Church History

Church in Late Antiquity

(RVS Notes)

National Presbyterian Church
Adult Nurture
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Recommended Texts

- Fairbairn, Donald. *The Global Church: The First Eight Centuries.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2021.
- Gonzalez, Justo. *Story of Christianity, Vol. 1, Revised. The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation.* New York: HarperCollins, 2010.

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To the Council of Chalcedon

*"*But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us." (2 Corinthians 4:7)

The church of Christ in every age, beset by change, but Spirit led,
Must claim and test its heritage and keep on rising from the dead.
Then let the servant church arise, a caring church that longs to be
A partner in Christ's sacrifice and clothed with Christ's humility. (Wareham)

II. Church in Christian Kingdoms and Beyond

A. Roman Empire—Historical Milieu

§1-201. In general—Christianity's journey from persecution under Diocletian (284-305) to toleration under Constantine (306-337) is much more than the inclinations of great men. Beneath the surface, powerful social forces were at work. The Roman Empire, having left its republican roots, had become increasingly autocratic. In becoming a patron of Christianity, it found itself backing a religion with an ambiguous stance towards the use of power. Christianity had flourished as a religious movement during centuries of oppression and persecution. It was a faith committed to peace, nonviolence, and other countercultural values. Now it found itself as the pillar and support of the world's mightiest military and political power.

Christian "conquest"—The 4th and 5th centuries saw the Christian "conquest" of the Empire. The 4th century opened with the Christianity outlawed and hunted and ended with the Christian Emperor Theodosius making Christianity the official religion and outlawing paganism. Christianity became a player in the larger arena with a strong internal organization, an empire-wide system of communication, and an increasing confidence in its moral and intellectual superiority. The late 3rd to the early 5th centuries tells the story of how a persecuted faith became the established religion of the Empire.

Significant developments for the faith included:

- Competing forms of Christianity, Gnostics, Montanists, Manichaeans, Marcionites, Arians, Nestorians, and the Monophysites, made the definition of orthodoxy a priority.
- The Church continued to grow as a hierarchical organization. The idea of the Church as a visible, hierarchal organization was rapidly replacing the idea of the Church as the mystical body of Christ. The power of the monarchial bishop continued to grow and there was a clear rise of the patriarchal sees—Rome, Constantinople, Antioch, Alexandria, and Jerusalem.
- The canon was defined as the source and the measuring stick of the faith.
- Councils answered questions concerning the nature of Christ and the doctrine of the Trinity.

- Significant Church fathers arose in these conflicts—Cappadocians in the East, Jerome, Ambrose, and Augustine in the West.

§1-202. Fourth century—Christianity moved from a position of being politically downtrodden and persecuted to one of influence, preference, and power. However, the fortunes of the faith were closely wed to the precarious position of a crumbling empire. After a respite for several decades, the Germanic migrations resumed. Emperor Valens was crushed by the Goths at Adrianople in 378. This began the final death agony of the Roman Empire as antiquity knew it, stretching out for a century.

§1-203. Fifth century—The Western Empire was overrun by Germanic peoples. The Ostrogoths seized Italy, the Visigoths took Spain, the Franks settled in Gaul, the Burgundians in the Rhone Valley, the Vandals sacked Rome before overrunning North Africa. Many of these Germanic groups had great regard for Roman civilization and institutions and the century saw a cultural blending of Germanic and Latin customs that continued to play out in the early Middle Ages.

§1-204. Roman chronology

Emperors	**Bishops of Rome**	**Authors/documents**	**Events**
Constantine (306-337)	Sylvester (314-335) Marcus (335-336)		Edict of Milan (313) Arian controversy Pachomius' first monastery (324) Council of Nicea (325) Constantinople founded (330)
Constantine II (337-340) Constantius II (337-361) and Constans (337-350)	Julius (337-352) Liberius (352-366)		Arianism dominant
Julian (361-363)			Pagan reaction
Jovian (363-364)			
Valentinian I (364-392)			Eusebius of Caesarea and Athanasius die (373)
Valens (364-378)	Damasus (366-383)		Defeat at Adrianople (378)
Gratian (375-383)			Basil of Caesarea dies (379) Council of Constantinople (381)
Valentinian II (375-392)	Siricius (384-399)		Gregory of Nazianus (389), Gregory of Nyssa (395), Martin of Tours

			(397) and Ambrose (397) die
Theodosius (379-395)			
Maximus (383-388)			
Eugenius (392-394)			
Arcadius (395-408)	Anastasius (399-401)		
Honorius (395-423)			Rome sacked (410)
Theodosius II (408-450)	Zosimus (417-418)		Jerome (420) and Augustine (430) die.

B. Ascendancy of the Faith in an Era of Change

1. Constantine and the Transition to a New Order

§1-211. Diocletian and the reshaping of the Empire—Two key events set the stage for this:

- the worst persecution of Christians Rome ever engaged in;
- the unexpected conversion to Christianity of a Roman emperor.

Great Roman persecution—After Valerian died in 260, Christians enjoyed several decades free of persecution. However, when Diocletian ascended the throne in 284, the atmosphere at court changed. After his coronation as emperor in 284, Diocletian's first act was to leap from the Senate tribunal upon a rival and run him through with a dagger. This no-nonsense soldier turned back the Roman Empire from the abyss of chaos that threatened its utter disintegration.

Diocletian thought that the glory of Rome derived from its faithful worship of pagan gods. He was occupied with foreign wars during the first part of his reign. However, things began to change rapidly. In 299, Christians were expelled from the army. In 302, he began a persecution of the Manichaeans, a heretical sect, and then followed that with a general, Empire-wide persecution of Christians in 303. In this he was egged on by his assistant ruler, Galerius. This persecution was particularly severe in the East.

Imperial politics in Late Empire— Diocletian brought a new shape to imperial politics. In the 3rd century, the Empire suffered severe internal and external threats, particularly between 235 and 284, when it was almost reduced to anarchy. These decades saw continuous contests for imperial power that placed the Empire in a constant state of civil war. There were twenty-seven "regular" emperors during this half century, only one of whom died a natural death. Seventeen were killed by their own troops, two were compelled to commit suicide, and the rest were killed in battle. Ascension to the imperial purple became a death sentence, often a gruesome one. On the borders of the Empire, the Sassanid Empire brought the Persian/Parthian threat in the east to new heights. It reached as far west as Syria in the 250s. The Germanic tribes on the Rhine and Danube began a

series of migrations, which brought increasing pressure on the Empire's northern boundaries. Splinter empires existed for a time in the middle of the third century. Finances were in terrible shape. The spoils of war from new conquests had dried up and the Empire suffered through periods of famine, plague, and monetary inflation.

Diocletian saved Rome by centralizing authority and instituting rigid social and price controls throughout the Empire. The problem of succession, the cause of the incessant, empire-wrecking civil wars, was addressed with the tetrarchy. This was a system of four rulers, two senior Augusti and two junior Caesars, the latter the Augusti's designated heirs. He established a complex bureaucracy to impose control, greatly increased the size of the army, expanded the use of mercenaries and thus breaking the tradition of the citizen army, and raised taxes significantly to pay the immense bill of all these changes. The cult of the emperor and the imperial family was emphasized as the essential religious glue of the Empire. He brought to his rule the ancient premise that unity of religious observance, albeit minimal, was the basis for political unity and stability.

Persecution—Near the end of his reign, he and his fellow emperor Galerius undertook the most violent persecution of Christians (303-311) in antiquity. However, this persecution failed to obliterate the faith and instead garnered sympathy among the pagan populace. It was finally rescinded by Galerius on his deathbed when he issued the Edict of Toleration in 311.

The Dominate—Historians describe the Roman imperial rule in the early Empire as the "principate". The system established by Augustus, though concentrating real power in the emperor, gave the impression of sharing power in numerous ways and administratively relied on private actors. Not so with Diocletian's system. The emperor became an Oriental potentate, and the state bureaucracy developed was quite elaborate. Historians describe his system as the "dominate", a telling moniker for the later Empire.

§1-212. Constantine's rise to power and subsequent career—Son of Constantius Chlorus, a Caesar of the western portion of the Empire, Constantine's rise to absolute power was a slow and deliberate process. Upon the death of his father in 306, Constantine was acclaimed by his troops at York in England as his father's successor. By 308, he had consolidated control over Gaul and Britain. By 309, he added Spain and modern Morocco. In 312, at an opportune time, he attacked and defeated Maxentius and added Italy and North Africa around Carthage. Now Augustus of the West, he was biding his time to claim the sole rule of the Empire. In 314, he seized territory in the Balkans from his co-Augustus and brother-in-law, Licinius. Finally, he defeated Licinius and became sole emperor in 324.

The remaining thirteen years of his reign was a period of prosperity, albeit a mixed one. He fought successfully against the Franks along the Rhine and the Goths on the Danube. He made military reforms of questionable value, often criticized for over-relying on German *cofederati* troops. He stabilized the currency and issued new solid gold coinage, the solidus, which was widely accepted as the commercial coinage of choice for centuries after his death. However, this was made possible by the pillaging of pagan temples,

appropriating and melting down the treasures that generations of people had donated to their gods over the centuries. This despoliation was on a scale akin to that of Henry VIII's seizure of the wealth of the English monasteries in the 1530s.

In founding Constantinople as a "new Rome", probably meaning it to be a complementary eastern capital of the Empire, he showed great foresight. He chose the ancient site of Byzantium, a superb defensive position on the Bosporus Strait. It occupied an area joining Europe and Asia, with easy access by land and water for trade and for military movements. Constantinople prospered tremendously and became a monumental and almost impregnable Christian citadel for the next millennium.

Dressed in the nakedness of the empire—From the outset, Constantine set out to make the city grand, not only in size, but also in grandeur. Jerome would later say that Constantinople was dressed in the nakedness of the rest of the Empire. He engaged in great public works, including the hippodrome, public baths, a grand palace, and replicas of mansions for noble families who agreed to move to Constantinople. To populate the new city, Constantine granted all sorts of breaks, exemptions from taxation, military service, as well as free distributions of food and necessities. The city grew in an incredible manner, so much so that when Emperor Theodosius II undertook to enhance the city's defenses against barbarian inroads in the early fifth century, he had to expand the original walls, which in Constantine's day, seemed ludicrously ambitious.

Builder—Constantine was also an avid builder beyond Constantinople. He built large Christian basilicas through the Empire. His largesse included the old capital of Rome as well. His triumphal arch and magnificent imperial baths graced the city as did several grand palaces. Legend has it that Constantine gave Sylvester I of Rome land and money, which enabled the construction of the first cathedral of St. Peter. All of this was costly, as was the expense of Constantine's court and military needs. The taxes imposed to cover the expense were quite onerous. The effects of Constantine's policies have often been blamed as contributing to the continuing economic contraction of the Empire.

Christianity perhaps changed more dramatically because of Constantine's rise to power than at any other point in history. Constantine's new capital, Constantinople, soon became the epicenter of the Christian world as well as the administrative center of the Roman Empire. Imperial money flowed to the churches, great architectural works and churches were begun, Sunday was given holiday status, Christians were favored in the growing bureaucracy. Being a Christian went from a taboo or worse to a quasi-necessary condition for career advancement. The imperial army now enforced church decisions, which not only allowed believers to flip the script of pagan persecutions but greatly complicated Church-state relations as well as believers' relations with those they disagreed with.

Concluding Reflections—

- ***Sellout of the church to paganism***—Pagans poured into the church en masse in the fourth century, many of whom remained pagan at heart, converting only superficially to Christianity. This was a problem confronting Christian leaders in the fourth century in each of the so called new Christian kingdoms. However,

assertions that the church ceases to be the church when it is supported by the state are just as naive and unhelpful as blanket assertions that church has triumphed when the state affirms it.

- ***Flowering of Christian thought and writing as well as Christian architecture and art.***
- ***Very different impacts outside the Christian kingdoms than inside them***—This was particularly true for believers in Persia and countries east of Rome. The peaceful existence of the Persian church would be shattered not long after Rome's conversion, precisely because of Rome's conversion. The Persian church's situation would change as dramatically as the Roman church's situation, only in the opposite direction.

§1-213. Constantine's conversion and sponsorship of Christianity—Constantine's greatest fame was as the first Christian Roman emperor. Born a pagan and probably a follower of the unconquered Sun in his early years, he appeared to have converted to the Christian faith upon his ascension as Augustus in the West in 312. Legend has it that before the decisive battle of Milvian Bridge, Constantine had a dream that he would conquer using a particular symbol. The labarum, which superimposed the Greek letters chi [**χ**] and rho [**ρ**], the first Greek letters of the name of Christ (χρϊστος), over one another, was placed on his soldiers' shields.

Protector and benefactor—After his victory, he and his co-Augustus Licinius, issued the Edict of Milan (313) allowing freedom of worship to the Christians. Constantine immediately began using his authority to become the protector and benefactor of Christianity. He released Christian prisoners, and brought back banished exiles, and returned seized property. He did more than merely remove impediments. He exempted clergy from taxation, put Christian symbols on coinage, recognized decision by Church officials as valid and binding on Christian communities, allowed the Church to legally inherit and bequeath property, and began the practice of donating pagan temples as Christian sanctuaries. Constantine decisively placed imperial power behind the Church with the clear expectation that the Church would fully support a "Christian" imperial power.

Opportunist or genuine convert?—Constantine's conversion was markedly different than the typical conversions of the day. New Christians at that time were subjected to a long process of discipline and instruction before they were baptized. While there were Christian teachers and ecclesiastics in his entourage, Constantine determined his own religious practices from the outset. He deemed himself a "bishop of external affairs" and even the "thirteenth apostle". He was not baptized until near death and throughout his reign took part in pagan rites as high priest of paganism.

In the campaign against Licinius in 324 to consolidate his sole rule, Constantine posed as the champion of Christianity. He called the Council of Nicaea in 325 to address the Arian controversy and played a significant role at the Council. He put imperial posts at the disposal of traveling bishops. The founding of Constantinople appeared as the creation of a new Christian Rome, a clear attempt to diminish the power of the ancient aristocratic

families in Rome, who were pagan stalwarts. The seeds of later religious distress were sown by Constantine's political decisions.

Many have argued that Constantine was a mere opportunist and used the faith as a new religious glue for the Empire. That he was a shrewd politician who saw Christianity as a tool of policy is undeniable. However, he seems to have been a sincere, if immature, believer with a ready mixture of faith and superstition. Constantine's religious development followed a long, slow process which responded to both the demands of political realities and his own inner development. His reign's movement from ending the persecution of Christians and returning their confiscated property to favoring them in numerous ways both in policy decisions and in bureaucratic representation seems to track the gradual growth of his own faith.

§1-214. Constantine's successors: From the sponsorship of Christianity to its establishment—Below is a diagram of three generations of Constantine's family, key people in the early years of Christian ascendancy.

Helena—----------Constantius Chlorus----------Theodora

Minervina-----Constantine-----Fausta Gala-----Constantius-----Basalina

Crispus Constantine II Gallus Julian
Constantius II
Constans

Resistance to the Christianization—Imperial favor did not mean the Empire immediately embraced Christianity as its official faith. The Arian controversy raged throughout the fourth century and was a political and ecclesiastical quagmire during the reigns of Constantine's sons. In addition, many Romans were dedicated to the old practices, mindsets, and ideals (see §1-306 et seq.). People in rural areas and the intellectual classes were slow to convert to Christianity. This resistance endured for some time. This can be seen in the difficulties Constantine's successors had in imposing Christianity on the populace. The pagan reaction reached its high point in its restoration during the reign of Julian the Apostate (see §1-307).

Establishment of the faith—Succeeding emperors quickly and decisively restored Christian privileges after Julian's reign and continued to chip away at the pagan traditions. The Emperor Gratian (375-383) rejected emperor worship, removed the altar of victory from the Roman forum, discontinued state subsidy for pagan worship, and confiscated temple funds. The final establishment of Christianity as the official state religion occurred under Theodosius I (379-395). In 380, his edict "*On the Catholic Faith*" imposed Christianity on all inhabitants of the Empire. He closed all pagan temples. In 391, he forbade pagan worship. In 392, he declared sacrifice to the pagan gods as high treason, punishable by death. Things had come full circle and the persecuted had become the persecutor.

2. Growth of the Church in a Period of Ascendancy

§1-221. Impact of state sponsorship on the Church—The immediate events after Constantine's victory at Milvian Bridge in 312 signaled a significant change in the Church's public stature. Constantine held a grand feast at state expense for Christian bishops. It was a poignant scene as these suffering saints with their mangled bodies gathered around imperial tables piled high with delicacies of food and drink. The Constantinian era was a dynamic change from its outset.

End of persecution—The persecution of Diocletian and Galerius failed to obliterate the faith and was finally rescinded by Galerius on his deathbed in 311. Constantine's victory at Milvian Bridge and his conversion in 312 brought Christianity into official toleration, declared in the Edict of Milan (313).

Official favor—As time passed, Constantine's stance moved from toleration to favor. He granted to Christian clergy the freedom from taxation that had been the historical privilege of the priests of the old Greco-Roman gods. He ordered that the Christian Sunday should be placed in the same legal position as that of significant pagan feasts. He had his children instructed in the faith, kept bishops in his entourage, and enlarged and built many Christian churches. Christians enjoyed access to influential people, financial support, and buildings from which to operate built by the state at public expense. Many saw these years as the Millennium. The Church had come into its own. It was building basilicas, exercising power, holding councils, and determining policy.

Such favor came at a price. Constantine took an active part in the affairs of the Church and expected the state to control the Church. He saw himself as "bishop of external affairs", having oversight of the Christian Church in same manner that pagan emperors had over the pagan cults. Constantine and his successors treated Christian bishops and clerics like civil servants, the Church grew increasingly paganized with lukewarm or bogus conversions, and Christian leaders openly complained of power politics in the Church.

Growth in numbers and preeminence—Christianity grew from about five to ten percent of the population of the Empire at the beginning of the 4th century to almost fifty percent at the century's end. Constantinople was founded in 330 as a new capital for the now Christian Empire. In 380, Theodosius I made Christianity the official religion of the Empire and outlawed the various sects of paganism.

Impact on worship—Christian worship came out from the underground and was influenced by imperial protocol. Christian minsters dressed in ornate vestments, and incense, originally a sign of respect for the emperor, was increasingly used in worship. An imperial decree ordered the first day of the week to be devoted to worship. Communion tables became altars, the gestures used in worship multiplied, and grand processionals became common. People began to have increased interest in relics. Reverence for martyrs grew and their graves became the destination of pilgrimages.

Impact on instruction and Church membership—People flocked to the Church and the preparatory apparatus was overwhelmed. Training and instruction were dramatically shortened. Many new converts were not entirely sincere and brought with them beliefs that the earlier Church would have considered unacceptable. Syncretism and superstition climbed dramatically as it became fashionable to become a Christian.

§1-222. Emergence of patriarchal centers—Christian ecclesiastical structure tended to mimic the patterns of imperial administration. Roman administration promoted the growth of "first cities" in the various provinces. Power over the vast geographical expanse of the Empire was exercised by governors in the safe provinces and by military procurators and prefects in the dangerous ones. Certain cities grew in administrative importance based on a variety of factors, including governmental presence, military or commercial significance, and historical importance. Thus, Ephesus was the first city of Asia Minor and Lyons the first city of Gaul. In turn, these first cities exercised influence over the other cities of the region. Truly large metropolises exercised cultural and political influence over larger areas of the Empire.

Dioceses and praefecturates—Rome was the first city of the Empire, but Alexandria in Egypt and Antioch in Syria grew to considerable prominence. Under Diocletian (284-305), the Empire was divided into dioceses, each with a chief city, and these dioceses were gathered into praefecturates, each with a chief city. Christian ecclesiastical organization after Constantine followed this pattern. Chief cities became the seats of bishops and the praefecturate cities became patriarchal seats. These patriarchal seats entered a period of rivalry over several centuries for primacy within what might be called imperial Christianity as a whole.

§1-223. Primacy of Rome—In the early centuries of our era, the primacy of the bishop of Rome was widely recognized. This primacy was an honorary one and did not yet have a sense of administrative authority.

Peter and Paul—The key support to this primacy was the position ascribed to Peter and Peter's connection with Rome. Peter was understood to be the chief spokesman of the original apostles, the first to recognize Jesus' identity and confess that to others, and a primary witness of the resurrection. In Galatians, Paul recognizes Peter as one of the "pillars' of the Church. Tradition asserts that Peter in his later years was the first bishop of Rome and that quickly solidified the symbolic importance of the Roman church. The apocryphal Acts of Peter locate the scene of Peter's martyrdom in Rome. Both Ignatius of Antioch and Clement of Rome link Peter and Paul together as martyrs in Rome.

Rome's influence grew throughout these early centuries. Irenaeus of Lyons responds to Gnostic claims of secret teaching by tracing the "apostolic succession" of bishops to whom he ascribes authoritative teaching. He uses the bishops of Rome as his example and links them back one by one from his own day (the late second century) to Peter (mid-first century). Rome's early moral and persuasive authority grew especially in pontificates of Damasus I (366-384) and Leo I (440-461). That influence can be seen in the Council of Carthage in 397 when that council declared that its decisions needed to be

checked with "the church across the sea", namely Rome, and by the weight given to Pope Leo's *Tome* at the Council of Chalcedon in 451. In the great doctrinal controversies of the 4th and 5th centuries, Rome was something of a moderating referee.

Real limits—However, there were real limits to that influence as seen in the rash effort by Victor I in 190 to excommunicate several Asian churches over the dispute concerning the proper date to celebrate Easter. He clearly overstepped his persuasive authority, and the Asian churches just ignored his ecclesiastical thunderbolt.

§1-224. Antioch and Alexandria as theological and ecclesiastical rivals—These two patriarchal centers repeatedly competed without directly challenging the primacy of Rome. They were the faith's intellectual centers, and their rivalry played a key role in the theological controversies that divided Christians in the 4th and 5th centuries. Both Alexandria and Antioch were all too willing to curry imperial favor to advance their respective theological positions and, not coincidentally, their ecclesiastical prominence.

Antioch was the church that sponsored the missionary work of Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:1-3). It was the church where the issue of Gentile inclusion in the Church without demanding the observance of the Mosaic Law was vigorously raised and debated. Key figures of this church include Bishop Ignatius who wrote letters of instruction and exhortation to churches across Asia as he traveled to his martyrdom at Rome in 107, Paul of Samosata (260-268), and Lucian, who was martyred in 312.

The school arising in connection with Antioch was Aristotelian in style, meaning that it placed its emphasis on empirical fact and historical roots and avoided the allegorical style of its rival, Alexandria. Antioch's understanding of the humanity of Jesus tended toward adoptionism. In its benign form, this means that the school emphasized the realness of Jesus' humanity. In its extreme (and erroneous) form, this position diminished the divine character of Christ, seeing it as something bestowed on him by God, rather than his "by nature".

Alexandria was the other great intellectual center. It was the main source of Hellenistic Jewish literature, above all that of Philo, who was deeply influenced by Plato. The Alexandrian see used the allegorical method of interpreting Scripture.

While little is known of how Christianity came to Alexandria, its didactic importance was established early. A catechetical school was founded by Pantaenus, a convert from Stoicism, in Alexandria circa 190. The school's most famous teachers were Clement and Origen, both prominent apologists and writers. Alexandria emphasized Jesus' divinity more than his humanity, tending toward Monophysitism. In its benign form, this emphasis recognized the fact that in Christ, God was at work for the salvation of humanity. In its extreme (and erroneous) form, it denied the real humanity of Jesus and saw the divine as simply making use of a human body.

§1-225. Growing influence of Constantinople—The last ecclesiastical titan to appear on the scene was the Patriarch of Constantinople. Constantinople claimed to be founded

by the "thirteenth" apostle, the Emperor Constantine. It was never a pagan center, unlike the other patriarchal cities, but was founded in 330 as a Christian city and the "new Rome". Although it would later be a center of Greek learning with the world's first true university, in the 4th and 5th centuries, Constantinople was not intellectually on the same par as Antioch and Alexandria. Its claims to ecclesiastical power came from its status as the new imperial city. From the very beginning the bishop of Constantinople wanted equality with the bishop of Rome. As the power of old Rome faded, those claims broadened to seek primacy.

§1-226. Legacy and ongoing concerns of Christian establishment— Establishment was a mixed blessing for the faith. Security from danger, deprivation, and persecution were obvious benefits. There were political/ecclesiastical benefits as well—magnificent places of worship constructed at state expense, the right to own and develop land for ministry purposes, special privileges to the clergy which freed them to concentration on their ministries, and a favored status for placement and advancement in the state bureaucratic establishment. With the termination of official state sponsorship of pagan rites and practices, there was the opportunity to expand the faith's agenda and work toward a genuinely Christian culture.

There were other concerns with Christian establishment that were less obvious to believers in that day.

Imperial domination—First, as "bishop of external affairs", the emperors increasingly involved themselves in religious matters with political motives. From the earliest days of state sponsorship, the lines of what came to be called "caesaropapism", the subservience of ecclesiastical to political authority, were being established.

The overriding concern for the emperors was the unity of the Empire. Religious divisiveness had to be resolved at all costs to secure political stability. Constantine's role at the Council of Arles (314), responding to the Donatists, and at the Council of Nicaea (325), deciding the Arian controversy, demonstrates this. Subsequent emperors aligned themselves with one party or another in theological disputes and used the power of the state to enforce their wills.

Bishops proved all too willing to seek imperial support to impose their wills. The kind of decision-making displayed at the Council of Jerusalem (50) was lost in the slam bang of power politics within the Church. For example, during the ongoing Arian controversy of the 4th century, Bishop Athanasius of Alexandria, champion of Nicene orthodoxy, was repeatedly exiled and restored according to the doctrinal allegiances of Constantine II and Constantius.

At first, State favor and money seemed like a great boon. But when there are disputes, who should call the shots? Do you resist the temptation to call out the State hound on religious dissenters? Is it true religion that we are after or Christian hegemony? If the Church is to be the conscience of the state, then should it be entangled in the policy debates that drive state action? On the other hand, if the Church is to affect society

positively for Christ, can it afford to be politically detached? We wrestle with those same questions today.

Stress of being "political" glue—The challenge of being a state religion put severe stress on Christianity. It was ill-prepared for the task of being glue for a society coming apart. Early Christianity had a countercultural disposition and an eschatological orientation. This fallen world is not permanent nor is it the ultimate reality. Much of early Christianity's culture argued against the way power was used to maintain the unity and stability of the Empire. The canonical writings of Christianity did not provide detailed directions for a civilization to organize itself.

Cultural captivity—Especially in the east, where imperial rule remained more stable, the precedents of pagan culture, suffused with biblical data, continued to provide much of the form for Greek *paideia*. The basic instruction was in logic, philosophy, rhetoric, and the liberal arts set in a backdrop largely framed by the values of classical paganism. As an imperial religion, Christianity increasingly displayed a Greco-Roman form, with only vestigial connections with Judaism. Even the Scriptures were in Greek and were interpreted through the categories of Greek philosophy and rhetoric. The Church went from a counterculture to the accepted culture almost overnight. Biblical counterculture may not be physically safe, but cultural captivity is not spiritually safe.

In the west, the instability of the Empire would force Christianity to engage new cultural realities, very foreign to the precepts of the faith, and to forge a distinctively Christian culture as an instrument of civilization among the barbarians.

Rise of religious complacency—The Church grew rapidly and becoming a Christian was the thing to do. This attracted career climbers and insincere people who wanted to get ahead.

From martyrs to inquisitors—The Edict of Milan began as religious freedom but started in motion a path to religious domination. Christians who had been subject to persecution and censorship soon turned the tables on the pagans. The troubling assumption arose, from the age of Constantine forward, that whenever the Church possessed the means (e.g. an obliging State authority), it had the right to exercise public power to enforce its religious demands and to further its work of salvation at the edge of the sword.

C. Growth Beyond the Empire

§1-231. In general—The way religion in the world normally worked was this—as the ruler went, so went the kingdom. Early Christianity was something of an aberration, growing and spreading without the aid of royal conversions. However, during the early part of the fourth century, the situation changed radically. Armenia, Georgia, and Ethiopia became Christian kingdoms, and the Roman Empire became a Christian state.

With the advent of Constantine and his successors, Christianity became a public political religion in a fashion like the Greco-Roman polytheism that preceded it. Conversion

became an instrument of statecraft and a primary means of geographically extending Christianity. The now official state religion expanded spatially and temporally to meet its new cultural obligations.

New character of evangelism—Evangelism and missionary work took on a new character when Christianity became the official religion of the Empire. It was more intentional and more centrally organized. Prior to its establishment, converts to Christianity were made through networks of association and personal influence. Evangelism was conducted on a small scale. After establishment, imperial authority often commissioned missionaries to work both with the leadership and populace of other nations and tribes. Often, the king of a client state would convert the people by converting himself and then declaring Christianity to be the official religion of the realm.

Noteworthy characteristics—There are several aspects of this geographical and demographical expansion that are worth noting:

- The Bible was translated into new languages (Ethiopian, Georgian, Armenian, Gothic) as a key element of Christianizing new lands and peoples.
- Christianity became more inclusive as it embraced new populations. The various forms of Christian expression from North Africa to East Asia testify to the faith's remarkable cultural adaptability.
- Conversions were often very superficial, with elements of indigenous paganism remaining.
- Cults and other faith variants thrived in these new areas and with new people—Nestorians in Persia, Monophysites in Ethiopia and Armenia, and Arians among newly converted Germanic tribes. The Empire's heartland was orthodox while its fringe areas tended to become a refuge for heretical or questionable versions of the faith.

Missionary activity in the east started early, involved doctrinal debates, and led to cultural identity awareness through Bible translations into new languages. In the west and north, Christianity won adherents among the Germanic peoples, but strong tribal structures, a warrior mentality, and syncretistic native pagan religions presented thorny issues for the progress of a vibrant faith.

While it was within the Empire that Christianity attained its most notable successes, by the time the Western Empire collapsed, there were Christians as far east as India, as far south as Ethiopia, and as far north as Ireland. The sections that follow provide a thumbnail guide to missionary activities in areas beyond the Empire into which Christianity expanded.

§1-232. Edessa, Armenia, and Georgia

Edessa—At an early date, Christianity spread east along the paths of Syriac language and culture. Its most notable success was in the city of Edessa, which came as early as the

latter part of the second century. Legend fast-forwarded this expansion to within the lifetime of Jesus, alleging that the king of Edessa sent a letter to Jesus asking him to come and cure his leprosy. A nearby community of believers also arose in the region of Abiabene in the second century. There are believers today who trace their origins to these early churches.

The Syriac language was the common tongue for trade in the east, and it served as a channel for expansion of the faith. A Syriac translation of the Old and New Testament appeared and came to be known as the *Peshitta* (meaning "simple"). Portions appeared as early as the second century and the translation was completed by the fourth century. Tatian, an apologist who was a disciple of Justin Martyr, edited a gospel harmony known as the *diatessaron* ("according to the four") which became a subject of much controversy among Syriac Christians.

Armenia—After Edessa, Armenia was the next state to embrace Christianity. Armenia was a buffer state between Persia and Rome. Persia wanted it in her empire, while Rome preferred to keep Armenia as a client state. When Tiridates III converted in 301 under the influence of Gregory Lusavorich (the Illuminator), the kingdom followed suit. Gregory was at Caesarea while in exile in the Roman Empire. He returned to his native land, converted and baptized the king, and had a highly successful ministry there. What emerged in Armenia in the beginning of the fourth century was a nation with an allegiance to Christianity with a close link between crown and episcopacy. Near the end of the fourth century a linguist named Mesrop Mashots was instrumental in developing and Armenian alphabet, specifically for the purpose of Bible translation.

By the 5th century, a school of Christian literature was established and an Armenian translation of the Bible based on Greek was produced. The Armenian Church became Monophysite in doctrine, emphasizing the deity of Christ and downplaying his humanity. From the 6th century onwards, the Armenian Church developed separately from the Church of the Empire.

Georgia, a former Roman province, became officially Christian between 317 and 327 when Mirian III converted. A Cappadocian slave woman named Nina figured significantly in the conversion of the king. She impressed her captors with her piety, modesty, and her faithful life. Legend credits her with several significant healings and miraculous interventions on behalf of the royal family. A Georgian bishop attended the Council of Nicaea in 325. Tradition has it that the apostle Andrew first preached the gospel in Georgia and claims that the apostle Matthias ministered in the southwestern part of the territory as well.

Tradition credits Mashots with developing a Georgian alphabet as well as the Armenian one. In the sixth century, a group of monks from Persia came to Georgia to strengthen the Georgian religious life. The Georgian church was the only non-Greek speaking church in the eastern Christian world to embrace the Christological decrees of the Council of Chalcedon.

§1-233. Ethiopia, Libya, and Nubia—In the early centuries of the Christian era, Aksum was an advanced kingdom that included modern Ethiopia and Eritrea in Africa and Yemen in Arabia. It dominated eastern Africa for most of the first millennium of our era and traded widely with the Mediterranean and Asian worlds. Aksum had a strong Jewish presence. An ancient legend has it that the Aksumites were descendants of Solomon and the queen of Sheba, linking the Aksumites to Judeo-Christian history much earlier than to Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8. Christianity gained a sustained presence in this area via the trade routes up the Red Sea. In Constantine's time, a philosopher from Tyre was captured by a raiding party along with two of his young students. These two students became fixtures in the king's household, one as the cupbearer and the other as an accountant. When the king died, the queen begged the two to stay and help her rule. The accountant, Frumentius, used his position to extend to Roman merchants trading with Aksum the right to sponsor the building of Christian churches, Later, Frumentius traveled to Alexandria to urge the bishop, Athanasius, to commission a bishop for the fledgling church in Aksum. Athanasius chose Frumentius himself (circa 330), who was instrumental in spreading the faith in Aksum. Refusing Emperor Constantius' urging to convert to Arianism, the Ethiopian Church came under the influence of those at Alexandria emphasizing the Monophysite doctrine. Ethiopian believers rejected the decisions of the Council of Constantinople in 381, embraced Monophysitism, and remain to this day the largest of the Monophysite churches. In the 5th and 6th centuries, the Bible was translated into Ethiopian, and the Church was engaged in evangelizing the Nubians (north Ethiopia) and the Nabataeans. There is a Nubian translation of the Bible that dates from the 8th century.

Given the strong Jewish presence in Aksum, the Christian church incorporated more Jewish features in their faith practice than elsewhere in Christendom. These practices included circumcision, the Old Testament dietary restrictions, and regarding Saturday as well as Sunday as holy days.

§1-234. Persia and Mesopotamia—Christianity also crossed the border into Mesopotamia and Persia at an early date, carried there by Syriac-speaking merchants and traders. The Parthian dynasty practiced a measure of religious toleration and Christianity seems to have grown rapidly. In 224, the Sassanids came to power in Persia and most of its rulers persecuted Christians as a foreign religion. Nevertheless, there was an important theological school at Nisibis on the Euphrates and the earliest church building archeologists have found was built in the area at Dura-Europos in the mid-3rd century.

The 4th and 5th centuries were times of intermittent persecution under the Sassanid kings, forty years under Shapur II, a time of royal favor from 399 to 420, and more persecution from 420 to 450. Christianity's status as the official religion of the Roman Empire meant that the Sassanid kings tended to view Christians were as traitors or at least Roman sympathizers. With the rise of a stricter and more zealous Zoroastrianism in Sassanid Persia and the conversion of Constantine in the West, the tables were turned on the fortunes of Christians in the east. They were subjected to a persecution that was far more severe than anything the Romans had unleashed on believers.

The key personality in this persecutory mindset was Shapur II (309-379). On the positive side, Shapur steeled ethe Persians to regain their possessions during his long reign. On the negative side, Constantine's artless diplomacy spawned a terrible result. In 315, Constantine wrote a letter to Shapur, urging the six-year old, to accept Christianity and gain favor with the true God. Shapur and his advisers saw this as a heavy-handed gesture from an aggressive ruler of a long-time enemy state who was consolidating his power to take advantage of the young ruler. Several decades after this, Constantine readied an assault on Persia, allegedly to rescue Christians from persecution. He died before the campaign began, but that served as a signal to the Persian king. In 339, Shapur attacked Rome in the east and began a fierce persecution of Christians. For the next twenty years this persecution raged. Shapur defeated and killed Julian the Apostate in battle in 363 and annexed Nisibis, a noted Christian center. It was not until 409 that a Persian shah issued a decree of toleration like the Edict of Milan in 313 which brought the Persian national church officially into existence. However, this decree brought no lasting favor to the Christians in the east unlike the Edict of Milan to Christians in the west.

The irony of this was that for centuries Rome had been the enemy of Persia and antagonistic toward Christianity. This led to eastern church to seek refuge ever deeper into Persian territory. Then suddenly, Persia was the fierce Christian enemy and Rome their stalwart defender.

Persian Christians rejected the edicts of the Councils of Ephesus (431) and Chalcedon (451) and followed Monophysite doctrine. Others were followers of Nestorius, who emphasized the distinction between the human and divine natures of Christ. Indeed, Nestorian Christianity became the national Church in Persia and the source of missionary activity along the trade routes to East Asia.

Concluding reflections—Persia had little influence on Rome's persecution of Christians in the first three centuries of our era or in the conversion of the Roman emperor and the tremendous changes that followed that conversion. However, the move of the Roman Empire in becoming a Christian state was a decisive factor in changing Persia's posture toward the faith from benign tolerance to severe hostility and persecution. Persian Christians, fleeing Shapur's persecution, founded Indian Christianity and brought it into significant contact with the eastern church. Persian Christians found themselves in radically different situations at various stages of their lives. The borders between friendly Rome and hostile Persia were constantly changing in this era. Their situation defied easy labels of "the church under siege" or the "church triumphant." They had to make their way through a world of great uncertainty about the attitude toward Christian faith of the government and the larger society of which they were apart.

§1-235. Arabia—Christianity penetrated Arabia by the second century. We know of contacts with believers in Alexandria dating to that time. Arabia became a point of contact for slightly different versions of the faith, one from the Greek-speaking parts of the Eastern Empire and the other from Persia and Ethiopia. There also existed an ancient Gnostic sect called the Elkanites. This mixture was the confused and muddled picture of Christianity that Mohammed came to know and reject in the 7th century.

Constantius II, an imperial sponsor of Arianism, sent Bishop Theophilus to the Sabean tribal people of Yemen in the 4th century. An Arabic translation of the New Testament appeared there in the 7th century shortly before Yemen was overrun by Islam. The remaining Christians after the Islamic conquest were Nestorian in their outlook.

§1-236. India—It is difficult to ascertain when Christianity first came to India. There is a tradition that claims that the apostle Thomas founded the Church in India. Another tradition relates that Pantanenus, a Clement's teacher in Alexandria, went to India in 180. In addition, one of the participants at the Council of Nicaea in 325 was "John the Persian, of all Persia and great India."

According to tradition that bears more rigorous historicity, a delegation of Jewish Christians from Persia arrived in the Malabar region of India in 345 and were welcomed by the Indian ruler. The newcomers proved to be gifted with business acumen, prospered greatly in Malabar, and brought considerable prosperity to the region. Whether there was a Christian presence in India prior to this is uncertain. There certainly was one, and a favored one, by the fourth century. Indian Christianity was firmly in the Persian orbit. Syriac became the language of the liturgy. There are two significant ironies in all this:

- It is surprising that a faith from a region where Christians were experiencing severe persecution would become so influential in a land with such a different culture.
- It is surprising that Christianity could gain a privileged position in a society without official approval by the ruler. The Christians were favored because of their business acumen, but that favor failed to bring many conversions.

§1-237. England, Scotland, and Ireland

***England*—**Christianity also extended north to embrace the Celts and the Anglo-Saxons. Rome conquered Britain in the 1st century. The island was evangelized in the 2nd century but the faith there developed in "distinctive" ways because of pagan influences. In other words, early Christianity in Britain was a syncretistic mush. In 590, Pope Gregory I dispatched Augustine (not the theologian) and a group of Benedictine monks to Britain, leading to the establishment of Catholic Christianity on the island.

***Scotland*—**Southern Scotland was evangelized at the end of the 4th century through the missionary work of Ninian. Northern Scotland was evangelized by the Irish Abbot Columba (died in 597) over a period of almost thirty-five years.

***Ireland*—**A vibrant faith gained a strong foothold in Ireland before the collapse of the Western Empire. The spread of the faith is attributed to Patrick (432-461). As a young boy, Patrick was captured in Great Britain by Irish raiders and served as a slave in Ireland. After his escape and a variety of other experiences, Patrick had a vision calling him to serve as a missionary among his former capturers. Going back, he experienced great hardships, had remarkable success, and baptized people in droves.

Ireland became a vibrant monastic and missionary center. Monasteries were founded around the island and the learning of antiquity was one of the major concerns. Bypassed by the marauding barbarian hordes, Irish monasteries were one of the main sources from which the territories of the ancient Roman Empire in the west regained much of the classical knowledge and literature lost during the invasions.

§1-238. Germany and beyond—There was also expansion among the Germanic people north of Constantinople. Arian missionaries crossed the Danube and began mission work among the Goths. The faith moved west with the migration of the Germanic tribes as the Western Empire collapsed. Arianism provided the German tribes with a Church and a hierarchy independent of both Rome and Constantinople, fostering an identity they took into the territories they conquered.

A thumbnail guide to missionary work among Germanic tribes is as follows:

- ***Franks***—The historically most significant Germanic people were the Franks. They would eventually dominate a large part of Western Europe. They came from the lower Rhine in the middle of the 5th century. King Clovis I (481-511) ended Roman rule in Gaul and conquered middle Europe. He converted to orthodox Christianity in 496. It was through the Franks that Europe eventually adopted orthodox Christianity rather than the Arian form.
- ***The Lombards*** also started in Pannonia (an area north of the Danube, now Austria and Hungary), leaving there in 586 and conquering most of Italy except for Ravenna, Rome, and part of the Italian boot in the south. They were Arian and hostile to orthodoxy but eventually embraced orthodoxy and mingled with the Roman and Italian populations.
- ***Vandals***—The Vandals were an East German tribe converted to Christianity in 364 under the Emperor Valens. The Vandals were the most aggressive of the Germanic tribes. They started in Pannonia, devastated Gaul in 409, settled in Spain for a while, before crossing over to North Africa around 429. King Genseric crushed Roman power in North Africa and established a Vandal kingdom until Emperor Justinian reconquered it in the 530s. They were Arians who were hostile to orthodoxy.
- ***Visigoths***—In the 4th and 5th centuries, both the Visigoths and Ostrogoths followed the Vandals into an Arian form of Christianity. The Visigoths (western Goths) migrated from the northern shore of the Black Sea along the Danube and all the way to Spain. They were evangelized by Ulfilas under the direction of the Arian emperor Constantius II. Ulfilas learned the Gothic language, devised an alphabet for it, and then translated the Bible into a Gothic version. The Visigoths moved first to Thrace (north of Greece), then migrated through Greece and northern Italy, and ended up in southern Gaul and Spain by the early 5th century where they mixed with the local populations. They remained Arian in their understanding of the faith until the Islamic conquest in the 7th and 8th centuries.

- ***The Ostrogoths*** (eastern Goths) started in Pannonia and migrated to Italy in 489, establishing an extensive and stable kingdom under Theodoric the Great (471-526). The kingdom lasted until 553, and included Italy, Sicily, Dalmatia (Croatia), Pannonia, and Provence (southern France). They were Arians who repressed orthodox Christians, imprisoning and executing both Pope John I (526) and the philosopher Boethius (524-525).

D. Religious Controversies and the Church's Response

1. Controversies

§1-241. In general—How was the Church to understand Jesus considering an uncompromising monotheism inherited from Judaism? The Church needed to affirm that there was an absolute distinction between Yahweh and all other beings and that the Son and the Spirit were on the Yahweh side of that distinction. The early heresies and controversies of the church confronted fell into three categories:

- Heresies dealing with the dualisms of surrounding belief structures;
- Heresies misconstruing the relationship between the Father and the Son;
- Montanism, the danger-prone spiritual enthusiasm of the early centuries.

Heresy comes from the Greek word for "choice." The idea is that the heretic had chosen to turn away from the true faith to a false conception of God. Several points need to be made:

- Not every doctrinal mistake is heretical. Heresy is a mistake on a point so central to the Christian faith that salvation itself is threatened.
- Heresy is not always a deliberate distortion of the faith.
- Ideas of heresy and orthodoxy are not arbitrary. Some modern scholars see many Christianities and it does not matter a great deal which you choose. For the early church, heresy was recognized as such because it did not conform to Scripture and the church's tradition. The early church differed sharply from the modern mindset and believed there was a clear and strong consensus about the fundamental points of Christian doctrine.

Importance of doctrine—Christianity was unique in the religious world of the Roman Empire for its emphasis on doctrine as an important aspect of religion. Pagan polytheistic faiths focused attention on cultic acts, not the content of belief about the gods. While Judaism certainly stressed belief per se, the religion itself was more about worship, life, and the religious practice of the community.

However, from its origins, Christianity stressed the importance of correct belief. This was, in large measure, due to the nature of the claims about Jesus—that He was the Messiah and died for the sins of the world. Therefore, knowing the correct things about Jesus (that He was the Son of God and offered his life as a perfect atoning sacrifice for sin) and having a proper faith (belief in His death and Resurrection and reliance on His work for salvation) was central to what it meant to be a Christian. Being a Christian did

not mean performing certain cultic sacrifices to a certain god in a certain way and at a certain time. It did mean having correct understanding of God and His saving provision for people and proper beliefs about God and His involvement in the world.

The faith is certainly more than believing the right things, but it is not less than that. A Christian professes Jesus as Messiah and as Lord. Intellectual commitment is foundational to this confession. In addition, Christianity in the imperial period was influenced by the convictions of philosophical schools of the era. Among the philosophies of the day, it was a universal premise that right thinking was the basis for right practice.

Two questions predominate in the controversies of the 4th and 5th centuries: who or what is the Christian God and who or what is the Christ, the Messiah who stands at the center of Christian belief and piety. In these centuries, Christians debated the nature of God and the nature of Jesus and developed a more coherent understanding of the divine as triune and singular. Like the Jews, early Christians believed that "God is one" and considered themselves monotheists. But they also confessed Jesus as Lord (Rom. 10:9; 1 Cor. 12:3), sharing in the divine life and power as demonstrated by the Resurrection. How is monotheism compatible with such as confession?

§1-242. Political context—It is difficult for moderns to understand the vehemence with which the imperial Church debated matters. The issues were held by the people to be of much greater importance than they are now. Gregory of Nyssa once commented that one could not get one's shoes repaired in Constantinople without getting into a discussion of whether the Son was of similar or of the same substance as the Father. Could God truly be present in a carpenter executed by the Empire as a criminal, or is God more like the emperor on his throne?

In all the theological controversies of the early centuries, there was a political constant behind the scenes. The concern of the Roman and Byzantine emperors was for the unity of the Christian religion as the new glue of the Roman/Byzantine order and the preservation, if not the enhancement, of their authority. One does not have to wonder for long why so many of the fourth century emperors preferred the Arian view. If the focus was to be on the divine Christ, represented as the exalted *Pantokrator*—the exalted emperor sitting on his throne and ruling the world, then an ecclesiastical check to imperial authority seemed to be the natural corollary**.**

Needing a winner—Aside from this, the unity of the Empire demanded that one side or the other win and the losing side accept that. This added to the rancor of these debates and made them very intense. One historian remarked: "Not without astonishment and regret the historian finds that in these long, bitter disputes which rent the Church, heresy as such counted for less than men's passionate attachment to their own will, to a party spirit and obstinacy in schism." The emphasis on right thinking, far from guaranteeing right practice, as the philosophers held, worked to remove theology from the ordinary life of believers and become a matter of speculation. The disputes revealed within

Christianity, a faith dedicated to peace and unity, a deep tendency toward conflict and division.

§1-243. Ecclesiastical competition—The New Testament asserts Jesus' full humanity (see Heb. 4:15) and full deity (see Jn. 1:14; 13:3; Heb. 1:2, 6; 10:5) with equal vigor. Somehow God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself (2 Cor. 5:19). What confessional formula adequately captures this paradoxical position?

Two schools of thought vigorously debated the issue of Jesus as the God-man. These two schools—one centered in Alexandria and the other in Antioch—were also prominent ecclesiastical rivals. Alexandria emphasized Christ's divine nature; Antioch stressed the complete humanity of Christ. A leading voice in Alexandria (Origen) coined the term the "God-man." His thought was that in Christ the encounter between God and humanity had taken place perfectly and emphasized the unity of these two realities in one person. In the Antioch camp, Gregory of Nyssa taught that in Christ the *Logos*, one person had united in Himself the divine and human natures. The Antioch school emphasized the distinctiveness of the natures after the Word became flesh.

The natural passion released by religious controversy over essential aspects of the faith was greatly intensified by the polarization of, and ecclesiastical competition between, the great patriarchal centers.

§1-244. Arianism—Arius (260-336) was a presbyter or pastor of the influential Baucalis Church in Alexandria. He studied under Lucian, a teacher at Antioch, whose tendencies were towards an adoptionist position about Christ. Adoptionism was a Christian theological doctrine that taught that Jesus became the son of God through adoption, rather than being the Son of God in his essential nature from birth. Arius became a popular priest at Alexandria and sometime between 315 and 319 began to publicly advocate adoptionist views. He asserted that the Word (*Logos*), who assumed flesh in Jesus, was not true God but had an entirely different nature, neither eternal nor omnipotent. The Son was the first and greatest of the created beings, who could lead Christians up to God. He was an example of salvation as the upward movement of humanity to God. He was not everlasting or co-everlasting with the Father, sent from the Father as Savior. The phrase "there was a time when the Son was not" was the pithy statement that summarized this view.

Arius followed the Greek conceptions of his day in understanding God as absolutely unique and transcendent and who could not share or communicate his being or essence with anyone else. God, while creating everything that is, did not directly create the world. It could not bear His direct contact. Creation was accomplished by the Word (*Logos*), the agent of His creation and sustenance of the material world. This Word was also a created being, although the first and highest of beings. Thus, Christ was something of a quasi-divine hero or demigod, greater than ordinary human beings but lower than God. He was a superhuman creature, not the Creator—not of the same divine essence as the Father. He was temporal, not eternal, and subject to change.

The controversy became public when Alexander, the Patriarch of Alexandria, condemned Arius' teaching and removed him from all posts in the Alexandrian church. Arius appealed to the people of Alexandria and to the bishops throughout the Eastern part of the Empire. Demonstrations in the streets followed and Arius garnered support among the bishops. Constantine intervened and called a council of bishops from all parts of the Empire.

Fulcrum of debate—During this period of controversy, the battle lines came to be drawn around two terms that summarized the differences: *homoousios* (same nature—the Nicene formula) as the Father and *homoiousios* (like or similar nature—favored by the Arians) as the Father. Centuries later, Edward Gibbon, author of the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, sneered that Christianity fought for fifty years over a diphthong. But in this case, a little thing like a diphthong really mattered.

Illustration—A woman visiting in Europe wanted to buy a bracelet for $75,000. She wired her husband for his thoughts. He wired back "No, price too high." But the cable people omitted the comma, and the message read "No price too high." Little things can make a significant difference in meaning.

At stake in the Arian controversy was whether the *Logos* was coeternal with the Father. Arius famously claimed that "there was a time when He [the Word] was not." This seemed a fine point but the issue at stake was the divinity of the Word. Arius claimed that the *Logos* was not God, but the first and greatest of creatures. The counter argument was made by Alexander and then Athanasius of Alexandria, which emphasized the full deity of the Word, who was coeternal with the Father. Arius asserted that such a claim was a denial of Christian monotheism. Alexander and Athanasius argued that Arius denied the divinity of the Word and therefore of Jesus. The Church worshiped Jesus and Arius' proposal would force it to stop this practice.

For Alexander and Athanasius, the heart of the matter was that Christ achieved our salvation precisely because, in his person, God has entered human history and opened the way for our return to God. Salvation was a downward movement of God to humanity. Arius' retort was to assert that Christ's role as Savior was imperiled by such a view, for Jesus had opened the way for salvation by his complete obedience to God, and such obedience would be meaningless if he himself was divine, and not a creature. He was the example of the upward movement of humanity to God.

Philosophical or biblical backdrop?—The Arian controversy was a direct result of the way Christians came to think of the nature of God, drawing on the work of such people as Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and others. Appealing to respected classical philosophers, many Christians apologists argued, in effect, that they believed in the supreme being of the philosophers and were not atheists, an accusation which arose because they did not worship visible gods. The danger in this was that the paradigm for speaking of God's nature became that of the classical philosophers rather than that of the Scriptures.

The classical philosophers conceived of God's perfection as immutable, impassable, and fixed and Christians equated the God of the Scriptures with these attributes. Two ways of marrying the philosophical notion with the God of the Scriptures came into vogue: by allegorizing the Scripture and by the doctrine of the *Logos*. In the first way, anytime the Scripture spoke in an "unworthy" way of God according to the ideas of the classical philosophers, the passage was to be taken allegorically. This intellectualized approach created a great distance between God and humanity in a faith that spoke of a highly personal relationship with the God of the ages.

The other way of bridging the distance between the god of the philosophers and the Biblical God was in the doctrine of the *Logos*. The Father is immutable, impassable, and completely transcendent, but there is the *Logos*, who is personal and who interacts with human beings. This led to the idea that between the immutable God and the world was the mutable Word or *Logos*. This was the context in which the Arian controversy arose.

***Council of Nicaea*—**The Arian controversy was the primary matter taken up at the Council of Nicaea in 325. The Council supported Alexander's decision in condemning Arius and was influenced in its articulation of the doctrine by Athanasius. They denounced the idea of the Son as a created being, one who was not eternal and immutable. This view of the nature of God and the Word was incorporated into the Nicene Creed.

***Ongoing controversy*—**While many assumed that Council of Nicaea finally decided this question, that was not the case. Arianism was a potent force for the entire 4th century. Several emperors after Constantine were themselves Arians and supported that view. Their frequent intrusion into Church politics is illustrated by the career of Athanasius, Nicene Christianity's great champion. For fifty years after Nicaea, the struggle with Arianism continued and Athanasius was banned from his bishopric no less than five separate times.

The Arians were particularly active in evangelizing the Germanic peoples who would overthrow the Western Empire in the 5th century. We looked at this briefly in these notes (see §1-238) and will consider this more extensively in the early part of the course in the Medieval church.

§1-245. Adoptionism or Ebionism—These are heresies in the second and third centuries that arose because of inadequate understanding of the Father's relationship with the Son and the Spirit.

Adoptionism was first introduced by the Ebionites. The name Ebionite was derived from the Hebrew word for "poor". Ebionism originated from Judaizing movements during the apostolic period. They were a continuation or offshoot of the early Judaizers who taught that in addition to accepting by faith the grace of God in Christ, one must also observe the regulations of the Jewish law.

They were strong monotheists and saw the asserted deity of Jesus Christ as problematic. They rejected the idea of the virgin birth and taught that Jesus was born to Joseph and Mary in the normal fashion. Jesus was an ordinary man possessed of unusual but not supernatural gifts. Upon his baptism by John the Baptist, the Christ descended upon the man, Jesus, in the form of a dove. This was an indication of God's presence and power rather than a personal, metaphysical transforming reality. Near the end of his life, the Christ withdrew from the man Jesus, who subsequently died on the cross. Thus, Jesus was not God, just a man upon whom the power of God was present and active in an unusual degree. This concept of Jesus' relationship to God is known as adoptionism.

§1-246. Docetism—From early in the life of the Church, there was a stream of thought denying the humanity of Christ. This view, known as Docetism, took its name from the Greek word *dokeo*, meaning to seem or to appear. Its central assertion was that Jesus only seemed to be human. God could not really become material, since all matter is evil, and He is perfectly holy and pure.

Docetism was strongly rooted in Greek dualism, which assumed that mind or thought was the highest form of reality and matter the lowest. This distinction assumed ethical gradations where matter came to be regarded as evil. God was completely transcendent and utterly independent of the material world.

§1-247. Apollinarius—Apollinarius of Laodicea (310-390) was on this docetic continuum. He did not deny Jesus' humanity, so much as he truncated it. According to Apollinarius, Jesus took on genuine humanity, but not the whole of our humanity. He proposed that Christ had the body and lower soul of an ordinary human but, in Him, the divine *Logos* took the place of a human mind. He asserted that only the divine Word could be perfect and save humanity and the divine Word was, in effect, the replacement for the human soul or mind of Jesus Christ. Thus, Christ had a single composite nature.

His opponents objected. If Christ's mind was not truly human, then the human mind was not redeemed. His humanity must extend to the totality of our humanity. Theodore of Mopsuestia (350-428) also pointed out that the New Testament portrayed Christ as having a complete and truly human mind.

Apollinarius' views were condemned at a regional synod in 362 and at the Council of Constantinople in 381. The basic thought that guided orthodoxy was "only that which is assumed can be saved." The Word had to assume full humanity for humanity to be saved. It is noticeable that from the outset of these Christological controversies, the debate focused on ontology (the being of Christ) rather than his moral character or saving work.

Apollinaris' inadequate conception of what it meant to be human—a spirit in a body—led him to deny that the incarnate Christ possessed a human mind. Some in Syria and Anatolia understood Apollinarianism as an error so great that it required rethinking of what it meant for Christ to be divine and human.

§1-248. Nestorius—A controversy erupted when Nestorius, the Patriarch of Constantinople and a champion of the Antioch school, objected to calling Mary *theotokos* (God-bearer). He said Mary could not have been the mother of Christ's divine nature and should be called *Christotokos* (Christ-bearer). To his opponents, Nestorius was espousing a belief that Christ was really two beings—one the son of God and the other the son of Mary.

Ecclesiastical politics at the turn of the fifth century—The ugliness of this controversy cannot be understood without delving into the ecclesiastical politics of the era. The Emperor Theodosius died in 395 and divided the empire between his two sons Honorius (395-423) taking the west and Arcadia (395-408) taking the east. Both were weak rulers, but the situation in the west was particularly devastating. Rome was sacked by the Goths in 410, the Vandals settled in Spain and then crossed the straits into North Africa. In the east, Arcadia died in 408 and was succeeded by Theodosius II (408-450) who battled the Persians and the Huns throughout his long reign.

The political crisis was compounded by the emergence of ecclesiastical rivalry between Constantinople, a newly recognized patriarchal see, and Alexandria and Rome. The latter two sees sought to thwart the ecclesiastical ambitions of the Constantinople see. This rivalry was in clear focus at the at the Synod of the Oak in 403 when Theophilus, patriarch of Alexandria, had John Chrysostom deposed as Patriarch of Constantinople. Chrysostom had boldly called out the sins of the aristocracy from the pulpit, earning the ire of the Empress Eudoxia who conspired with Theophilus to have John removed. A serendipity at this synod was that Theophilus' nephew Cyril was at the synod and witnessed the proceedings. Cyril later became Patriarch of Alexandria and would have a major hand in deposing Nestorius, the Patriarch of Constantinople a couple decades down the road.

Christological muddle—Into this cauldron came a Christological muddle. *Diodore of Tarsus*, a teacher of rhetoric, began to think of Christ not as the *Logos* who became human but as a man in whom the *Logos* dwelt. He thought this helped resolve a theological problem—how could the impassable, eternal God suffer and die. Diodore claimed that only the man Jesus suffered and died. The *Logos* was a different person altogether who abandoned the man Jesus as he hung on the cross. A prominent teacher, Theodore of Mopsuestia, seemed to follow this teaching. The Lord Jesus Christ was a compound person composed of the *Logos* and the man Jesus. The *Logos* was the true God, begotten not made, and the man Jesus was the one who suffered, died and buried, and rose again from the dead.

Nestorius of Constantinople—Theodore died in 428 and one of his students, Nestorius, was installed as the Patriarch of Constantinople by the Emperor Theodosius that same year. Nestorius followed Theodore in his understanding of the compound person of Jesus Christ. Nestorius' reluctance to call Mary *theotokos* (bearer of God) was the spark that brought this problematic teaching to the fore. Nestorius objected to this use because he did not seem to believe that the human Jesus was God the Son. He was the man that God the Son indwelt. As with John Chrysostom, who alienated a strong-willed empress

Euodia, so Nestorius alienated the strong-willed Empress Pulcheria, sister of Theodosius II. When the *theotokos* controversy arose, Pulcheria wanted to make sure Nestorius was branded a heretic.

Cyril's Christology—The Cyril championed orthodox Christology. He was a prolific teacher and writer who composed a massive set of biblical commentaries in the two decades before this controversy. He insisted that salvation consisted of God's descent to restore humanity to grace. Christ was God the Son who took humanity into His own person. Even though He was impassable in His nature as God, God the Son did truly suffer on the cross in the humanity He had taken upon Himself. He was and is equal and co-substantial with God in all respects, and yet remaining God He became human as well, so that He could live, die, and be raised from the dead as a man for our salvation.

After receiving an angry letter from Nestorius, Cyril compiled a list of Nestorius' objectionable teachings and sent it to the bishop of Rome. Bishop Celestine of Rome had the influential monastic, John Cassian, investigate. John Cassian ended up agreeing with Cyril that Nestorius was essentially denying the deity of Christ. In 430, Celestine convened a synod at Rome and condemned Nestorius' teaching and wrote to Nestorius demanding that he affirm the faith of Alexandria and Rome. Nestorius appealed to Theodosius II to call an ecumenical council, which he did, to begin in the summer of 431. Pulcheria intervened to change the venue from Constantinople to Ephesus.

The Council of Ephesus was a seriously ugly affair. Cyril showed up early, his monks demonstrated in the streets, and he rammed home a verdict in the council before Nestorius' followers arrived. The Antiocheans refused to abide by a verdict so derived and mutual excommunications flew back and forth. Under imperial pressure, a compromise resulted in Nestorius' exile from the Empire (433). Nestorianism found a home outside the borders of the Roman Empire and thrived in Persia and beyond.

Why did this issue generate so much controversy? Was not the force of Christian teaching all along that Jesus was not just a separate man whose connection with God (the *Logos*) was simply like ours (indwelt by the *Logos* (the Spirit)) but in a more perfect way? Was not the teaching always that He is the same eternal, divine person both before and after the Incarnation, but after that incarnation was also human as well as divine?

- The controversy was in large measure a species of ecclesiastical politics. One could pass by a significant theological issue because of the way it was raised and dwelt with. Cyril's shrill demeanor and harsh anathemas seemed overboard.
- The words used to describe Jesus Christ's person and nature muddled the discussion. In the Arian controversy, *homoousios* was the culprit. This time it was *physis*. In that day, *physis* was often used in the sense of "person." Cyril spoke of the *Logos* as the *physis* (person) of Christ, where Nestorius tended to think of the *Logos* and the man Jesus as separate *physeis* (persons) in one compound or corporate presentation. Later in time, physis would carry the sense of "nature" and thus it be normal to speak of two *physeis* (natures) of Christ, not just one.

§1-249. Monophysitism—Eutyches (378-454), a monk at Constantinople, began to teach what came to be known as Monophysitism. He thought that before the incarnation,

Jesus had two natures, human and divine, but after the incarnation, those two natures blended so that there was only one nature, fully divine. In other words, Jesus Christ was the same substance *(homousion)* as the Father but not the same substance as humanity. Thus, in reaction to the division between the divine and human natures of Christ ascribed to Nestorius, Eutyches asserted that there was only one (*monos*) nature (*physis*) in Christ, that is a divine nature.

Condemned by a synod in Constantinople in 448, Eutyches appealed to the Emperor Theodosius II who summoned a council. Pope Leo I (440-461) intervened with his *Tome* in 449, which clarified the orthodox position of two natures (human and divine) in one person. Nevertheless, the Alexandrians were able to score a victory at the "robber council" of 449 and adopt a one nature verdict in its most radical form.

***Chalcedon*—**After the death of Theodosius II, who favored the Monophysite position, and at the urging of Leo and many of the western bishops, a new council was called and held at Chalcedon in 451. That council followed the lead of Leo and affirmed that Christ had two natures, human and divine, without reduction or suppression of either one: "one single Christ, Son, Lord, Monogenic, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation, the difference in natures being in no way suppressed by the union, but rather the properties of each being safeguarded and reunited in a single person and a single hypostasis." This verdict ended the formal debate, but many continued to hold to the Monophysite tradition, especially in Egypt, Syria, Palestine, Ethiopia, and many in Constantinople.

§1-250. Monarchialism or Sabellianism—Monarchialism was an early attempt to deal with the issue of the Trinity. It was a theological movement that emphasized the unity of God with little room for three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. There were two types of monarchialists. Dymanic monarchialists (adoptionists) held that Jesus was not God incarnate but a divinely empowered man. Modal monarchialists taught that one God expressed himself in three modes, Father, Son, and Spirit. But these were only names for modes in which God temporarily operated, not distinct and eternal personalities. The properties of a common substance, water, illustrate the approach. Water is one substance that takes on different modes—solid, liquid, and gas.

In this view there is a strong insistence on one God. This one God revealed Himself to humanity in three modes at different times: as Father and judge in the Old Testament, as Son and servant in the person of Christ, and as Spirit and helper in the Church period after Christ's Resurrection and Ascension. This raises several concerns:

- Is God's integrity challenged because He reveals Himself differently at different times?
- Is the drama of salvation compromised if the Father and the Son are actually a single person? How does God in the mode of Son truly suffer the wrath of God (in the mode of Father) and die for sin? How does God (in the mode of Father) raise Himself (in the mode of Son) from the dead and breathe new life into believers (in the mode of the Spirit)? The Father, Son, and Spirit are distinct from one another

(three distinct persons and not just modes of one person) and yet not separate from one another (and therefore not three separate gods).

Modal monarchists came to be known as Sabellianism after its famous defender in the church at Rome. Sabellius believed he was defending the unity of God against a polytheism that was, in essence, speaking of the "persons" of God as separate gods. The Sabellian controversy raised a fundamental issue. How can the oneness of God be reconciled with the belief (and Scriptural references) that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were all God and yet distinct?

§1-251. Pelagianism—The controversies listed above raged primarily in the Greek East, a culture taken with philosophical speculation. Issues in the Latin West were less theoretical and more pastoral and ecclesiastical. The dominant controversies were Donatism and Pelagianism, each named for its representative figures. The Donatist controversy was considered in sections §§1-184 and 1-185, above. In this section, we will consider the debate surrounding the views of Pelagius, a British monk known for his piety and austerity, who was active in the early 5th century.

***Optimistic anthropology*—**Pelagius taught an optimistic view of human nature. He understood the Christian life as a continuous effort through which one could overcome one's sins and attain salvation. Pelagius agreed that human beings were free agents and that the source of evil was in the will. For Pelagius, this meant the humans always can overcome their sin. Even after the fall, humans could please God by their own merit. Grace aided humanity but was not strictly necessary for them to lead virtuous lives. Pelagius' view of salvation was that of the upward movement of humanity to God.

***Original sin denied*—**Pelagius denied that humanity inherited a sinful nature from Adam. People were free to act righteously or not. There was no direct connection between Adam and humanity's moral condition. There is no such thing as original sin nor is human nature so corrupted that it naturally leads us to sin. Pelagius said that God holds sinners accountable and therefore Christians should strive for moral perfection. He thought this goal attainable since God would never give commands impossible to obey. Pelagius' idea of a righteous life was similar that of the Stoic concept of self-control.

Augustine was Pelagius' great opponent. He thought Pelagius' ideas contradicted the plain sense of Scripture. Salvation by grace was always central to faith and necessarily so. The Scripture declared this forthrightly and Augustine's own agonizing personal experience underscored the need for grace. The freedom of the human will was not as simple as Pelagius characterized it. There are times when the will is powerless against the hold sin has on it.

***Human depravity*—**Augustine saw human will under the sway of sin and that human beings cannot move their wills to be rid of it. The most one can do is to be willing and not willing. The sinner is powerless to stop sinning. A sinner's freedom exists in his freedom to choose among his sins. The fall has left us little more than the freedom to sin. Salvation must be a downward movement of God to humanity. With redemption, our

wills are restored, and we are free to sin or not to sin. When we arrive at our eventual destiny in heaven, we shall still be free, but free only not to sin. At the point of conversion, we can only choose to accept grace by the power of grace itself. The initiative in conversion is not human, but divine. Furthermore, grace is irresistible, and God gives it to those who have been predestined to it.

***Results*—**The controversy lasted for decades, but eventually Pelagianism was rejected, first at a regional council at Carthage in 411 and then again at the Council of Ephesus in 431. It did not consider the terrible hold sin has on the human will nor the corporate nature of sin that is manifest even at the beginning of human life.

However, there was also opposition to Augustine's views. Opponents of Augustine's idea of predestination have been called "semi-Pelagians". In the century that followed Augustine's death, his views were reinterpreted. At the Synod of Orange in 529, the Church upheld Augustine's doctrine of the primacy of grace in the process of salvation, but drew up short on his ideas of irresistible grace and what came to be known as unconditional election.

2. Church's Response to Controversies

§1-261. In general—More than a century earlier, Irenaeus in *Against Heresies* (see §1-197), deployed the basic approach the Church would adopt in responding to these various controversies and in defining Christian orthodoxy:

- Specifying the Canon of Scripture, the texts and traditions to be relied upon;
- Convening Councils, calling on the authority of the bishops properly assembled, to address, debate, and decide the particulars of the issues raised; and
- Articulating Creeds to serve as the rule of faith.

a. Canon

§1-262. In general—*Canon* comes from Greek word for "measuring rod." The Canon is a list of books acknowledged as divine revelation. The idea is a list of books constituting a standard or rule for the churches.

***Authoritative texts unusual in antiquity*—**To moderns, it is common sense that a major religion should have an authoritative set of writings as a guide. However, this was anomalous in the ancient Roman world. The idea of having a collection of sacred books that indicated what one should believe about God and how one should live one's life was unheard of in ancient pagan circles. There were tales about the gods, but these were noticeably lacking in inspirational, didactic, and ethical value.

***Hebrew Scriptures*—**Judaism was the one exception to this phenomenon. Jews across the Empire recognized the Hebrew Scriptures as sacred laws, guidance, and stories for living according to God's will. Christian witness built on this tradition.

New Testament— Several passages from what is known as the New Testament were referenced alongside those from the Old Testament. In 2 Peter 3:15-16, the author writes: "Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.'' Note the phrase "to the other scriptures." Paul's writings were considered Scriptural authority in the latter part of the first century. Again, 2 Timothy 5:17-18 says: "The elders who direct the affairs of the Church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, 'Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain', and 'The worker deserves his wages'.'' The author is instructing the Church to financially back its leaders and cites two passages of Scripture in support of this. The first is Deuteronomy 25 (part of the Torah) and the other is from Matthew 10:10. New Testament writings were equated with Scripture.

Jesus Christ compelled a rethinking of what constituted sacred writing just as he had done for sacred time, action, and structure. Around the middle of the first century, written accounts of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection began to appear. By the latter half of the second century, Tatian, in faraway Persia produced his *Diatessaron*, a harmony of the four gospels in our Bible today, demonstrating that he, and at a distance, acknowledged the four gospels and those alone as authoritative. Numerous "Gnostic" gospels dating from the second century and later have been rediscovered in the mid-20the century and a few scholars have argued that they deserve a place alongside the four canonical gospels. The early church never considered these as additional revelation or even as supplemental aids to the four gospels.

§1-263. Need for the Canon and context of its formation—It was because of the proliferation of so-called "revealed" literature and a relentlessly critical assessment of traditional texts that it was necessary to establish a canon to define Christian teaching and practice. Various dissenting or heretical groups highlighted the need to have a set of books to which to appeal for normative beliefs. A related question was whether the Old Testament was a Christian book or not. A couple of examples will have to do:

- Marcionism (see §1-134) —The God of the Old Testament was depicted as a God of wrath and the author of evil. This god was only concerned for the Jews. Marcion rejected the Old Testament and that part of the New Testament he thought favored Judaism. He adopted a truncated New Testament—ten of Paul's epistles (Pauline corpus minus the Pastorals) and a highly edited version of Luke's gospel. Marcion forced Church to decide whether the Old Testament is a Christian book and what books should be included in the New Testament.
- Montanus and "winds of the Spirit" (see §1-135)—Montanus and his two prophetesses, Prisca and Maximilla, saw themselves as lyres across which the Spirit played a new song of revelation. Anyone opposing them was opposing the Holy Spirit, indeed guilty of the unpardonable sin of Matthew 12:30. Montanists posed the question of whether self-authenticating new revelation would be allowed to push the apostolic message into the background.

***Rise of controversies*—**The controversies that arose with the ascendancy of Christianity during the age of Constantine pushed to the fore the question of what standard would be used to determine a true religious opinion from a false one. By what standard does one decide for or against Arius? How does one determine the truth concerning the nature of Jesus Christ? What does one rely on as a guide in these decisions?

§1-264. Gradual formation of the Canon—The recognition of an authoritative Old and New Testament happened gradually over time. The Hebrew Old Testament consisted of twenty-four books, including the five books of the Torah or Pentateuch, eight books of the Prophets, and eleven books in what they called the Writings. The Old Testament canonizing process was as long and involved as that of the New Testament. By time of Babylonian Captivity (586 B.C.), acceptance of Torah was well settled. The Prophets were accepted by the 2d century B.C. and the Writings at the Council of Jamnia in 90 A.D. Marcion's attack on the Old Testament raised the question of whether it was a Christian book at all. However, the Church at large readily recognized it as the Word of God to his people and adopted the Hebrew canon.

As to the New Testament, by the second century the Church began to compile a list of sacred writings. What happened over several centuries is that a consensus gradually developed concerning the authoritative writings to be relied upon. The gospels were the first to attain general recognition. The early Christians were aware of the differences in the gospels, and it was precisely for this reason that there were more than one included. The Christians chose an open tradition and multiple sources upon which to base definitive doctrine—a portrait of Jesus in stereo, if you will. These were collected and circulated by the second century. Note references in *Didache 8:2* and in Justin Martyr's *Apology*. After the gospels, the book of Acts and the Pauline epistles enjoyed early recognition. By the end of the second century, the core of the New Testament was established: the four gospels, Acts, and Paul's epistles.

Lists of accepted New Testament books began to appear. Muratorian Canon, dated to the end of the 2nd century and was circulated at Rome, affirmed the gospels, all thirteen of Paul's letters, and most of general epistles. Hebrews and James were disputed and the shorter epistles (2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, and Jude) were left off the various lists perhaps because they were too short to be cited frequently. The book that received the most debate was Revelation. It was caught up in the controversy over the renewal movement in the latter part of the second century called the New Prophecy, more commonly known as Montanism today.

***Emerging consensus*—**Slowly, a consensus emerged. Irenaeus, bishop of Lyon in the late 2d century, listed including 20+ books (minus Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, 2-3 John, and Jude) as canonical. Tertullian, a noted apologist in the early 3d century, only questioned James, 2 Peter, and 2-3 John. As for the shorter epistles, recognition did not finally come until the 4th century. Bishop Athanasius' Easter letter in 367 listed all twenty-seven New Testament books and only those as authoritative. Many people point to this letter as the time the Church agreed on the New Testament canon. This list of authoritative books

constituting the New Testament Canon was affirmed at the regional gatherings at Hippo (393) and Constantinople (397).

§1-265. Canon chronology—The following chronological chart may be of help by way of summary:

100	200 – Mura-torian Canon	250 – Origen	300 – Eusebius	400—Hippo & Carthage
* New Testament written but not collected. * Writers quote from Paul & Gospels * Paul's letters collected by 100 * Gospels col-lected by 150	Four Gospels Acts Paul's letters * Rom * 1-2 Cor * Gal * Eph * Phil * Col * 1-2 Thess * 1-2 Tim * Titus * Phile James (?) *Disputed* 1-2 John Jude Rev of John Rev of Peter Wisdom of Solomon Shepherd of Hermas	Four Gospels Acts Paul's letters * Rom * 1-2 Cor * Gal * Eph * Phil * Col * 1-2 Thess * 1-2 Tim * Titus * Phile 1 Peter 1 John Rev (?) *Disputed* Heb James 2 Peter 2-3 John Jude Shepherd of Hermas Letter of Barnabs Teaching of Twelve Gospel of Hebrews	Four Gospels Acts Paul's letters * Rom * 1-2 Cor * Gal * Eph * Phil * Col * 1-2 Thess * 1-2 Tim * Titus * Phile 1 Peter 1 John Rev (?) *Disputed* James 2 Peter 2-3 John Jude	Four Gospels Acts Paul's letters * Rom * 1-2 Cor * Gal * Eph * Phil * Col * 1-2 Thess * 1-2 Tim * Titus * Phile Heb James 1-2 Peter 1-3 John Jude Rev

§1-266. Criteria of canonicity—So how did people decide what made the grade and what did not? The practical criteria related to the use of the text in public worship. The theoretical underpinnings for making that choice rested on the following criteria:

- Apostolic authority—Was the book from the hand of one of the apostles or one of their disciples.
- Orthodoxy—Did the book conform to accepted teaching? A corollary to this related to its use in public worship. If the book was not used in worship, then why wasn't it?
- Antiquity—The Church revered ancient authority and suspected newer works.
- Catholicity—Did the book receive consensus or universal recognition?
- Inspiration of the Holy Spirit—Was the text commonly considered to be of God.

b. Councils

§1-271. In general; Apostolic succession—A second response to controversies concerned the authority of the Church. The Gnostics claimed access to secret knowledge through a succession of teachers. Marcion claimed to have access to the original message through Paul and Luke and was claiming authority to purge the rest of the New Testament, which didn't agree with his views. In response, the Church claimed to be in possession of the original message and the true teachings of Jesus.

Apostolic succession— The idea of the apostolic succession is set in this context. If Jesus had secret knowledge to communicate to his disciples, then he would have entrusted the teachings to the same apostles to whom he entrusted the churches. If those apostles had received such teaching, they in turn would have passed it on to those in leadership in the various churches.

To strengthen this argument, it was necessary to show that the bishops of that day were indeed historical successors of the apostles. Several ancient churches had lists of leaders dating back to their origins. In fact, the early leaders of these churches (Rome, Antioch, Ephesus etc.) were not the monarchial bishops of the second and third centuries, nor were they singular heads of the churches in these various cities but part of collegiate groups of officers, sometimes called "bishops" and other times called "elders" or "presbyters". However, these lists did link the churches to the apostles in ways that served as a useful check on the expansive claims of the teachers like Marcion and the Gnostics. Later, the idea of apostolic succession grew to include additional authority claims (e.g. the idea that an ordination of a presbyter (in the sense of a priest) was only valid if performed by a bishop (e.g. a monarchial bishop who could claim direct apostolic succession)).

"Catholic" in its original connotation, meaning common or universal, arises in this context. The common or universal witness of these bishops was further strengthened by a collegial network. Bishops in the early Church were often elected in each city and the custom soon developed that after such election, the prospective bishop would send a statement of faith to neighboring bishops who would vouch for his orthodoxy. "Catholic Church" referred to this episcopal collegiality as well as to the witness to the gospel as described above. "Catholic" underscores both universality and the inclusiveness of the witness upon which it stood. It was the Church "according to the whole," that is, according to all the apostles and evangelists.

§1-272. Early ecumenical councils summarized—The early Church met in general gatherings to settle issues among themselves. Many of these were local or regional gatherings (often called synods). However, some issues took on a more serious and universal character and attempts to gather the universal Church to decide these issues were made. Over time, such councils came to be known as ecumenical councils.

***Summary*—**The ecumenical councils in the period we are considering were called primarily to decide Trinitarian and Christological issues. A quick thumbnail summary follows:

- Trinitarian issues were primarily addressed at the councils of Nicaea (325) and Constantinople (381). The councils arrived at the following conclusions:
    - God is one and exists from all eternity in three co-equal, consubstantial persons.
    - The Father begets the Son.
    - Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father (and Son) – filioque clause later a great controversy.
    - Jesus is not subordinate to God; He is not just a man of Spirit, adopted for a particular purpose.

- Christological issues were primarily addressed at the councils of Ephesus (431) and Chalcedon (451). The councils arrived at the following conclusions:
    - Since the Incarnation, Christ has two distinct and complete natures, one human and the other divine.
    - These natures are inseparably joined in the one person of the Redeemer.

Summary chart:

Nicea (325)	Christ is fully divine; Trinity defined
Constantinople (381)	Christ is fully human; Trinity further elaborated
Ephesus (431)	Christ is a single, unified person
Chalcedon (451)	Christ is human and divine in one person

***Ontology as primary concern*—**It should be noted that during the debate over the nature of the Son and of the Godhead, the use of ontological metaphysical language (language pertaining to being in and of itself) came to the fore and attention shifted from what Jesus did and what God did in Jesus to who Jesus was. It shifted from the Lord's work to his person. In a sense, the debate shifted the focus from Easter and the Resurrection to Christmas and the Incarnation. Christian monotheism was recognized as a richer, more nuanced, and paradoxical monotheism than that of Judaism or Islam. Three persons in one God suggested an understanding of "unity" not simply as singleness but as embracing a rich diversity of life.

§1-273. Nicaea (325)—The Emperor Constantine summoned the Council of Nicaea in 325 to re-establish religious unity in the Empire. It was an assembly with a euphoric atmosphere. Many of those attending had been imprisoned, tortured, or exiled just a few years before. Many bore on their bodies the physical marks of their faithfulness. Furthermore, this was the first general assembly of all the Church. There before their eyes was the physical evidence of the universality of the Church and many were meeting for the first time fellow believers they had only known by correspondence or by hearsay.

The Council approved standard procedures for readmitting the lapsed, for the election and ordination of bishops and presbyters, and for establishing ecclesiastical sees. In addition, the Council diplomatically settled the dating of Easter, which had caused such consternation between east and west in the 2nd century.

***The principal issue was the Arian controversy*—**There was a small band of convinced Arians led by Eusebius of Nicomedia (not the historian). Arius was not a bishop and not allowed at the Council, so Eusebius served as his spokesman. The opposing party was led by Alexander of Alexandria, but the real champion of what became Nicene orthodoxy was Athanasius. A small group held the view that later became known as *patripassianism*, that is, that the Father and the Son are the same and that therefore the Father suffered the passion. Most bishops did not belong to any of these groups. Many hoped to forge a compromise and move on to other matters. Eusebius of Caesarea (the historian) was representative of this group.

When Eusebius of Nicomedia explained his views, the scene changed considerably. The assertion that the Son was no more than a creature met with vehement opposition and the majority was convinced that they had to reject Arianism in no uncertain way. Deep convictions were at stake concerning the nature of God and of salvation. Those on the Arian side thought they were protecting the "oneness" of God by relegating Christ to merely a creature. For Athanasius and friends, Jesus' divinity was essential to his saving mission.

***Creedal formulation*—**A creed was produced that expressed the faith of the Church in a way that Arianism was clearly excluded. What they formulated was the Creed of Nicaea to distinguish it from the final form of the Nicene Creed ratified near the end of the fourth century at the Council of Constantinople in 381.

- The Council clearly stressed the downward movement of God in redemption by asserting of the Son "who because of us men and because of our salvation came down."
- It also affirmed the complete equality of the Son with the Father is such expressions as "God from God," "light from light," "begotten not made". However, Arius' followers would subsequently twist these statements, requiring further clarification at a subsequent council.
- It decreed that certain episcopal (patriarchal) sees would hold a special place in the Christian world. These included Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria, and Rome.
- It also resolved the long-standing dispute in how to calculate the date of Easter.

The bishops used a Greek term *homoousios* in describing the Son's nature. The word meant "of the same essence or substance." It was intended to convey the idea that whatever characterizes God also characterizes the Son. They little realized that a raging controversy would attend a single Greek word.

The Council declared those supporting the Arian position heretical and deposed them. Constantine added the arm of the state to this—he banished the deposed bishops from their episcopal sees. The addition of this civil sentence to the ecclesiastical one established the precedent for intervention of the secular authority on behalf of ecclesiastical decrees. However, the Council's pronouncements on the nature of Christ did not end the controversy. It raged on for most of the 4th century with the resolution in favor of orthodoxy not at all certain.

§1-274. Constantinople (381)

Politics and theology after Nicaea—Two realities kept controversy alive:

- the term *homoousios* troubled many bishops;
- political changes complicated matters.

The mid-4th century was a period of theological confusion, largely of Constantine's doing. Several years after the Council of Nicaea, Arius drafted a creed designed to show his orthodoxy without really changing his ideas. He showed it to Constantine rather than the bishops, and Constantine asked the bishops to reinstate Arius. Alexander and his successor bishop of Alexandria, Athanasius refused. The troubling nature of the term *homoousios* increased the tense environment. The word had been associated in the third century with quasi-modalist views that blurred the distinction between the Father and the Son. In 335, Athanasius himself was deposed by a council presided over by Eusebius of Nicomedia, one of Arius' supporters. This would begin a most interesting career for Athansius as he was exiled five separate times by four different emperors over the course of the next two decades.

The political arena kept things in turmoil. Constantine died in 337 and was succeeded by his three sons who carved up the empire. Constantine II ruled Gaul and Britain, Constans Italy and North Africa, and Constantius the eastern regions. It took approximately fifteen years to sort this out. Constantine II invaded Italy (Constans portion) and was defeated and killed. Constans subsequently lost the support of his army and was overthrown and killed by his general Magnetius. Constantius took advantage of the discord in the west and defeated Magnetius and became sole emperor in 351.

At first, Constantius seemed to take a middle road between the Creed of Nicaea and the Arian faith. But by 357, it became clear that he was advocating Arianism. At a council in Serbia at Sirmium, a document was approved that criticized Nicaea, concluded that the Son "was like the Father in all respects," and removed the central assertion of Nicaea that the Son "came down" for our salvation. The document accomplished something Constantius did not intend. It rallied the church to a consensus around Nicaea. Hillary of Poitiers, sometimes referred to as the Athanasius of the west, called Constantius' document, the "Blasphemy of Sirmium."

Constantius died in 361 and was succeeded by his cousin, Julian, dubbed "the Apostate". He longed to return to the old days of glory of pagan Rome and to conquer Rome's constant eastern opponent, Persia. He died on the battlefield in 363. He had allowed all the exiled bishops to return to their sees, hoping that the presence of both orthodox and Arian bishops together would lead to infighting that would weaken the church. Athanasius returned to Alexandria and held a regional council in 362 which solidified the articulation of trinitarian orthodoxy. Athanasius forged a general agreement to use the word *hypostasis* in the sense of "person" and thus to speak of three persons (*hypostates*) in one essence (*ousia*) in God. This eliminated the modalistic objection to the use of *homoousios,* allowing that term to be understood as "of the same essence" without implying that the Father and Son were the same person in different modes.

Valens (363-378) followed Constantius to the imperial purple and followed Constantius' policy favoring Arianism. Athanasius was exiled for the fifth and last time as well as the other orthodox bishops. However, the church finally had sorted this issue out. With Valens' death at the battle of Adrianople in 378 and the succession of orthodox Theodosius I in 379, the political storm with theological consequences was finally over. All subsequent Roman and Byzantine emperors would affirm the Nicene faith.

Turning to the Holy Spirit—Some affirmed the full deity of the Son but not of the Spirit. The Cappadocian fathers (Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory Nazianus) would lead the charge for the full deity of the Spirit. Theodosius I (379-395) consolidated his power and proceeded to enforce Nicene orthodoxy. He installed Gregory Nazianus as bishop of Constantinople in 380 and called for an ecumenical council to meet in Constantinople in 381.

The council of Constantinople in 381 produced what we now know as the Nicene Creed. It affirmed—

- That the Father and Son of the same essence.
- The downward movement of God in His Son's redemptive work.
- The full deity of the Spirit. Echoing the words of John 15:26, the Council articulated the relationship of the Spirit in the Godhead as "proceeding" from the Father rather than "begotten" as with the Son, thus clearly indicating that the Spirit is not another Son.
- The condemnation of Apollinarianism, a view of Christ as having a human body but not a human mind because He already had a divine mind or spirit. Without a human mind, would the incarnate Son be able to fully undergo human experience and be tempted as we are? Gregory of Nazianus led the dissent. "The unassumed is unhealed" became the classic expression of the Son taking on himself every aspect of humanity at the Incarnation.
- That the see at Constantinople was equal in honor to the other patriarchal sees (Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem) and second only to Rome.

The followers of Arius continued to insist on the subordination rather than the equality of the Son to the Father. Imperial politics played into the controversy. Constantine seemed to back off on the Nicene formula while his sons spilt on the issue: Constantius II (337-

361) being an avid supporter of Arius in the east and Constans (337-351) an avid supporter of orthodoxy in the west. Missionary activity was no boon to orthodoxy as most of the barbarians converted in the 4th century were converted to an Arian form of the faith.

Capable teaching and imperial support won the day for orthodoxy. The teaching of the Cappadocian fathers (Basil of Caesarea (330-379), his brother Gregory of Nyssa (330-395), and Gregory of Nazianus (329-390) in the East and Ambrose (339-397) and Hilary (315-368) in the West provided support to Nicene orthodoxy. The reversal of Christian fortunes under Julian the Apostate (361-363) revealed how fragile a divided Christianity could be in the ruthless politics of the Empire led to the rallying of support for Nicene orthodoxy as the faith of the Empire. That was cemented under Theodosius I (379-395) with the establishment of Christianity as the official religion of the Empire in 380.

Nicene Creed outside the Roman Empire—Both the Persian and Indian churches affirmed a version of the Nicene Creed. In the fourth century, the Persian church was in the throes of a merciless persecution by Shapur and his successors. That ended with an edict of toleration in 409 and in 410 the Persian church convened a major council, which made Seleucia-Ctesiphon the principal see of the church and took up the questions related to the Nicene Creed. The church affirmed a version of the Creed, the idea of mono-episcopacy (one bishop per diocese), and approved dates for the celebration of Christmas and Easter. The Nicene Creed was also affirmed by the Indian, Armenian, Georgian, and Ethiopian churches as well.

North of the Empire was a different story. The Goths and the Vandals were to defeat the Roman legions in the 5th century. These northern tribes were converted to Christianity in the fourth century through the missionary work of one Ulfilas, a man of Gothic and Cappadocian ancestry who was an ardent Arian believer. He explicitly affirmed that the Son and the Spirit were created creatures. When the Goths and Vandals conquered the Western Empire in the 5th century, they lived in uneasy coexistence with their subjects who adhered to the Nicene faith. It was not until the ascent of the Franks under Clovis and the Merovingians in the sixth and seventh centuries that the Nicene faith gained ascendancy and Arianism died out.

Concluding reflections—The Trinitarian and Christological controversies of the fourth century were messy and the twists and turns in the debate are difficult to follow. However, the essential issue is straightforward. Christians have always affirmed than human beings cannot rise up to God or save themselves. If we are to be saved, God must come to us. Thus, the Son and the Spirit who come down to accomplish and apply our salvation must be as fully God as the Father. Messy though it was, the controversies concluded with a consistent affirmation of allegiance to God the Father, His eternal and equal Son, and His eternal and equal Spirit.

§1-275. Ephesus (431) and Formula of Reunion—Ephesus was an unfortunate council. There were bishops and delegates coming from Constantinople (led by Nestorius), Anatolia (led by Memnon, an ally of Cyril), Syria (John of Antioch), Egypt (Cyril), and

Rome (Celestine). John of Antioch let the Council know that his party would be arriving late and if he was delayed beyond that, the Council should start without him. Cyril started the Counsel immediately and summoned Nestorius to defend himself prior to the arrival of delegates sympathetic to Nestorius. The Council then read a selection from Nestorius' writings and condemned him. When John and the Syrian bishops arrived, they were furious with Cyril's action and met with Nestorius and "his" bishops and condemned Cyril and Memnon for their action. Celestine's delegation came late as well and affirmed Cyril and Memnon's action. Theodosius ended up affirming Cyril's council and sent Nestorius into exile. What was supposed to be an ecumenical council had turned into an ecclesiastical standoff, with Syria and Constantinople one side and Egypt, Anatolia, and Rome on the other.

John of Antioch later proposed a document (the Formula of Reunion) as a basis for reconciliation. Cyril and John agreed to a modified version of this formula and had Nestorius banished to a Saharan oasis in Egypt for the rest of his life (two decades). The Formula stressed two things:

- The person who was the Father's eternal Son was the very one born of Mary for our salvation.
- The affirmation of two natures (using *physis* to mean "nature") in one person.

The Formula embodied the belief that the Son really did come down for our salvation and that the Father's Son was the same one who was born of Mary. The consensus going forward involved the use of physis to mean "nature" rather than "person," thus the affirmation of two *physeis* in the person of Christ. This consensus was widely misunderstood.

§1-276. Chalcedon (451)— The lead-up to Chalcedon was as messy as Ephesus ever was. John of Antioch died in 441 and Cyril in 444 and subsequently their Formula fell apart. Controversy enveloped Eutyches, an elderly monk who served as a spiritual adviser at the imperial court in Constantinople. He allegedly claimed that Christ's humanity was absorbed into his deity. It also touched Bishop Leo of Rome in his *Tome to Flavian,* whose language was claimed to have Nestorian overtones. Flavian, bishop in Constantinople, held a synod at Constantinople in 448, which condemned Eutyches and questioned Leo's *Tome*. A council was called in 449, the so-called "Robber's Council" at Ephesus, which reinstated Eutyches and declared Flavian heretical. In 450, Theodosius died, his sister Pulcheria stepped in the power vacuum, marrying Marcian, a senator, and having him named emperor. In 451, Marcian called for an ecumenical council which met at Chalcedon, an imperial resort near Nicaea.

The hypostatic union (divine-human union in Christ) was the focus of this Council. The Antioch school emphasized the two natures of Christ taking care that they were not understood as confused. Alexandria school emphasized Christ's divinity. The Antiochenes saw the doctrine of salvation at stake—what Christ did depended on who he was. By living in perfect obedience to God, the second Adam undid the damage of the first Adam's sin.

The Council affirmed that Jesus Christ was "complete in Godhead and complete in manhood, truly God and truly man, … in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, or without separation … coming together to form one person." Thus, the final resolution was that Christ had two complete natures without confusion or change (rejecting Monophysitism), whose two natures coexisted without division or separation (rejecting Nestorius). Christ had a reasonable soul and was one substance with the Father (rejecting Apollinarius and Arius). The *Tome* of Leo, bishop of Rome, had a significant effect on the ultimate outcome and raised the prestige of that bishopric.

Physis was used as in the Formula of Reunion to mean "nature" rather than "person." However, many Greek speakers in the east, who were somewhat inattentive to the full statement of the Council, misinterpreted the Council's declaration as implying a separation of Christ into two persons, the man Jesus and the *Logos* who indwelt Him, rather than referring to the Lord's two distinct natures, divine and human. In the Latin speaking West, it was assumed that "two *physeis*" meant two natures and thus had no difficulty in affirming the conclusions of the Council.

***Concluding reflections*—**What may have been a genuine consensus of the person and nature of Christ was obscured by imperial and ecclesiastical intrigue and confusion over the use of words. The consensus was that fallen human beings could not rise up to God, but that God must come down to us. Therefore, Christ must not be merely a man with a special connection to God, but God the Son himself, who has come down by taking human nature upon himself and living as a human being. However, consensus was muddled by all the theatrics and basically three groups emerged from Chalcedon:

- The Orthodox, following Cyril's thought.
- The Monophysites, who were still in the thralls of debating how "*physis*" was used. Some prefer to describe them as Oriental Orthodoxy.
- True Nestorians.

Responses to Chalcedon by region varied—

- In Byzantium it saw it as a clear statement of orthodox faith;
- In Egypt and Syria, the language of two *physeis* was interpreted in the sense of "two persons" and rejected as a heretical Nestorian statement.
- In the West, where authority of Rome was always a paramount concern, the Chalcedon formula was attributed to the influence of Leo's *Tome.* The West insisted on its authority and drew implications from it for the authority of the Roman bishop.
- In the Persian church, a separate and self-governing church since 424*,* Chalcedon was largely ignored since they were uninvolved. The church looked warily at those in Syria and others due west of Persia who seemed to be following Eutyches and asserting the absorption of Christ's humanity into his deity.

1-277. Ecumenical councils (as accepted by the Roman Catholic Church)—The early ecumenical councils established a tradition in the Church of general meetings to decide issues of pressing import. What follows is a chart summarizing the ecumenical councils of the Church as accepted by the Roman Catholic Church. Orthodox believers of various

ethnic stripes accept the verdicts of the first seven of the councils. Protestants have come late on the scene and have a varied take on the results of the councils, but usually agree with the early councils through the Council of Chalcedon (451).

Councils through the years (Roman Catholic reckoning):

Number/date		**Name**	**Primary decisions; Headlines**
1 (325)		1 Nicaea	Condemnation of Arius Creed of Nicaea Son of one substance with Father
2 (381)		1 Constantinople	Reiteration of Nicaea; Nicene Creed in Divinity of the Holy Spirit Condemnation of Apollinarius
3 (431)		Ephesus	Condemnation of Nestorius Mary *theotokos* "bearer of God"
4 (451)		Chalcedon	Condemnation of Eutyches Two natures—divine & human—in Ch
5 (553)		2 Constatinople	Condemnation of "Three Chapters" Theodore of Mopsuestia Theodoret Ibas of Edessa
6 (680-681)		3 Constantinople	Condemnation of monothelism Condemnation of Pope Honorius
7 (787)		2 Nicaea	Condemnation of iconoclasts Images worthy of veneration *(dulia*), bu *(latria)*
8 (869-870)		4 Constantinople	Ended schism of Photius
9 (1123)		1 Lateran	Confirmed Concordat of Worms betwe Emperor of Holy Roman Empire
10 (1139)		2 Lateran	Compulsory clerical celibacy
11 (1179)		3 Lateran	Determined method of papal election
12 (1215)		4 Lateran	Transubstantiation Yearly confession & communion requi Condemnned Joachim of Fiore Condemned Waldensians & Albigensia Regulated Inquisition
13 (1245)		1 Lyons	Deposed Emperor Frederick II
14 (1274)		2 Lyons	New papal election regulations (essenti used to the present day) Nominal reunion with Constantinople
15 (1314)		Vienne	Templars suppressed
16 (1415)		Constance	End of Papal Schism Condemnation of John Huss Conciliar authority over the Pope Plans for reformation & additional cou

17 (1431-1445)		Basel/Ferrara/Florence	Nominal reunions with Constantinople, Jacobites
18 (1512-1517)		5 Lateran	Condemned schismatic council of Pisa
19 (1545-1563)		Trent	Condemned Protestantism Authority of Scripture & tradition Consolidated Catholic Counter-reforma
20 (1869-1870)		1 Vatican	Papal infallibility
21 (1962-1965)		2 Vatican	Liturgical renewal (use of vernacular) New openness to lay ministry and parti New openness to other Christians Church to the modern world: addressin inequalities; nuclear war; & religious fr

c. Creeds

§1-281. In general—Our word comes from the Latin *credo,* meaning "I believe." The focus of the early church was equally focused on whom we profess to believe as well as what we believe. The early believers saw being a Christian as fundamentally about allegiance to the risen Lord Jesus. The creeds have something of a baptismal declaration about them. Just as the catechumen professed belief in and allegiance to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in baptism, so too the structure of the creeds reflect professed allegiance and belief. They were organized around the three divine persons, with the details of Christ's life, death, and resurrection amplifying the discussion of the Son, making that section of the creed much longer than that of the Father or the Spirit.

***Early efforts*—**The final aspect of the Church's response to heresies was the development of creeds. Attempts to formally state the basic beliefs of the Church began quite early. Baptismal creeds were developed and handed down from mother to daughter churches. One of these was a shorter version of what we now call the Apostles' Creed. It was not composed by the apostles but was assembledr around 150, probably in Rome. Later in the second century, Irenaeus developed a rule of faith like the Apostle's Creed in providing a doctrinal framework for Christian faith for the churches he was shepherding.

***Controversies as prompting*—**The Trinitarian and Christological controversies, which prompted the calling of the initial ecumenical councils, resulted in the production of creedal statements. The nature of Christ and His relationship to the Father dominated the first two councils at Nicaea in 325 and at Constantinople in 381. The doctrine of the Trinity was formulated at these councils. The relationship between the human and divine in Christ was dealt with definitively at Chalcedon (451).

***Purpose and use*—**Creeds of the faith attempted to state the essence of Christianity with accuracy and concision. Such statements were intended to be useful in preaching and in instructing catechumens. The two most extensively used formulations were Apostle's Creed and the Nicene Creed. The Apostle's Creed was in widespread use by the 3rd century and perhaps in its present form by 7th century. The Nicene Creed was formulated

and revised by the end of the 4th century. As a rule of thumb, the Latin West favored Apostle's Creed while the Greek East preferred the Nicene Creed.

§1-282. Apostles' Creed

"I believe in God the Father Almighty; Maker of heaven and earth.

"And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; the third day he arose from the dead; he ascended into heaven; and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

"I believe in the Holy Spirit; the holy catholic Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen."

***Observations*—**The Apostles' Creed adopted the name because it attempted to concisely summarize the apostolic faith. The creed was directed against Marcion and the Gnostics. Consider the following:

- Use of "Father almighty" (*pantokrator*), which means "all ruling". Other versions read "Creator of all things visible and invisible." Nothing, including the material world, falls outside of God's rule. The distinction between a spiritual reality that serves God and a material reality that does not is rejected.
- The paragraph dealing with the Son is extensive. Jesus Christ is declared to be the "Son of God" who rules over this world and all reality. He is declared to be born of the Virgin Mary, affirming the virgin birth to be sure, but, to the point of controversy, affirming that Jesus was born and did not just appear on earth as claimed by Marcion. Pontius Pilate is mentioned, not to put the blame for Jesus' death exclusively on the Romans, but rather to date a definitive historical event. Docetism is denied in the affirmation that Jesus "was crucified … dead, and buried". That Jesus would judge this world is affirmed, a thing Marcion would deny.
- The third paragraph or clause affirms the authority of the Church against the various groupings arising in Marcionite and Gnostic circles. The "resurrection of the flesh" is a final rejection of any idea that the flesh is inherently evil or of no consequence.

§1-283. Nicene Creed (325); revised at Constantinople (381).

"We believe in one God the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of all that is, seen and unseen.

"We believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, being of one Being with the Father, through him all things were made. For us and for our

salvation, he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became truly human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated on the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

"We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen."

§1-284. Chalcedon Creed (451)—"We, then, following the holy Fathers, all with one consent, teach men to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood, truly God and truly man, of a reasonable soul and body; consubstantial with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the Manhood; in all things like unto us, without sin; begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, according to the Manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and the only begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the prophets from the beginning have declared concerning him, and the Lord Jesus Christ himself has taught us, and the creed of the holy Fathers has handed down to use."

E. Reaction to Christian Ascendancy

§1-291. Reactions to the new order—Reactions were positive and negative. Those enthusiastically supporting the Christian faith's sudden rise to favor began to develop what might be called an "official theology." This sought to show that Constantine was chosen by God to bring the history of both Church and Empire to its culmination. The Church historian, Eusebius of Caesarea, was typical of this attitude.

However, others did not see imperial favor as a boon. They saw it as the faith being watered down and wanted nothing to do with the whole situation and retreat into the wilderness or desert to lead lives of meditation and asceticism. While martyrdom was no longer threatening, true disciples must continue training and that was in the monastic life. The fourth century witnessed a mass exodus of devout Christians to the deserts of Egypt and Syria.

Others just chose to break with the main Church for disciplinary reasons. The Donatists were representative of this track. Intellectual activity abounded in the era, and not always

in the realm of sound teaching. The Arian and Monophysite controversies loomed and caused divisions.

Finally, there was a pagan reaction as well, best represented by the Emperor Julian (361-363). This reaction gained the most ground in old Roman aristocratic circles and in the rural areas of the Empire.

1. Monasticism: Call to Simplicity and Discipleship

§1-292. In general—Monk comes from *monos* and means "one who lives alone." Moderns do not know what to make of monks. Edward Gibbon, the author of the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, and others like him sneer "at the unhappy exiles from social life, impelled by the dark and implacable genius of superstition." However, monasticism represented much more than that. It started as a movement of believers who were looking for a more vigorous, vibrant faith.

In the first three centuries, earnest discipleship was not a problem. Christians were surrounded by a suspicious, slanderous, and hostile society that became a persecuting one in various locales and eras. However, after Constantine, being a Christian could be quite a comfortable gig. Becoming a Christian was the thing to do, a ticket to a possibly good ride to influence and position. Gregory of Nazianzus complained "The chief seat is gained by evil doing, not by virtue; the sees (bishoprics) belong, not to the more worthy, but to the more powerful."

White martyrdom—It is true that ascetic monasticism was about being a Christian hero for some. The martyrs received recognition and kudos. They were venerated. Christians went on pilgrimages to their shrines. Relics would soon be a booming business. However, with the advent of Constantine, martyrdom was not in the cards anymore. In the 4th and 5th centuries, the model Christian was no longer the courageous bishop dragged before wild animals in the Roman arena, but the "white martyr", the lonely hermit in the forsaken Egyptian desert defying evil. The martyrs renounced their lives by defying the world system; the monastics and ascetics renounced the world system by withdrawing from it.

Asceticism in the pagan and Christian worlds— To varying degrees, Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism, Gnosticism, and philosophical systems like Neoplatonism were uneasy with, or even antagonistic to, the physical world. Various forms of asceticism were profoundly world-rejecting and deeply committed to the soul's self-salvation. People were urged to forego marriage for celibacy, restrict their diet and even fast severely, and to shun the accumulation of wealth and property and embrace poverty. Stoics held that passions were the great enemy of true wisdom and the wise should devote themselves to perfecting their souls by subjugating their passions. There were precedents of communal living outside the bounds of ordinary society among the Epicureans and the Pythagoreans. Additional precedents were found in Judaism (the Essenes and the Therapetuae, described by Philo of Alexandria), and the community in the desert at Qumran.

Christianity stands at odds with dualistic ascetic movements. It does not identify the physical world or all physical activity as evil. Indeed, the created world is declared to be very good (Gen. 1:31) at its outset. Properly understood, Christian faith does not speak of souls ascending to the true God, but of the true God descending to our realm to redeem unworthy humanity. However, Christianity has always spawned ascetic movements, not denying the goodness of matter, of food, of marriage and sexual relations, but instead focusing on denying oneself legitimate interests for the sake of pursuing higher ones.

§1-293. Monastic patterns—There were two patterns for monastic living:

Eremitical monasticism—It was in the desert, particularly the Egyptian desert, which proved to be the starting place for monasticism. The desert was at first attractive to monastics, not so much because of the hardships it presented, but because of its inaccessibility. This was eremitical monasticism (from *eremos* = wilderness, desert). The milieu of the birth of monasticism was a combination of a chaotic and crumbling Empire and the ascendancy of the Church in power. The hermit fled from both the world at large and the world in the Church.

The Scriptural precedent was the wilderness motif that runs throughout Scripture. The desert/wilderness was the place for encountering God:

- Moses and Israel in Pentateuch;
- Elijah fleeing to the desert;
- Jeremiah's laments; and
- The Lord's own practice (e.g. his retreat into the desert to be tempted 40 days and nights)

Wilderness scene—In the closing centuries of the Roman Empire, so popular was the wilderness life that a virtual city appeared on the fringes of the Egyptian desert. The monks sought to create an alternate culture, based not on wealth but poverty, not on power but weakness, not on prestige but lowliness. In their communal life they saw themselves as living the "apostolic life" described by the book of Acts. In a sense, the same impulse that drove the Reformation in the 16th century was alive and well in early monasticism—a return to simplicity, poverty, the imitation of Jesus, and the trusting heart of faith.

Cenobitic monasticism—Another form of monastic life, and eventually the dominant form, was *cenobitic* monasticism, a form of communal monasticism. The term "cenobite" comes from the Greek *koinos bios* (meaning life together). It arose out of the tendency among monastics to gather around particularly saintly hermits and out of the very nature of the gospel.

§1-294. Monastic development and appeal—From the solitude of the early hermits, monasticism evolved into disciplined and large communities of monks. Initially eschewing books and learning, the movement soon enrolled such scholars as Jerome, Augustine, and Basil. Originally a lay movement, it soon embraced bishops and eventually became the standard for the ideal bishop. At root was the conviction that the

ideal Christian life was one of personal poverty and sharing of goods. The monastics took the New Testament exhortation to not be conformed to this world (Rom. 12:2) very seriously. They looked back to the early believers who shared all their possessions and lived very dedicated lives (Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-36). This radical dedication caused a distinction to arise in Christian community which continued through the centuries—two levels of Christians, one marked by vows of celibacy and obedience that only monastics took.

***Wealthy and sophisticated*—**The appeal of monasticism reached the wealthy and sophisticated of the day. Evagorius (345-399) was born a Christian and educated in Constantinople. After an affair when a priest, he fled to Jerusalem and joined a monastery. He spent most of his life in the desert. A disciple of Origen, his writings (*Praktikos* and *Gnostic Chapters*) were influential on later spirituality.

Palladius (364-420 or 430) was a well-established figure in society who went on pilgrimage to the monks in the desert in Egypt and Palestine, seeking a simplicity and nobility of life he felt was unavailable in the cities of the late Empire. He collected sayings and stories in *Lausiac History*, which presents a vivid picture of Egyptian monasticism.

Macrina was a Roman matron who used her massive fortune to establish and support monastic foundations and met the practical needs of the monks. Here we see the Roman patronage system (or *clientalia*) taking on a Christian ministry face. She influenced her brothers, Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nyssa, two of the three Cappadocian fathers, to a more serious and disciplined Christian discipleship.

***Athanasius, Jerome, and others*—**Word spread about the monastic ideal by pilgrims to the desert. But those who contributed most to the spread of the monastic ideal were bishops and scholars who saw the value of monastic witness for the daily life of the Church. Athanasius wrote the *Life of Anthony*, observing the monastic life first-hand when he fled persecution by imperial authority in the Arian controversy. Augustine partly attributed his conversion to reading that book. Athanasius was not a monk himself but sought to organize his own life by monastic discipline and promote the monastic ideals and worldly renunciation.

Jerome wrote *Life of Paul the Hermit*, translated Pachomius' *Rule* into Latin, and became a monk himself. His works and example had a tremendous impact on the Western Church. Basil of Caesarea found time amid theological controversy to organize monasteries where he spent time in devotion and in care of the needy.

Martin of Tours is a name to remember in Western monasticism. He was born in Pannonia (now Hungary) in 335 to a soldier and resided in various parts of the Empire. He decided to become a Christian against his parents' wishes and his father, to keep Martin away from his Christian contacts, had him enrolled in the army. Martin served in the early campaigns of Julian the Apostate. During this era of his life, near the city of Amiens in Gaul, Martin encountered a freezing beggar and responded by cutting his

cloak in two and giving half to the freezing man. Soon after this event, Martin was baptized and then discharged from the army. He settled in the town of Poitiers in Gaul (modern day France) and devoted himself to the monastic life. His fame for sanctity spread through the region. When the bishopric of nearby Tours became vacant, Martin was elected bishop but did not abandon his monastic ways. His example took root. Many came to think of a true bishop in terms of the monastic ideal and not in terms of the pomp and worldly power that had come to characterize the bishoprics in the post-Constantinian era.

***John Cassian*—**An important source of what we know about early monastic ideals are two works by John Cassian (360-430) entitled *Institutes* and *Conferences*, a compendium of Egyptian monastic lore. The *Institutes* elaborates on cenobitic life in detail while the *Conferences* are sermons by desert monks on topics extending from prayer and contemplation to fighting boredom or temptation.

§1-295. Anthony and the early hermits—Christian monasticism in the form of solitary wilderness life initiated with by the life of Anthony of Egypt (251-356). He was something of a "rock star" of the early hermits. What we know of Anthony comes from a biography, the *Life of Anthony*, written by Athanasius of Alexandria around 360. Athanasius lionized solitary monasticism, also known as anchoritic or eremitic monasticism = Greek for "retreating" and "desert." Antony alternated between seclusion where he struggled against his own sinfulness and engagement where he provided spiritual advice to the other disciples who visited with him. This latter pattern of engagement began to manifest what has been described as the *a laura* pattern in solitary monasticism. These were groups of solitary monastics in loose communities. Over time, the wisdom of the monastics like Antony were collected and revered by fellow monastics and by believers from all levels of society. Particularly noteworthy in these sayings is that these "desert fathers" including many women.

***Background*—**Anthony was born in Egypt of wealthy parents. They died when Anthony was young, leaving him an inheritance sufficient for Anthony and his younger sister to live comfortably. The story of the rich young ruler inspired Anthony to dispose of his property, reserve a portion for the care of his sister, and to give the rest to the poor. He then spent several years learning the monastic life from an old anchorite. He then spent his life retreating ever deeper into the desert pursued by other monks desirous of learning from him the discipline of prayer and contemplation. Anthony's desire to be alone was in danger of being thwarted by the desire of his disciples to join him.

He visited the great city of Alexandria on two occasions. The first occurred during the persecution of Diocletian, when he and others went to offer their lives up as martyrs. The Roman official deemed them unworthy of his attention, and they contented themselves with offering encouragement to their fellow believers. The second visit was during the Arian controversy to quell rumors that he was an Arian supporter. He lived into the 350s and attended by two younger monks as he approached the end of his days.

***Elements of early monasticism*—**In Athanasius' account of Anthony's life, we see the elements of early monasticism:

- The world is corrupt. The disciple desires to be alone and apart from the world to strive to achieve true discipleship through struggle.
- Monasticism is a form of "white martyrdom". The monk is not fighting wild beasts in the arena and dying a bloody death, but inner demons in a solitary environment to die to self and struggle for an authentically pure faith.
- The arena for battle is the mind and the body. The control of the body through mental and physical dedication (asceticism) is a key dimension of early (and subsequent) forms of monasticism.
- Early monastics, while striving to live alone, were submissive to ecclesiastical authority and strongly orthodox in their outlook.
- The "desert fathers" or "sages of the desert" were magnets that drew other followers who sought the wisdom the fathers personified.

***The desert monks lived extremely simply*—**Their daily routine included prayer, usually standing, sometimes for hours, meditation, reading from Scripture, and fasting, often and lengthy, from food and sleep. The desired consequence was a growing spiritual awareness. Some planted gardens, but most earned their living by weaving baskets and mats out of reeds that they traded for bread and oil. Their possessions were their clothing and a mat to sleep on. They did not own books, fearing that knowledge might puff them up. They memorized entire books of the Bible, particularly the Psalms and the New Testament.

***Severe asceticism*—**Some engaged in ridiculously severe asceticism to gain reputations. Stories of hermits going to extremes abound—pole dwellers, cave dwellers, anchorites. Fantastic stories of temptations and hallucinations raised real questions of their mental balance. Other hermits, thinking their lives holier than those of most bishops and priests, deemed themselves the proper deciders of Christian teaching.

§1-296. Pachomius and communal monasticism—Communal or coenobitic monasticism (coenobitic = Greek for "common life") is exemplified by the communities founded by Pachomius (286-346). He was born in Egypt to pagan parents. As a young man, he was forced to join the army. Consoled by Christians in the army, he sought out believers when he was discharged unexpectedly from the service. He converted to Christianity around 313. He lived as a solitary hermit for seven years and was deeply influenced by a solitary monastic named Palamon. He received visions to join in the monastic but in a communal, not solitary, manner and felt commanded to move in the direction of founding a community of hermits. He persuaded his younger brother join him in the life of prayer and contemplation.

Pachomius established the first monastery where monks lived communally under a formal rule as a corrective to the abuses of the hermits. Their basic rule was one focused on mutual service. New initiates were required to break from their former lives but given

significant freedom to pursue their spiritual callings once this break was made. Daily life in community was dominated by work, Bible reading and meditation, prayer, and discussion of how to apply Biblical principles to communal life. By the time of his death, there were nine monasteries for men and two for women under his authority with thousands of members.

***Rule of life*—**He established a regulated common life, in which the monks ate, labored, slept, and worshiped. Anyone joining the community was required to give up all their possessions and pledge absolute obedience to their superiors. He called for fixed hours, manual work, uniform dress, and strict discipline. Life in community kept one connected and accountable in an orderly and productive routine. The rule consisted of a rhythm of isolation—time alone in prayer and meditation and in working small crafts—and common time together devoted to meals, common prayer, and instruction. Subsequent leaders would elaborate on this rule, particularly Basil of Caesarea in the east and Benedict of Nursia in the west. Augustine was influenced by this and started his own community at Thagaste in North Africa.

Daily routines of the monks included both work and devotion. Common prayers were twice a day, in the morning and evening. These prayer times included the singing of the psalms and the reading of Scripture. Poverty was the vow, but Pachomius did not insist on exaggerated poverty. The diet included bread, fruit, vegetables, and fish, but never meat. The monks produced their own food and sold the excess to local markets or gave it to the poor or provided hospitality to sojourners. In each housing unit, there was a superior, who in turn was subject to the superior of the monastery and his deputy. Above the superiors was Pachomius and his successors who called themselves abbots or archmandrites. Twice a year all the monks gathered for prayer and worship and to deal with issues necessary to maintain proper order in the communities. The monks never accepted ecclesiastical office or ordination. Each Sunday a priest would come to the monastery and celebrate communion.

***Novices*—**People seeking admission to the monastery simply appeared at the gate of the enclosure. They were usually spent several days and nights at the gate, begging to be let in. When let in, the gatekeepers took charge of the new arrivals, living among them until the newcomers were deemed ready to join the community. Surprisingly, many new arrivals were not Christians, an indication of the enormous attraction of the solitude of the desert in the fourth century.

§1-297. Egyptian monasticism—The Egyptian desert beckoned people to abandon the crowds, the complexity, and the danger of city life and live more simply away from civilization. In the third century, Rome encountered economic and political crises, and many headed for the sands for a variety of reasons:

- Persecution—The Decian/Valerian and the Diocletian/Galerian persecutions were the most violent and systematic of the Roman persecutions. Christian headed to the desert and stayed there even after the persecutions lifted.
- Societal breakdown—The third century was a century of crisis for the Roman Empire. Many fled to the desert to escape.

- Spiritual critique—Many felt that the Constantinian church had become thoroughly worldly.
- The noble heroic—Some wanted to court spiritual battle to be strengthened in their faith.

This was a mass exodus involving many people. Some wanted to leave their environs because of the compromise they saw in Christians around them. Others abandoned their villages to flee the increasingly oppressive tax burden that characterized the later Empire. The reasons for the exodus abounded, including the inspirational life of Anthony. He was a legend of solitude attractive to the early monastics. Anthony went out into the desert in the middle of the 3rd century. As many as 100,000 followed him to the desert in the last years of antiquity.

Monastic theologians—Egypt was also the home of the first great monastic theologians—Shenoute of Atripe and Evagrius of Ponticus. Shenoute lived more than one hundred years, dying in 466. His writings were mostly sermons, moral homilies for the benefit of the communal monastics that he led. Evagrius wrote of eight besetting sins that hindered the monastic's spiritual progress. He called these the "eight words" (gluttony, lust, greed, anger, dejection, weariness, vainglory, and pride). They would become the basis for the medieval "seven deadly sins" that one finds expounded in Aquinas. He also proposed a three-step pathway to spiritual perfection:

- *praktike*—eradicating one's vices (the eight words) and acquiring virtues;
- *physike*—acquiring an equanimity of soul in order to fight demons;
- *theologike*—contemplating God purely and perfectly once one had vanquished one's own sinfulness and demonic opposition.

These became monasticism's problematic theological underpinnings. The strong focus on ascetic denial and the upward progress of the soul undercut the Christian insistence on the essential goodness of the physical realm and ran the danger of espousing an essential dualism as well as tending to obscure the priority of God's downward action for our salvation. The Christian idea of redemption is not humanity reaching for God but God reaching down to us.

§1-298. Syria, Palestine, and Asia Minor—The presence of significant biblical sites in Palestine contributed to the growth of monasticism in the region. Helena, mother of the Emperor Constantine, went on pilgrimage from 326 to 328 to identify important biblical sites and Constantine had churches built on the sites she identified, including the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem and the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem. Monastic communities grew up around these sites. Wealthy widows, Melania in Jerusalem and Paula in Bethlehem, established communities that drew famous inhabitants—Rufinius in Jerusalem and Jerome, translator of the Latin Vulgate, in Bethlehem. These communal monasteries focused on scholarship, manuscript preservation, and hospitality to visitors. Monasteries not located at famous sites were usually of a *laura* pattern of solitary monasticism.

During the fourth century, communal monasticism exploded in Syria. The fifth century witnessed the phenomena of the Stylites or "pillar monks", those living on pillars using elevation to gain a unique vantage on the world around them. The most famous of these was Symeon the Stylite. He spent a decade in a communal monastery before receiving permission in 423 to live alone atop a nearby hill. Over the next four decades, he developed a system of pillars upon which he lived. He prayed, carried on extensive correspondence influencing the affairs of the church, and provided spiritual advice to thousands of visitors.

In Edessa, now Urfa, a city in southwest Turkey, clusters of celibate monastics, called the Sons and Daughters of the Covenant, made explicit commitments to remaining in society at large while following a set of spiritual steps towards greater closeness with God. Edessa became a significant center for Persian Christianity and its expression of monasticism was less bent on separation from society than in the Roman world. Rather than emphasizing a decisive break with one's previous life, as in Pachomian monasticism, Persian monasticism called for its adherents to live within and be concerned about their local communities and churches while remaining celibate and exercising a set of spiritual disciplines marking them out as different from society at large.

In Anatolia, also called Asia Minor, was a province in consisting of the Asian part of modern-day Turkey. Monasticism here was the story of a remarkable family. Basil (the elder) and his wife Emmelia were wealthy Roman aristocrats and devout believers. They had ten children. The eldest, Macrina, lost her fiance before they were married and subsequently devoted herself to the monastic lifestyle. She convinced her mother to dedicate the family estate in central Anatolia to monastic ascetism and the property became home to several monasteries. Her brother Naucratius became a noted jurist and lived as a hermit on the property. Another brother, Peter, became a bishop. Two other brothers became the great Trinitarian theologians, Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nyssa. Macrina's influence on her younger brothers was notable. Basil became a great monastic leader and wrote a short treatise *Small Asketikon,* enumerating the principles of monastic life that became the closest thing to a fixed rule in eastern monasticism. It was translated into Latin in the fifth century and became known as the *Rule of St. Basil*.

***Episcopal authority*—**The monks submitted to the authority of the bishop as a curb on spiritual freelancing. They began to focus on service to the surrounding community, including medical treatment, relief of the poor, and educational activities. They sought the salvation of their souls by fleeing the "entanglements of the body." Monasticism provided a context for the pursuit of the Christian ideal—mutual support, context for freeing one from selfishness and bodily passion, and the community supplied with a range of gifts needed for spiritual exercise.

§1-299. Western monasticism

Early monasticism in the Western world—Monasticism spread quickly from Egypt to North Africa. Augustine lived as a monk before becoming a bishop and wrote a monastic rule for the monasteries around Carthage. Most of western monasticism took place north

of the Mediterranean. Early eastern monasticism was often sponsored by wealthy aristocrats, many of them women—Helen, Melania, Paula, Macrina and her mother. In the west, Martin of Tours, a converted former pagan soldier, loomed large. In 360, he established a communal monastery near Poitiers in central France and in 371 became bishop of Tours. He dedicated his pastoral efforts to the evangelization of the rural poor in northern Europe.

John Cassian was a significant figure in early western monasticism. He spent time in eastern monasteries in Palestine, Egypt, and Constantinople before founding monasteries near Marseilles in France. In the 420s, he wrote the *Institutes* and the *Conferences,* which brought the principles of Egyptian monasticism and ascetic spirituality to the western world.

***Benedict of Nursia*—**Casian's writings and those of Basil of Caesarea had profound influence on the greatest of all Christian monastic systematizers. Benedict of Nursia is regarded as the father of Western monasticism. In 529, he founded the famous monastery at Monte Cassino in central Italy and in 540, he wrote the *Rule of Benedict*, which became the basis of subsequent communal monasticism in the West. There were three keys to Benedict's *Rule:*

- the monk's voluntary obedience to the abbot of the monastery;
- the monk's acceptance of voluntary poverty and chastity; and
- the concept of the "work of God," the daily routine of work, study, and worship/prayer/reflection.

The monastics sought closeness to God through a disciplined life of moderate asceticism, productive manual work, and attention to Scripture and prayer.

***Spiritual fortress*—**Benedict saw the monastery as a spiritual fortress apart from the world. He emphasized work, study, prayer, and worship; there were seven or eight short services each day. Monks were to be "instruments of good works" —to love God and others in tangible ways, to fast regularly, to aid the poor, to be truthful, to avoid returning evil for evil, and to shun gluttony and sloth. They were to avoid complaining and murmuring, boisterous laughter, and raucous behavior. They were to enjoy holy living and honor the elderly. The list went on—there were seventy-two such rules of discipline.

***Work and prayer*—**Benedict felt that "idleness is hostile to the soul," and therefore the monks should be occupied at fixed times in manual labor and at definite hours in prayer and religious reading. Work has moral value—both mental and manual labor. Benedict saw the monastery as a little world unto itself, in which the monks lived a strenuous but not overburdened life, involving worship, vigorous labor in the shop and the fields, and serious study.

§1-300. Assessment of monasticism—Monasticism found a permanent place within Christianity and has exercised enormous influence. In the imperial Church of the 4th century and beyond, many bishops came from the monastic ranks. These leaders were ascetical, celibate, and frequently scholarly. The monks were the "foot soldiers" of both

the fierce doctrinal wars and of earnest service in the era of the imperial Church. They were active, mobile, and militant in their support of their doctrinal particularities and in their regimens of service. In addition, through these centuries and beyond, monasteries provided a constant "alternate lifestyle" that enabled Christians to express their discipleship in a more radical fashion. As such, they were an outlet for reforming impulses in the Church.

It is almost impossible to exaggerate the service the monks rendered after the ruin of the Western Empire and the growth of new Europe with its mix of Germanic kingdoms and old Roman customs. Civilization and classical learning survived because of the Benedictine monasteries which dotted the European countryside. Monasteries were centers for reform in knowledge and religious practice. They preserved and copied manuscripts and taught techniques in agriculture as well as a basic curriculum in learning. The monks were the basic missionary force of the early medieval Church and the only real educators in the vast reaches of a barbarian continent.

Tensions within monasticism—Monastic faults flowed from **failing to live up to lofty ideals** (ideals that the populace at large would not think of reaching for). However, perhaps the most serious flaw was the **monastic concept of life**. It was essentially unnatural and unbiblical. To enter a monastery was to separate from the world, to abandon the ordinary relationships of social life, and to shun marriage and all that Christian home and family signified. The movement was poised between the dualistic world around them (with its sharp distinction between matter and spirit) and Christianity's affirmation of the physical world and God's incarnate manifestation in that world in the person of Jesus Christ.

- The first and most significant tension in monasticism was that of focusing on the soul and not considering the whole person. A movement requiring the renunciation of most bodily pleasures and needs ran the risk of treating the body as insignificant. The tendency was to see the soul as the "real" person and the body as a temporary and problematic appendage. The critics assert that undergirding the monastic ideal was the erroneous view of humanity as essentially a soul trapped in a body, the spirit made prisoner to a corpse. This is not a biblical view of humanity as the image of God, albeit fallen.
- Works salvation—Tension between the upward movement of the soul and the downward movement of God's redemption. The monastic emphasis on the upward movement of the soul certainly did tend to descend into a works righteousness. The movement ran the risk of focusing salvation on human striving. Christianity focused on God's downward work in the person and work of Jesus Christ.
    - ***Pause and ponder—***The monks renounced the comforts of society and sought the spiritual rewards of self-discipline. Their theory held that renunciation of the body and creature comfort frees the soul to commune with God. But how does such renunciation relate to the gospel? Is it a form of self-salvation, a works righteousness that achieves an atonement for sin based on the denial of self? Or is it a legitimate form of repentance, and essential preparation for joy in the good news of God's salvation in Christ? While many did neglect the downward dimension of God's redemptive work, not everyone was guilty of

this. Monastic discipline can spur evangelical thought concerning Christian discipleship.

- Tension between contentless contemplation of God and a focus on the relational experience of God in Christ. Monasticism became closely associated with mysticism, a spirituality that revolves around the mystic's direct experience of God. In eastern pantheistic faiths, this mystic experience was seen as contentless, an experience of the ineffable ultimate. Christian faith calls us to a relationship with God Himself through His incarnate and fully human Son, a faith that is anything but contentless.
- Commitment to poverty and hard work, staples of communal monasticism, tended to undermine communal monasticism's principles. Vows of poverty and hard work made by capable people end up producing an excess that makes the community very prosperous. While the monastics could not own anything, the monastery could and did. There arose a tension between the growing wealth of monasteries and the increasingly hollow commitment to technical poverty that became a huge problem for the monastic movement in the centuries that followed. Thus, monastic poverty and diligence soon accumulated wealth that tempted subsequent generations of monks to sloth (the dreaded *accadia* decried by so many monastic reformers). Discipline started off strictly and grew increasingly lax. Scandal seldom plagued monasteries early in their existence, but moral vigor declined over time.
- Tiered spirituality—Monasticism did see singleness as a superior state. They were wedded to Christ, the "athletes of God" if you will, more committed, more disciplined and earnest. Protestants have inverted that and regard marriage as the superior state, but we still have a general tendency to a tiered understanding of the faith. The ranking of ourselves is not geared to monastic disciplines lifting the soul to heaven but in other comparisons we use to flatter ourselves. The human tendency to comparison is always an issue.
- Concern for the church and the larger world—Monasticism is often criticized on this ground. Monasticism, particularly solitary monasticism, was prone to focus so much on individual salvation that it neglected community. Even communal monasticism, so focused on its own members and their life and worship, tended to neglect the broader community of the church in the world. However, monastics saw themselves as serving the community, as a noble form of Christian community and in practical ways—business, scholarship and education (Scriptoriums and monastic schools), and in evangelism and missions (the missionary monks).
- Small-minded group loyalty—The monastics were often overly loyal to their group as against the larger church. However, evangelical Protestants are hardly the model critic here. Haven't we been guilty of the same kind of small-mindedness?

2. Pagan Reaction

§1-306. In general—Imperial favor did not mean the Empire immediately became Christian. Many were dedicated to the old practices, mindsets, and ideals. People in rural

areas and the intellectual classes were slow to convert to Christianity. For example, the famous rhetorician Libanius (314-394), a highly sophisticated and learned scholar, continued to defend traditional ways. He was a teacher of Julian the Apostate and composed a magnificent eulogy for Julian at his death. One purpose of Augustine's *City of God*, composed more than a century after the Edict of Milan, was to reply to pagan critics who claimed that the fall of the city of Rome was due to the abandonment of the pagan gods.

Resistance to the Christianization of the Empire was significant and were demonstrated by the difficulties Constantine's successors had in imposing Christianity on the populace. In 341, Constantius prohibited all pagan sacrifice, an indirect confirmation that the practice had persisted. In 346, Constantius and Constans issued an edict forbidding sacrifices and closing pagan temples. In 353-356, the imperial edict of 346 was reissued, clearly indicating its lack of complete success. This pagan reaction reached its crescendo in the reign of Julian the Apostate (361-363).

§1-307. Julian the Apostate—Julian the Apostate (361-363) is a prime example of this pagan resistance to the Christianization of the Empire. Julian was raised as a Christian in the imperial family. The decade prior to Julian's elevation witnessed him immersed in his studies in rhetoric and philosophy at Athens. He became interested in ancient mystery religions and abandoned Christianity, seeking after truth and beauty in the literature and religion of classical Greece. Julian's defection became very apparent upon his elevation to the throne and his attempt to restore the Empire to its traditional polytheistic religion.

Constantius II made Julian Caesar in the west in 355. He proved an able soldier, winning victories, and was proclaimed Augustus by his troops in 360. When he became the sole emperor in 361, he promoted a syncretistic form of paganism with a much-diminished place for Jesus. Jesus was viewed as a man, among others, who manifested the divine.

Pagan restoration—Julian sought to restore and reform paganism and to impede the progress of Christianity. Constantine had not persecuted pagans but had favored Christianity and sacked pagan temples to build Christian basilicas. Constantine's sons had decreed laws favoring Christianity and a half century of neglect had put paganism on the rocks. Julian reorganized the pagan priesthood along the hierarchical lines of the Christian Church. He restored pagan worship, returned the property taken from the pagan shrines, and reinstituted sacrifices.

He did not persecute Christians but worked to put the faith at a disadvantage. He removed Christians from high office and sought to return education to pagan standards. He passed laws forbidding Christians from teaching the classics, aware of how Christians were using the classics to enhance the appeal of the faith. He set out to systemically ridicule and mock the faith. He wrote *Against the Galileans*, in which he charged that Christians twisted and misinterpreted the Jewish Scriptures and vigorously undercut the Bible and Christian teaching. Having been raised in the emperor's extended household, he was well aware of what Christians taught and his work had impact. Basil of Alexandria felt the need to reply to Julian's attacks eighty years after Julian died.

***"Thou has conquered, Galilean"*—**Death overtook Julian on the battlefield a mere two years into his reign. Legend has it that his dying words were: "Thou hast conquered, Galilean." He pushed his pagan agenda vigorously but did not have time to roll back the Christian tide. Christians of the day interpreted his death as the judgment of God for his apostasy.

§1-308. Effect of pagan reaction—The specter of a pagan emperor unsympathetic to the Christian faith sobered believers. Doctrinal conflicts continued but there was new energy to resolve these. Gone was the assumption that Christian emperors were a constant and that State support could be taken for granted.

F. Theologians and Writers

§1-311. In general—We can only pause briefly to discuss a few of the significant theological voices of this era. The first is Eusebius the great Church historian. Then we will briefly consider the career of Athanasius, the champion of Nicene Christianity. Additionally, in the East, the so-called Cappadocian fathers, Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa, along with John Chrysostom, were the most important. In the West, Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine, the first three of the four so-called Latin fathers, bear particular attention.

1. Eastern Fathers

§1-312. Eusebius of Caesarea—Eusebius of Caesarea (260-340) was prehaps the most learned Christian of his time. Early in his career he collaborated with a scholar named Pamphilus, traveling far and wide in quest of documents concerning Christian origins. The two jointly wrote several significant works. Diocletian's persecution ended their peaceful and scholarly life when Pamphilus suffered martyrdom. Fortunately, Eusebius escaped this fate.

***Ecclesiastical history*—**Eusebius continued alone working on his masterpiece, *Church History*. Before Constantine became sole emperor, Eusebius was elected bishop of Caesarea, which pulled him away from his scholarly life. His role in the Arian controversy was ambiguous. For him, the peace and unity of the Church was the primary concern which caused him to minimize the danger of Arianism. He did vote against it at the Council of Nicaea but began to waver in his convictions after the Council.

Eusebius' *Church History* is really an apology to show that Christianity was the goal of human history, particularly seen in the context of the Roman Empire. Justin Martyr and Clement of Alexandria had popularized the idea, at least in the eastern part of the Empire, that both Greek philosophy and the Hebrew Scriptures were given in preparation for the gospel. In addition, the relative peace which the Empire had brought to the Mediterranean world was seen as ordained by God to disseminate the Christian faith. Eusebius wove all these ideas together in his work, demonstrating the truth of Christianity and understanding it as the culmination of human history. We are deeply indebted to Eusebius

and his scholarly work in shedding light on the early Church. Without this work, we would know far less about these early centuries of the Church.

***Criticism*—**However, his perspective in understanding his day as the culmination of human history made it difficult for Eusebius to take a critical view of the events of the time. He ignored Constantine's shortcomings and is mute about his crimes. His work is something of a warning of how Christian thought can be unwittingly shaped by circumstances, even to the point of abandoning traditional themes and critical concerns. Three examples should suffice to demonstrate this:

- In the New Testament and in the early Church, the gospel was good news for the poor and downtrodden. The rich were not particularly responsive, and a number of New Testament passages speak of the difficulty of the rich being saved. With Constantine, the Church was awash in imperial favor and riches were seen as signs of divine favor. The monastic movement was in part a protest against this accommodating understanding of the Christian life.
- Eusebius waxed eloquently over the ornate churches that were built all over the Empire. The net effect of all these elaborate buildings and the increasingly formal liturgy that fit them was the development of a clerical aristocracy remarkably similar to the imperial aristocracy. The Church grew away from the common person and imitated, in liturgy and in social structure, the great offices and rites of the imperial government.
- The scheme of history Eusebius developed led him to set aside or at least postpone a fundamental theme of Christian preaching: the eager expectation of the full reign of God. One gets the impression that with Constantine and his successors, the plan of God was fulfilled. Eusebius seemed to be expressing a common feeling among Christians of the day that, with the advent of Constantine and the peace he brought to the Church, the final triumph of Christianity over its enemies had arrived.

§1-313. Athanasius—Athanasius (296-373) was bishop of the influential see of Alexandria from 328 to his death in 373. Nicknamed the "black dwarf" by his enemies because of his dark complexion and small stature, Athanasius was born to Coptic parents in a small village along the Nile River. In his early years, he was in close contact with the desert monks, and he maintained that association throughout his life. The monks repeatedly gave him support and asylum throughout his stormy career. He learned discipline and austerity from the monks, which earned him the admiration of his friends and the respect of his enemies. His strong suit was his close ties to his people and in living out his faith without the obtuse subtleties of the Arians or the luxurious pomp of so many of the bishops of important ecclesiastical sees.

***Battle for Nicene orthodoxy*—**As a young advisor to his mentor and predecessor Bishop Alexander of Alexandria, he was the architect and champion of Nicene Christianity. When Alexander died, Athanasius brcame bishop of Alexandria much against his own wishes. The year was 328, the same year Constantine revoked the sentence banishing

Arius. Arianism was again on the rise and the battle lines were drawn. During his tenure as bishop, he was exiled five separate times as the conflict between the supporters of Nicaea and the Arians grew increasingly intense through the 4th century. Athanasius frequently sought refuge among the monks of the Egyptian desert. During one exile, while in Germany, he published *The Life of Anthony*, which influenced the course of Western monasticism.

***Presence of God in history*—**Athanasius was perhaps the greatest theologian of his day and the primary human reason for the defeat of Arianism. Athanasius saw the presence of God in history as a central theme of the faith. Therefore, he saw Arianism as a grave threat. Their assertion that Jesus was not really God, but a lesser being, put the very core of the Christian message at risk. Athanasius saw Jesus' humanity as a key tenet of orthodoxy. The corruption of humanity because of sin was such that a new creation was required, a radical transformation and restoration of what had been destroyed by sin. The work of salvation is not less than the work of creation. The person responsible for our re-creation can be no less than the one responsible for our creation.

Athanasius sought both the affirmation and clarification of the Nicene formula. Those who opposed the Nicene Creed did so because they feared that the assertion that the Son was of the same substance as the Father could be understood to mean that there is no distinction between the Father and the Son. They preferred to say, "of similar substance" (*homoiousios*) rather than "of the same substance" (*homoousios*) as declared in the Creed. Athanasius worked with these believers and arrived at an agreement at a synod in Alexandria in 362, that it was acceptable to refer to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as "of one substance" if it was clear that that did not mean the obliteration of the distinction between the three persons. In part because of these negotiations, most people rallied to the Nicene formula and that formula was ratified at the ecumenical Council in Constantinople in 381.

In addition, he wrote *De incarnatione*, a carefully reasoned explanation of the doctrine of redemption. His apologetic work, *Contra Gentiles*, was a defense of Christianity against an increasingly belligerent paganism, epitomized by the short reign of Julian the Apostate (361-363).

§1-314. Cappadocian fathers—The Cappadocian fathers are Basil of Caesarea (330-379), the famous monastic and theologian, his brother Gregory of Nyssa (335-394), famous for his works on mystical contemplation, and their friend Gregory of Nazianzus (329-389), poet, author, and hymn writer. They were the early pillars of Eastern Orthodoxy. In addition, there was Macrina, the remarkable sister of Basil and Gregory. All these people hailed from the province of Cappadocia in eastern Anatolia (modern-day Turkey).

***Nicene formula*—**The Cappadocian fathers championed the view of the Trinity that was formulated in the Nicene Creed. In their view, there was one divine substance (*ousia*) but three persons (*hypostateis*). One divine nature in three persons was encapsulated in the

Nicene Creed and became the common formula by 375. One God in three consubstantial yet distinct persons has been foundational doctrine ever since.

§1-315. Basil of Caesarea—Basil, bishop of Caesarea from 370 to 379, was a stout defender of the doctrine of the Trinity as formulated at the Council of Nicaea and further clarified at the Council of Constantinople. He is known for lasting contributions in three areas. First, he introduced the idea of communal monasticism based on love, holiness, and obedience, which refocused that movement away from the sensational asceticism of the wandering hermits. The Rule of St. Basil remains today the basic directive of Eastern monasticism. Second, he established the administrative control of the bishops over the monasteries and other works of the Church. Third, he defended orthodoxy along with his friends, Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa.

Background—Basil initially intended to follow in his father's footsteps as a lawyer and orator. He returned to Caesarea after his studies, puffed up in his own estimation, to take a position teaching rhetoric. Macrina, his sister, intervened and took him down a peg in no uncertain terms. Then word came that their brother, Naucratius, with whom Basil was very close, had died. This blow led Basil to search for answers. He resigned his teaching position and asked Macrina to teach him the secrets of religious life. Macrina proposed a life of renunciation and contemplation like the ascetics of the desert.

Macrina founded a community for women in nearby Annesi. Basil went to Egypt to learn more about the monastic life and then, he and his brother Gregory of Nyssa founded a monastic community for men like the one their sister founded. Basil emphasized community life based on service to others and is regarded as the father of Eastern monasticism.

Ecclesiastical career—Basil was a monk for about six years before he was made a presbyter against his own wishes. The bishop of Caesarea recruited him to assist him with the struggle against the Arians. Arriving in the city, conditions were difficult. Bad weather had destroyed crops, the rich were hoarding food, and many people in the city were up against it. Basil preached against the hoarding and sold his property to feed the poor. He collected resources from the wealthy, telling them it was an opportunity to invest in the treasure of heaven. On the outskirts of the city, he created "the new city," later called Basiliad. The hungry were fed, the ill were treated, and the unemployed were put to work.

When the bishop died, the Caesarea see became the focal point of the struggle between the orthodox and the Arians. Basil won the election and was immediately at odds with the Arian Emperor Valens. Basil focused his efforts on organizing and spreading communities of the monastic life, consolidating the authority of the bishops, and in advancing the Nicene cause. He maintained a vast correspondence and wrote several theological treatises. He died a few months before the Council of Constantinople reaffirmed Nicene doctrine in 381.

§1-316. Gregory of Nyssa—Gregory of Nyssa, Basil's brother, had a completely different temperament than his brother. Basil was tempestuous, inflexible, and at times arrogant. Gregory preferred silence, solitude, and anonymity. He did not want to be the champion of any cause. Initially choosing a career in rhetoric, Gregory retired at a young age to a monastery in the Pontus after the death of his wife and became absorbed with mystic contemplation.

***Reluctant proponent*—**However, Gregory was an extremely able person and Basil drafted him to become bishop of Nyssa at the time when Emperor Valens was using all his power against the orthodox party. The strife caused Gregory to go into hiding. After the death of both Valens and Basil, Gregory assumed the Nicene banner and was one of the main Nicene leaders at the Council of Constantinople. His primary contribution was his detailed working out of the doctrine of the Trinity, specifically the distinction between substance (*ousia*) and person (*hypotasis*). He may have been the most theologically capable of the Cappadocian fathers.

***Christian mystic*—**The Emperor Theodosius made him one of his main advisers on theological matters, and Gregory spent several years traveling throughout the Empire. Finally, assured that the Nicene cause was firmly established, Gregory returned to the monastic life, hoping the world would just leave him alone. His anthropology was an important contribution to Christian mysticism. He understood humanity's creation in the image of God as focal in redemption's goal. He saw people's souls as like unto God's nature, enabling people to intuitively know God and, through purification, to become like God. In the end, his desire to be left alone was granted. The date and circumstances of his death are not known.

§1-317. Gregory of Nazianzus—Gregory (329-389) was a monastic, a theologian, and a cogent preacher and teacher. His heart was with monastic solitude, but his theological ability thrust him into the limelight and the controversies of his day.

***Background*—**Gregory was born into a devout Christian family. He was a serious student and spent his youth studying, during which he met Basil of Caesarea. Around the age of thirty, he returned home and joined Basil in the monastic life. He was reluctantly ordained a presbyter, yearning for a contemplative life and fearing that he was unequal to the pastoral task. Basil had him made a bishop of Nazianzus against his wishes and at a time when Gregory lost his parents and both of his siblings. Gregory felt imposed upon in a way that deeply strained his friendship with Basil. Alone and bereaved, he retreated from his pastoral duties to have a time of quiet meditation.

During this period, news came of Basil's death with whom he had never been reconciled. Gregory was initially in shock, but the loss of Basil compelled him to take a leading role in the struggle against the Arians. He went to Constantinople in 379 at a time when Arianism enjoyed the total support of the state. He opened the lone orthodox church in the home of a relative. The church was repeatedly harassed by Arian monks who disrupted services and profaned the altar.

***Council of Constantinople*—**Gregory soldiered on and eventually the tide turned. Theodosius, an orthodox general, entered the city of Constantinople and soon expelled all Arians from the positions they had used to further their cause. Theodosius made Gregory the patriarch of Constantinople. The emperor called the Council of Constantinople in 381, over which Gregory presided. His opponents pointed out that Gregory was already bishop of a small hamlet and should not be patriarch of Constantinople. Gregory promptly resigned from the position he never sought and returned home, spending his time composing hymns and attending to his pastoral duties. He avoided all further ecclesiastical pomp and involvement until his death.

His doctrinal contributions lie in the clarification of the Trinitarian and Christological doctrines. The *Five Orations* was his most influential work. In Oration 1, he defends the divinity of the Son and the Spirit. Oration 2 is a treatise on the office of the presbyter which greatly influenced John Chrysostom's *On the Priesthood* and Pope Gregory I's *Pastoral Rule*. He wrote many letters, two of which were very influential (designated as Epistles 101 and 102). They were treatises against Apollinarius. Epistle 101 was adopted as a statement of orthodoxy by the Councils at Ephesus in 431 and Chalcedon in 451.

§1-318. John Chrysostom—Like Tertullian, John of Constantinople (347-407) was trained in law and rhetoric before abandoning the law and devoting himself to the ascetic life while caring for his elderly parents. After the death of his parents, he joined a community of monks in the Syrian mountains where he spent six years rigorously practicing monastic discipline.

***Golden-mouthed*—**He returned to Antioch, was ordained a deacon in the early 380s, and then a presbyter several years later. He began to preach and developed such skill in the pulpit that his fame became widespread throughout the Greek-speaking Church. He was given the nickname *Chrysostomos* (golden mouthed) a century after his death. When in 398 he became the patriarch of Constantinople at the order of the emperor, his popularity in Antioch was such that the order was kept secret because they feared a riot over his elevation.

***Straight talk express*—**His preaching ministry in capital of the Roman world was the original straight-talk express. He was an eloquent and forceful speaker with lofty standards and little diplomatic skill. He kept being deposed and returning throughout his career at Constantinople. Constantinople was a rich city, given to luxury and intrigue. As John assumed his responsibilities, there was plenty of intrigue swirling around the empress and the chamberlain, who was the power behind the throne. John was an earnest monk, and he had no intension of wedding the gospel to the comforts and luxuries of the decadent people in the capital city.

***Reform efforts*—**He began by attempting a reform of the clergy. Many so-called celibate priests kept "spiritual sisters" in their homes. Others were living in rich and luxurious situations. Church finances were a mess and pastoral care neglected. John ordered the "spiritual sisters" to move out, the priests to adopt a much more austere lifestyle, and sold the luxury items in the bishop's own palace to feed the poor. He placed Church finances

in a system under strict scrutiny. He opened the churches at times convenient for all and not just the wealthy. He also challenged clergy and laity alike to lead lives in accordance with the gospel. His sermons went far beyond preaching in an erudite but comfortable way. He seriously meddled in the lifestyles of the day.

***Backlash, exile, and death*—**The rich and powerful, led by the chamberlain and empress, were upset and resented the growing influence of the eloquent Patriarch. A series of ugly incidents and trumped-up charges led to years of exile and various recalls when John's supporters, including delegations from the Western emperor, compelled his return to the pulpit.

John's tenure as Patriarch was a sad period full of intrigue and backstabbing. His supporters were systematically removed or sent to distant areas within the Empire. He himself ordered to be exiled to the little village in the Caucasus and then to move to an unknown hamlet on the Black Sea. Mistreated and neglected, he died on the way. A great injustice was done and many refused to accept the authority of the new bishop and those in communion with him, namely the patriarchs of Antioch and Alexandria. The schism only ended thirty years later when John's memory and reputation was restored, and his body brought back to Constantinople.

***Chrysostom and Ambrose compared*—**There was a noticeable difference between the careers John Chrysostom and Ambrose (see §1-321, below). Ambrose opposed the emperor and won. John criticized the emperor and the decadence of the day and was deposed and banished. From that period on, the Latin-speaking Church of the west became increasingly strong and filled the vacuum left by the crumbling Empire. In the east, the Empire would last another thousand years. The Empire's strength would wax and wane, but the emperor would zealously guard his prerogatives over the Church. Theodosius was not the last ruler in the West humbled by a bishop. John was not the last Eastern bishop banished by an emperor.

2. Western Fathers

Ambrose provided the political posture, Jerome the biblical source text and learning, and Augustine the intellectual vision of subsequent Latin Christianity.

§1-321. Ambrose—Ambrose (340-397) was one of the Latin doctors of the Church and a leading foe of Arianism in the Western Empire. He served as bishop of Milan from 374 until his death in 397. Classically educated, fluent in both Greek and Latin, he introduced the thinking of Greek Christianity to the Latin West and played a vital role in the unity of the Church in the late 4th century as the Western Empire collapsed. He had a substantial influence on the conversion of Augustine (circa 386) and set a crucial precedent for the following centuries when he confronted the Emperor Theodosius (379-395) and compelled the emperor to do public penance.

***Episcopal detour*—**Ambrose came from a noble family and was trained in rhetoric. He was a dedicated civil servant, rising in the Roman bureaucracy. In a most abrupt transition, Ambrose was elected bishop of Milan while serving as a Roman governing

official of the city, still a catechumen being instructed in the faith, and prior to his baptism.

In 373, the death of the bishop of Milan threatened the peace of the city. The bishop had been appointed by an Arian emperor and both Arians and orthodox were determined to have one of their number succeed to the episcopal see. To avoid a riot and keep the peace, Ambrose attended the election and made a speech that quieted the crowd. The crowd's response to his address was a growing chant "Ambrose, bishop." Election as bishop was not part of Ambrose's career plans and he vigorously attempted to dissuade the people. When that failed, he unsuccessfully attempted to escape from the city. Finally, when it became clear that the emperor was pleased with Ambrose's election and would frown on his refusal to serve, Ambrose agreed to become the bishop of Milan. He was baptized and ordained in 374.

Influence—Ambrose took his responsibilities seriously and devoted his best efforts to his duties. He undertook the study of theology, enlisted able assistants to aid him with the administrative tasks of the bishopric, and devoted himself to the exposition of Scripture. Speaking both Greek and Latin, he made available to the Latin-speaking West the theology of the Greek-speaking East. He contributed to the development of Trinitarian theology in the West by popularizing the work of the Cappadocians.

He was also very much involved in the formation of the clergy with whom he worked. He wrote *Duties of the Clergy*, which helped shape the understanding of Christian ministry long after his death. Among those who heard Ambrose preach was Augustine, a young teacher of rhetoric. Ambrose's sermons influenced Augustine's journey to faith.

Imperial confrontations—Ambrose's relations with the imperial power in the West were stormy. First, there was a deep conflict with Justina, the Arian mother of the western Emperor Valentinian II, which played out in several confrontations. Then there were several clashes with the orthodox Emperor Theodosius. The first clash took place when overzealous Christians in a small town burned a synagogue. The emperor decided that they should be punished and rebuild the synagogue. Ambrose protested that Christians should not be compelled to build a Jewish synagogue, The emperor yielded on that point. This was a sad precedent to which Ambrose contributed, for it meant that the Christian emperor would not extend the protection of law to those of a different faith.

In another instance, justice was on Ambrose's side. Rioters at Thessalonica had killed the commandant of the city. Ambrose counselled moderation, but Theodosius decided to make an example of the disorderly city. He informed the rioters that they were forgiven and then sent troops to trap and slaughter those who met in an arena to celebrate the pardon. Seven thousand people were killed in this incident. Ambrose confronted the emperor and demanded that he publicly repent. The emperor's courtiers threatened violence, but the emperor acknowledged the truth of Ambrose's charge and publicly repented. After the clash, the relations between Theodosius and Ambrose became increasingly cordial. On his deathbed, it was Ambrose that the emperor called to his side.

At the end of his life, Ambrose's fame was such that the queen of the Macromanni, a dominant German tribe, asked him for an introduction to the Christian faith and resolved to visit the wise man in Milan. Ambrose died on Easter Sunday, 397, before the queen arrived.

§1-322. Augustine—Augustine (354-430) was born in Tagaste in North Africa to Patricius, a minor Roman official who followed traditional pagan religion, and Monica, his devout Christian mother. He was an outstanding student and received a fine education first at nearby Madaura and then at Carthage. Augustine studied rhetoric and was preparing for a career in public service. In the world of the day, eloquence and persuasiveness was the point, not truth. Reading Cicero convinced Augustine otherwise.

His tortuous path to truth led him first to Manichaeism, then to Neoplatonism, before becoming a Christian. Much to his mother's chagrin, the young Augustine resisted the faith for two principal reasons: (1) its inelegant, even barbaric writings, where one found crude episodes of violence, rape, deceit, and the like, and (2) the question of the origin of evil. If God were supreme and pure goodness, evil could not be of divine creation. However, if all things were created by God, as taught in the Bible, God could not be good and wise for Augustine saw evil all around him and in himself.

Philosophical journey—Augustine spent nine years with the Manichaeans, but always with reservations. He remained a "hearer," without seeking to join the "perfect". Pursuing his career options, he moved first from Carthage back to Tagaste, then to Rome, and then to Milan. In Milan, he was introduced to the writings of the Neoplatonists. Neoplatonism was a philosophy with religious overtones. Through a combination of study, discipline, and mystical contemplation, one sought to reach the Ineffable One, the source of all being. Evil consisted in moving away from the One, turning one's gaze to the inferior realms of multiplicity. Evil, while real, is not a "thing," but a direction away from the goodness of the One. Neoplatonism gave Augustine an approach to the problem of evil and helped him understand God and the soul in non-corporeal terms.

Scripture and allegory—There remained his distaste for the Scriptures. How could one claim that the Bible, with its stories of violence and falsehood and its crude accounts, was the Word of God? In Milan, at the urging of his mother, Augustine heard Ambrose preach. At first, he played the role of rhetorical critic but soon Augustine became a most intent listener. He observed that Ambrose interpreted the passages that created difficulties for Augustine in an allegorical way. It made the Scripture seem less crude and more acceptable to Augustine.

Conversion—With his intellectual objections dealt with, Augustine found that his main remaining hurdle to faith was himself. He could not be a lukewarm Christian—he had to confront his own carnality. Augustine was convinced that he must accept the monastic life, give up his career in rhetoric and his secular ambitions, and his addiction to sexual pleasure. He later wrote that at this time he used to pray: "Give me chastity and continence, but not too soon." In 386, in a garden in Milan a dejected professor of rhetoric heard the words "Take up and read." He picked up the manuscript he had put

aside and read the words of Paul: “Not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.” Augustine made the decision he had long postponed. He devoted himself to the service of God.

Soon he abandoned his career as a professor, dismissed his concubine, returned to Tagaste with his son, where he planned to spend the rest of his days in monastic retreat. Arriving in Tagaste, Augustine sold most of the property he inherited, gave money to the poor, and settled at Cassiciacum with his son and a few friends who shared the goal of mystical contemplation and philosophical inquiry. Their goal was a disciplined life, with no unnecessary comforts, devoted entirely to prayer, study, and meditation.

Episcopal ascent—In 391, Augustine visited Hippo to invite friends to join his monastic community at Cassciacum. Against his will, Augustine was ordained to assist the bishop at Hippo. The bishop died shortly thereafter and in 395, Augustine became bishop. While Augustine attempted to retain as much of the monastic discipline as possible, his energies turned to his pastoral duties rather than contemplation. It was with these responsibilities in view that he wrote the works that made him the most influential theologian in the Latin-speaking Church since New Testament times.

Thinker and writer—Augustine was an amazingly prolific writer and wrote searchingly on a phenomenal number of topics in his lifetime. Even a brief survey of these writings is beyond the scope of this course and of my ability as a teacher. However, his thought was forged in the crucible of controversy, three of which were paramount and each relating to evil—Manichaeism and evil in the world, Donatism and evil in the Church, and Pelagianism and evil in individuals.

Manichaeanism—This youthful dabbling by Augustine related to evil in the world. Based on the teachings of Mani, a 3rd century Babylonian prophet, Manichaeanism located evil in material. They taught that the universe was the scene of conflict between two powers—one good and one evil. Humanity is a mixed bag, light or the spiritual part is good, and darkness or the physical part is evil. Salvation consists in separating the two elements and in preparing our spirit for its return to pure light. Since any mingling of the principles was evil, true believers needed to avoid matter, including procreation. The task of true religion is to free the good from the evil—by prayer and abstinence from the lusts of the flesh, sex and the products of sex—and from luxuries. They professed a belief in Jesus as savior, but that belief was in the framework of a Gnostic-like cosmic dualism, for the true Jesus had no body and did not die. His purpose was to teach the way out of physical enslavement.

Manichaeans held that everything was predetermined, and human beings had no freedom. In refuting the Manichaeans, Augustine affirmed freedom of the will. By that he meant that a decision is free because it is not the product of nature, not born of circumstance or of an inner necessity, but of the will itself. Augustine insisted that there is only one God whose goodness is infinite. How to explain evil? The explanation lies in affirming that the will is created by God and is therefore good. The origin of evil is to be found in bad

decisions made by free human and angelic agents. However, evil is not a thing, but a decision, a direction, a negation of the good.

In addition, his anti-Manichaean works established a positive sense of the Church and the material order. He developed a principled defense of the created order: the goodness of the body, food, marriage, and children.

Donatist controversy related to evil in the Church**.** The controversy grew out of the persecutions of the Church in the 3rd and 4th centuries. Believing the sanctity of the Church depended on the loyalty and morality of its members, the Donatists opposed leniency to those who had fallen away in persecutions. Donatus (313-355) led a protest against bishops that had lapsed in Diocletian's persecution. Donatus claimed that his followers were the true, pure Church and that the sacraments performed by fallen bishops were not valid. Augustine asserted both the importance of the Church as an inclusive body of sinners and the need for forgiving grace. He saw the Church as a mixed multitude (Mt. 13:24-30 imagery) and believed that the sacraments were effective despite the moral stance of the bishop or cleric administering them.

In addition, in response to the ongoing Donatist controversy, Augustine developed his just war theory. Some Donatists, the circumcellions, turned to violence in opposition to the orthodox. He was certain that the violence of the circumcellions had to cease and authorized the State to suppress them by force. He concluded that war could be justly waged if certain conditions were met:

- The purpose of the war must be just;
- The war must be waged by a properly instituted authority;
- Amid violence that is a necessary element of war, the motive of love must be central.

Pelagian controversy related to individual evil. Pelagius denied that human sin was inherited from Adam. People were free to act righteously or to sin. There was no direct connection between Adam and humanity's moral condition. Pelagius said that God holds sinners accountable and therefore Christians should strive for moral perfection, a goal he thought attainable since, according to Pelagius, God would never give commands impossible to obey. Pelagius' idea of a righteous life was almost identical to that of the Stoics concept of self-control.

Augustine opposed Pelagius's optimistic view of human nature. He thought Adam's sin had enormous consequences on all people. Humanity's power to do right was gone. People died spiritually and physical death was the ultimate result. All power to do good must be a gift of God's grace.

Signature works—Two other of Augustine's writings are particularly significant. His *Confessions* is a spiritual autobiography, addressed in prayer to God, which tells how God led him to faith through a long and painful pilgrimage. It is not only a classic account of conversion, but also introduced a sense of self unique to antiquity and witnesses to Augustine's profound spiritual and psychological insight.

The *City of God* is Augustine's response to pagan allegations that the fall of Rome in 410 was due to Rome's abandonment of the ancient gods and its turn to Christianity. Augustine composed an encyclopedic view of history in which he claims that there are two cities or social orders each built on a foundation of love. The city of God is built on the love of God. The earthly city is built on the love of self. In human history, these two cities always appear mingled, but they are in an irreconcilable fight to the death. In the end, only the city of God will remain. Human history is and will be filled with kingdoms and nations which are passing expressions of the earthly city built on the love of self. In the case of Rome, God allowed it and its empire to flourish so that they could serve as a means for the spread of the gospel. While Christians had hoped for a Christianized empire, Rome had given itself over to wealth, glory, and power. Sin was bringing the destruction of an earthly empire, but the love of God would lead to perfection in His sovereign timing.

The *City of God* provided a profound political theology that impacted medieval Church and society. His vision of a society on earth that sought to embody and foreshadow the "city of God" in heaven was a distinctively Christian political/societal vision.

***Lasting influence*—**Augustine died in 430, with the Vandals at the gates of Hippo. However, his works were not forgotten. Throughout the Middle Ages, no theologian was quoted more often than Augustine. He became not only one of the doctors of the Roman Catholic Church but also the favorite theologian of the 16th century Reformers.

§1-323. Jerome—Jerome (347-419) was a Bible scholar, papal secretary to Pope Damasus, monastic, and author of the Latin Vulgate. His outstanding characteristic was his struggle with himself and the world. Jerome was not humble, peaceful, or sweet, but proud, stormy, and bitter. He strove mightily with himself and had little patience with those who did not match his effort. His ire was with those who dared to criticize him. He attacked nearly all of his contemporaries and upbraided those who disagreed with him as "two-legged asses."

***Background*—**Jerome was born into a Christian family, studied classical Latin language and literature at Rome, was baptized at twenty, and dedicated himself to the monastic life. He was an ardent admirer of classical learning but feared that his regard for this essential pagan tradition was sinful. While ill one time, he had a dream that he was summoned before the judgment throne and asked who he was. Jerome replied, "I am a Christian." In the dream, the judge retorted: "You lie. You are a Ciceronian."

Jerome lived as a hermit in Syria for a time, learning both Greek and Hebrew. At Constantinople, he studied biblical exegesis with Gregory of Nazianzus. He spent three years in Rome as the secretary and counselor to Pope Damasus I. There he met and developed lasting friendships with Albina, her widowed daughter Marcella, Ambrose's sister Marcellina, and the scholarly Paula. Paula, along with her daughter Eustochium, would play a leading role throughout the remainder of Jerome's life. He felt free to

discuss his scholarly questions with these women. These women would be among his supporters and confidantes during the later stages of his life.

***Latin Vulgate*—**While in Rome as secretary to the Pope, Jerome was assigned the task of translating the entire Bible into Latin (the Old Testament from Hebrew and the New Testament from Greek). The goal was to provide a standardized text to replace the "old Latin" versions. The resulting translation (the Vulgate) provided the standard text for medieval Latin Christianity. After Damasus' death, Jerome cantankerous disposition caused him to fall out of favor in Rome. He moved to Bethlehem in 389, where he lived as a hermit until his death in 420. His *Lives of Eminent Men* is an indispensable source of early Christian history.

***Lasting influence*—**Jerome is often counted as one of the Latin fathers and a significant influence on medieval Christianity and especially medieval monasticism. His masterpiece was the Vulgate, the translation of choice in Western Christianity for more than a millennium. He was also a driving influence in the monastic emphasis on study and the desire to preserve the classical heritage that was rapidly being lost.

G. Early Christian Attitudes

§1-331. In general—The following sections attempt to characterize early Christian attitudes on subjects relevant to their lives and ours. Obviously, these are generalizations, but hopefully helpful ones.

§1-332. The "world"—Early Christians saw themselves in opposition to what they called "the world," a culture organized according to "the spirit of this present age," in the words of the apostle Paul. They recognized and were persecuted for an antagonism between Jesus and the culture in which they lived. This involved opposition to features of Greco-Roman society—its polytheism, immoralities, amusements, practices such as infanticide, sexual irregularities, and others.

This contrast found its dramatic expression in Augustine's *City of God* with its sharply drawn distinction between the city of the world and the city of God. At heart, this attitudinal contrast involved a philosophy of history. Greco-Romans saw history as endlessly repeating itself in a series of cycles where mankind's career was determined by fate. For the early Christians, history had God as its sovereign and was linear rather than cyclical. This present age will culminate in a climax in which God's mastery will be made manifest in the second coming of Christ. For early believers, this attitude had starkly apocalyptic features with an earnest anticipation of the near return (the *parousia*) of the rightful king.

§1-333. War and peace—The earliest believers were opposed to war and to Christians bearing arms. Hippolytus, a prominent teacher in second century Rome, and Tertullian, a noted apologist in the early 3d century, were outspoken in their opposition to Christian participation in active military service. So clear was the opposition of early Christians to bearing arms that Celsus, an early pagan critic, declared that if all citizens were to do as

the Christians, then the Empire would fall victim to the wildest and most lawless barbarians. For the earliest Christians, pacifism was a theoretical concern. They were not one of the groups in the Empire from which the legions were recruited nor were they the least bit influential in formulating state policy.

However, from Constantine on, when Christians were responsible for the welfare of the body politic, the attitudes of most Christians toward war changed from one of total and unqualified opposition to viewing it as an unfortunate necessity in a fallen world. Wickedness was real and must be restrained. Virtue did not lie in excusing yourself from such conflicts. However, not all wars were just. To be just, a war must be waged under proper governmental authority, must be fought without vindictiveness and undue violence, and must be carried on with an inward love. This last point was not meant as moderns mean "love." It was not an emotional gauge at all, but an emphasis on and devotion to the common good resulting from the military action engaged.

§1-334. Amusements and entertainment—The early believers set themselves against the prevailing attitudes of the Greco-Roman society. Leading Christian apologists unhesitatingly condemned the gladiatorial contests of the day, as well as the general tenor of pagan literature and theatrical productions. When the political clout of believers came to the fore after the ascension of Constantine, changes were made. Gladiatorial contests were forbidden and legal penalties requiring criminals to become gladiators were abolished. However, the nature of public amusement did not radically change with the ascendancy of Christianity in the Empire and, indeed, those amusements continued with most patrons being nominally Christian.

§1-335. Slavery—Christians did not conduct an organized campaign against slavery in the Empire. However, by the 5th century, slavery on the decline in the Empire. This was not due chiefly to Christian opposition, but the influence of Christians helped. Christian teaching reminded masters that they were accountable for the treatment of their slaves. In Christian congregations, the expressed teaching was that all "were one in Christ Jesus" and there was to be no "respect of persons" in the treatment of one another. Ambrose would speak of slaves being superior in character to their masters and freer than they. Augustine taught that God did not create rational people to lord it over their fellow rational humans. Finally, Christianity undercut slavery by giving dignity to all work, no matter how menial. Work was divinely sanctioned and profitable in ways that financial recompense could not properly gauge.

§1-336. Wealth and property—Could a person of wealth become and remain a believer? Did Christianity demand a revolution in one's attitude towards property that expressed itself by the necessity of unburdening yourself of it? There are several disquieting passages in the New Testament on this issue, not the least of which is Jesus' statement to the rich young ruler that if he would be perfect he must sell all that he had and give it to the poor and his further comment that it was extremely difficult for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven (see Matthew 19:16-29; Mark 10:17-30; Luke 18:18-30). Early Christians struggled over this as have Christians throughout the

centuries. We will be speaking of the call of "Lady Poverty" (in Francis of Assisi's words) in subsequent courses.

The early Church in Jerusalem practiced a community of goods for a time (Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-37). The Scripture is quite forthright in the problems that arose from this (Acts 5:1-11). The monastic communities that mushroomed in late antiquity uniformly required a vow of poverty from their adherents.

Yet, Christian teaching did not forbid the ownership of property. It condemned luxury, commanded simplicity, enjoined labor, and urged generosity, but did not require the full surrender of the fruits of one's labor. This led to a curious dilemma, particularly in the monastic movement as it progressed. While the individual monks took a vow of poverty and simplicity, the diligence of these monks earned their monasteries and governing Church authorities a considerable bounty and wealth that would prove to be a significant snare.

§1-337. Charitable giving—Philanthropy was not a Christian invention. Indeed, particularly in the Roman Empire in its heyday, benefactions by private individuals and public officials were commonplace and often quite substantial.

However, Christianity did bring several innovations to this issue. First, it made giving an obligation for Christians. Christians were to regard all that they had as from God and to give back a portion of this in recognition of the rightful owner. Second, the motive for giving was stressed. It was not to garner personal kudos but to be a grateful response to the love and generosity of Christ experienced by the believer. Third, the objects of the benefaction changed from large public displays to preaching the good news and to caring for the less fortunate members of the community—widows, orphans, the sick and disabled, the imprisoned, the persecuted. Fourth, love and service of generosity was not just to be extended to your own but to a wider sphere. Fifth, Christian giving was to have a personal nature to it. The care the giver experienced from Christ was to be tangibly extended to another individual. Individuals were to value each other, as having distinct worth in the sight of God.

§1-338. Marriage, sex, and family—As to the place of women in community, this is a controversial issue into our day. Some insist that Christianity merely adopted the chauvinistic headship model of earlier Judaism and did little to help woman realize the truth of Galatians 3:28 that in Christ Jesus "there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female." Others insist Christ's willingness to be dependent on the support of woman, that the first generation of Christian women served as prophetesses (1 Corinthians 11:3-6) and, arguably, as deaconesses (1 Tim 3:11) revealed a different attitude. The high regard for widows, virgins, and the single state further highlighted this.

It is arguable that the early believers regarded virginity and the single state as superior to the married state. This can be seen in some of Paul's writings (e.g. 1 Corinthians 7:25ff.) and can certainly be garnered from the insistence on singleness and chastity in the monastic movement of late antiquity. However, marriage was not proscribed (except for

priests in the West). Indeed, its sanctity was underscored by proscriptions against divorce and even multiple remarriages in the event of the death of a spouse (several groups allowed a second remarriage in that event, but not a third).

Sex outside of marriage was condemned. Homosexuality was prescribed. Sexual offenses were certainly not unknown in the early Church, and they were dealt with rather harshly when discovered. The offense was held to exclude people from the ministries of the Church for a substantial period.

Children were held in tender regard. Jesus' reception of children was often cited as was his insistence that people must come to him in faith as "a little child." The early Christians opposed abortion and infanticide, strongly emphasized the nurture and instruction of children "in the Lord" and underlined both parental responsibility and filial devotion.

§1-339. Music and arts—As to the literature of the age, the early Christians did not fully agree. Several outstanding molders of Christian opinion, Clement of Alexandria and Origen come readily to mind, were students of the Greek philosophers and the classics and credited them in forming their own conceptions of the Christian faith. Ambrose was deeply indebted to Stoicism and Augustine to Neoplatonism. Jerome so loved the Greek and Roman classics that he feared that his passion for them was idolatrous. Many early Christians struggled with the implications that all truth is God's truth, wherever it is found and (often) despite the sneering demeanor of its advocates.

However, several early believers poured scorn on the literature and artistic milieu of the day and denounced it as inherently immoral and as promoting Christian waywardness. Tertullian would ask earnestly: "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem" as a rhetorical device to mark a clear divide between the literature and thought of the day and Christian fidelity. There were ancient voices that resembled the strident Christian condemnation of the intellectual and artistic culture of our own day.

And indeed, these voices had reason for concern. There was a substantial gulf between the Christian and the Hellenistic approach to the intellectual life. The Greeks relied on reason as the primary way to truth, but underneath that reason there were presuppositions, consciously and unconsciously maintained, which accompanied their reasoning. Their literature reflected this. The New Testament frequently decries the "wisdom of the world" and its host of accompanying assumptions (see 1 Corinthians 1:18-31). The road to the most salient truth was acceptance by faith in what God had done in the incarnation, cross, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Augustine succinctly summarized this intellectual paradigm with the following: "Believe in order that you may understand." This was anathema to the Hellenistic mind.

As for the visual arts, their conscious development within the framework of a Christian worldview would await other eras of Church history. Christian visual art followed in the classical mold of the Greeks and Romans. The early Christians were very conservative with respect to the visual arts because of their fear of idolatry. The second commandment was interpreted as prohibiting any visual images of God. The understanding of the place

of art in the context of worship and Christian practice would be probed in the iconoclastic controversy of the 8th and 9th centuries.

§1-340. Christians and the State—The early Christians did not set out deliberately to supplant the Roman state or to remake the structure of society of which it was an essential part. The early attitudes were framed by those of Jesus, whose demeanor towards the state was neither one of unqualified disapproval nor approval. He was critical at times of the Herodians and the Jewish Sanhedrin but commanded obedience to people in authority in the Jewish community and beyond. Paul argued that government derived its authority from God (albeit often abusing it) and instructed believers to be submissive to the governing authorities (Rom. 13:1-7). Likewise, Peter instructed believers to submit to their rulers and to give them their due (1 Pt. 2:13-17).

In the first three centuries, Christians bore state persecutions passively and did not oppose the state with violence. While there were believers in positions of public authority in the more benign times, there seems to have been a conviction among the earliest believers that they should not hold State office. To do so might entail participation in pagan ceremonies and entertainment or in the imposition of the death penalty for various offenses. Opposition to the death penalty was common among the early believers.

With the ascendancy of Constantine, these attitudes changed. The Church entered an alliance with the state and most civil and even military officials were at least nominally Christian. Constantine sought to bolster the flagging power of the Empire by reinforcing the political regime with the most comprehensive and well-articulated private organization in that empire. This union brought the idea of a Christian empire to fore and even that the ascendancy of the Church marked the beginning of the millennium itself. Those dreams were disabused by the way the emperors attempted to control the Church and use it for their political purposes and by subsequent events of the 5th century when the Empire in the West completely unraveled.

So, the Church in the Roman era knew opposition and favor, persecution and ascendancy, being powerless and being influential. It knew the hardship and adversity that state opposition imposed, and it also learned of the advantages and high cost to Christian earnestness that official favor brought.

G. End of an Era

§1-341. In general—The imperial Church which Constantine inaugurated continued for another thousand years in the Byzantine Empire. Not so in the West. It was a long time before western Europe experienced the political unity and relative peace it had known under Roman rule. It took centuries to recover, not only in terms of the economy and infrastructure of western Europe, but even more in terms of its literature, art, and learning. In all these fields, it was the Church which provided continuity with the past. It became the guardian of civilization and order. Meanwhile, the victorious Germans were pagan and through the unrecorded witness of many believers, the invaders gradually accepted the faith and eventually provided generations of leaders of the future Church.

Out of all this, a new civilization would arise, heir to the classical Greco-Roman culture, Christian faith, and Germanic traditions.

Appendix A—Timeline

Church Fathers—This document is a chronological timeline of significant events relating to development of early Christianity, including key martyrdoms of significant leaders, the development of Christian theology, and major persecutions that the early Church endured. It highlights important political and religious milestones and the ecumenical councils up to the Council of Chalcedon (451). The timeline also covers the rise and fall of Roman emperors, Germanic migrations, and the eventual decline of the Western Roman Empire**.**

96	Ascension of Nerva (96-98) and beginning of the Age of the Antonnines (96-180) – zenith of territorial extent and power of Rome
107	Martyrdom of Ignatius, bishop of Antioch
111	Pliny the Younger's inquiry to Emperor Trajan (98-117) concerning treatment of Christians
155	Martyrdom of Polycarp
160s	Germanic migrations begin to threaten Rome's northern border; initially met with vigorous action by Marcus Aurelius (161-180)
177	Intense local persecution of Christians at Lyon and Vienne with the sanction of Emperor Marcus Aurelius
180	Ascension of Commodus (180-192) ends the age of the adoptive emperors
190s	Muratorian Canon
193	Septimius Severus (193-211); Severan dynasty (193-235) was last stable dynasty of Rome
225	Origen publishes *On First Principles*, the first Christian systematic theology
227-299	Persian armies threaten Roman east
235-284	Era of the "barracks emperors" and the crisis of the third century
249-251	General persecution of Christians under Emperor Decius
258	Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, martyred
260s or 270s	Anthony enters ascetic life in Egyptian/Libyan desert

284	Ascension of Diocletian and reformulation of Roman state
293	Diocletian creates the Tetrarchy (rule by four emperors) for defense and succession purposes
303-311	Great persecution of Christians under Diocletian and Galerius
312	Constantine's victory at Milvian Bridge; his conversion to the faith
313	Edict of Milan
323	Pachomius founds first cenobitic monastery in Egypt
325	First Ecumenical Council at Nicea
330	Dedication of Constantinople, new capital in the east
361-363	Julian the Apostate and the attempted pagan revival
370s	Basil of Caesarea composes *Ascetia*, which becomes the rule for monasticism in the East
376	Renewal of Germanic migrations; Goths migrate into Empire
378	Goths defeat Roman legions at Adrianople; beginning of death throes of the Western Empire
379-395	Reign of Theodosius I, last emperor to rule in both east and west
381	Second Ecumenical Council at Constantinople
390	Slaughter at Thessalonica; Ambrose confronts Theodosius
406-407	Vandals and other Germanic tribes cross the Rhine and migrate into Western Empire
410	Goths sack Rome
413-426	Augustine publishes *City of God*
413-414	Construction of Theodosian walls around Constantinople
431	Third Ecumenical Council at Ephesus
451	Fourth Ecumenical Council at Chalcedon

452	Huns threaten Rome; death of Attila
455	Vandals sack Rome
476	Romulus Augustus, last Western emperor, deposed

Appendix B—Glossary

This document is a glossary of key terms, figures, doctrines, councils, and movements relevant to early Christian history and theology.

Adoptionism—The idea that Jesus was in nature a man who became God by adoption. Such groups as the Ebionites and such works as the *Shepherd of Hermas* (circa 150) promoted this belief.

Allegory—A method of biblical interpretation that asserted multiple levels of meaning in the text. The approach was utilized by scholars in making palatable parts of the Bible they found intellectually incredible or morally objectionable if taken literally.

Ambrose (339-397)—Theologian and bishop of Milan. One of the Latin Fathers who greatly influenced Augustine. He introduced the concepts and terminology of the Greek East to the Latin West.

Anthony (251-356)—A 3rd and 4th century hermit who lived on the fringe of the Egyptian desert. His biography, written by Athanasius, inspired many early monastics.

Apollinarius (310-392)—Eastern bishop and theologian. His Christology was an extreme form of the views of the Alexandrian theologians.

Apologists—Christian writers in the early centuries who defended Christianity against pagan attacks on Christian doctrine, morals, and practices. The name is taken from the Greek *apologia* meaning "defense".

Apostle's Creed—A confession of faith used by early Christians in celebrating baptism, for catechetical instruction, as a rule of faith, and as part of the official liturgy in the western Church. Segments of our current Creed date to the 2nd and 3rd century, but the Creed didn't take its present form until the 7th century.

Apostolic Constitutions—A church instructional manual dating to the third century.

Apostolic fathers—A designation created by Jean Cotelier, a French scholar in the late 17th century, for a group of disciples of the apostles and Christian writers, though not contributing to the New Testament canon, were thought to help preserve the apostolic faith. Such writers as Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch, Polycarp, Papias, and the authors of the *Epistle of Barnabas, Epistle to Diognetus, 2 Clement*, and the *Didache* were numbered among the Apostolic fathers.

Apostolic succession—The doctrine that the pastoral authority given by Jesus to the apostles has been handed down through an unbroken succession of bishops.

Arius (260-336)—Alexandrian presbyter who taught Jesus was not equal in divinity to the Father. He was condemned at the Council of Nicea (325).

Asceticism—The rigorous denial of the body for the purpose of spiritual growth.

Athanasius (296-373)—Bishop of Alexandria (328-373), relentless foe of Arianism, and champion of Nicene Christianity. He is regarded by many as the foremost theologian of his day.

Atonement—The doctrine that answers the question of how did Christ's suffering and death on the cross take away sin and reconcile human beings to God. There are several different doctrines in the wider Christian tradition.

Augustine of Hippo (354-430)—Bishop of Hippo in North Africa and author of numerous significant works, including the *Confessions* and the *City of God*. Next to Paul, he was probably the most influential theologian of the first millennium of the Christian era.

Baptism—The sacrament or rite of Christian initiation. Christians have differed in their understanding of baptism, as to mode (immersion as necessary vs mode as optional), as to proper subjects (believers only vs believers and their children), and as to its meaning (baptism as a means of saving grace/as a sign and seal of the covenant of grace/as an outward sign of an inward reality/reception of saving grace).

Basil of Caesarea (330-379)—Bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, theologian, and one of the founders of Eastern monasticism. Frequently referred to as one of the Cappadocian fathers, along with Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa.

Benedict of Nursia (480-550)—A sixth century monk and abbot whose Rule became the standard for Western monasticism.

Bishop—An overseer, senior pastor, and shepherd of the church. In the New Testament, the term for overseer (*episkopos*) and the term for elder (*presbuteros*) seem to be used interchangeably. However, by the 2nd and 3rd centuries, a distinction was drawn between bishop (overseer) and priest (presbyter) and a hierarchical relationship became the norm in church governance.

Boethius (480-524)—Born into a wealthy Roman family who supplied one of the last emperors of the Western Empire, Boethius has been described as "the last of the Romans and the first of the scholastics". He labored to preserve the classical past and was a bridge from that past to the Middle Ages.

Caesaropapism—A system in which the secular ruler has absolute authority over both church and state. The term is often used to describe the relationship between church and state in the Byzantine Empire.

Canonical hours—Set times of worship and prayer in the daily routine of a monastery under the Benedictine rule, consisting of nocturnes, matins/lauds, prime, terce, sext, none, vespers, and compline.

Canon of Scripture—The officially recognized books of the Bible. The Protestant canon consists of the 39 books of the Old Testament and the 27 books of the New Testament. The Roman Catholic canon also includes the books (and chapters) of the Apocrypha, including *1 & 2 Esdras, Tobit, Judith*, *additional chapters in Esther, The Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, A Letter of Jeremiah, The Song of the Three, Daniel and Susanna, Daniel, Bel, and the Dragon [additional chapters in Daniel], The prayer of Manasseh, and 1 & 2 Maccabees*.

Cappadocian fathers—Three 4th century theologians (Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa) from Cappadocia in Asia Minor (now central Turkey). These men made important contributions to Christian theology (especially the doctrine of the Trinity) in general and to the Eastern Orthodox tradition, in particular.

Cassiodorus (6th century)—A high official in the Ostrogothic kingdom who retired to his estates and founded a number of monasteries after Justinian's generals overthrew the Ostrogothic kingdom. One of the monasteries he founded became a model house of learning and was very influential in the monastic emphasis on Bible transcription and preservation of the classics in the early Middle Ages.

Catechumen—An individual in the ancient Church being instructed in the faith in preparation for baptism.

Celsus (circa 170s)—A scathing pagan Roman critic of Christianity whose work *True Doctrine* is known only in quotations and paraphrases found in Origen's reply *Against Celsus*.

Cenobitic monasticism—A form of communal monasticism. The term "cenobite" comes from the Greek *koinos bios* (meaning life together).

Chalcedon, Council of (451)—An assembly of bishops which convened at Chalcedon, near Constantinople, and resolved key questions concerning Christology.

Christology—The branch of Christian theology that deals with the personal identity and work of Jesus Christ.

Church fathers—Christian writers up to Isidore of Seville (died 636), whose works are widely viewed as having special authority.

Clement of Alexandria (150-215)—An Alexandrian bishop and theologian, who sought to establish links between Christian theology and Greek philosophy.

Clement of Rome—Bishop of Rome from 88 to 99 and considered the first Apostolic father, he is famous for a letter he penned to the Corinthians in 96 concerning their divisiveness.

Confessor—Christians who remained true under torture and persecution short of death. By the mid-third century, some persecutions took the tact of attempting to create Christian apostates

rather than martyrs, to force Christians to recant while depriving them of the opportunity for heroic witness unto death.

Columba (died 597)—An Irish monastic missionary to northern Scotland who worked among the Scots for a period of 35 years.

Constantine (274-337)—The Roman emperor who legitimized and then favored Christianity. He called and presided over the Church's first ecumenical council at Nicea in 325.

Constantinople, Councils of—Site of the second (381), fifth (553), and sixth (681) ecumenical councils, which addressed, among other things, the Arian and Monophysite issues.

Creed—From the Latin "credo", meaning "I believe". It is a verbal formula of Christian faith, originally used as a confession of faith at baptism and later used as a way of identifying and excluding heretical teaching.

Cyprian—Bishop of Carthage (249-258) who wrote extensively in promoting the unity of the Church and the authority and role of Christian bishops.

Cyril of Alexandria (died 444)—The Patriarch of Alexandria (412-444) and great opponent of Nestorius in the controversy regarding the nature of Christ's person. He took a leading role at the Council of Ephesus in 431.

Deacon—A church officer who focuses on practical service to the congregation.

Depravity—The idea that because of the Fall, humanity's original relation with God was broken and human nature broken as well. As a result, human beings cannot do anything, even good things, that are redemptive or restorative of this original relationship. This concept does not contend that humanity is as bad as it possibly can be, but that we are wrong at the root and that shows up in both individual and communal sins from which we cannot escape.

Diaspora—A Greek word meaning **"**scattering or dispersion" which, in the context of the early Church, referred to the scattering of the ancient Jews from their Palestinian homeland.

Didache—An early Christian teaching manual dating to the 2nd century.

Diocese—An ecclesiastical district under the authority of a bishop.

Docetism—A Christological heresy that held that Christ was wholly divine and only seemed to have a body. The name is derived from the Greek *dokeo* meaning "to seem, to appear".

Donatists—A group led by Donatus, a schismatic bishop of Carthage (313-347), who opposed allowing Christians who lapsed in the Roman persecutions back into the Church.

Dualism—Ethical or religious dualism asserts that there are two hostile forces or beings in the world, one being the source of all good and the other the source of all evil. The universe is

understood as the battleground for these opposing beings or forces, often identified respectively with light and darkness.

Ebionites—A group of ascetics who chose poverty as a way of life. They derived their name from the Hebrew term for "poor men" (*ebyonim*). They denied the pre-existence of the *Logos*, were very legalistic, understood Jesus as adopted by the Father at His baptism, and may have tended to Gnostic dualism.

Ecumenical councils—Assemblies of bishops whose decisions are considered binding on all Christians. Most Christian groups recognize the first four of these:

- Nicea (325);
- Constantinople (381);
- Ephesus (431);
- Chalcedon (451).

Many, notably the Greek Orthodox, also hold to three others:

- Second Constantinople (553);
- Third Constantinople (680-681);
- Second Nicea (787).

The Roman Catholic Church recognizes all seven of the above and an additional fourteen other councils (see §1-277).

Edict of Milan (313)—A decree issued jointly by Constantine (West) and Licinius (East) extending the freedom of worship to Christians.

Elder—See **Presbyter**

Ephesus, Council of (431)—The third ecumenical council, which condemned the teaching of Nestorius, among other things.

Episcopate—Derived from the Greek word for "bishop" or "overseer", this term refers to the network of bishops governing the church from the 2nd century on.

Eremetical monasticism—A form of solitary monasticism practiced by the desert hermits. The term comes from the Greek "*eremos*" which means wilderness or desert.

Eucharist—A sacrament commemorating the Last Supper shared by Jesus and His disciples (Mt 26:26-30; Mk 14:22-26; Lk 22:14-20; 1 Cor 1:23-26). It is also commonly known as Communion and the Lord's Supper. Christians have differed in their understanding of the nature of the Eucharist:

- Transubstantiation (Roman Catholics) – The elements (bread and wine) actually change and become the body and blood of the Lord;
- Consubstantiation (Luther) – Christ is bodily present in, under, and with the elements of bread and wine. The elements do not become the Lord's body and blood but the participants of the sacrament do "eat and take to [themselves] Christ's body truly and physically";

- Memorialism (Zwingli) -- The sacrament or ordinance memorializes Christ's sacrifice. The Lord's Supper is primarily an occasion to remember the spiritual benefits purchased by Christ's death;
- Spiritual presence (Calvin) -- There is a real reception of the body and blood of Christ in the sacrament only done in a spiritual manner.

Eusebius (260-339)—Christian bishop, theologian, apologist, and the first notable Christian historian. He is best known as the author of *Church History*, an account which covers the period from the time of Christ until the first half of the fourth century.

Eutyches (died 454)—A prominent monk who taught that the incarnate Christ had only a single, divine nature clad in human flesh. This teaching (monophysitism) was condemned at the Council of Chalcedon in 451.

Excommunication—A church's act in excluding a person from its fellowship and from worship, usually for moral or doctrinal deficiencies for which the person is not repentant.

Franks—A Germanic tribe that dominated western Europe from the sixth to the ninth centuries (especially, the 8th and 9th). Charlemagne was their most famous king.

Gnosticism—A broad label for a wide variety of non-orthodox forms of a philosophical religion, popular in the second and third centuries, which taught a cosmic dualism and offered salvation from the material realm based on secret knowledge (*gnosis*).

Goths—Germans who migrated into the Roman Empire in the fourth century. After the collapse of Western Empire, the West Goths (Visigoths) ended up dominating Spain and southern France for time and the East Goths (Ostrogoths) dominated Italy.

Grace—A term for the unmerited mercy and favor of God. The term has a wide play in theology to describe the power of God to redeem and transform human beings.

Gregory of Nazianzus (329-390)—One of the Cappadocian fathers and a founding theologian of the Orthodox tradition.

Gregory of Nyssa (331-395)—One of the Cappadocian fathers, a mystic, and a founding theologian of the Orthodox tradition.

Gregory Thaumaturgus (213-270)—A third century bishop and earnest evangelist who is credited with miracles and with working wonders.

Gregory (the Illuminator) Lusavorich (257-331)—A missionary to Armenia credited with converting that land from paganism to Christianity. Armenia became the first nation to adopt Christianity as it official religion (301). Gregory became the first head of the Armenian Apostolic Church.

Hermit—A term that comes from the Greek word for desert. The monastic movement began with individuals fleeing from the world into the desert wilderness. This so-called eremitical monasticism, exemplified by the desert fathers, was often very extreme in its asceticism and in its representation of the struggle against temptation and the evils of the world. Monasticism gained a communal focus in the Middle Ages, in part in reaction to the excesses of the hermits.

Hippolytus (170-236)—A presbyter at the church at Rome who led a schism against Bishop Callistus. He was a rigorist on church discipline, denying reconciliation with the church to those guilty of of serious (mortal) sin. He was a prolific author and his *Apostolic Tradition* is one of our best sources on the origins and liturgical practices of the early church.

Hypostatic union—The union of the two natures of deity and humanity in the person of Jesus Christ. The Council of Chalcedon (451), in particular, addressed this issue. In the incarnation of the Son of God, a human nature was inseparably united forever with the divine nature in the one person of Jesus, yet with the two natures remaining distinct, whole, and unchanged, without admixture or confusion so that the one person, Jesus Christ, is truly God and truly man.

Ignatius of Antioch (35-107)—Bishop of Antioch and one of the famous early martyrs for the faith. He is noted for his letters to the churches of Asia Minor in which he defended the reality of Christ's physical suffering.

Irenaeus (130-200)—Bishop of Lyons in southern Gaul (France) in the late 2nd century. He wrote *Against Heresies*, defending Christianity against Gnosticism.

Jerome (345-420)—Bible scholar, monastic, doctrinal polemicist, and translator of the Latin Vulgate, the standard version of the Bible in use throughout the Middle Ages.

John Cassian (360-430)—Author of the *Institutes* and the *Conferences***,** a compendium of Egyptian monastic lore and an important source of what we know about early monastic ideals.

John Chrysostom (347-407)—Bishop of Constantinople, theologian, and one of the most influential preachers in antiquity. The epithet *chrysostom* means "golden-mouthed".

Justin Martyr (100-165)—Author of two *Apologies*, defenses of the faith aimed at pagan audiences. He was one of the first Christian thinkers to point to what he regarded as common features that linked Christianity with Greek philosophy.

Labarum—A symbol given to Constantine on the eve of the battle of Milvian Bridge (312) by which he was to conquer and be victorious. It consisted of the Greek letters che (χ) and rho (ρ) superimposed over each other and was placed on the shields of Constantine's soldiers.

Leo the Great (440-461)—A pope who greatly expanded the power and authority of the Roman bishopric. Leo expanded the claims of papal supremacy based on the Petrine dogma, claiming that the Roman see should rule over the entire church. His influential *Tome of Leo* was cited by the Council of Chalcedon in 451. His personal influence and diplomacy persuaded Attila the Hun

to abandon his siege of Rome in 452 and moved Gaiseric the Vandal to limit his sack of the city in 455.

Liturgy—A prescribed form of public worship, usually centering on the celebration of the Eucharist. The most common forms of liturgy modern Americans encounter are the Roman Rite in the Catholic Church, the Liturgy of John Chrysostom in the Eastern Orthodox Church, and the Book of Common Prayer in the Anglican or Episcopal communion.

Logos—The Word made flesh, manifested in Jesus Christ. For the Alexandrian school in the early centuries, the *logos* took on a more expansive sense and was utilized as the key concept in integrating classical philosophy with the Christian faith.

Manichaeism—A dualist religion based on the teachings of the third-century Babylonian prophet, Mani. Augustine was an adherent to this cult for a time.

Marcion—A second-century heretical teacher whose views included the rejection of the Jewish Scriptures and a selective acceptance of the New Testament (basically Paul's epistles minus the Pastorals and an edited version of Luke). His influence pushed the Church to recognize an official "canon" or measuring rod for the accepted, authoritative books of the Bible.

Martin of Tours—A fourth century bishop of Tours in France and a devout monastic. He became an example of the "true" bishop, devoted to his shepherding task while maintaining a simple lifestyle in contrast with the pomp and power of many bishops in the period of the late Empire.

Martyr—One who died for the sake of the faith. The word comes from the Greek word for "witness".

Monarchianism—A third-century movement that emphasized the oneness of God. Dynamic or adoptionist monarchianism taught that Jesus was divine only in the sense that God gave to him divine power. Modalist monarchianism argued that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were only three modes in which the one God operated and not discrete persons.

Monasticism—The name is derived from the Greek word meaning "alone". The first monastics were desert hermits who fled from the world at large and the world in the church and sought to live celibate lives of simplicity and self-denial. Communal monasticism soon developed where monks lived lives of poverty, chastity, and obedience in community by a stated rule (usually following the Benedictine rule in the west and the Rule of St. Basil in the east).

Monaticism's heyday was from the 3rd to the 11th centuries. The mendicants of the 12th and 13th centuries adopted a number of monastic traits but took the monastic ideal outside the walls of the monastery. The Reformation, the Enlightenment, and the modern secular spirit have all contributed to the significant decline of monasticism as a movement.

Monophysites—Derived from the Greek words *monos* (single) and *physis* (nature), Monphysites believe that the incarnate Christ had a single divine nature, clothed in human flesh. The Fifth

(553) and Sixth (681) Ecumenical Councils at Constantinople addressed this issue, a very contentious one in the east from the 5th to the 7th centuries.

Montanism—A movement in the second and third centuries based on the prophecies of Montanus. Its instance on the moral purity of the Church won Tertullian to its ranks late in his life.

Mortal sin—A sin causing spiritual death. Roman Catholic moral theology distinguishes between serious or mortal sin, which extinguishes the life of God in the soul, and lesser or venial sin, which only weakens but does not destroy that life. The distinction was initially suggested by Tertullian in the third century in the context of the question of the lapsed.

Muratorian Canon—An early list of generally accepted books of the New Testament which circulated at Rome near the end of the 2nd century.

Mysticism—An approach to religion that stresses the direct and intuitive experience of God. Their emphasis on the unintelligibility of God (that many aspects of God are hidden from human understanding because God is incomprehensibly beyond human understanding) generally led mystics to look askance at the systems of logic woven by groups like the scholastics. They believed that the scholastics thought they knew too much about God by their logical extrapolations, and that such pretense was dangerous.

Nag Hammadi—A site in Upper Egypt where a collection of ancient codices (i.e. books), including a number of gnostic gospels dating to the early centuries of our era, were discovered in 1945.

Neoplatonism—A form of Platonism that originated with Plotinus (205-270). Neoplatonism supplied the philosophical backdrop for the Nicene fathers.

Nestorius—A bishop of Constantinople and allegedly a teacher of an extreme form of Christology that emphasized the separateness of the two natures of Christ (human and divine).

Nicea, Council of (325)—An assembly of bishops convened at Nicea in northwestern Turkey, which condemned the teachings of Arius.

Nicene Creed—A statement of faith resulting from the Council of Nicea (325) and modified by the Council of Constantinople (381) which has been used by Christians through the centuries.

Novatian—Leader of a rigorous faction of the church at Rome in the third century, seeking to exclude those who lapsed in times of persecution. Cyprian of Carthage and others urged a more moderate policy.

Origen (185-254)—An influential Alexandrian theologian, apologist (author of *Against Celsus*), and author of the first Christian systematic theology, *On First Principles*. He favored an allegorical method of interpreting Scripture and made extensive use of Platonic and Neoplatonic thought.

Original sin—The doctrine that every human being is born with a corrupt and sinful nature deserving of condemnation.

Pachomius (290-346)—Founder of Egyptian cenobitic (communal) monasticism.

Patriarch—A honorary title given in the early Church to the bishops of Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem.

Patripassianism—This is sometimes used as another name for modal monarchialism. Strictly speaking, patripassianism is the teaching that it was the Father who became incarnate, was born of a virgin, and who suffered and died on the cross.

Patrick (432-461)—The English missionary to Ireland used of God as an instrument of a very substantial awakening among the Irish. Ireland would become a vibrant monastic and missionary center in the early Middle Ages.

Pelagius—A Christian theologian of the early 5th century who emphasized human freedom and the merits of human effort in attaining salvation. Augustine was his great opponent.

Penance—A sacrament of forgiveness in the Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic traditions, involving contrition, confession to an ordained priest, the doing of a prescribed penance, and absolution by the priest.

Peshitta—A translation of the Old and New Testament into Syriac. It is one of the earliest translations of the Bible into the vernacular of the people, a key missionary strategy of the early Church.

Platonism—A system of thought formulated by Plato (427-347 BC), immensely influential in the theological formulations of the early Church.

Polycarp (70-156)—Bishop of Smryna and an early martyr for the faith.

Predestination—The doctrine, heavily influenced by Augustine, that human beings are destined for salvation (and some would say damnation as well) as a result of God's decree before the beginning of time, regardless of their own choices or actions. During the Reformation, this doctrine was emphasized and elaborated on the most by Calvin and Calvinist theologians.

Presbyter—An elder, commonly seen as a priest in the Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic traditions. One of the three offices in the early church – overseer, elder, and deacon.

Real presence—The doctrine that insists that Christ's body and blood are really present in the Eucharist. Transubstantiation is the Roman Catholic version of this doctrine whereby the substance of bread and wine are changed into Christ's body and blood. Consubstantiation is the Lutheran version of this doctrine whereby the bread and wine physically remain as they are but the body and blood of Christ are present in/around/with them.

Relics—The physical remains of a saint, usually body parts but sometimes artifacts, thought by medievals to have miraculous powers.

Sabellius—A teacher of modal monarchianism, emphasizing divine unity to the point that the three persons of the Trinity are reduced to mere modes of divine being or action.

Sacrament—An outward sign of invisible grace (some would add -- that confer the grace they signify). Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox recognize seven sacraments – baptism, penance or reconciliation, confirmation, Eucharist, holy orders, matrimony, and extreme unction (last rites or anointing for the sick). Protestants recognize two – baptism and the Eucharist.

Septuagint—A Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament dating to the 3rd century B.C., deriving its name from the seventy scholars commissioned by to do the translation.

Stoicism—A major school of Hellenistic thought begun by Zeno (335-263 BC) and deriving its name from the porch (*stoa* in Greek) in Athens where he taught.

Syncretism—The process by which elements of one religion are assimilated into another religion resulting in a change in the fundamental tenets or nature of those religions.

Synod—A regional meeting of religious leaders.

Tertullian (160-225)—A great Latin apologist for the faith and a formative theologian of the Latin Christendom.

Theodore of Mopsuestia (350-428)—A theologian of the Antioch school who emphasized the two distinct natures of Christ in the controversy concerning the hypostatic union.

Theotokos—A Greek term meaning "God bearer" used to signify and honor the Virgin Mary.

Treasury of Merit—A repository of surplus merits of Christ, the Virgin Mary, and the saints which could be distributed by the Church for the spiritual benefit of others. It was the "spiritual bank", if you will, that drove the popular sale of indulgences in the late Middle Ages.

Trinity—The doctrine that one God consists in three divine, consubstantial persons.

Ulfilas (or Walfila 311-383)—An Arian missionary who worked among the Germanic tribes outside the borders of the Roman Empire. He was known as the Apostle to the Goths.

Venial sin—A sin that does not cause spiritual death in and of itself. Roman Catholic moral theology distinguishes between serious or mortal sin, which extinguishes the life of God in the soul, and lesser or venial sin, which only weakens but does not destroy that life. The distinction was initially suggested by Tertullian in the third century in the context of the question of the lapsed.

Vulgate—A translation of the Bible into Latin by Jerome. This was the version used through most of the Middle Ages.

White martyrdom—A phrase used in relation to monasticism**.** The monastics were seen as the bloodless successors to the martyrs. The martyrs renounced their lives by defying the world system; the monastics renounced the world system by withdrawing from it.