and the Saracens.	Frederick drowned; Philip returned home; Richard captured Acre and Joppa, made treaty with Saladin, and was captured and imprisoned in Austria on the way home
FOURTH CRUSADE	1200-1204	Innocent II	Thibaut of Champagne Louis of Blois Baldwin of Flanders Simon de Montfort Enrico Dandolo	Undermine Saracen power by invading Egypt.	Christian city of Zara was sacked to repay Venice for transportation; for this the Crusaders were excommunicated; they then sacked Constantinople.
CHILDREN'S CRUSADE	1212	Nicholas of Cologne Stephen of Cloyes		Supernatural conquest of Holy Land by "the pure in heart."	Most of the children were drowned at sea, sold into slavery, or slaughtered.
FIFTH CRUSADE	1219-1221	Honorius II	William of Holland John of Brienne	Undermine Saracen power by invading Egypt.	Crusaders succeeded in taking Damietta in Egypt, but soon lost it again.
SIXTH CRUSADE	1229		Frederick II	Regain Jerusalem.	Crusaders made treaty with Sultan, giving Frederick control of Jerusalem; Frederick was excommunicated for this.
SEVENTH CRUSADE	1248		Louis IX	Relief of Holy Land through invasion of Egypt.	Crusaders were defeated in Egypt.

⁴²¹ Robert C. Walton, *Chronological and Background Charts of Church History* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2005), chart number 38.

- **Rome Answers**

- Pope Urban II initiated a church council in Clermont in 1095 and preached a sermon in which he called on “Frankish knights to vow to march to the East with the twin aims of freeing Christians from the yoke of Islamic rule and liberating the tomb of Christ, the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, from Muslim control.” (Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Crusades* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1995], 1.)
- Urban II was more interested in getting the holy places back from the Muslims than he was of rescuing the eastern empire from the Turks.
- Thanks to the preaching of such preachers as Peter the Hermit and Walter the Penniless, many peasants received this call with enthusiasm.
- When they had arrived to help in Constantinople, they were then sent to Asia Minor where they were decimated, and those remaining were taken captive by the Turks or sold into slavery.
- When the Pope called for a response, he promised those who were killed in this service to God would be remitted from all of their sins. This was naturally met with great enthusiasm and multitudes left on the crusades, including many nobles, and even some wives.
- Once this second wave of crusaders arrived at Constantinople, some of the leaders met with Alexius. Alexius offered material support in return for the commitment of the crusading army to be his vassals, which was accepted.

- **Battles**

- Nicea
 - The Crusaders first captured this city, which was the capital of the Seljuk sultan, Kilij Arslan.
 - Siege lasted more than seven weeks.
- Dorylaeum
 - This second defeat of Arslan opened the way to Antioch.
 - This defeat was less than a month after the defeat in Nicea.
- Antioch
 - This next siege lasted from October 1097 to June 1098.

- They defeated the Turks after a stalemate by treachery. A Muslim named Firuz, collaborated with Bohemund of the Crusaders and left his towers that he was in command of vulnerable so that they could get into the city.
- At the capture of Antioch, news of another Muslim army had reached the Crusaders, causing great fear.
- In Antioch a poor pilgrim named Peter Bartholomew had arrived with a vision that he had. He said that Saint Andrew appeared to him in a vision and urged him to go to the cathedral of Saint Peter (in Antioch) and there he would find, buried underground, the holy lance that pierced the side of Jesus Christ.
 - Relics were supposed to be body parts (teeth, bones, etc) of saints, and in the case of Jesus Christ (who obviously had no body parts left on earth after the resurrection) it was those things that had touched his body (such as the lance that pierced his side, the cross he was nailed to, the cup that he used at the last supper).
 - Relics were thought to bring power to the Crusaders as an act of divine help from God. The True Cross, which was supposed to be a piece of the cross that Jesus was crucified on, was one such relic.
- Peter Bartholomew supposedly unearthed this lance which had a tremendous impact on the Crusaders' morale:

Christopher Tylerman: The discovery transformed the army's mood from terrified inertia to awed encouragement, allowing the leaders to organize a military breakout with some prospect of success, further celestial sightings accompanying the preparations for battle hardly coincidentally containing saintly instructions to further penance and military discipline. (*God's War: A New History of the Crusades*, p. 144)

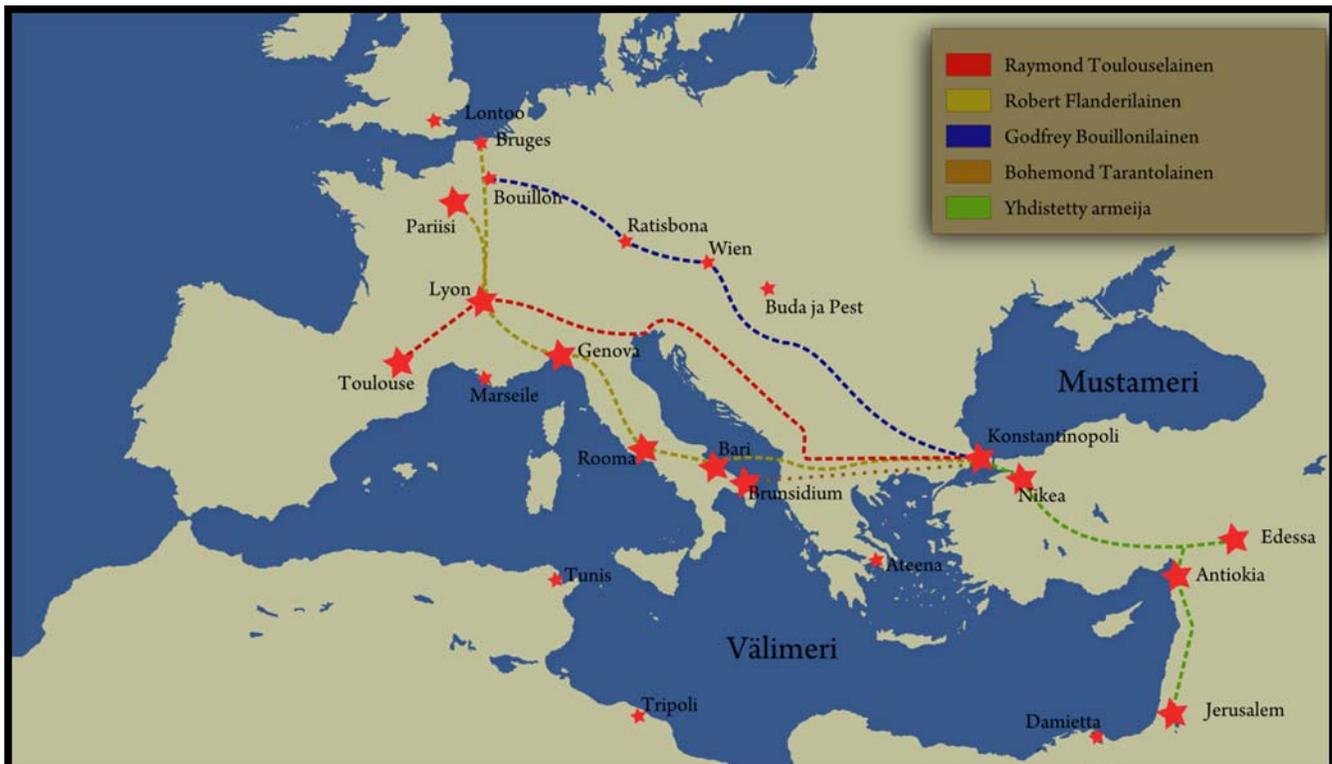
- As a result of the moral change, the Crusader army was able to fight off the Turkish army.
- Ma'arrat an-nu'man
 - This was a city fortress that was not a large city, but nonetheless was made famous by what happened there.
 - Upon entering the conquered city the Crusaders massacred the inhabitants, which one specialist on Arab historians notes was more than 100,000 people. (Francesco Gabrieli, *Arab Historians of the Crusades* [New York: Dorset Press, 1989], 9)
 - There were also reports of cannibalism that occurred here.

- o Jerusalem

- June 9, 1099 marked the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem. After a little more than a month, on July 15, 1099, the final assault occurred.
- After they breached the walls, they continued to slaughter the Muslims in the city.

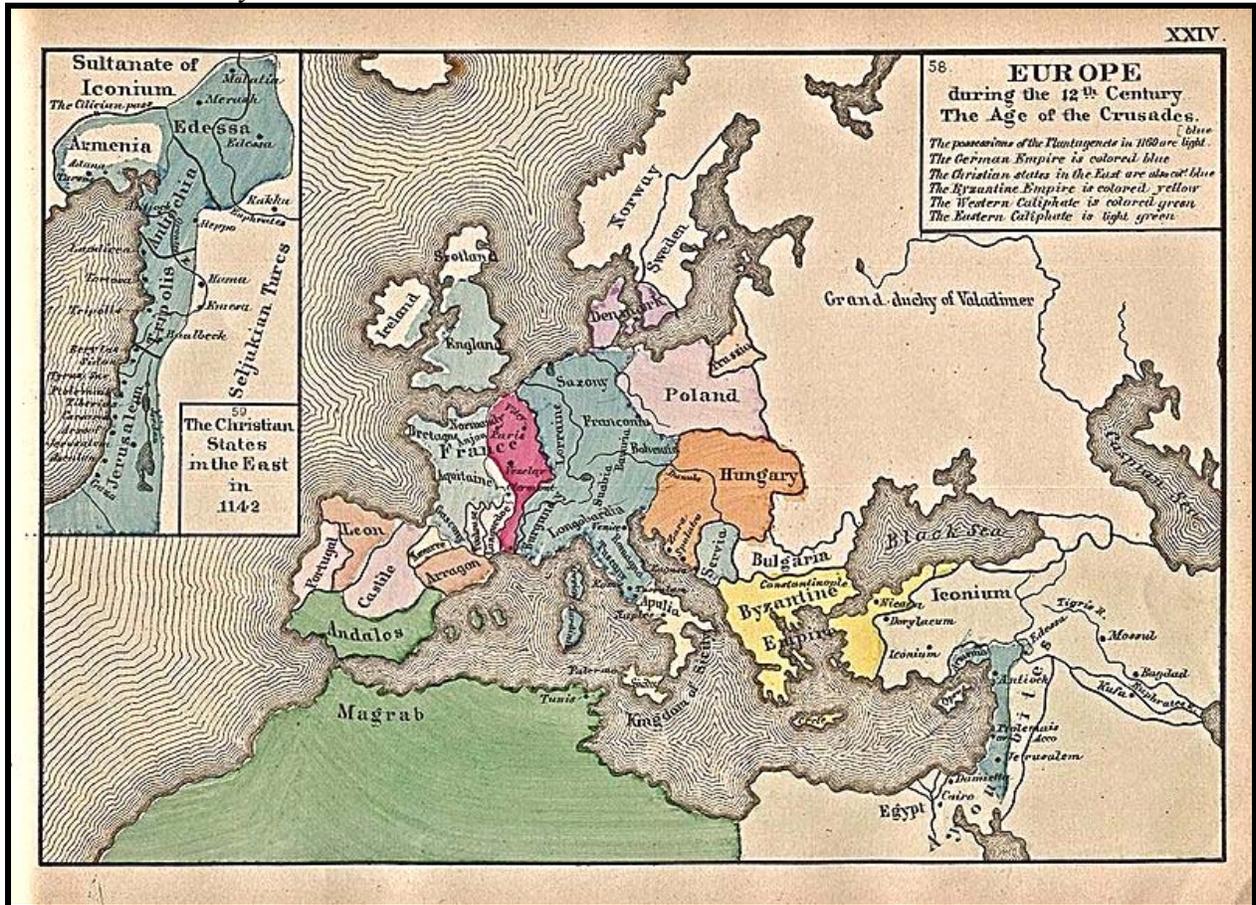
Anonymous: Then our men held a council, and gave out that everyone should give alms and pray that God would choose whom he wished to reign over the others and rule the city. They further gave orders that all the dead Saracens should be cast out on account of the terrible stench; because nearly the whole city was crammed with their bodies. The Saracens who were still alive dragged the dead ones out in front of the gates, and made huge piles of them, as big as houses. Such a slaughter of pagans no one has ever seen or heard of; the pyres they made were like pyramids. (Secondary source, cited in *Life During the Crusades*, p.60)

- After eight days, Godfrey of Buillon is elected as Guardian of Jerusalem, having refused to take the title of king.



The Second Crusade (1147–1148)

The First crusade had been a war that was victorious against all odds. This only confirmed in the minds of the westerners that this was indeed a holy war, commanded by God Himself. After the first crusade, the Muslims struck back by taking back Edessa. The second crusade was launched in confidence that God would give them victory against the Muslims again. This time, Kings would lead the way.



- This was a collaborative effort by Conrad III, the emperor of Germany, and Louis VII, the king of France.
- They took separate routs to get to Jerusalem and had a great loss of men.
- Damascus
 - At Damascus the combined army attacked to try to obtain a crucial point on the map, which would effectively split the Muslim territory.
 - The assault was an abysmal failure and after four days they withdrew.

Sibt ibn al-Jauzi: The Franks had with them a great Priest with a long beard, whose teachings they obeyed. [During] the siege of Damascus he mounted his ass, hung a cross around his neck, took two more in his hand and hung another

round the ass's neck. He had the Testaments and the crosses and the Holy Scriptures set before him and assembled the army in his presence; the only ones to remain behind were those guarding the tents. Then he said: "The Messiah has promised me that today I shall wipe out the city." At this moment the Muslims opened the city gates and in the name of Islam charged as one man into the face of death. Never, in pagan times or since the coming of Islam, was there a day like this. One of the men of Damascus militia reached the Priest, who was fighting in the front line, struck his head from his body and killed his ass too. As the whole Muslim army bore down upon them the Franks turned and fled. (Cited in *Life During the Crusades*, p.61)

The Third Crusade (1189-1192)

In a meteoric rise to power, Saladin became the sole leader of the Muslims, through a series of battles with other leaders, as well as some timely deaths of others. In October of 1187, Jerusalem fell to Saladin and his army. This crusade is also known as the King's Crusade because of the men who led the way.

Leadership

- Frederick I was the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, and led the way.
 - On his way to Jerusalem he had a freak accident crossing a river and drowned, sending his troops back home.
- Richard I, king of England.
 - He was a younger man who had already been an accomplished war general. Earned the nickname "the Lion Heart." He sold much land to raise resources for the crusade.
- Philip Augustus, king of France.
 - Got into an argument with Richard and went home.
- Saladin, sultan of Egypt.
 - He stands alone in history as the man who united the Muslim world.
 - He was very religious and united the Muslims under a banner of Jihad to conquer the infidels who had taken their land (and who had turned the Dome of the Rock into a stable, thus desecrating one of their holiest sites).

The Battles

- Battle of Hattin (Before the Third Crusade)

- In this important battle, Saladin had drawn out the Crusader army led by Guy, who was the King in Jerusalem, and Reynald one of his leaders.
- This was a response to attacks on caravans that had been led by Reynald.
- In this battle the Crusader army was drawn out near the Sea of Galilee, where the dehydrated army was held off from the water source by Saladin's army.
- Saladin's army showered the Crusaders with arrows and burned their lungs with brush fires, making the inability to get to water worse.
- The Crusader army was defeated, Reynald beheaded, King Guy taken prisoner and the relic of the True Cross captured.



Christopher Tylerman: Before these final moments, Frankish morale was destroyed by the capture of the relic of the True Cross and the death of its bearer, the bishop of Acre. This relic, discovered in the days after the capture of Jerusalem in July 1099, had regularly been carried into battle by the Jerusalem Franks as a totem of God's support and promise of victory. Its loss, even more than the defeat itself, resonated throughout Christendom, raising the military disaster into a spiritual catastrophe. (*God's War: A New History of the Crusades*, p. 371)

Acre

- Saladin had released King Guy because he felt he was no longer a threat to him.
- King Guy amassed a large army and went to lay hold of Acre, which was a strategic seaport for an assault on Jerusalem.

- After a long drawn out siege, Guy's army was exhausted and was losing hope. That is when he received reinforcements by way of King Richard's army.
- Six weeks after Richard arrived, the city surrendered.

Jerusalem

- King Richard marched on Jerusalem, but never sacked it. He made a treaty with Saladin to restore access for the pilgrims back to Jerusalem.

Military Orders

- One of the remarkable things from the Crusades is that from it emerges military orders that have been given approval by the Pope. These military orders were often the most feared warriors of the crusading armies. So important were they that when Saladin had captured them at Hattin, he had all of them executed. Here are some of the orders that were created as a result of the Crusades.
- **The Templars (The Knights of the Temple)**
 - Named for the headquarters where they met—supposedly the location of Solomon's Temple
 - They took on monastic vows of poverty, obedience to the church, and chastity.
 - Group of knights who protected pilgrims on the way from Jerusalem to Jericho.
 - In 1124 the Catholic Church officially established them as a military-religious order—the first order of warrior-monks.
 - Of these knights, **Bernard of Clairvaux** writes:

First of all, there is discipline and unqualified obedience. Everybody comes and goes according to the will of the commander. Everybody wears the dresses given to him, and no one goes in search for food or garments according to his whims. They live in a community, soberly and in joy, without wife or children. And to reach evangelical perfection, they live in the same house, in the same manner, without calling anything their own, solicitous to preserve the unity of spirit in the bond of peace.

Impudent words, senseless occupations, immoderate laughter, whispering or even suppressed giggling are unknown. They have a horror of chess and dice; they hate hunting; they don't even enjoy the flight of the falcon. They despise mimes, jugglers, story-tellers, dirty songs, performances of buffoons—all these they regard as vanities and inane follies. They cut their hair short because they know it is shameful for a man to wear it long. Never overdressed, they bathe

rarely and are dirty and hirsute, tanned by the coat of mail and the sun. (Cited in *Knights of Christ*, pp. 5-6)

- In battle they had to follow certain rules as well.
 - Must fight to the death for the holy places of Christendom.
 - Refuse to be ransomed if defeated.
 - Must accept every combat, regardless of the odds.
 - Refuse quarter or ransom to the infidels.
 - Must defend any Christian molested by the infidel.
- Their order became very wealthy. By the second half of the 12th century they were one of the leading landowners in Syria and Palestine.
- Created banking network where money could be deposited in a preceptory in Europe and then a withdrawal could be made in Palestine.
- In the middle of the 13th century, they began to fight with the Hospitallers. Because of competition in orders, they had declining military power, though still had immense wealth.
- They eventually became a scapegoat for the inefficiency of the Crusades. In 1312 the order was suppressed and their resources were given to the Knights of St John.

The Hospitallers (The Knights of St John)

- Formerly Benedictine monks who administered care in Jerusalem.
- Given a great deal of resources by Godfrey of Bouillon, guardian of Jerusalem.
- Established as a monastic order for their role in protecting pilgrims going to and from the sea and Jerusalem, however they could only act in defense (unlike the Templars).
- Built a network of hospitals throughout the Holy Land.
- In 1206 the need was recognized for military provisions and they were then made into a military order.
- After conflict with the Templars they went into a decline. Their headquarters in Krak des Chevaliers was taken.

- After their decline and loss of their headquarters, they shifted their military focus to the sea, becoming a naval force. They continued fighting naval battles until 1798 when they surrendered their headquarters of Malta to Napoleon.

The Teutonic Knights

- Germanic order established during the Fourth Crusade.
- They were hospitallers who served the German contingent.
- They were recognized in 1199 by Pope Innocent as an official military Order.
- They had amassed great wealth as well—enough to fund their own crusade—but had no land in the Holy Land because it had already been granted to the Templars and Hospitallers.
 - Because of this they retained their national identity.
- After this they became involved in the Prussian crusades, which is described as such:

Terence Wise: The fighting was ferocious and merciless, fought over an almost impenetrable wilderness of sand dunes, lakes, rivers, bogs and dense dark forests along the shores of the Baltic. In this gloomy and mysterious world of the heathen tribes ambushes were the normal way of fighting, and prisoners were subjected to frightful tortures in pagan rites. (*Knights of Christ*, p. 20)

- They received the same accusations that the Templars had received because of the failure of the Crusades, but were able to still concentrate on the Prussian Crusades.
- They were split into three distinct groups, Germany, Prussian and Livonia.
- After jealousy of their accumulated wealth had caused them to have many enemies, and then the subsequent attacks by them, the Teutonic Knights lost their military strength.
- The German order survived in both Germany and Austria into the 20th century, perhaps even involved in an assassination attempt on Hitler.

The Fourth Crusade (1202–1204)

- Initiated by Pope Innocent III as an attempt to attack Muslim strongholds in the Holy Land by sailing across the Mediterranean and coming up through Egypt.
- But the Crusaders lacked the money necessary to pay for the fleet, and were quickly sidetracked

- When the deposed Byzantine emperor, Alexius Angellus, offered the Crusaders large sums of money, soldiers, and ships if they would restore his father (Isaac II) to power, the Crusaders accepted his offer
- The Crusaders expected to be welcomed when they returned to the city with Alexius, but instead they were resisted and openly scorned by the city's inhabitants
- When the usurper (also known as Alexius) mismanaged his own troops during the siege, the population of Constantinople turned against him and he fled the city; Isaac II was restored to power and Alexius Angellus was also made emperor, being known as Alexius IV
- Because Constantinople at this time was in financial and political turmoil, Alexius IV was not able to immediately pay the Crusaders what he had promised them; so he asked them to help him for another six months while he acquired the necessary funds
- During this time, Alexius became very unpopular, because the inhabitants of Constantinople saw him as allying himself with the Latin armies of the Crusaders; which was something that they resented
- As a result of his unpopularity, Alexius IV was murdered by a usurper named Murtzuphlos who took the name Alexius V. He refused to pay the crusaders anything, and organized his armies to attack them.
- In retaliation, the crusaders besieged the city. When Pope Innocent III heard about this, he condemned the action and told the crusaders not to attack the city. But his warnings went unheeded.
- On April 12, 1204 the crusaders took the city and destroyed great portions of it. This marked the final split between the East and the West.



Speros Vryonis: The Latin soldiery subjected the greatest city in Europe to an indescribable sack. For three days they murdered, raped, looted and destroyed on a scale which even the ancient Vandals and Goths would have found unbelievable. Constantinople had become a veritable museum of ancient and Byzantine art, an emporium of such incredible wealth that the Latins were

astounded at the riches they found. Though the Venetians had an appreciation for the art which they discovered (they were themselves semi-Byzantines) and saved much of it, the French and others destroyed indiscriminately, halting to refresh themselves with wine, violation of nuns, and murder of Orthodox clerics. The Crusaders vented their hatred for the Greeks most spectacularly in the desecration of the greatest Church in Christendom. They smashed the silver iconostasis, the icons and the holy books of Hagia Sophia, and seated upon the patriarchal throne a whore who sang coarse songs as they drank wine from the Church's holy vessels. The estrangement of East and West, which had proceeded over the centuries, culminated in the horrible massacre that accompanied the conquest of Constantinople. The Greeks were convinced that even the Turks, had they taken the city, would not have been as cruel as the Latin Christians. The defeat of Byzantium, already in a state of decline, accelerated political degeneration so that the Byzantines eventually became an easy prey to the Turks. The Crusading movement thus resulted, ultimately, in the victory of Islam, a result which was of course the exact opposite of its original intention. (*Byzantium and Europe*, 152)

- After taking the city, the crusaders temporarily divided the Byzantine empire into a number of crusader states.

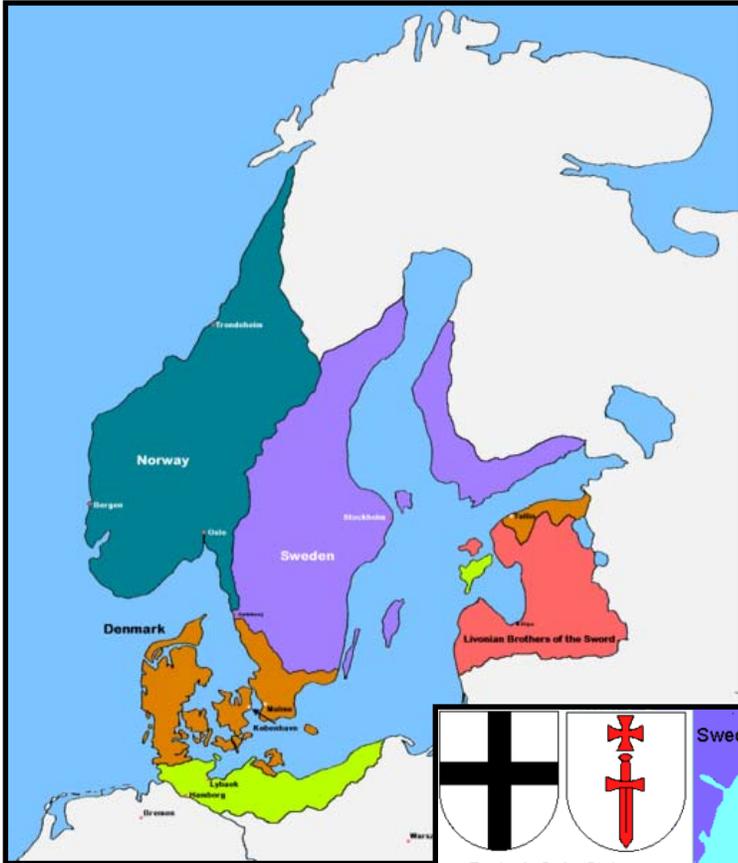


- In 2001, Pope John Paul II officially apologized to Christodoulos, the Orthodox Archbishop of Athens. And in 2004, he apologized to Bartholomew I, the Patriarch of Constantinople.

Other Crusades (1212–1272)

- The so-called “Children’s Crusade” of 1212 may be fictitious. It reportedly involved 37,000 children from France and Germany who went on crusade. None of them reached the Holy Land; they either escaped back home, died, or were enslaved in Egypt and North Africa.

- The Fifth Crusade (1217–1221) was commissioned by the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215. Crusaders from Austria and Hungary were able to capture Damietta, Egypt in 1219. But, when the crusaders decided to attack Cairo in 1221 they were defeated by the Sultan Al-Kamil and forced to surrender.
- The Sixth Crusade (1228–1229), King Frederick II of the Holy Roman Empire made a peace treaty with Al-Kamil which allowed Christians to rule over much of Jerusalem for a period of ten years. In 1244, Muslim forces (unhappy with Al-Kamil's treaty) were able to retake the city.
- The Seventh Crusade (1248–1254) was launched by Louis IX of France in response to the Muslim conquest of Jerusalem (and the Templars) in 1244. The aim of the crusade was to attack Egypt, but it turned out to be a failure.
- The Eighth Crusade (1270) was again organized by Louis IX in an attempt to bring military aid to the crusader states in Syria. But the crusade was diverted to Tunis (in North Africa). Shortly thereafter, Louis IX died and the crusade ended.
- The Ninth Crusade (1271–1272) was led by Edward I of England. Edward had been with Louis IX on the previous crusade. Like the crusades before it, the Ninth Crusade was unable to gain any military ground, and proved to be a failure. It was the last of the Christian crusades in the Middle East.
- By 1291, Muslim forces had completely removed any crusader influence from the Middle East and North Africa. Any gains made by the European Christians in the previous two centuries were finally lost.
- Not only did the Crusades prove to be militarily ineffective, but they also put a major strain on the relationship between Christians and Muslims.
- During this time, there were also a number of military expeditions around the Baltic Sea and into central Europe (in an effort to conquer and Christianize the people there). These crusades are known as the “Northern Crusades” and lasted until the 16th century.
- The maps below shows the results of these crusades on north-western Europe.



{ LECTURE 18 }

THE CHURCH AND THE MIDDLE AGES (PART 4)

X. **Scholasticism and the Rise of the Medieval Universities** (1100–1500)

- “Scholasticism” means “of the school” and refers to the primary form of education in the late medieval period
- It began as an effort to explain how Christian theology and Greek philosophy could be reconciled; thus, it’s main objective was to answer questions and resolve supposed contradictions
- The roots of scholasticism go back to Charlemagne and the Carolingian Renaissance at which times schools were established in abbeys and monasteries
- During the medieval period, the Greek language was no longer spoken in the West; learning Greek became an important part of scholastic training; as a result, many Greek works (such as the Greek church fathers) were translated and began to influence Western thinking and theology
- One early scholastic, during the days of the Carolingian Renaissance, was the Irish scholar Johannes Scotus Eriugena (c. 815–877). At a time when the use of Greek had almost vanished from mainland Europe, Irish scholars (who had a reputation for their extensive educations) became an important influence in the Frankish court.
- In the eleventh century, the major figures in Early Scholasticism include **Anselm of Canterbury** (1033–1109); **Peter Abelard** (1079–1142); and **Peter Lombard** (c. 1100–1160). Anselm is of particular note because of his Satisfaction Theory of the Atonement, which shares some similarities with the Reformation understanding of Substitutionary Atonement (though its emphasis is slightly different than the Calvinistic understanding of penal substitution).
- The medieval education system was based on the “trivium,” consisting of an emphasis on (1) grammar; (2) logic; and (3) rhetoric.
- In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, universities began to develop in the major cities throughout Europe. They started as private institutions but eventually the protection of local civil authorities. The earliest universities in Europe were in Bologna (1088), Oxford (1096), and Paris (1150). Cambridge is the sixth oldest, established in 1209.
- During this time, two new orders of the Catholic Church developed (both of which influenced the scholastic world of their day). The Franciscans (named after Francis of Assisi) tended to focus on the writings of Plato; while the Dominicans (named after

Dominic of Osma) were more interested in the newly discovered writings of Aristotle.

- **Thomas Aquinas** (1225–1274), a Dominican, represents the height of Scholasticism.

- Aquinas was born into a wealthy family in Italy; his uncle was a Benedictine abbot, and the family planned for Thomas to join the Benedictine order
- As a young man, he was sent to the university in Naples, where he became influenced by the Dominicans and decided to join the Dominican order
- His family was distraught by his decision, eventually kidnapping him in an attempt to dissuade him from becoming a Dominican
- After two years at home (and many attempts to persuade him otherwise), they realized that he would not be deterred in his decision



- In 1245, Aquinas went to the University of Paris where he studied theology under **Albertus Magnus** (c. 1193–1280)—who is also considered to be one of the greatest philosophical minds of the Middle Ages. Aquinas later traveled to Cologne with Albertus, where he served as an assistant professor.
- In 1252 he returned to Paris in order to earn his master’s degree. He then served as the regent master in theology from 1256–1259.
- From 1259–1268, Aquinas returned to Italy where he instructed Dominican friars in Orvieto and later in Rome. While in Rome, he began work on his most famous work, the *Summa Theologica*.
- He was sent to Paris by the Dominicans to begin a second term as regent master (from 1269–1272). During this time, a controversy broke out regarding “Averroism” or extreme Aristotelianism. Though Aquinas opposed Averroism, he appreciated Aristotle and attempted to counteract an overreaction by Franciscans like Bonaventure.
- In 1272, he returned to Naples where he was able to complete his *Summa Theologica*. He died a couple years later, while traveling to Rome, in 1274.

- He was named a “saint” by Pope John XXII in 1324.
- Thomas Aquinas was declared a “teacher of the church” at the First Vatican Council in the 1860s. Pope Leo XIII officially noted that Thomistic thought was definitive for Roman Catholic theology in 1879. In 1880, he was made the patron saint of all Catholic universities and places of education.
- In terms of his theological emphasis, Thomas attempted to unite Aristotelianism with Augustinianism. He emphasized the importance of empirical thought, and taught that truth comes to men through reason (general, natural revelation) and faith (special, supernatural revelation). Thus, *faith* and *reason* become the two primary ways through which theology is to be understood.
- From a Protestant perspective, evangelicals today are divided on their opinions of Thomas Aquinas. Some find his approach to be very helpful, especially in the area of Christian philosophy and apologetics. Others consider him much too “Catholic” to be considered a theological ally.

XI. The Papacy of the Late Medieval Period

(Notes for this section adapted from Jim Stitzinger’s class notes.)

- From 1250–1300, there was tremendous fighting between popes and emperors (primarily over whether the church or the state had the right of investiture—the right to appoint bishops). While popes claimed absolute authority, no one had the power of Innocent III (1160–1216). Gregory IX (1148-1248), Innocent V (d 1254), Clement V (1264-1314), fought with the emperors.
- Pride, corruption (absolute power corrupts absolutely), taxation, and church-state issues.
 - Note on taxes received by Rome
 - Indulgences—2/3 went to Rome
 - Simony (From Simon Magus in Acts 8:18-24) acquisition of an office or other spiritual item by remuneration, went to Rome depending on the situation.
 - A tax related to the benefice system (first used in the feudal system for land given in return for service. Religiously it was income, etc, received by the office holder for rendering his duties.

- Annates—“first fruits” –first year’s income in office was paid to the Pope by the bishops, abbots, etc (office holders).
- Reservations—a practice where the richest benefices were reserved for certain cardinals, etc.
- Expectancies—a practice where the nomination was sold by the Pope to the highest bidder.
- All churches paid an annual tax through the diocese to Rome.
- Contributions paid to Rome in return for permission to build a church building.
- Papal fees paid for such things as sacraments, etc.
- Feudal influence produced additional complex taxes:
 - Tribute from secular rulers to the Pope
 - “Peter’s Pence”—collected from every household
 - Protection money paid by monasteries and bishoprics
 - Clergy were severely taxed
- **Babylonian Captivity** (1305–1377)
 - (A term used first by Italian humanist Francesco Petrarch [1304–74])
 - A real dark spot in RCC history. It was a 70 year long period named after the O.T. Captivity of 70 yrs. It lasted from 1305–1377 during which the papal chair was carried away to Avignon, France.
 - When Boniface VIII (1294–1303) took the chair, he still had the power held by Gregory VII, and Innocent III but failed to discern a new spirit of nationalism. Freedom from papal control and independence of trade were suggested.
 - A war broke out between Phillip of France and Edward of England in 1295.
 - Boniface VIII sought to arbitrate—no one would listen to him.

- Boniface VIII retaliated by issuing a papal bull forbidding the collection of money for the church (and the war)
 - Edward I responded by collecting the taxes anyway.
 - Phillip of France (the Fair) cut off sending the Pope his share of the taxes.
 - Boniface VIII issued a bull of excommunication and an interdict:
 - “If the King resisted the pope—he resisted God Himself.”
 - The bull quoted Thomas Aquinas— “We declare, define and affirm that every man must obey the pope or forfeit his salvation.”
 - This had a major impact on the catholic church in France.
 - Phillip seized and confined the pope in prison where he died in 1303.
 - Benedict XI (1303–4) was pope for only 9 months.
 - Clement V (1305–14) moved papal city to Avignon, France. He was French. Phillip died in 1314
 - During the next 70 years, 7 successive popes—all French and weak—failed to move the papacy back to Rome. All were subservient to French interests.
 - It was called the “Babylonian Captivity” because the papacy was in captive hands.
 - Phillip seized the riches of the church's Knights Templar in 1307 and had Clement V abolish the order in 1312.
 - The Babylonian Captivity resulted in (1) the weakening of the papacy against state interests, and (2) a severe conflict over papal power which led to the Papal Schism
- **The Papal Schism** (1378–1417)
 - Urban V (1362–1370) made an unsuccessful attempt to permanently move the papacy back to Rome.
 - Gregory XI (1370-79) put an end to the exile moving the papacy back to Rome.
 - Urban VI (1378-1389) was elected on the grounds that he would move the papacy back to Avignon, but then he refused.

- The French declared Urban VI illegal and elected a Frenchman, Clement VII (1378-1394). For the next 40 years, the RCC had two popes, two colleges of cardinals—each pope anathematizing the other.
- *(The picture below depicts Gregory XI returning from Avignon to Rome.)*



- This state was intolerable so an Ecumenical Council was called at Pisa in 1409:
 - It said the Council was superior to the pope.
 - It deposed both popes and elected a new pope - Alexander VI (1409-1410). He died and was replaced by John XXIII (1410-1415) (same name as pope of 1958!) Now, there are 3 popes all anathematizing each other!
- Council of Constance (1414–1418) ended the Schism
 - Held in Constance, Germany
 - All 3 popes were deposed and Martin V (1417-31) was elected pope by this council. Martin V was the same kind of "operator" the others were. Power was returned to Rome—and the schism healed.
 - No real reforms took place with the Council of Constance although it was the first reforming council.

- Huss: “This council is a scene of foulness, for it is a common saying among the Swiss that a generation will not suffice to cleanse Constance from the sins which the council has committed in this city.”
- Huss was burned at the stake at this council in 1415.

<u>Summary of the Papal Schism</u>		
<u>Rome</u>	<u>Avignon</u>	<u>Council of Pisa</u>
	Urban V (1362–1370)	This council deposed the other two popes (Gregory XII and Benedict XIII) in 1409.
Gregory XI (1370–1378)		
Urban VI (1378–1389)	Clement VII (1378–1394)	
Boniface IX (1389–1404)	Benedict XIII (1394–1423)	Alexander (1409–1410)
Innocent VII (1404–1406)		John XXIII (1410–1415)
Gregory XII (1406–1415)		
<u>Council of Constance</u> (1417) – deposed all three popes and elected Martin V (1417–1431)		

- Council of Basel (1431–1449) was called to deal with the difficulties of Constance
 - It was called by Martin V and lead by Eugenius IV who then became the new Pope that same year (1431).
 - This council at first affirmed the position of Constance and declared that the real authority resides in the General Council and not in the pope.
 - The pope retaliated and declared this decision void and dismissed the council (1436). The Council disregarded the pope’s action and reaffirmed the decrees of Constance on the superiority of a General Council over a pope. This position was widely supported in the Church.
 - Under this pressure, the pope revoked his former position and recognized the Council but continued of oppose its influence over him.

- **Roman Catholic Activity and Theology During the Late Middle Ages**

- **The Inquisitions**

- Historically, the term “inquisition” denoted the juridical persecution of heresy by special ecclesiastical courts.
 - In the days of the fathers, punishment of heresy was excommunication. After Christianity became the state religion, the punishment became confiscation and even death, i.e. Donatism (4th century) and Priscillianism (5th century).
 - This form of persecution continued until the last half of the 12th century and early 13th century when the Church began using secular power in its efforts to put heretics to death. This was especially true of the *Albigenses* which were part of a larger group of objectors known as *Cathari*. This term was used of the Novationists (early) as well as others who objected to Catholic corruption and these people are frequently misrepresented in history.
 - The Inquisitions, proper, began in 1232 with Frederick II, King of Sicily, and crowned by Innocent III. Gregory IX (pope from 1227) made this church policy and appointed papal inquisitors. These were selected from the Dominicans and Franciscans (mendicant orders). Heretics were viewed as a cancer which must be cut out.
 - The procedure was the hunting out of heretics, asking them to confess voluntarily. “Confession” resulted in ordinary penance. If there was no confession, a month of grace was followed by a trial before a jury. The accused was allowed a legal counsel who was not permitted to defend his client but to plead for justice.
 - The accused were imprisoned under severe conditions. After 1252 Innocent IV used torture, confiscation of goods, imprisonment, and death at the stake. These measures were primarily directed against the Albigensians and continued into the 16th century. Political opposition to the Inquisitions was based on selfish motives. Believers also opposed them. Thousands of people died and entire cities were wiped out, especially in France.
 - The Spanish Inquisition, which was instituted at the end of the 15th century, was of different character as it was closely bound up with the state. These trials were set up with Papal approval by Ferdinand V and Isabella in 1479 and were directed against converted Jews. The Inquisition later also aimed at Protestants. These proceedings were extremely intense under Torquemada (1560) and finally abolished by Joseph Bonaparte in 1808. They also reappeared from 1814–1834.
 - The most important works on the Inquisitions include Henry C. Lea, *History of the Inquisition of the Middle Ages* (3 vols.), 1888 and *History of the Inquisitions of Spain* (4 vols.), 1906–07. Lea was a Protestant historian—his works are

Polemical and hostile. Also see Lecler, Joseph *Toleration and the Reformation* (2 vols.), 1960.

Angels

- The RCC doctrine claims to have come from the so-called "writings" of Dionysius the Areopagite.
- They had great imaginations about angels; well developed doctrines and new ideas.
- They said every believer was supervised by angels.
- The Synod of 787 as well as the Council at Trent taught that angels intercede for men and that "it is good and profitable to invoke them suppliantly . . . for the purpose of obtaining benefits from God through His Son Jesus Christ."

Relics

- Early worship of martyrs, saints, e.g. the worship of the bones of Polycarp.
- Examples (taken from Cathcart, *The Papal System*, 282-289)
 - Constantine's mother, Helena, went all over Israel looking for the cross of Christ. She found enough splinters for many crosses.
 - A cross was found in England in 938 with nails
 - Various accounts were given of individuals being raised of the dead
 - Accounts of discovery of the blood of Christ
 - The robe of Christ
- Note on Robe—this robe is commonly identified as the Edessa Mandylion and brought to Constantinople in 944. The later Holy Shroud preserved at Turin since 1578, long venerated as the winding-sheet in which Christ's body was wrapped for burial, cannot be traced before the mid-14th century. (Carbon dating to 1260–1390). This later shroud bears the imprint of the front and back of a human body marked with the traditional stigmata (mark of shame).

- The cradle, piece of Christ's manger.
- The hair of the Virgin Mary.
- Peter's chair and chains.
- Various original body parts including; the head of John the Baptist, an arm of St. Andrew, and a thumb of St. Bartholomew.
- The ashes of the prophet Samuel.
- The remains of Simeon, the pillar saint.
- Note: The dead remains of a saint were more valuable than a live saint. All sorts of items of canonized saints.
- Veneration of relics (worship) is said to be a primitive instinct of a man and has always been a part of pagan religions.

Mary

- Mary is the most popular form of idolatry—the most worshiped of all divines. She is the desire and passion of every unmarried priest.
- This worship began in the 4th century in Arabia.
- Many prayers have been prayed to her as Mary, mediatrix.
- She has been addressed as: "Queen of the Universe", "My Sovereign", "The Hope of Christians", "More Merciful than Jesus"—blasphemous statements of the highest degree. She is a true antichrist. See Cathcart (pp.319-20).
- The immaculate conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary was defined in 1854 by Pius IX but dates to possibly the 7th century and clearly by Trent (1545-63).
- Note on Mary—Mary represents a complete antichrist as everything ascribed to the person and work of Christ in Scripture is ascribed to Mary in the Church (Including virgin birth, sinless life, miraculous deeds, work of redemption, the role of mediator, and more recently Co-Redemptionist). Note the biblical position in Luke 11:27-28 and 1 Tim. 2:5). There is remarkable parallelism between Rome

and Ancient Babylonian Paganism, particularly concerning the veneration of Mary (worship of Venus), Papal worship (worship of Nimrod and his wife), image worship in general, and human mediation. Hislop, in his excellent work, *The Two Babylons*, calls popery simply “baptized Paganism,” seeing its core as Satanic. He concludes that, “Rome is in very deed the Babylon of the Apocalypse; that the essential character of her system, the grand objects of her worship, her festivals, her doctrine and discipline, her rites and ceremonies, her priesthood and their orders, have all been derived from ancient Babylon; and finally, that the Pope himself is truly and properly the lineal representative of Belshazzar.” (p. 3)

Images

- Note: Images (the use of any representation of men, animals, and plants, whether carved or painted) and icons (flat pictures, usually painted in egg tempera on wood, but also wrought in mosaic, ivory, and other materials)
- While early Christian pictures existed in some catacombs (2nd century), there were no images or image worship until the 4th century.
- The Fathers were against image worship; even Augustine, appealing to Old Testament passages; Deut 4:16-18, Ex 20:4
- Due to Greek influence; pictures of Christ, saints, were introduced by stressing the theological significance of the Incarnation where God became visible by taking on human form,
- See earlier notes on the Iconoclastic Controversy in the Eastern Church
- After the Controversy, icons continue as an integral element in Eastern Orthodoxy, both in public and private. These icons, while only in the form of pictures (rare exceptions appear such as crucifix settings with Mary and Joseph) are given a much more important place than in the Western Church. Veneration of images in the Western Church developed more slowly and included statues.
- Both the Eastern and Western Churches used the justification for veneration of Basil’s principle that the honor paid to the image passes on to its prototype, a principle already laid down by Nicea II in 787. This attempt to make a distinction between the worship of images and the adoration of God was also done by Israel with their Golden Calf (Exodus 32:1-5).

The Holy Land and pilgrimages

- Helena, mother of Constantine, is well remembered for her trip to Palestine to be baptized in the Jordan in 325.
- Crusades to the Holy Land – These encouraged these pilgrimages to provide:
 - A more sure chance of salvation.
 - An opportunity to obtain a splinter, water, or piece of earth from the Holy Land (a relic)
- Gregory of Nyssa (330-395) opposed such pilgrimages because of the lack of Scripture and because of much immorality.

Miracles

- The most marvelous legends are told.
 - Alban (AD 303) —Parting of water, eye sockets of the emperor
 - Constantine—saw Christ and was healed of leprosy
 - Donatus—met a dragon and spit in his mouth
- Note on Contemporary Miracles—Contemporary Catholics continue to speak of miracles of great proportions. These include *stigmata* (wounds which appear on the hands, feet, etc); relics (miraculous occurrences occur in connection with these including the location of ancient vials of blood and milk from early saints); and apparitions (visions which are not understood as an article of faith but nevertheless are certain). Many claim present day apparitions along with messages and healings.

Sacraments

- The term is not found in the New Testament.
- The term means a religious rite, regarded as a channel or a means of grace. Sacrament comes from the Latin word for “mystery” and is used to refer to salvation in Christ. Thus, the sacraments are ways by which man can participate in Christ's salvation (the mystery of Christ). A “sacrament has its intended effect

by virtue of its inherent power, independent of the moral character of the priest and of the recipient, provided it is performed in the prescribed manner and with the proper intention and provided that the recipient throw no obstacle in the way.” (Schaff, 4.438)

- Augustine was the first to give a general definition of the sacraments.
- RCC developed this to as high as 30 sacraments by which they could dispense special grace on any occasion.
- By the 13th century—7 sacraments. These were adopted by the Council of Florence in 1439 and confirmed by the Council of Trent in 1545.
 - Baptism—for infants—once baptized always baptized (benefit may be forfeited).
 - Confirmation—closely connected with baptism—a kind of supplement.
 - The Eucharist or Mass as a sacrifice.
 - Penance— (outward acts of self-abasement) for sins after baptism. Involves confession and absolution.
 - Extreme Unction—anoointing with oil in preparation of death—means of departure into the other world. First used as a medical cure—later used in cases of extreme danger.
 - Ordination—for hierarchy—indispensable for the government of the church (once ordained always ordained).
 - Marriage—basis of the family and society. Jealously guarded by the church against abortion, divorce, mixed marriages and marriage of near relatives.
- The Eastern Church also adopted 7 sacraments.
- The Protestant Church limited the sacraments to 2, but continued to call them sacraments. Evangelicals today refer to them as “ordinances” since they were ordained by Christ for the church.

XII. The Eastern Roman Empire Finally Falls (1453)

- The Fourth Crusade (1204) had severely weakened the Byzantine Empire, fracturing it into several Greek states (Nicaea, Epirus, Trebizond). These Greek states allied together against foreign attack, but bickered amongst themselves for control of the Byzantine Empire.
- In 1261, the forces of Nicaea were finally able to retake Constantinople from the Latin government which had been set up there after the Fourth Crusade.
- Over the next two hundred years, the Byzantine Empire faced the threat of invasion from Latin armies (to the west), Serbian and Bulgarian armies (to the north), and Muslim Turkish armies (to the south and east).
- By the early 1400s, almost all of the Byzantine Empire had been lost to the Turks, with the exception of the land immediately around Constantinople and some island fortresses in the Mediterranean. The kingdom of Trebizond also maintained its independence until the 1460s.
- In 1453, Sultan Mehmed II brought a force of around 80,000 troops to take the city (which was defended by 7,000 troops). The siege lasted from April 5 until May 29, when the Muslim armies finally broke through the city's defenses and took the capital.
- Mehmed II allowed the Christians to remain in Constantinople, and even allowed the Patriarch to remain there in the Church of the Holy Apostles. The Hagia Sophia, however, was converted into a mosque.
- Mehmed made Constantinople the capital of his Ottoman Empire. Over the centuries, the name became known as Istanbul.
- The fall of Constantinople marks the end of the Middle Ages for two reasons: (1) it was one of the first times that gun powder and canons were used in warfare; thus it represents the transition to modern warfare; (2) many Greeks fled from Constantinople after its fall and came to Italy. They brought many historic manuscripts and artifacts with them, helping to fuel the Renaissance.
- For some time after this, there were movements in Europe to try and organize a crusade to retake Constantinople. The pope was very much in favor of this.

However, by this time, the power of the papacy had greatly declined. And there were no European monarchs who wanted to support such a crusade. For that reason, the crusade never materialized.



{ ADDENDUM }

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ROME

Romans 11:6 – “But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.”

* The Roman Catholic Church finds itself in the impossible position of advocating a gospel that is both “by grace” and also “on the basis of works.”

The Roman Catholic Position: *salvation is by grace through works (which include faith, the sacraments, and the Ten Commandments); these good works are rewarded with eternal life.*

* * *

- I. Salvation is not by grace through faith alone. It does not come through the imputation of Christ’s righteousness to the sinner.

Council of Trent, Canons on Justification, Canon 9: “If anyone says, that by faith alone the impious is justified . . . let him be anathema.”

Council of Trent, Canon 11: “If anyone says that men are justified either by the sole imputation of the justice of Christ or by the sole remission of sins, excluding grace and charity which is poured into their hearts by the Holy Spirit and inheres in them, or also that the grace which justifies us is only the favor of God, let him be anathema.”

* * *

- II. Good works are necessary for salvation. They are not merely the fruits of salvation, they are actually the root of it. They are meritorious and will be rewarded with eternal life.

Note: Rome attempts to classify these good works as works of grace. It denies that good works are meritorious if they are done apart from the grace of God.

Council of Trent, Canon 1. If anyone says, that man may be justified before God by his own works, whether done through the teaching of human nature, or that of the law, without the grace of God through Jesus Christ; let him be anathema.

But the attention paid to grace is really little more than lip-service. In the end, good works, such as keeping the Ten Commandments, are seen as a condition for receiving eternal life.

Council of Trent, Canon 20. If anyone says, that the man who is justified . . . is not bound to observe the commandments of God and of the Church, but only to believe; as if indeed the Gospel were a bare and absolute promise of eternal life, without the condition of observing the commandments; let him be anathema.

Note: in context, the “commandments” are the Ten Commandments (being so defined in the previous canon.)

Rome further teaches that the believer’s justification (or righteousness before God) is caused and increased by good works.

Council of Trent, Canon 24. If anyone says that the justice [or justification] received is not preserved and also not increased before God through good works but that those works are merely the fruits and signs of justification obtained, but not the cause of the increase, let him be anathema.

Thus, the good works of the believer are meritorious, and contribute to his salvation.

Council of Trent, Canon 32. If anyone says that the good works of the one justified are in such manner the gifts of God that they are not also the good merits of him justified; of that the said justified, by the good works which he performs through the grace of God and the merit of Jesus Christ, whose living member he is, does not truly merit increase of grace, eternal life, and the attainment of that eternal life . . . let him be anathema.

The Catholic Encyclopedia, in an article entitled *Sanctifying Grace*, states that the sinner “is formally justified and made holy by his own personal justice and holiness” such that “over and above faith other acts are necessary for justification” including acts of charity, penance with contrition, and almsgiving.

By trying to hold to both “grace” and “works,” the Catholic Church promotes a gospel that is hopelessly confused and inherently contradictory.

The **Catholic Answers** apologetics website states:

Even though only God’s grace enables us to love others, these acts of love please him, and he promises to reward them with eternal life (Rom. 2:6–7, Gal. 6:6–10). Thus good works are meritorious. When we first come to God in faith, we have nothing in our hands to offer him. Then he gives us grace to obey his commandments in love, and he rewards us with salvation when we offer these acts of love back to him (Rom. 2:6–11, Gal. 6:6–10, Matt. 25:34–40). . . . We do not “earn” our salvation through good works (Eph. 2:8 – 9, Rom. 9:16), but our faith in Christ puts us in a special grace-filled relationship with God so that our obedience and love, combined with our faith, will be rewarded with eternal life (Rom. 2:7, Gal. 6:8–9).

The **Catholic Catechism** teaches:

The Council of Trent teaches that the Ten Commandments are obligatory for Christians and that the justified man is still bound to keep them [fn, Cf. DS 1569–1570]; the Second Vatican Council confirms: “The bishops, successors of the apostles, receive from the Lord . . . the mission of teaching all peoples, and of preaching the Gospel to every creature, so that all men may attain salvation through faith, Baptism and the observance of the Commandments” (P 2068; ellipsis in original)

We can therefore hope in the glory of heaven promised by God to those who love him and do his will. In every circumstance, each one of us should hope, with the grace of God, to persevere 'to the end' and to obtain the joy of heaven, as God's eternal reward for the good works accomplished with the grace of Christ (P 1821).

Moved by the Holy Spirit and by charity, we can then merit for ourselves and for others the graces needed for our sanctification (P 2010)

Roman Catholic theologian, **Ludwig Ott** explains:

The Council of Trent teaches that for the justified eternal life is both a gift or grace promised by God and a reward for his own good works and merits. . . . According to Holy Writ, eternal blessedness in heaven is the reward . . . for good works performed on this earth, and rewards and merit are correlative concepts (Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma* [Rockford: Tan, 1974], 264).

As God’s grace is the presupposition and foundation of (supernatural) good works, by which man merits eternal life, so salutary works are, at the same time gifts of God and meritorious acts of man. . . . By his good works the justified man really acquires a claim to supernatural reward from God. . . . A just man merits for himself through each good work an increase in sanctifying grace, eternal life (if he dies in a state of grace) and an increase of heavenly glory (*Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, 264, 267).

Catholic author **John Hardon** likewise confirms this point of view when he writes:

Habitual or sanctifying grace is a supernatural quality that dwells in the human soul, by which a person shares in the divine nature, becomes a temple of the Holy Spirit, a friend of God, his adopted child, and able to perform actions meriting eternal life (*The Question and Answer Catholic Catechism* [Garden City: Image, 1981], Question #1074).

Are the sacraments necessary for salvation? According to the way God has willed that we be saved the sacraments are necessary for salvation (John Hardon, Question # 1119).

* * *

- III. The act of water baptism brings forgiveness for sins. Any major sins committed after baptism must be paid for (by the sinner) through acts of penance.

Council of Trent, Canon 29. If anyone says, that he, who has fallen after baptism, is not able by the grace of God to rise again; or, that he is able indeed to recover the justice which he has lost, but by faith alone without the sacrament of Penance, contrary to what the holy Roman and universal Church—instructed by Christ and his Apostles—has hitherto professed, observed, and taught; let him be anathema.

The Catholic Catechism: By Baptism all sins are forgiven, original sin and all personal sins, as well as punishment for sin [fn, Cf. Council of Florence (1439): DS 1316]. In those who have been reborn nothing remains that would impede their entry into the Kingdom of God, neither Adam’s sin, nor personal sin nor the consequences of sin, the gravest of which is separation from God (P 1263).

The Catholic Catechism: Christ instituted the sacrament of Penance for all sinful members of his Church: above all for those who, since Baptism, have fallen into grave sin, and have thus lost their baptismal grace and wounded the ecclesial communion. It is to them that the sacrament of Penance offers a new possibility to convert and to recover the grace of justification (P 1446).

The Catholic Catechism: Absolution takes away sin, but it does not remedy all the disorders sin has caused. Raised up from sin, the sinner must still recover his full spiritual health by doing something more to make amends for the sin: he must “make satisfaction for” or “expiate” his sins. This satisfaction is also called “penance” (P 1459).

John Hardon explains: “Penance is . . . necessary because we must expiate and make reparation for the punishment which is due our sins. . . . We make satisfaction for our sins by every good act we perform in the state of grace but especially by prayer, penance and the practice of charity (Question #1320).

* * *

- IV. Sins that are not properly paid for in this life will be purified after death in Purgatory.

Council of Trent, Canon 30: If anyone says that after the reception of the grace of justification the guilt is so remitted and the debt of eternal punishment so blotted out to every repentant sinner, that no debt of temporal punishment remains to be discharged either in this world or in purgatory before the gates of heaven can be opened, let him be anathema.

Handbook for Today's Catholic: “If you die in the love of God but possess any stains of sin, such stains are cleansed away in a purifying process called Purgatory. These stains of sin are primarily the temporal punishment due to venial or mortal sins already forgiven but for which sufficient penance was not done during your lifetime” (p. 47).

The Catholic Catechism says that Purgatory is for “all who die in God's grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation, but after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven” (P 1030).

Pope Paul VI: The doctrine of purgatory clearly demonstrates that even when the guilt of sin has been taken away, punishment for it or the consequences of it may remain to be expiated and cleansed. They often are. In fact, in purgatory the souls of those “who died in the charity of God and truly repentant, but who had not made satisfaction with adequate penance for their sins and omissions” are cleansed after death with punishments designed to purge away their debt. . . . Following in Christ’s steps, those who believe in him have always tried to help one another along the path which leads to the heavenly Father, through prayer, the exchange of spiritual goods and penitential expiation. The more they have been immersed in the fervor of love, the more they have imitated Christ in his sufferings. They have carried their crosses to make expiation for their own sins and the sins of others. They were convinced that they could help their brothers to obtain salvation from God who is the Father of mercies. This is the very ancient dogma called the Communion of Saints. . . . The “treasury of the Church” is the infinite value, which can never be exhausted, which Christ’s merits have before God. They were offered so that the whole of mankind could be set free from sin and attain communion with the Father. In Christ, the Redeemer himself, the satisfactions and merits of his Redemption exist and find their efficacy. This treasury includes as well the prayers and good works of the Blessed Virgin Mary. They are truly immense, unfathomable and even pristine in their value before God. In the treasury, too, are the prayers and good works of all the saints, all those who have followed in the footsteps of Christ the Lord and by his grace have made their lives holy and carried out the mission the Father entrusted to them. In this way they attained their own salvation and at the same time cooperated in saving their brothers in the unity of the Mystical Body. . . . God’s only-begotten Son . . . has won a treasure for the militant Church . . . [H]e has entrusted it to blessed Peter, the key-bearer of heaven, and to his successors who are Christ’s vicars on earth, so that they may distribute it to the faithful for their salvation. They may apply it with mercy for reasonable causes to all who have repented for and have confessed their sins. At times they may remit completely, and at other times only partially, the temporal punishment due to sin in a general as well as in special ways (insofar as they judge it to be fitting in the sight of the Lord). (Paul VI, *Indulgentiarum Doctrina*, January 1, 1967).

This is in direct contrast to biblical teaching about divine forgiveness:

Romans 8:1 – Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

2 Corinthians 5:18–21 – Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was

in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Colossians 2:13–14 – When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

* * *

V. Christ's sacrifice on the cross is repeated every time the Mass is celebrated.

Council of Trent: In this divine sacrifice . . . Christ is contained and immolated in an unbloody manner who once offered himself in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross. . . . This sacrifice is truly propitiatory. . . . If anyone says, that the sacrifice of the mass is only a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving; or that it is a bare commemoration of the sacrifice consummated on the cross, but not a propitiatory sacrifice . . . and that it ought not to be offered for the living and dead for sins, pains, satisfactions and other necessities: let him be anathema (Doctrine on the Sacrifice of the Mass, Canon 3).

John Hardon explains: The Sacrifice of the altar . . . is no mere empty commemoration of the Passion and death of Jesus Christ, but a true and proper act of sacrifice. Christ, the eternal High Priest, in an unbloody way offers himself a most acceptable Victim to the eternal Father as He did upon the Cross. . . . In the Mass, no less than on Calvary, Jesus really offers His life to His heavenly Father. . . . The Mass, therefore, no less than the Cross, is expiatory for sins (John Hardon, Questions #1265, 1269, 1277).

This is in direct contrast to the biblical teaching about Christ's death:

Hebrews 7:26–27: For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.

Hebrews 10:10–14: By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time onward until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet. For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.

* * *

The Biblical Position: Salvation comes through faith alone by grace alone based on the work of Christ alone. (Though good works result from our new birth, they are not the basis of it. Good works are the *fruits* of justification, not the *root* of it.) Here are a few verses to make the point.

Luke 18:9–14 – He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: “Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.’ But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

John 20:31 – These have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.

Acts 16:30 – 31 – After he brought them out, he said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” They said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.”

Romans 4:2–5 – For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness.

Romans 10:9–10 – If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

Ephesians 2:8–10 – For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

Titus 3:4–8 – But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. This is a trustworthy statement; and concerning these things I want you to speak confidently, so that those who have believed God will be careful to engage in good deeds. These things are good and profitable for men.

{ LECTURE 19 }

FORERUNNERS TO THE REFORMATION

* * * * *

Long before Luther nailed his *95 Theses* to the Wittenberg Door, there were those who recognized the corruption within the Roman Catholic Church and the need for major reform. Generally speaking, these men attempted to stay within the Catholic system rather than attempting to leave the church (as the Protestant Reformers later would do).

The Waldensians (1184–1500s)

- Waldo (or **Peter Waldo**) lived from around 1140 to 1218. He was a merchant from Lyon. But after being influenced by the story of the fourth-century Alexius (a Christian who sold all of his belongings in devotion to Christ), Waldo sold his belongings and began a life of radical service to Christ.
- By 1170, Waldo had surrounded himself with a group of followers known as the *Poor of Lyon*, though they would later become known as Waldensians.
- The movement was denied official sanction by the Roman Catholic Church (and condemned at the Third Lateran Council in 1179). Waldo was excommunicated by Pope Lucius III in 1184, and the movement was again condemned at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215.
- Waldensians were, therefore, persecuted by the Roman Catholics as heretics. However, the movement survived (even down to the present) though the Waldensians were often forced into hiding in the Alps.
- The Waldensian movement was characterized by (1) voluntary poverty (though Waldo taught that salvation was not restricted to those who gave up their wealth), (2) lay preaching, and (2) the authority of the Bible (translated in the language of the people) over any other authority. They emphasized the teachings of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, and placed great importance on Bible memorization.



- The Waldensians would eventually join the Reformed branch of the Protestant Reformation. In many ways, their movement was a precursor to the Reformation.

Arnold of Brescia (1100–1155)

- Studied in France under Pierre Abelard
- Taught reform and was ordered to silence by Pope Innocent III
- His written works were burned as heresy
- Espoused radical ideas about apostolic poverty
- Toward the end of his life, became not only a religious reformer but a political reformer as well
- He was hanged and then his body burned in Rome in 1155
- He is considered a rebel by Roman Catholics and an early hero in the Reformation effort by Protestants

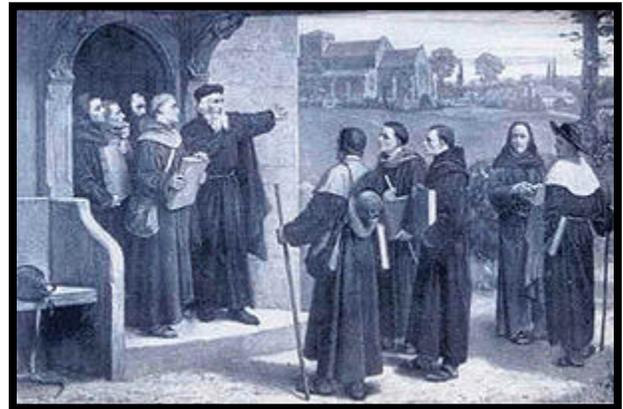
John Wycliffe (1329–1384)

- Known as “the Morning Star of the Reformation”

Christopher Catherwood: Since I have argued that the Reformation was a process, we can now start to look at some of its great precursors, men like John Wycliffe (or Wycliff), who lived in England from 1324–1384 and was for a brief while Vice-Master of Balliol College, Oxford.

Wycliffe never started a new church. But like many of his contemporaries, he realized that the medieval church was going seriously astray. In his case he saw the decadence and corruption of much of the clergy, some of whom were more politicians or major landowners than priests and had mistresses and illegitimate children.

In 1377 Wycliffe got into trouble with the church authorities. Here he was fortunate: he had a political protector in John of Gaunt, a younger son of King



Edward III (and the ancestor of today's British Royal Family). This was crucial since otherwise Wycliffe would have been executed, as Jan Hus would later be. John of Gaunt was no saint, but he did admire Wycliffe, and, as earlier in history, God used an unrighteous man to protect a godly one. (*A Crash Course in History*, 90–91)

- There are a number of different spellings of his last name
- Followers known as Lollards (Oxford scholars who embraced his views and supported him)
- Educated at Oxford University and received his doctorate from there in 1372
- Early advocate for the translation of the Bible into the native languages of laity
- Translated Bible (from Latin Vulgate) into English in 1382
- Also opposed the Roman doctrine of transubstantiation
- Died of a stroke in 1384
- Declared a heretic by the Council of Constance in 1415
- His body was exhumed and burned in 1428
- Taught several important Reformation principles:
 - Affirmed *Sola Scriptura*
 - Opposed the Papacy – Christ is the only Head of the Church
 - Taught that clergy can marry
 - Denied baptismal regeneration
 - Opposed transubstantiation and the mass
 - Opposed crusades, indulgences, and religious orders

B. K. Kuiper: In 1376 he began to criticize the clergy. He said that wealth and political power had so corrupted the Church that a radical reform was necessary. The Church, he said, should return to the poverty and simplicity of apostolic times. The

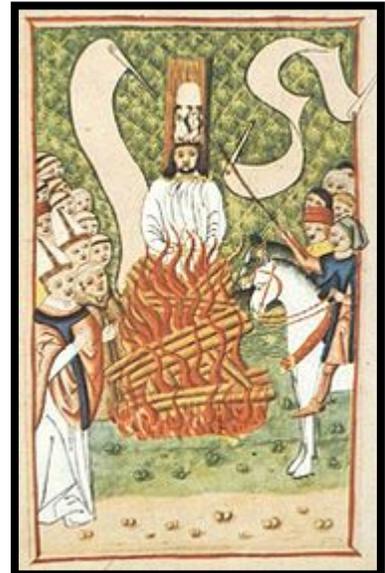
pope he called the antichrist. He declared that the Bible rather than the Church should be the only rule of faith. But the Bible in general use in the Catholic Church was written in Latin and could not be read by the people. . . . In order that Christians in England might be able to read the Bible to themselves, Wycliffe translated it into the English language. (*The Church in History* [Grand Rapids: Christian Schools International, 1964], 143–144)

- Many in Bohemia also embraced Wycliffe’s views (including Jan Hus)

Samuel Parkes Cadman: An Englishman who heard the examination of Hus before the Council of Constance, which condemned and burned him, declared that he thought standing before him “the very Wycliffe.” It required little stretch of imagination to see, looming in the background, the majestic shade of that great Englishman “for whose doctrine Hus went to the stake.” Their memories, with Luther’s, are enshrined in three medallions at the University of Prague, which depict the evolution of Protestantism for a century and a half, from the Anglican Scholastic through the Bohemian martyr to the German Titan. The first shows Wycliffe gleaming sparks from a flint; the second, Hus kindling the coals with the sparks; the third, Luther bearing a blazing torch he has lit at their fires. (*The Three Religious Leaders of Oxford and Their Movements* [Macmillan, 1916], 169)

John Hus (1373–1415)

- Alternate spellings — “Jan Hus” or “John Huss”
- Bohemian reformer; educated at the University of Prague
- Highly respected preacher
- Adopted many of Wycliffe’s views
- Preached against corruption in the Roman Catholic Church and faced tremendous persecution as a result



B. K. Kuiper: When Huss became acquainted with the writings of Wycliffe, he began to preach against the corruption of the clergy. Long before the birth of Huss, strong opposition to the Roman Church had developed in Bohemia. The Waldenses were especially numerous in that country. So the preaching of Huss met with a hearty response among the common people and the nobility. Huss won almost the whole of Bohemia to his views.

Huss taught many ideas which later became the main teachings of the Reformers. He taught that the holy Catholic Church consists of the total number

of the predestinated. He distinguished between being *in* the Church and being *of* the Church. He taught that one could be in the Church and yet not be a real member of it. Of the universal Church Christ alone is head. Popes and cardinals are not necessary to the government of the Church. (pp. 144–145)

- Invited to Council of Constance in 1414 and promised safe passage
- While there he was arrested, tried for heresy, and ultimately burned at the stake
- Huss reportedly prophesied shortly before his death that, “in a hundred years, God will raise up a man whose calls for reform cannot be suppressed.” Other renditions report that he said, “Today you cook a goose [derived from his name, Huss], but in 100 years a swan will rise whom you will not be able to silence.” Luther would nail his *95 Theses* to the church door almost exactly a century later.
- Followers of Huss fall into two categories:
 - Hussites – reactionaries in Moravia and Bohemia who stood courageously against the papacy after Huss’s death (even engaging in armed conflict)
 - Bohemian Brethren – also known as Moravians – followed the principles of Huss; at the outset of the Lutheran Reformation, it is estimated that there were 200,000 Moravians in some 400 parishes
- Here is one of the last letters Huss wrote while in prison:

Letter 50 (to his friends): I have resolved, dear and faithful friends in our Lord, to make known to you in what manner the Council of Constance, swelled with so much pride and avarice, has condemned as heretical my books, written in the Bohemian tongue, without ever having seen or read them, and which it could not have understood, even when it had listened to the reading of them. For this Council is filled with Italians, French, Germans, Spaniards, and persons from all countries, and of every different language. They could not be understood but by Bishop John de Litomissel, by several Bohemians, my enemies, and by a few priests of Prague, who have first to calumniate the truth of God, and afterwards our Bohemia, which I hope is a country of a perfect faith, remarkable for its attachment to the Word of God, as well as for its good morals. And if you had been at Constance you would have witnessed the detestable abomination of this Council, which calls itself infallible and very holy ; an abomination of which, many of the country of the Grisons have said, the city of Constance could not wash herself of in thirty years, and almost everybody, supporting with great difficulty the great corruption, which is to be seen in it, is irritated against the Council. . . . Having said, that, if I had erred, I should be glad to be instructed of my errors : " Since you desire to be instructed," replied the Grand Cardinal, " you must first of all abjure your doctrine, conformable to the sentence of the fifty doctors and interpreters of the Holy Scriptures." An excellent advice! Therefore,

St Catherine should renounce the Word of God and faith in Jesus, because fifty doctors opposed her ! But this sublime virgin did not yield; she remained faithful unto death ; she thus gained over her judges to Christ; but I cannot in the same manner persuade mine ; it is wherefore I have thought fit to write to you, in order you might be informed they have not vanquished me neither by the Scriptures nor by reason, but tried me by terror and by lies to extort an abjuration from me. The God of mercy, whose justice I have glorified, was with me. He is still with me now, and I am confident he will remain with me unto the end.

Written the fourth day after the Festival of John the Baptist, in prison, in chains, and in the expectation of death; and yet I dare not say, on account of the hidden judgment of God, that this letter may be my last; for, even now, the Almighty God may effect my deliverance. (*Letters of John Huss Written During His Exile and Imprisonment*, trans. by Campbell Mackenzie [Edinburgh: William Whyte & Co., 1846], 181–83)

Huss and the Headship of Christ:

- Huss was primarily killed because he taught that Christ alone (and not the pope) is the head of the church.
- The truth that Christ is Lord of His church may sound somewhat benign to a casual listener in our generation, but the struggle for that truth has come to us through the ages on a sea of blood—as the life and death of John Huss so vividly illustrates.
- In his famous book on the church, called *De Ecclesia*, Huss wrote simply, “The pope is not the head nor are the cardinals the whole body of the ... church. For Christ alone is the head of that church.”
- He explained that, where the word of the Pope came into conflict with the Word of Christ, believers were bound to submit to the Scriptures and obey the Lord—for only He is the true King and Ruler.
- Huss’s candor cost him his life. But the flames lit on the day he died would pale in comparison to the fires of Reformation that he sparked.
- A hundred years later, Huss’s writings were discovered by a monk named Martin Luther.
- Emboldened by what he read, and compelled by his study of the Bible, the German Reformer took up the fight for Christ’s honor as true Head of the church.
- As Luther himself explained, “The chief cause that I fell out with the pope was this: the pope boasted that *he* was the head of the church.”
- But, as Luther and the other Reformers examined the New Testament, they became unshakably convinced that Jesus Christ alone is the Lord of the church.

- Three centuries later, the British preacher Charles Spurgeon summed up that Reformation conviction like this:

“The Church of God, in a very special manner, calls Jesus “our Lord,” for there is not, and there cannot be any head of the Church except the Lord Jesus Christ. It is awful blasphemy for any man on earth to call himself Christ's vicar and the head of the church, and it is a usurpation of the crown rights of King Jesus for any king or queen to be called the head of the church, for the true Church of Jesus Christ can have no head but Jesus Christ himself.”

- Like Charles Spurgeon, true believers throughout history have always been characterized by a wholehearted devotion to the church’s true Head, the Lord Jesus Christ.
- John Huss and the Reformers who came after him understood this, which is why they broke away from the corrupt Roman Catholic system.
- The result, in church history, is what we call “the Protestant Reformation.”
- The great doctrines of the Reformation all flow from that steadfast commitment to the lordship of Christ. The Reformers taught that...
- Christ alone is the Head of the church – that truth is encapsulated in the Reformation doctrine of *Solus Christus*, “Christ alone.”
- And since He is the Head of the church, His Word is the final authority in the Church. That is the Reformation doctrine of *Sola Scriptura* or “Scripture alone.”
- And since His Word is the final authority in the church ... then the gospel taught in that Word is the *true* gospel. And the biblical gospel is one of *grace alone* through *faith alone*. Those are the Reformation principles of *sola gratia* and *sola fide*.
- And since the gospel is by grace alone, then all the glory goes to God – which gives us the final Reformation principle of *solus deo Gloria*, “glory to God alone.”
- All of this flows from the fact that Christ alone is the Head of His church.

Girolamo Savonarola (1452–1498)

- Italian reformer; Dominican monk
- Follower of Thomas Aquinas; excellent preacher, settled in Florence
- Denounced worldly and corrupt papacy and was opposed by Pope Alexander VI
- Made major moral reforms in the city of Florence

- In 1498, he was convicted of heresy and hanged and burned

Williston Walker: He began in 1490 to attract huge crowds through his powerful sermons calling for repentance and conversion, and warning, in vague apocalyptic terms, of impending tribulations. The French invasion of 1494, which seemed to confirm the ascetic friar's status as a divinely inspired prophet, led to a popular revolution against the [ruling] Medici, and Savonarola became the de facto ruler of Florence, which he sought to turn into a penitential city. A semimonastic life was adopted by many of its inhabitants. The carnival seasons of 1496 and 1497 witnessed the "burning of vanities": cards, dice, jewelry, cosmetics, wigs, and lewd books and pictures were all consigned to the flames. . . . But he aroused formidable enemies. The adherents of the deposed Medici hated him, and Pope Alexander VI, whose evil character and misrule Savonarola denounced, was an implacable foe, owing not least to the friar's pro-French policy. Papal agents excommunicated him in 1497 and demanded his punishment. Friends sustained him for a while, but the fickle populace turned against him. In April 1498, he was arrested and cruelly tortured, and on May 23 he was hanged and his body burned by the city government. (*A History of the Christian Church*, Fourth Edition [New York: Simon & Schuster, 1985], 398–99).

{ APPENDIX }

KEY EVENTS IN PRE-REFORMATION CHURCH HISTORY

* * * * *

- Several years ago, *Christianity Today* put together a list of 100 Key Events from Church History. These events represent a good, objective list of things evangelical pastors should know about church history.
- Here is what *CT* says about their list:

Imagine for a moment that you are approached by someone largely unfamiliar with the Christian church who asks you what are the most important things that have happened in our history. Excluding any event recorded in the Bible, what would you say? What would you list in your top ten?

We at *Christian History Institute* [*Christianity Today*] have come up with a list of one hundred. . . . Our list leans to Western history because that is what we have the most records on (and face it—for most of its history, Christianity was strongest around the Mediterranean, only moving out in the last five hundred years). Oriental churchgoers, aware of happenings that were never reported in the West, might make quite a different list!

Beyond all that, we suspect that, just as Jesus considered a small coin given by a poor widow far more significant than big donations by the wealthy, so will he rank people, events, and moments high in heaven that have never made it into our church history books.

So how did we generate our less than perfect list? It was based on a survey of Christians from many denominations and a survey of professors of church history.

- Of the 100 events, 46 are from the Pre-Reformation period of the Church. I have omitted 4 (which I did not number due to their relative non-importance) and added an additional 18 (marked with the initials “NB”).

FIRST CENTURY (30–100)

1. **30** – The Church begins on the Day of Pentecost, as recorded in Acts 2 [NB]
2. **49** – The Jerusalem Council settles the Judaizer debate, emphasizing the fact that Gentile Christians are not obligated to keep the Mosaic Law. [NB]
3. **64** – fire ravages Rome. Emperor Nero blames Christians and unleashes persecution.

4. **70** – Titus destroys Jerusalem and its temple. Separation deepens between Christianity and Judaism.
5. **~95** – Clement of Rome writes his *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, urging them to avoid schism and underscoring justification by faith. [NB]
6. **~100** – The Apostle John, the last living Apostle, dies in Ephesus after having been exiled to Patmos. [NB]

SECOND CENTURY (101–200)

7. **~116** – Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, writes seven letters to various churches before being killed as a martyr in the Coliseum in Rome. [NB]
8. **~130** – Papias dies; he was a disciple of the Apostle John and a Premillennialist. His writings, now lost, are partially recorded by Irenaeus and Eusebius of Caesarea. [NB]
9. **~130** – *The Epistle of Barnabas* written by “Barnabas” (not the biblical Barnabas) in Alexandria, Egypt. It is characterized by an allegorical hermeneutic. Other important second-century writings include *The Didache* and *The Shepherd of Hermas*. [NB]
10. **~150** – Justin Martyr writes his *First Apology*, advancing Christian efforts to address competing philosophies.
11. **~156** – Polycarp, an eighty-six-year-old bishop, inspires Christians to stand firm under opposition.
12. **~172** – Tatian dies. His most famous work, the *Diatessaron*, is the earliest known harmony of the four New Testament Gospels. [NB]
13. **177** – Irenaeus becomes bishop of Lyons and combats developing heresies within the Church.
14. **~196** – Colorful and cantankerous Tertullian begins writings that earn him the reputation of being the "Father of Latin Theology."

THIRD CENTURY (201–300)

15. **~205** – The gifted North African Origen begins writing. He headed a noted catechetical school in Alexandria. [A school he inherited from Clement of Alexandria.]
16. **251** – Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, publishes his influential work *Unity of the Church*. He was martyred in 258.

17. **270** – Antony gives away his possessions and begins life as a hermit, a key event in the development of Christian monasticism. [He was one of the first ascetics to go out into the wilderness (in Egypt). His biography, written by Athanasius, helped to make monasticism popular among Christians, especially in the West.]

FOURTH CENTURY (301–400)

18. **303** – The tenth wave of anti-Christian persecution begins under Diocletian. Many Christians gave their lives as martyrs. [NB]
19. **312** – Constantine is converted after seeing a vision of the cross. He becomes a defender and advocate of the oppressed Christians.
20. **325** – The Council of Nicea addresses debates perplexing the Church and defines the doctrine of who Jesus really was. [--namely, that He is of the same substance as the Father]
21. **367** – Athanasius' *Easter Letter* recognizes the New Testament Canon, listing the same books we have now. [Athanasias defended the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity throughout his entire lifetime, enduring multiple exiles for the stand he took.]
22. **379** – Basil dies. He, along with Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa, defended Nicene orthodoxy in Asia Minor at a time when such was unpopular. Together, these three are known as the Cappadocian Fathers. [NB]
23. **380** – Emperor Theodosius I (“the Great”) declares Nicene Christianity to be the official religion of the Roman Empire. The next year he would convene the first Council of Constantinople, which dealt a final blow to Arianism. [NB]
24. **385** – In Milan, Bishop Ambrose defies the Empress, helping establish the precedent of Church confrontation of the state when necessary to protect Christian teaching and oppose the state. [Ambrose was a major influence on Augustine through his preaching.]
25. **387** – Augustine of Hippo is converted. His writings became bedrock for the Middle Ages. The *Confessions* and *City of God* are still read by many.
26. **398** – John Chrysostom, the "golden tongued" preacher is made bishop of Constantinople and leads from there amidst continuing controversies.

FIFTH CENTURY (401–500)

27. **405** – Jerome completes the Latin "Vulgate" version of the Bible that becomes the standard for the next one thousand years.

28. **432** – Patrick goes as a missionary to Ireland—taken there as a teenager as a slave. He returns and leads multitudes of Irish people to the Christian faith.
29. **440** – Leo I (“the Great”) becomes bishop of Rome. Leo did much to consolidate Rome’s political and theological authority. His *Tome* was instrumental in resolving the Christological debate at Chalcedon. [NB]
30. **451** – The Council of Chalcedon confirms orthodox teaching that Jesus was truly God and truly man and existed in one person. [Nestorianism and Eutychianism are both denounced as heresies.]
31. **476** – This is the date that most historians ascribe to the fall of Rome (the western half of the Roman Empire), due to the invasion of barbarian tribes. [NB]

SIXTH CENTURY (501–600)

32. **529** – Benedict of Nursia establishes his monastic order. His “rule” becomes the most influential for centuries of monasticism in the West.
33. **553** – Emperor Justinian I (“the Great”) convenes the Second Council of Constantinople in order to resolve the monophysite/dyophysite controversy. [NB]
34. **563** – Columba goes as a missionary to Scotland. He establishes the legendary monastic mission center at Iona. [Columba had been trained in Ireland; he left there to become a missionary to the “Picts”—the natives of Scotland.]
35. **590** – Gregory becomes Pope Gregory I, known as “the Great.” His leadership significantly advances the development of the papacy and has enormous influence on Europe.
36. **597** – Augustine of Canterbury brings Christianity to the Anglo-Saxons of England. [NB]

SEVENTH CENTURY (601–700)

37. **632** – Muhammad dies in Arabia after founding a new, heretical religion: Islam. [NB]
- 664** – Synod of Whitby determines that the English church will come under the authority of Rome.

EIGHTH CENTURY (701–800)

38. **716** – Boniface, the “Apostle of Germany,” sets out as a missionary to bring the gospel to pagan lands. [He was influential in extending Christianity throughout the Frankish kingdom to other Germanic tribes.]

39. **731** – The "Venerable" Bede completes his careful and influential *Ecclesiastical History* of the English Nation. [For his work, he became known as “The Father of English History.” Much of what we know about Augustine of Canterbury and other missionaries comes from Bede.]
40. **732** – At the Battle of Tours, Charles Martel turns back the Muslim invasion of Europe.
41. **781** – A stone stele dating back to 781 indicates the presence of a strong Christian contingency in China during the Tang dynasty. [NB]
42. **787** – Irene, the widow of Emperor Leo IV, organized the Second Council of Nicea which authorized the use of religious icons in both the Western and Eastern Church. [NB]
43. **800** – Charlemagne crowned emperor by the pope [Leo III] on Christmas. He advances the church, education, and culture.

NINTH CENTURY (801–900)

863 – Cyril and Methodius, Greek brothers, evangelize the Serbs. Cyril develops the Cyrillic alphabet which remains the basis for the Slavonic used in the liturgy of the Russian church.

TENTH CENTURY (901–1000)

909 – A monastery is established at Cluny and becomes a center for reform. By the mid-12th century, there were over 1,000 Cluniac houses.

988 – Conversion of Vladimir, Prince of Kiev, who, after examining several religions, chooses Orthodoxy to unify and guide the Russian people.

ELEVENTH CENTURY (1001–1100)

44. **1054** – The East-West Schism. Brewing for centuries, rupture finally comes to a head with the fissure that has lasted to this day.
45. **1093** – Anselm becomes Archbishop of Canterbury. A devoted monk and outstanding theologian, his *Cur Deus Homo? (Why Did God Become Man?)*, explored the atonement. [He articulated the “satisfaction theory” of the atonement, which is somewhat similar to the “penal substitution” theology of the Reformers.]
46. **1095** – Pope Urban II launches the First Crusade. The crowd wildly shouts "God wills it!" There would be several crusades over the next centuries with many tragic results.

TWELFTH CENTURY (1101–1200)

47. **1115** – Bernard founds the monastery at Clairvaux. He and the monastery become a major center of spiritual and political influence. [Bernard was a major supporter of the Second Crusade and of the Knights Templar.]
48. ~**1150** – Universities of Paris and Oxford are founded and become incubators for renaissance and reformation and precursors for modern educational patterns.
49. **1173** – Peter Waldo founds the Waldensians, a reform movement emphasizing poverty, preaching and the Bible. He and his followers are eventually condemned as heretics and the Waldensians suffer great persecution for centuries.

THIRTEENTH CENTURY (1201–1300)

50. **1206** – Francis of Assisi renounces wealth and goes on to lead a band of poor friars preaching the simple life.
51. **1215** – The Fourth Lateran Council deals with heresy, reaffirms Roman Catholic doctrines and strengthens the authority of the popes. [According to Norm Geisler, it was at this Council that Roman Catholic doctrine became officially apostate. Of course, the seeds of apostasy had been planted centuries before.]
52. **1273** – Thomas Aquinas completes work on *Summa Theologica*, the theological masterpiece of the Middle Ages.

FOURTEENTH CENTURY (1301–1400)

53. **1321** – Dante completes *The Divine Comedy*, the greatest work of Christian literature to emerge from the Middle Ages. [This epic poem gives a first-hand account of Dante's imaginative journey through hell, purgatory, and heaven.]
54. **1378** – Catherine of Siena goes to Rome to help heal the "Great Papal Schism" which had resulted in multiple popes. Partly through her influence, the papacy moves back to Rome from Avignon. [The "Babylonian Captivity" ended at this time when Gregory XI moved the papacy permanently back to Rome.]
55. ~**1380** – John Wycliffe is exiled from Oxford but oversees a translation of the Bible into English. He is later hailed as the "Morning star of the Reformation."

FIFTEENTH CENTURY (1401–1500)

56. **1415** – John Hus, who teaches Wycliffe's ideas in Bohemia, is condemned and burned at the stake by the Council of Constance. [The Council of Constance also put an end to the “Papal Schism” that had begun in 1378.]
57. **1453** – The fall of Constantinople to the Muslim Turks marks the end of the Middle Ages. [NB]
58. **1456** – Johann Gutenberg produces the first printed Bible, and his press becomes a means for dissemination new ideas, catalyzing changes in politics and theology.
59. **1478** – The Spanish Inquisition is established under King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella to oppose "heresy."
60. **1498** – Savonarola, the fiery Dominican reformer of Florence, in Italy, is executed.