

BEREA CHRISTIAN COLLEGE FOR INTEGRATED STUDIES
COURSE OUTLINE: INTRODUCTION TO CHURCH HISTORY I
30AD – 1300 AD
COURSE CODE: CTH/105
REGULAR

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Aim

The aim of this course is to acquaint the students with the birth and growth of the church.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course, students should be able to

- Analyse the development of the Christian church from the Apostolic time to the medieval period.
- Evaluate the context of the growth of the church
- Apply the information in the context of the church today.

Prerequisites - None

Course Description

The course will cover an introduction of Christian History, reasons for study, sources of history, social and religious background for the beginnings of the church, the Graeco Roman world, Judaism, Persecution of the church, heresies in the early church (Gnosticism) marcionism, montanism, donatism, church fathers, church mothers, development of the Canon, development of creeds, church councils (Nicea 325, Constantinople 381, Ephesus 431, Chalcedon 451). The rise of monasticism (Egypt, Benedictines, Cluniacs, Cistercians, Fransiscans) Collapse of the Western Roman Empire, Re-evangelisation of Europe, the Great Schism, the crusades.

Teaching methodology

- There will be class lectures, class student presentations and discussions.

Instructional materials and equipment – Blackboard, whiteboard and recommended books.

Required textbooks

Renwick, A.M, (1985). The story of the church, Grand Rapids, MI:Eerdmans/IVP

Dowley, Tim (ed) 1977, The History of Christianity, Lion Publishers.

Foster, John (1989), The first advanced church history AD29 – 500, London: SPCK.

Hazlet, Ian (1991), The early church, London: SPCK

Richardson, Alan (1991). The making of Creeds, London: SCIM

Course Assessment

Course work will be worth 50% of the final mark. The final exam is 50%

1.1 INTRODUCTION TO CHURCH HISTORY

Church History as an academic discipline studies the history of Christianity and the way the Christian church has developed since its inception. Henry Melvin Gwatkin defines church history as the spiritual side of the history of civilized people ever since our master's coming. A.M. Renwick defines church history as the story of the Christian community and its relationship to the rest of the world throughout the ages.

E.E. Cairns suggests that church history is interpreted record of the origin, progress and impact of Christianity upon human society, based on the organized data gathered by the scientific method from archaeological, documentary or living sources. It is the interpreted, organized story of the redemption of man and the earth. Church history is often but not always, studied from a Christian perspective. Writers from different Christian traditions will often highlight people and events particularly relevant to their own denominational history.

Catholic and orthodox writers often highlight the achievements of the ecumenical councils, while evangelical historians may focus on the protestant reformation and the great awakening.

1.2. PURPOSE FOR STUDYING CHURCH HISTORY

(i) Doctrine

Church history enables the Christians to see the development of doctrine throughout the years within the Christianity. This will enable students to determine more accurately those doctrinal systems that are more closely related to the bible and gain personal convictions on the mainstream of Christian doctrine. Thus, a study of church councils and the theological thinking of various men become important. Church history will also give one a tolerance of others who do not agree with him doctrinally.

(ii) Heresy

While this is closely related to doctrine, it should be kept distinct for there has been a development of heresy throughout the history of the church. Many of the heresies that confront the church today are merely repetitions of earlier heresies met and exposed by the early church. There continues to be a great need today for men to be able to distinguish truth from error.

(iii) Great men

Church history is a record of great men of the faith including theologians, preachers and laymen. Much of the church history is a study of men and their exploits for the resurrected Christ. Most of the Orthodox Christian teachings that are taken for granted today are the products of great men who struggled with, fought for and even died for Christian doctrine.

(iv) Persecution

No one can read church history without being impressed by the fact that multiplied thousands have given their lives for their Christian beliefs. The Lord Jesus Christ said that the world would hate the Christians and that Christians would suffer much for their faith, and many have taken this word as great comfort into their martyr's death.

(v) Movements

Church history is a record of numerous Christian movements that have sprung up inside and outside the organized church. Some of these movements are good and others are harmful to the church as a whole.

(vi) Church growth

This shows how the church which was few in number developed into a mighty organization. Church history exposed the Roman Catholic System as a later development in church organization. The study of church history reveals how the Roman Catholic, Episcopalian, congregational and Presbyterian forms of church government developed.

No student can become well grounded in his beliefs about church authority without a study of church history. It also helps one to understand the history of denominationalism – especially in America where there are great multitudes of different groups of professing Christians.

(viii) Missions

Church history is primarily a record of how Christ's disciples throughout the last 2000 years have taken the gospel to the nations in obedience to the Great Commission to make disciples and to instruct them in the Lord's command. Church history is also a record of how individual groups and movements have failed in their faithfulness to the great commission.

(viii) Effects on Human life

The life of innumerable individuals and of many nations has been transformed by the mighty power of the cross. Christian education and philanthropic agencies have exemplified the love of Christ to men-raising many people to a new moral plane. God in every generation has touched people with the good news of Christ and has never left himself without a witness.

1.3. SOURCES OF CHURCH HISTORY

In its first few centuries, Christians made up a small minority of the population of the Roman Empire. The religion attracted little attention from writers. Other religious beliefs and few artifacts have been found to document Christianity in its earliest days. Most of the surviving documentation was written by Christians.

(i) Dead sea scrolls

The Dead Sea scrolls are a collection of about 900 documents including texts from the Hebrew bible discovered between 1947 and 1956 in eleven caves in and around the ruins of the ancient settlement of Khirbet Qumran on the Northwest shore of the Dead Sea in the West Banks. **The texts are of great religious and historical significance as they include the oldest known surviving copies of biblical and extra biblical documents and preserve evidence of great diversity in late second temple Judaism. They are written in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek mostly on parchment, but with some written on papyrus.**

These manuscripts generally date between 150 BCE and 70 CE. The scrolls are traditionally identified with the ancient Jewish sect called the Essenes, though some recent interpretations have challenged this associational and argue that the scrolls were penned by priest, Zadokites or other unknown Jewish groups.

(ii) New Testament Apocrypha

The New Testament apocrypha are a number of writing by early Christians that give accounts of Jesus and his teachings, the nature of God, or the teachings of his apostles and their lives. These writings often have links with books regarded as “canonical” not every branch of the Christian church agrees on which writings should be regarded as canonical and which are “apocryphal”

(iii) Gnostic Gospels

The Gnostic gospels are Gnostic collections of writing about the teachings of Jesus written from the 2nd – 4th century. These gospels are not part of the standard biblical Canon of any major Christian denomination and as such are not part of what is called the New Testament Apocrypha.

(iv) **Nag Hammadi Library**

The Nag Hammadi library is a collection of early Christian Gnostic texts discovered near the upper Egyptian town of Nag Hammadi in 1945. That year, twelve leather-bound papyrus codices buried in a sealed jar were found by a local peasant name Mohammed Ali Samman. The contents were written in Coptic language. The best known of these works is probably the gospel of Thomas of which the Nag Hammandi codices contain the only complete text. After the discovery, it was recognized that fragments of these sayings attributed to Jesus appeared in manuscripts discovered at Oxyrhynchus in 1898 and matching quotations were recognized in other early Christian sources. Subsequently a 1st or 2nd century date of composition c.80 for the lost Greek originals of the Gospel of Thomas has been proposed.

The Nag Hammadi codices are housed in the Coptic museum in Cairo Egypt.

(v) **Josephus**

The works of Josephus provide crucial information about the first Jewish – Roman war and are also important literary source material for understanding the context of the Dead Sea scrolls and late temple Judaism. Josephus includes information about individuals, groups, customs and geographical places. His writings provide a significant – extra biblical account of the post-exilic period of the Maccabeus, the Hasmonean dynasty and the rise of Herod the Great. He makes references to the Sadducees, Jewish High priest of the time, Pharisees and Essenes, the Herodian Temple, Zealots and to such figures as Pontius pilate, Herod the Great, Agrippa I and Agrippa II, John the Baptist, James the brother of Jesus. He is an important source for studies of immediate post-temple Judaism and the context of the early Christianity.

(vi) **Tacitus**

The annals are among the first-known secular-historic records to mention Jesus which Tacitus does in connection with Nero's persecution of the Christians. The passage contains an early non-Christian reference to the origin of Christianity, the execution of Christ described in the bible's New Testament gospels and the presence and persecution of Christians in 1st Century Rome. The surviving copies of Tacitus works derive from two principal manuscripts, known

as the Medicean manuscripts which are held in the Laurentian Library and written in Latin. It is the second Medicean manuscript which is the oldest surviving copy of the passage describing Christians.

(vii) **Historicity of Jesus and Historical Jesus**

The historicity of Jesus concerns the historical existence of Jesus of Nazareth. While scholars often draw a distinction between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith and while scholars further debate what can specifically be known concerning Jesus Character and ministry – essentially all scholars in the relevant fields agree that the mere historical existence of Jesus can be established using documentary and other evidence.

The lines of evidence used to establish Jesus historical existence include the New Testament documents, theoretical source documents that may lie behind the New Testament, statements from the early church Fathers, brief references in histories produced decades or centuries later by pagan and Jewish sources and early Christian creeds. The historical Jesus is a scholarly reconstruction of the 1st Century figure Jesus of Nazareth using modern historical methods.

This reconstruction is based upon historical methods. These include critical analysis of the gospel texts as the primary source for his biography, and non-biblical sources for the historical and cultural context in which he lived. In the last half of the 19th Century and the 20th centuries, historians and biblical scholars have made great studies in the quest for the historical Jesus. The purpose of these scholars is to examine the evidence from the diverse sources and critically bring it together in order that we can compile a totally up-to-date composite of Jesus.

Use of the term Historical Jesus implies that the figure thus reconstructed will differ from that presented in the teaching of the ecumenical councils (the dogmatic Christ). It will also sometimes differ from Jewish Christian Muslims or Hindu beliefs. The historical Jesus was a Galilean Jew living in a time of Messianic and apocalyptic expectations. He was baptized by John the Baptist and after John was executed, Jesus began his own preaching in Galilee. He sent his apostles out to heal and to preach the kingdom of God. Later, he travelled to Jerusalem in Judea where he caused a disturbance at the temple. It was the time of Passover, when political and religious tensions were high in Jerusalem. The Gospels say that the temple guards arrested him and handed him over to Pontius Pilate for execution. The movement he had started

survived his death and was carried on by his apostles who proclaimed his resurrection. It developed into early Christianity.

The quest for the historical Jesus began with the work of Hermann Samuel Reimarus in the 18th Century. Two books both called the life of Jesus were written by David Strauss, published in German in 1835-36 and Ernest Renan published in French in 1863. The Historical Jesus is conceptually different from Christ of faith. The former is physical while the latter is metaphysical. The historical Jesus is based on historical evidence. Everytime a new scroll is unearthed, or new gospel fragment is found, the Historical Jesus is modified. And because so much has been lost, we can never know Him completely.

(viii) **Apostolic Fathers**

The earliest church Fathers (within two generations of the Apostles of Christ) are usually called the Apostolic Fathers. Important Apostolic Fathers include Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch and Polycarp of Smyrna. In addition, the Didache and Shepherd of Hermas are usually placed among the writings of the Apostolic Fathers although their authority is unknown.

The writings of the Apostolic Fathers are in a number of genres, some e.g. the writings of Clement of Rome are letters called epistles, others relate to historical events e.g. the Martyrdom of Polycarp. The Apostolic Fathers are distinguished from other Christian authors of this same period in that their practices and theology largely fell within those developing traditions of Pauline Christianity or proto-orthodox Christianity that became the mainstream. They represent a tradition of early Christianity shared by many different churches across cultural, ethnic and linguistic differences. The tradition they represent holds the Jewish scriptures to be inspired by God and holds that the Jewish prophet point to the actual flesh and blood of Jesus through which both Jew and Gentile are saved.

(ix) **Church Father**

The church fathers are generally divided into the Ante-Nicene Fathers, those who lived and wrote before the Council of Nicaea 325 and the Nicene and post Nicene Fathers. That is those who lived and wrote after 325. In addition, the division of the Fathers into Greek and Latin writers is also common. Some of the most prominent Greek Fathers include Justin martyr, John Chrysostom and Cyril of Alexandria. Among the Latin Fathers are Tertullian, Jerome,

Ambrose of Milan and Augustine of Hippo. The early church fathers defined and defended Christian doctrines.

2.1 THE BEGINNING OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH (FOUNDING OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH)

According to Christian tradition, the Christian was founded by Jesus Christ. In the gospel according to Matthew, the resurrected Jesus gathered his twelve Apostles together, issued the great commission and selected Simon Peter as their leader. Scholars argue and deny that Jesus ever intended to found a church.

Separation of Christianity from Judaism

The split between pharisaic/Rabbinic Judaism and early Christianity is commonly attributed to the rejection of Jesus in his hometown c-30. Christianity had begun within Judaism and in St Paul's time, Christians Jews were being left to go their own way. But it was people like Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles who were making it clear that Christians were not a sect within Judaism. The church was growing quickly and the converts were nearly all gentiles. The Jews often made complaints to the authorities against the Christians. It seemed unlikely that the Roman government would leave Christians in peace much longer. Christians had forsaken their national customs for the law of Christ. People do not like a minority such as the Jews who shut themselves off from their neighbours. They are still more uneasy when they see a new religion, such as that of the Christians winning converts at the expense of the old religions, that is a threat to Judaism hence a split with Christianity.

2.2. WHY THE EARLY CHURCH GREW. (SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND FOR THE BEGINNINGS OF THE CHURCH – THE GRAECO ROMAN WORLD)

(a) The Roman peace (Pax Romana)

Throughout the Roman Empire, there was no war. There was one political administration which brought unity. There was one legal system. There were good roads and bridges which gave good communications and enabled a postal service to function. Good security forces meant that robbery and violence were under control.

(b) The Greek Language

Good communications in the Roman Empire were helped by the Greek language which was being spoken in France, Italy, Palestine, and Mesopotamia and as far as India. Jews and Gentiles all spoke Greek. The gospels were written in Greek and the Old Testament was translated into Greek in the 2nd Century BC. This Greek Old Testament was called the “Septuagint” Greek was a flexible language well able to express clearly the ideas of the Christian gospel and Christian teaching.

(c) Hebrew religion

The Jewish scriptures (e.g. Isaiah, Micah, and Zechariah) had prophesied that a Messiah would come. Jewish teaching from the Old Testament prepared the way for Christ’s teaching.

(d) Spiritual Despair

In the Roman Empire, people were dis-satisfied with the pagan cults and the Roman gods who were remote and took no interest in human affairs. The Jewish scriptures proclaimed a God who acts in the events of human history who is interested in mankind and who calls upon people to serve Him. This message was supremely illustrated in the sending of His Son Jesus Christ into the world and in the persecuted devotion of the early Christians. Furthermore, growing immorality in the empire created a spiritual desire in people’s lives which the Christian gospel filled. It gave hope both for the present and for the future.

Social factors and the Christian faith

(e) The Gospel appealed to the lower classes of the society (1Cor. 1:26-32).

- (f) The Gospel also appealed to the intellectuals of the day like Paul, Irenaeus, Justin Martyr and the African Theologians like Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian and Augustine of Hippo.
- (g) Christianity also appealed to some in the upper classes like Joseph of Arimathea, the Praetorian Guard (Phil. 1:13) and eventually in AD 311 to the Roman Emperor himself.
- (h) The early Christians evangelized to the towns which enabled the gospel message to spread to many people quickly. The gospel appealed to both town and the country people.

(i) Christian fellowship

Look how these Christians love one another was the comment of many interested onlookers as they watched Christians together. This love illustrated and confirmed the reality of the gospel message which they preached. Joy in the Holy Spirit in the face of Persecution and a purity of life in the midst of an immoral society powerfully attracted outsiders towards the truth of the Christian faith.

2.3 METHODS USED IN EARLY CHURCH EXPANSION

(a) Apostles and their successors (Full time workers)

These may be divided into different categories. Local pastors and teachers of congregations. Some of these elders-presbyters – bishops may have been part time. Some like Ignatius, Polycarp and Ireneaus were probably full time leaders of their flocks. It is doubtful whether even the full time workers were paid. Travelling prophets and teachers like Paul, Timothy and some wonder workers.

(b) Lay Evangelists (Part time preachers)

Many of these would have been people in business who might travel and spread their faith in their spare time. These include people like Priscilla and Aquilla mentioned in Acts 18:2-3)

(c) Confessors and Martyrs

Tertullian in North Africa wrote: The blood of a Christian is a seed. The way Christians died for their faith during persecution or suffered to it in prison attracted many people to Christ. Many Martyrs died for their faith, many other confessors were imprisoned or suffered persecution in some other ways. (A confessor is someone who suffers but does not die for his faith).

(d) Christian literature

The apologists like Justin, Tertullian wrote many books to defend Christians from unjust criticism and to explain what they really believed. Other full time Christian teachers like Clement of Alexandria and Origen wrote books to refute heresies. Some bishops like Polycarp, Ireneaus and Cyprian also wrote books to explain Christian doctrine. Literature was seen as a very important means of communication.

3.1 PERSECUTION OF THE EARLY CHURCH

(A) Persecution by the Jews

The first people who persecuted Christians were Jews. Christians experienced opposition from the beginning from the Jews who did not believe in Christ. After the resurrection of the Jesus Christ, Stephen was the first to experience martyrdom. In Acts Chapters 6-7 we read that he started preaching that the coming of Christ made the Law of Moses out of date. The Jewish leaders objected to this subversive doctrine and stoned Stephen to death. Saul (Paul of Tarsus) agreed with this decision to kill him (Acts 8:1). Later Paul was converted and he became convinced by most of Stephen's arguments. Paul himself taught that obedience to the Law of Moses cannot bring salvation (Gal. 2:15-21). This radical message and his decision to preach the gospel to the Gentiles led to bitter opposition and persecution from the traditional Jews (Acts 13:44-51). Paul and Barnabas experienced what Jesus had promised to his disciples (Luke 21:12) and (John 15:20) slowly but surely, the infant Christian church was forced to break away from its Jewish cradle.

(B) THE START OF ROMAN PERSECUTION

Roman attitude to foreign religions

Within the empire, the Romans worshipped many different gods, but their most important worship was reserved for their state gods. Whenever they conquered a nation, they allowed them to continue to worship their own gods provided that they also agreed to worship the Roman state gods as well. This policy of toleration may have been followed out of fear of offending a foreign god who might destroy the prosperity of the empire.

So many religions were tolerated as long as three conditions were met:

- (i) The followers of the religion also agreed to worship the Roman state gods.
- (ii) The religion did not offend against public morals and decency.
- (iii) The religion was either an ancient or a national religion.

N/B: If a religion fulfilled these conditions it was given the title of "religion licita" or recognized religion.

Roman attitude to the Jewish Religion

The Romans tolerated the religion of the Jews inspite of the fact that the Jews refused absolutely to worship the Roman state gods. They were monotheists. They could only worship one God. Exo. 20:2-3. their religion was the only one granted “religion licita” status without the need to offer worship to the state. The monotheistic intolerance of the Jews was tolerated by the Romans because of their high moral standards and because theirs was both an ancient and a national religion.

Persecution

3.2 EMPEROR NERO AD 54-AD68

As long as Christianity remained a group within Judaism, Christians were not likely to be persecuted by the Romans. They were covered by the religion licita status of the Jews. However, during the reign of Nero AD 54-68), the Romans began to understand that Christians and Jews were different.

When this happened, Christianity became a superstition that is an illegal religion liable to be persecuted by the Roman authorities. New religions were viewed with suspicion because they were not national nor were they ancient. So a superstition could not command the respect of the Roman authorities. Indeed, in popular rumour, Christianity was thought to be offending against public morals and decency. Because Christians taught the need to love everyone rumour said that they practiced incest and because they celebrated the Lord's Supper in secret, rumour had it that they were cannibals eating the flesh of young children. Many Christians were slaves so they could only meet for worship after dark or before dawn when they were not working. So rumour said that they were a dangerous secret society.

Roman emperor Nero in July AD 64 tried to blame the Christians for burning Rome after a rumour had spread, probably true that Nero himself had started the fire. Tacitus says that Christians were hated for their evil practices and he calls their religion a deadly superstition.

On the night of 18th July AD 64, night watchmen in Rome blew their horns and people woke up to see the city ablaze. Fanned by a strong wind, it burned for six days. A large part of the city was destroyed. Thousands were left homeless. Who was to blame? Rumours said that Empero himself had started the fire. Some people thought he had done so to make way for one of his building schemes. Perhaps, said others, it was just another sample of the wicked ways of a man who had murdered his own mother. The easiest way for Nero to clear himself of this accusation was to fix the guilt upon others and punish them publicly and severely.

The Roman historian Tacitus who was Governor of the province of Asia wrote an account of the fire about fifty years later. In the passage quoted below, four points should be noticed:

1. It is one of the earliest references to Christ by a secular historian.

2. There is an indirect reference to the resurrection. Tacitus a non-Christian does not realize this, but any Christian reader should be able to recognize it.
3. St Peter and St Paul were probably among the Christians who were arrested and killed there. So there is a connection with John 21 where Jesus foretells how Peter would die.
4. Tacitus emphasizes the large number of Christians in the capital, only 35 years after the death of Christ.

Nero fixed the guilt on a class of people, hated for their abominations who are commonly called Christians. The executions were turned into cruel sport to amuse the crowds in the emperor's garden. Christians were dressed in animal skins and hunted by the Emperor's hounds, and the scene was floodlit by other Christians who were burned as human torches. Tacitus adds that Nero himself mixed with the crowd dressed like a charioteer or drove about in a chariot.

The first persecution did not spread beyond the city of Rome. It was not carried out for religious reasons but was to satisfy one man's cruelty (Nero). The persecution must have made Christians everywhere feel insecure. Men had been put to death just because they were Christians.

Nero later committed suicide on June 9 68AD when he learned that he had been tried in absentia and condemned to death as a public enemy – making him the first Roman Emperor to commit suicide.

3.3. PERSECUTION BY DOMITIAN AD 81 – AD 96

During the first two hundred years of its existence, the church was too small for the Roman government to take very much notice of Christians. So persecution was not a deliberate policy of the Romans. Infact, from the time of Nero until Domitian, we know of no persecution. Domitian however adopted an Eastern custom and began to insist that the Emperor should be worshipped as divine. Formerly, most Emperors had shown little interest in being included among the Empire's gods. They were content just to be revered among the powers upon which people's lives depended. But Emperor Domitian made people call him "Lord and God" The very words which forms the climax of the fourth gospel i.e. John 20:28. It is no wonder that Christians called it blasphemy.

Domitian took the title "Master and God" (Dominus et Deus" in Latin) and ordered people when making official oaths to swear" by the genius of the emperor" Christians refused this because they remembered that this was the title that Thomas gave to Jesus in John 20:28. Their refusal made Christians unpopular and this may be why John in Revelation 1:9 was put on the island of Patmos on account of the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

Because Christians refused to swear by the genius of the Emperor, they began to be accused of atheism. Atheism means not believing in God so they were called atheist because they refused to believe that Emperor was God.

In AD 86, under Domitian, the colosseum was completed – the great stone amphitheatre which remains today the most impressive building in Rome. It used to have marble seats for 50,000 people and standing room for nearly as many again. And the spectators shouted there as we do today at a football match, but they were not to see men kicking a ball but watch prisoners (both men and women) made to face wild beasts, bulls, bears, panthers and lions which were brought to Rome for the purpose. Many Christians were later to die there, the first of whom we know being Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch in AD107.

Domitian's reign came to an end in 96 AD when he was assassinated by court officials. He was succeeded the same day by his advisor Nerva..

3.4 CHRISTIANS AND EMPEROR

TRAJAN AD 98 – AD 117

After Domitian died, persecution died down because Emperor Trajan did not like Emperor Worship being used as a loyalty test in the Empire. However, some Christians were put to death during Trajan's time. Among them was Ignatius Bishop of Antioch who was executed at Rome in about AD 107. We do not know why Ignatius was arrested, but trouble broke out for Christians in Bithynia because of their success. The pagan temples were being deserted. In the year 112 AD, Pliny, Governor of Bithynia wrote to the Emperor Trajan asking how he ought to deal with the growing number of Christians in his province.

Pliny's letter is also interesting because it tells a little about early Christian worship. Here is part of his letter

Pliny's letter to Trajan AD 112

"I ask them if they are Christians, if they admit it, I repeat the question a second and third time, threatening capital punishment if they persist. I sentence them to death. They have been accustomed to meet before daybreak, to recite a hymn to Christ; they abstain from theft, robbery and adultery. After the conclusion of this ceremony, it is their custom to depart and meet again taking food."

Trajan's reply to Pliny

The only reason that Pliny gave for executing the Christians was their obstinacy in continuing in their superstition. This is not a very strong reason for putting anyone to death. Trajan was a humane Emperor so he does not encourage Pliny to go looking for Christians to execute. He also insists that anonymous accusations were not to be accepted in any court of law.

3.5 OCCASIONAL PERSECUTION AD 138 – AD 211

During this period, Christianity continued to be the object of great suspicion because Christians refused to worship the Emperor. There was only occasional persecution during the reign of Antoninus Pius (AD 138 – 161) But Bishop Polycarp was burnt at Smyrna in AD 155 mainly because of the opposition from the Jews there.

Marcus Aurelius (AD 161-180) was a stoic who knew about Christianity and disliked it. It was a time of disasters and crises in the empire. Christians were blamed for these because they had offended the traditional gods of Rome. During this time, Justin was martyred at Rome in 163 AD and Bishop Pothinus Blandina and 46 Christians were cut to pieces at Lyons in France in AD 177.

Under Emperor Septimius Severus AD 193 – 211 AD Clement was exiled from Alexandria in 202 and perpetua and Felicitas were martyred at Carthage in Tunisia in about AD 203.

3.6 SERIOUS PERSECUTION: EMPEROR DECIOUS AD 249 – 251 AND EMPEROR VALERIAN AD 253 – 260

We have seen that in the first two hundred years of the church's existence, the Roman authorities did not carry out widespread persecution. Emperor Trajan even told Pliny not to hunt out Christians but only to punish them if they were brought to his notice. The next emperor Hadrian AD 117 – 138 even went as far as to order that Christians were seen as a minority group who did not fully enter into the Roman Society. They practiced a religion which was not well understood by the majority of people. Therefore they often became scapegoat for all kinds of accusations. Their refusal to take part in state worship classed them as atheist who was disloyal to the state.

During the time of Maximinus Thrax AD 235 – 238, Christians became more numerous. At the same time, the Roman Empire was faced with many trouble after a long period of time in peace. It was attacked by the barbarians outside the empire. There were also political revolts inside the empire. So the government was forced to increase the size of the Army. To do this, they increased the taxes. This in turn led to a period of great inflation and the former peace and prosperity disappeared.

Naturally, people tried to suggest reasons for these political and economic problems. Many gave a religious explanation for these disasters. They said that the growth of Christianity had

caused the old gods of Rome who had made Rome great. Therefore, the old gods were angry with the growth of the new religion in the name of Christianity. Others gave political reason saying that Christianity was forming a state within a state. Therefore Christians might be tempted to overthrow the state. Therefore in AD 250, soon after Decius came to power, a big effort was made to wipe out Christianity by the destruction of places of worship. Scriptures were confiscated as well as liturgical vessels. Leaders of the church were imprisoned and killed. At the same time, ancient state religion was emphasized as the only way to save the empire. Sacrifice was now to be made to the name of the Emperor and not just to his genius.

Decius aimed at nothing less than the destruction of the Christian faith. Origen had seen it coming. He had written in AD 248. “It seems likely that the secure existence enjoyed by believers now will come to an end, since those who slander the word say that there is now so much sedition, because Christians are so many and because the officials do not war against them as in the old days. During this time, Origen was imprisoned and Cyprian Bishop of Carthage in North Africa went into hiding. Fabius, Bishop of Rome, Babylus – Bishop of Antioch and Alexander Bishop of Jerusalem were killed. Everyone was instructed to get a certificate to show that he had obeyed the Emperor’s order to worship the gods of the empire. The certificate was in this form:

“To the commissioner superintending the sacrifices.

I.....son of..... name of a place..... aged..... I have always sacrificed to the gods and now in your presence, according to order, have sacrificed, offered wine and eaten of the sacrificial food.

Signed by

(Name of the first witness)

Signed

by.....

(Name of the second witness)

Those who did not get the certificate were arrested, tried and tortured to make them obey.

It had been safe to be a Christian for so long that no one thought of danger. Suddenly, Christians saw before them prison, torture, death. Cyprian Bishop of Carthage wrote:-

“Many were conquered before the battle, ran to the market place of their own accord as if they had always desired the chance to sacrifice. Why? Wretched man do you bring an animal to offer? You have come to sacrifice yourself, to burn up your Christian faith in the altar’s fire.

After a serious rebellion in North Africa and an outbreak of plague, some began to wonder if the policy of persecution was really being successful. So it was relaxed under Emperor Gallus AD 252-253.

Others thought that the persecution had not been thorough enough. So it was renewed under Emperor Valerian AD 253 – 260 AD. In 250 AD, Cyprian went into hiding, in order to stay alive and lead his people. Under Decius’s successor, Valerian, he let himself be arrested and when the judge said, you shall be executed with the sword, Cyprian simply replied thanks be to God.

Valerian’s policy was to execute bishops and senior clergy and thus leave the church leaderless. But the empire was disturbed by both barbarian and Persian invaders and Valerian’s plans were not fully carried out. The next Emperor Gallienus AD 261 – AD 283 stopped persecution as unlawful. He gave back church properties and granted toleration to Christians. Everyone thought that the longed for peace had come.

3.7 FINAL ROMAN PERSECUTION

Diocletian became Emperor in AD 284 after years of confusion and civil war in the empire. He reformed the administration of the empire and re-organised it for defence purposes. He divided it into two halves – East and West. Each half was ruled by an Augustus with a deputy like a vice-president called a Caesar. Diocletian ruled in the East as Augustus with Galenus as his Caesar. In the West, General Maximian was Augustus with Constantius (Father of Constantine as his Caesar).

Diocletian's Persecution

By AD 300, the loyalty of the army was becoming a problem. Series of disasters occurred and many people started to blame the Christians again because they refused to sacrifice to the Emperor. So they were disloyal. In the East, mass conversions to Christianity may have made the pagan priests fear that they were in danger of losing their jobs. The governor of Bithynia was very anti-Christian. Galenus headquarters were at Nicomedia in Bithynia and so he was very influenced by the Governor. Galenus then influenced Diocletian against the Christians and persuaded him to act against them.

In February 303, the Christian cathedral at Nicomedia was destroyed. Christians were ordered to close their churches and to hand over bibles and liturgical books to the authorities. Later, Clergy were arrested. In 304, an edict was issued ordering all citizens to sacrifice to the Emperor, though this law seems to have applied only to the East of the Roman Empire. If citizens refused, they were to be executed. The worst bloodshed took place in the East.

Diocletian's abdication

In 305 Diocletian announced that he and Maximian, his Augustus in the West, were abdicating. Galerius now became Augustus in the East with Maximin as his Caesar. Maximin supported Galerius desire to persecute the Christians and so in the East, persecution continued. However, in 311 AD Galerius was dying. In order to gain the prayers of Christians, he gave them toleration. A week later, he was dead and Maximin took his place as Augustus. Maximin wished to start up the persecution again but fortunately for the Christians, he died in 313 shortly after being defeated in the battle by Licinius who supported Christians.

Power Struggle in The West

In the West, there was only occasional persecution of Christians. The new Augustus Constantius died at York in Britain in 306AD. His soldiers proclaimed his son Constantine as

the new Augustus. Maximian objected to this. He had only abdicated very unwillingly in 305. So he tried to regain power by fighting Constantine who defeated and killed him in the battle in 308AD.

In Rome, Maximian's son Maxentius declared himself to be the new Augustus of the West. Constantine did not hurry to attack him but slowly gathered his forces together in Britain and France. In 312 AD Constantine eventually invaded Italy. According to legend, he had a vision of a cross in the sky and in the vision, he heard a voice say: "go and conquer this sign." He is said to have vowed to become a Christian if he won the battle. This he did and Maxentius and many of his soldiers drowned in the River – Tiber in Rome when the Milvian Bridge collapsed.

The Edict of Milan AD 313

A year after the battle, Constantine met with Licinius at Milan in Northern Italy. They issued the "edict of Milan" which granted toleration for all religions in the empire including for the first time Christianity. All properties confiscated during the persecutions was to be restored to the Christian church. This toleration of Christians was to apply throughout the whole empire – both the East and the West.

Constantine and Licinius ruled as a joint Emperor until 323 when Licinius revolted. He was defeated by Constantine in 324 and executed soon afterwards. From 324 until his death in 337 AD, Constantine ruled as sole Emperor. He was the first Christian Roman Emperor.

4.1 HERESIES IN THE EARLY CHURCH

Heresy has been a concern in Christian church at least since the writing of the second Epistle of Peter "even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable

heresies even denying the Lord that brought them – 2nd Peter 2:1 While in the first two or three centuries of the early church, heresy and schism were not clearly distinguished.

Heresy is understood to mean the denial of revealed truth as taught by the church. There were lots of people from very diverse backgrounds who became Christians. Although many were Jewish by upbringing, there were also many Gentiles, some of whom worshipped Greek or Roman gods rather than the real God. Some of them were very intelligent thinkers and since there was no widespread Christian literature or media, there were many interpretations of the faith. Some of them were a lot further away from sound doctrine than others. Those beliefs which threatened the core doctrines of the Christian faith were known as heresies. Some include:-

(i) DOCETISM

This heresy denied Christ's human nature. He was pure spirit only. It flourished in the early second century AD. It was opposed by Bishop Ignatius of Antioch and Bishop Polycarp of Smyrna. It taught that Jesus only "seemed to be a man. God is impassible i.e. God cannot suffer like human beings. If Christ was God, He could not have had a real fleshly body which suffers. So his sufferings on the cross must have been an illusion. Because he did not have a real human body, he only appeared to suffer on the cross. It was not real.

(ii) ADOPTIONISM

This took the opposite view to Docetism. Jesus was a real human being but He was not permanently God. It is said that the divine 'Christ spirit' descended upon the human "Jesus" in the form of a dove at His Baptism. It left Him again before His crucifixion. On the cross, Jesus suffered alone as a human being. This was the view of the Jewish 'Ebionites' and of Cerinthus who was an early Gnostic at Ephesus.

(iii) MARCIONISM

This heresy also virtually denied the human nature of Jesus. It certainly denied the value of the Old Testament. It flourished from AD 140 onwards. Its founder was Marcion who was the son of the church official. He was born at Sinope in North East Asia Minor. He was a rich ship owner. In AD 144, he was expelled from the church in Rome because of these unorthodox ideas which have been described as theological anti-Semitism.

MARCION'S ANTI-THESES

Marcion wrote a book called anti-theses which in Greek means contradictions. In it he denied the contemporary method of interpreting the OT in an allegorical way. So he drew a distinction between God of OT which he rejected, and the loving unknown Father of Jesus Christ. This led early Christian writers to accuse him of believing in two Gods, the God of OT which he rejected and the Father of Jesus whom he accepted.

“In his book, Marcion argued that OT God was inconsistent. He forbade the making of images and yet he allowed Moses to make the Bronze serpent in the wilderness. The OT God was ignorant! He had to ask Adam where he was. The OT God helped bloodthirsty bandit called David! The OT God was responsible for the introduction of sin into the world through Adam. He could even admit that he makes good and evil. Therefore, Marcion could not believe that Jesus fulfilled the OT prophecies about the Messiah. Also because the OT God was responsible for the humiliating method of human reproduction, he could not believe that the divine Redeemer could be born of a woman. In this, he was following Docetists and Gnostics.

(iv) MANICHAISM

Mani – AD 216 – 276 AD was probably brought up in Mesopotamia by a sect of Jewish Christians although his parents were Persian. He called himself Apostle Jesus Christ but left the Christian community after receiving revelation first at the age of 12 and then at 24. He taught that there are two independent and eternal principles, light and darkness. God and matter. Jesus the brilliant light came to release that part of man imprisoned in his body. His suffering is the example of the suffering of imprisoned light in matter. After the second coming of Christ and his reign for 1,000 years, the end will come when the elect are re-united with the light. Our present material creation will then be destroyed.

There were two classes of Manichaeans, the “elect” who ate no meat and abstained from sexual life and “haeretics” who were the majority. They were very missionary minded and carried their message as far as China. Mani himself was persecuted towards the end of his life. He was executed in prison by the Persian (Zoroastrian) authorities. St Augustine was a Manichee before he became a Christian. Manichaeism was a late form of Gnosticism and it included elements which come from Buddhism and Zoroastrianism. Like so many others before and after him, Mani claimed to be the final revelation which united Christianity, Buddhism and Zoroastrianism.

(v) MONTANISM

This was a movement which wished to add to the church the “extra” authority of the Holy Spirit. It is doubtful if it is right to call this a heresy. It flourished in about AD 170. Montanus claimed special power from the Holy Spirit to utter prophecies speaking directly on behalf of God in the first person singular. “ I am the Lord God, Almighty dwelling in man.” He prophesied that the end of the world was near.

Many local churches in Phrygian where he began his work considered him to be inspired by the devil. He was joined by two women. Priscilla and Maximilla who had left their husbands. It was the first Christian group to pay its officials. It was noted for their disorderliness and bad behavior of its members. Later montanists were more mature and restrained. The movement spread to North Africa where Tertullian became a member in later life. Tertullian died complaining about the Catholic Christian because of their low moral standards and because they believed that the church was constituted by bishops instead of by spiritual men and women.

One effect of montanism was to increase the authority of the ordained ministry in the church at the expense of the laity. It was felt that it was not possible for lay prophets to exercise a spiritual ministry alongside the clergy. The New Testament on the other hand seems to indicate that a healthy church cannot choose either one or the other. It needs both.

Montanists also believed that Christians who fell from grace could not be redeemed.

(vi) APOLLINARISM

Appolinaris who became bishop in Laodicea in AD 361 taught that the one person of Christ had a human body but not human mind or spirit. And that the mind and spirit of Christ were from the divine nature of the son of God. Appolinaris views were rejected by the leaders of the church who realized that it was not just our human body that needed salvation and needed to be represented by Christ in his redemptive work but our human minds and spirits as well.

(vii) DONATISM

Donatism is viewed as a schism in the church. This schism arose as a result of divergent views between the Catholics and Donatists. The Donatists favoured traditional North African puritan view of the church. The church is a pure and exclusive community. Its holiness depends not upon God who is holy and who chose and redeemed it but upon each individual member who

keeps himself holy with the help of the Holy Spirit of God. The true church is without spot or wrinkle or any such things as Paul had said in Ephesians 5:27.

Because of their faithfulness, the Donatist Clergy were free from mortal sin and because of this, only they could administer valid sacraments. Their opponents the catholic Christians of Carthage and the Church of Rome which supported them had shown by their actions that they were not a pure spiritual church because they had compromised with traditores. **So the Donatists went as far as appointing a.... bishop or Rome. Later they also denied the right of the state to interfere in church affairs.**

The Catholics disagreed with the Donatist views saying church is like Noah's Ark which is full of both clean and unclean beasts. The holiness of the church depended not upon man but upon God. It was holy because God had chosen the church and redeemed it and God is holy.

At first, however, the Donatists were quite happy for the state to intervene in their dispute with Caecilian. It was only later when the state gave judgment against them that they turned away from the idea of state interference in church affairs. Constantine decided to support caecilian and freed his clergy from paying municipal taxes in the province of Africa. Marjorinus appealed against this decision and Constantine summoned him and caecilian and their supporters to a tribunal in Rome in AD 313. About this time, Marjorinus died and Donatus the man who gave his name to the schism was chosen as his successor.

The tribunal declared in favour of caecilian who publicly agreed to the Roman view of the sacraments. Donatus was condemned for re-baptizing clergy and causing schism. In AD 317, Constantine passed a severe law against the Donatists ordering the confiscation of Donatist church properties and the exile of their leaders. Soldiers were used to carry out this law. **This convinced the Donatists that nothing had really changed in the empire since Diocletians persecution. Christians were still being persecuted. This situation led to Donatus famous question "what has the emperor to do with the church"? It also led to the growing idea in the Western church that church and state should be separated.**

(viii) GNOSTICISM

Gnosticism is a blanket term which covers a variety of sects some nearly Christian and others with only vague connections with Christianity. The Gnostic sects contained elements of Greek Philosophy, Judaism and Zoroastrianism from Persian as well as Christian ideas. It flourished in the second century AD and remains of it continued until the Middle Ages in Europe and

even to the present day. **The common factor in Gnosticism is the belief that one can be saved by possessing certain secret “knowledge” In Greek, “gnosis” means knowledge.**

Gnostics also believed that matter was evil. Therefore Jesus could not have taken evil human flesh and be born of a woman. So to avoid contamination by the evil nature of “fleshly” matter, some Gnostics taught a very strict asceticism. They denied marriage and kept to a very high moral code. Others were highly immoral. They argued that the flesh has no value. Spirits greatly superior to the flesh. So fleshy activities like adultery cannot harm the spirit in man nor remove the gnostic’s superior knowledge. Both of these views are found in Hinduism today.

Gnostics tended to deny both the human nature and the divine nature of Christ. They said, that Christ was only the “Demi-urge” the intermediary between man and the pure God of Spirit. Gnostics also presented their version of Christianity, like so many other Christian deviations since as superior form of it. Their followers could become superior or first-class Christians. They taught that the divine spirit was imprisoned in the flesh of man. Jesus came to release the spirit in man so that it could be free on its spiritual pilgrimage of various stages back to Christ. From Christ, the spirit passes through other stages in the planet back to God who is pure spirit.

Gnostic was very interested in the story of creation and the fall in Genesis. Some Gnostics taught that the serpent was good because he had encouraged Adam and Eve to get knowledge of good and evil.

Gnosticism therefore was often forced to impose a way of interpreting scripture in order to prove its teachings. In this respect, it is similar to Jehovah’s witnesses, and monism which have a set way of interpreting the bible. This happens with Mormonism, monism and Christian Science to name but a few of the modern sects.

5.1 DEVELOPMENT OF NEW TESTAMENT CANONIZATION

The Marcion’s rejection of the Old Testament and his cutting up of the New Testament to suit his own beliefs forced the church to think more deeply about which of the New Testament scriptures should be considered to be canonical. (Canon) in Greek means a measurer or a rule). Before the time of Marcion, this had not been taken seriously. The earliest list of measured books (Canon) comes from the church in Rome in about the year AD 190.

Marcion was preparing to write a book called contradictions with Jewish scriptures on one side and Christian scriptures on the other to show that they did contradict each other. But Marcion went further still. As he thought that Paul was the only one to understand Jesus, so Marcion seems to have thought that he himself was the only one to understand Paul. Paul had freed Christians from the law of Moses. Marcion believed that Paul meant Christians to be free from the Jewish scriptures also and from the God of the Jewish scriptures.

This God (so Marcion said) rules over the material world, which He created, with all its imperfections and he acts from no higher than justice: an eye to eye and tooth for a tooth (Exo. 21:24). This said Marcion is not the God of the Christians. The God and Father of Jesus Christ is in heaven. He is pure spirit and acts from love. This confirms the word of Irenaeus who from childhood had a close link with Polycarp, to express Polycarp's answer He says.

“Marcion blasphemed against God, put aside much of the teaching of Christ and set himself above the apostles who handed down the gospel to us.”

The Bishop of Rome excommunicated Marcion and the churches returned his subscriptions. Marcion did as many people have done when excommunicated. He took his followers with him. He made Rome his headquarters and used his business connections to spread his sect Westward to Gaul, South to the African coast and East to Mesopotamia.

Having freed his followers from the Jewish scriptures, Marcion announced what for his sect – the Christian scriptures to be. He counted as scripture that is ten epistle of Paul, excluding 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus (Perhaps because some people might think that 1 and 2 Timothy 6:20 was aimed at him. “Avoid the godless chatter and contradiction of what is falsely called knowledge). He accepted one Gospel only that of Luke, because of Luke's connections with his beloved Paul. Marcion decided to correct even those limited scriptures whenever Jewish influence had altered them. For example, Marcion cut out the beginning of Luke's gospel upto 4:31. Marcion did not wish it to be taught that Jesus Christ was a Jew of Jewish ancestry, born and brought up as a Jew, fulfilling Jewish prophecy. In Marcions version of Luke, Jesus just appears teaching in Capernaum. And he altered Luke 16:17 – “It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one dot of the law to become void.” To read “it is easier for heaven and earth, the law and prophets to pass away than one dot of the words of the Lord.” No wonder that the sharp tongued Tertullian said, Marcion teaches the bible not with his pen, but with his pen knife – cutting out everything which does not agree with his own ideas.

Marcionite churches continued to exist for more than a hundred and fifty years. And just as Marcion accepted Luke only, so the Jewish Christians now known as “Ebionites” (the Port men) accepted only Matthew. Other Christians rejected the fourth gospel, claiming it was the work of Cerinthus the Gnostic.

Faced with such a challenge, the church had to decide as a matter of urgency exactly which books should be included in the Christian scriptures. A list still exists which was made in Rome soon after Marcion’s time. Of the twenty-seven books of our New Testament, twenty-four are on this list. The reason for choosing them is given. Each has come from an Apostle, though in some cases indirectly e.g. Mark got information in his gospel from Peter. At this time 2Peter, Hebrews and James were still in doubt. The list also names some writings which were to be rejected as the work of heretics, adding, “do not mix fel with mel.” Fel is a Latin word for gall (i.e. bitterness) and mel for honey (i.e. sweetness).

The fixing of the New Testament “Canon” (from the Greek word for “rule” or as here “list” i.e. of books) began in the West, but its influence spread everywhere. A Chinese inscription at Ch’ang-an, the ancient capital of China, recording Christianity’s arrival there in 635 AD says “The scriptures have been left in twenty-seven books” West and East, they are the same twenty seven. Because the fixing of the Canon began so early, Christians were saved from having among their scriptures late writings which were heretical and harmful. So in the end, perhaps, Marcion did more good than harm to the church’s development.

5.2 MURATORIAN FRAGMENT

The Muratorian fragment was discovered by Lodovico Antonio Muratori. It is a copy of perhaps the oldest list of the books of the New Testament. The Muratori fragment is of great importance for the history of the biblical Canon. Written in or near Rome in the late second century C.E. The document is not a simple list of scriptures, but of a survey that supplies historical and other information regarding each book.

The beginning of the text is missing and the existing document begins in the midst of its description of gospel of mark moving from there to the Gospel of Luke and John. It may be

presumed that the writer included the Matthew in the missing section at the beginning. The author spends some energy justifying John's unique view compared to the synoptic gospel emphasizing that he was both an eye witness and a hearer of Christ and relating that this Gospel was written by John in conjunction with other disciples as they recalled various events in Jesus life.

He affirms the works of the Acts of the Apostles as the work of Luke, stressing the fact that Luke, though he did not know Jesus in the flesh, was associate of Paul who included eye-witness descriptions of events. Saint Paul's epistles (including those of Philemon, Titus and Timothy) are also mentioned. The author sees a special significance in the fact that Paul wrote letters to seven churches as did the writer of the book of Revelation.

The author rejects Paul's supposed letters to the Laodiceans and Alexandrians, as did later church tradition, specifying that these were "forged" in order to combat the heresy of Marcion. The epistle of Jude and two of the three epistles of John are included. Although the author is not certain if those of John are truly written by the Apostle. Neither the epistle of Peter or Epistle of James is mentioned and the epistle to the Hebrews is also absent from the list.

The author pointedly refers to certain letters in circulation which the church rejects so as not to mix "gall" with "honey" but he does not specify these. He accepts, however, the apocryphal wisdom of Solomon which he holds to have been written by the ancient king and his associates.

Turning to apocalyptic literature, the writer accepts the book of Revelation as well as the apocalypse of Peter (Later excluded from the New Testament) noting however, that some authorities did not allow Peter's apocalypse to be read in church. He also accepts the shepherd of Hermas, another apocalypse that was ultimately omitted in the final collection of the New Testament texts. He notes however, the shepherd while generally acceptable, is not to be read at formal church services.

Besides the letters forged in Paul's name, the author rejects a number of scriptures on the grounds that they were used by heretics. He specifies that the writing of the Gnostic teacher's valentines Basilides and Miltiades are to be rejected, as is a certain new "book of psalms" used by Maraon.

The original text of the Muratorian fragment is normally dated to about 170 C.E. or slightly later, partly on the grounds that its author refers to Pius 1 Bishop of Rome (142 – 157) as recently living. Some scholars however have also dated it as late as the fourth century. The Latin copy of the text is thought to have been made in the seventh or eighth century. The Latin of the surviving copy is considered very poor and there is disagreement among the scholars as to the correct meaning of some of the sentences.

6.1 APOSTOLIC AND CHURCH FATHERS

The early church fathers fall into three basic categories namely:-

- Apostolic fathers
- Ante – Nicene fathers
- Post Nicene church fathers.

The apostolic church was the ones like Clement of Rome who were the contemporaries of the apostles and were probably taught by them, carrying on the tradition and teaching of the apostles themselves. Linus, mentioned in the 2nd Timothy 4:21 became the Bishop of Rome and Clement took over from Linus.

Both Linus and Clement of Rome therefore are considered to be Apostolic Father. However, there appears to be no writings of Linus that have survived while many of the writings of Clement of Rome survived. The apostolic fathers would have largely passed from the scene by the beginning of the second century except for those few who might have been disciples of John, such as Polycarp. The tradition is that the Apostle John died in Ephesus around AD 98. The Anti-Nicene fathers were those who came after the apostolic fathers and before the council of Nicea in AD 325. The Post-Nicene Church Fathers and those who came after the council of Nicea in AD 325. These include such men as Augustine Bishop of Hippo- who is often called the Father of the (Roman Catholic) church because of his great work in church doctrine.

Chrysostom, called the “golden-mouthed” for his excellent oratorical skills and Eusebius who wrote the history of the church from the birth of Jesus to AD 324 one year before the council of Nicea. He is included in the Post-Nicene area since he did not write his history until after the council of Nicea was held. Other post-Nicene fathers were Jerome, who translated the Greek New Testament into the Latin Vulgate and Ambrose, who was largely responsible for Augustine’s conversion to Christianity.

So, what did the early church fathers believe? The apostolic fathers were very concerned about the proclamation of the gospel being just as the apostles themselves proclaimed it. They were not interested in formulating theological doctrine, for the gospel they had learned from the apostles was quite sufficient for them.

The apostolic fathers were as zealous as the apostles themselves in noting out and exposing any false doctrine that cropped up in the early church. The orthodoxy of the message was preserved by the apostolic fathers’ desire to stay true to the gospel taught to them by the apostles.

The ante-Nicene church fathers also tried to stay true to the gospel, but they had an additional worry. Now there were several spurious writings claiming to have the same weight as the established writings of Paul, Peter and Luke. The evidence or the reason for these spurious documents was in play. If the body of Christ could be persuaded to receive a false document, then error would creep into the church. So the ante-Nicene church fathers spent a lot of their time defending the Christian faith from false doctrine and this led to the beginnings of the formation of the accepted church doctrine.

The post-Nicene church fathers carried out the mission of defending the gospel against all kinds of heresies, so more and more the post-Nicene fathers grew interested in the methods of defending the gospels and less interested in transmitting the gospel in true and pure form. Thus, they began to slowly fall away from the Orthodox that was the hallmark of the apostolic fathers. This was the age of the theologian and endless discussion on secondary topics.

6.2 APOSTOLIC CHURCH FATHERS

The Apostolic church fathers were Christian theologians who lived in the 1st and 2nd centuries AD who were believed to have personally known some of the twelve apostles or to have been significantly influenced by them. Their writings though popular in early Christianity were ultimately not included in the canon of the New Testament, once it reached its final form.

Some of the Apostolic church fathers include:-

(i) Clement of Rome

His epistle, 1 Clement C.96 was copied and widely read in the early church. Clement calls on the Christians of Corinth to maintain harmony and order. It is the earliest Christian epistle aside from the New Testament

(ii) Ignatius of Antioch

Ignatius of Antioch also known as the Theophorus c.335- c.110 was the third bishop or patriarch of Antioch and a student of the Apostle John. Enroute to his martyrdom in Rome, Ignatius wrote a series of letters which have been preserved. Important topics addressed in these letters include ecclesiology, the sacraments, and the role of Bishops and the incarnation of Christ. Ignatius was the first to encourage the idea of monarchical episcopacy i.e. rule in the church by one bishop instead of by a committee of presbyter – elders. Ignatius said that leadership by the bishop in each church was the way to fight against heresy. He was the first to mention bishops, presbyters (elders) and deacons as three separate leaders in the church.

This is what he wrote about them to the Christians at Smyrna:-

“All of you follow the bishop, as Jesus Christ followed the Father, and follow the Presbytery as the Apostles. Moreover reverence the Deacons as the commandment of God. Let no man do anything concerning the church apart from the Bishop.

Ignatius believed that the ordained ministry was essential to the life of the church. But chief among these ordained clergy was the bishop. So he could write to the Christians at Philadelphia “do nothing without the bishop”

(iii) Polycarp of Smyrna C.69- C.155

He was the bishop of Smyrna (in modern Turkey) and was burnt to death there. When Irenaeus was a young man, he heard Polycarp say that he knew John the Apostle and other eye witnesses of Christ. Polycarp tried and failed to persuade Pope Anicetus to have the west celebrate Passover on the 14th of Nisan as in the Eastern calendar.

Around AD 155, the people of his town demanded Polycarp's execution as a Christian and he died a martyr. The story of his martyrdom describes how the fire built around him would not burn him and that when he was stabbed to death, so much blood issued from his body that it quenched the flames around him.

He is recognized as a saint in both the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches. He strongly disagreed with Marcion's views about God and the bible. His reply to the Roman governor of Asia before he died is famous:

"I have served Him (Jesus Christ) for eight years, and he has never done me any wrong. How then can I blaspheme my king who has saved me."

(iv) Papias of Hierapolis

Very little is known of Papias apart from what can be inferred from his own writings. He is described as an ancient man who was a hearer of John and a companion of Polycarp by Polycarp's disciples Irenaeus C.180. Eusebius adds that Papias was Bishop of Hierapolis around the time of Ignatius of Antioch. In this office, Papias was presumably succeeded by Abercius of Hierapolis. The name Papias was very common in the region – suggesting that he was probably a native of the area. The work of Papias is dated by most modern scholars to about AD 95 – 120.

(v) Irenaeus of Lyons

He wrote in Greek. He forms a link in the early church between East and West. He was probably a native of Smyrna in Asia minor where as a boy he listened to Polycarp. He claimed contact with the first Apostles through Polycarp who had known John at Ephesus. He studied at Rome and in AD 177 he mediated in the dispute between the montanists and Bishop Eleutherus of Rome. He followed Pothinus as Bishop of Lyons in Southern France in about AD 178, When Pothinus was martyred during a persecution there, and he may have become bishop without the normal Episcopal consecration ceremony. He accepted that the church or Rome with its bishop has great authority because it was founded. So he said, by the two great apostles that is Peter and Paul. In his book against heresies, he gave a list of the twelve Roman bishops from Linus down to Eleutherus in his own day. He claimed that the first Roman bishop Linus, was the Linus of 2nd Tim. 4:21.

He used this fact of an unbroken line in the succession of Roman bishops to prove that the tradition of the Christian church goes back directly to the teaching of the apostles themselves. This apostolic tradition is superior to that of the heretics who appealed to false tradition. He said that the earliest bishops were appointed by the Apostles themselves yet he also believed that they were still presbyter – elders and not a separate order of ministry.

He proposed that the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John all be accepted as canonical. He died about 195 AD.

(ix) THE DIDACHE

It was written about AD 100 – 150. It was a handbook in Greek giving instruction on morals and church order. Chapters 7-15 deal with baptism, fasting, the Eucharist and the ministry. It discusses the role of the prophets as well as that of deacons and Bishops (Elders) who also performed the ministry of prophets and teachers. It instructs Christians to break bread and to give thanks on the Lord's Day (i.e. Sunday) and it gives the following words to be used at the Eucharist.

A. And concerning the Eucharist, give thanks in this manner.

First concerning the cup

“We thank Thee, our Father, for the Holy vine of David, Thy Son which thou didst make known to us through Jesus Thy Son. Glory be to thee forever.

B. And concerning the broken bread, “we thank thee our Father, for the life and knowledge which thou didst make known to us through Jesus, Thy son. Glory be to thee forever. As this bread that is broken was scattered upon the mountains and gathered together and became one, so let thy church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into thy Kingdom.

Let none eat or drink of your Eucharist, except those who are baptized into the name of the Lord. For concerning this, the Lord has said, Do not give that which is holy to the dogs.

C. And after you are filled, give thanks thus “we thank thee, Holy Father for thy holy name, which thou has made to dwell in our hearts.

The prayer for the cup (A) is interesting because it follows Luke 22:17 in placing the cup before the bread in the Eucharist.

The prayer for the bread (B) stresses the symbolism of unity in the bread of the Eucharist. Once when it was wheat growing on the mountains. It was scattered. When

it was made into flour and then bread, it was brought together into one loaf. So the prayer asks God to gather the church together into the kingdom of God.

The didache instructs that baptism should be in immersion in running water in the name of the trinity. If this is not possible, water may be poured on the candidate's head. The baptizer and the candidate should both fast beforehand for one or two days.

“Concerning baptism, baptize in this way – baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost in living water. But if you do not have living water, baptize into other water and if you cannot in cold, warm, if you have neither, pour water three times on the head.

6.3 THE ANTE-NICENE CHURCH FATHERS

The Ante-Nicene Church Fathers were those who came after the apostolic fathers and before the council of Nicea in AD 325. These include:

(i) Justin Martyr AD 100 – 165

His parents were Greek Pagans and he was born at Shechem in Samaria. He was interested in the philosophy of Plato until AD 132 when he was converted through the testimony of an old man. This man introduced him to the Old Testament and Christianity as the one sure worthy philosophy. Justin taught in many places including Rome where Tatian was his pupil. He wrote two apologies in defense of Christianity. He wrote the first one to the emperor Antoninus Pius demanding that Christianity should no longer be considered as a crime. He also wrote a dialogue with Trypho the learned Jew who he tries to convince about the truth of Christianity.

He did not criticize pagan Greek philosophy but said that all that was good in it had been borrowed from the Hebrew Scriptures! The good in pagan philosophy had been inspired by the divine word (Logos). Therefore Socrates and other pagan Greek philosophers were Christians before Christ! He emphasized that salvation comes through the death and resurrection. He also had to believe that Christ and the Holy Spirit were lower than the father in the Trinity.

Justin's apologies did much to dispel rumour and misunderstanding about Christians and their secret practices which many non-Christians believed that Christians performed in their worship.

NB: Below Justin explains the worship in house-churches and on Sundays

On the day called Sunday, there is a meeting for all in one place, according to the city or countryside where one lives. The memoirs of the apostles (i.e. gospels) or the writings of the prophets are read as long as there is time. When the reader has finished, the president brings a sermon and call us to imitate these good things. Then we all stand and pray Justin calls the leader of the worship "President" because none Christians might be understand special words such as bishop or presbyter.

The three items mentioned: reading of the scriptures, a sermon based on the reading and prayers which were said while standing) This follows the custom of the synagogue.

Justin names the New Testament lessons as being from the gospels (and puts this first) and the Old Testament lesson as an alternative from the prophets. This reminds us that it was through reading the prophets and finding Christ as their fulfillment that Justin became a Christian. He was martyred in Rome about AD 165.

(ii) Tertullian C.155 – C. 222

Quintus Septimius Florens

Tertullian's who was converted to Christianity before AD 197 was a prolific writer of apologetic, theological controversial and ascetic works. Tertullian denounced Christian doctrine he considered heretical but later in life adopted montanism regarded as heretical by the mainstream church which prevented his canonization. He was born in Carthage, North Africa. His parents were pagan. He trained as a lawyer and was converted about AD 192. He

wrote in Greek and Latin but only his Latin work survived. **He was the first to use the Latin word “Trinity” by describing God as a Trinity of persons.**

His apology addressed to the Roman Pro-consul of the Roman Province of Africa (i.e. modern Tunisia) pleaded for Justice Christians. He said that they were loyal to the emperor because they were praying for him. Tertullian was also very interested in martyrs. He made the famous statement: “The more you mow us down the greater the harvest – the blood of Christians is the seed.”

In his *De praescriptione*, he used the dangerous argument that only Catholic Christians have the right to use the scripture because only churches founded by the apostles have the truth. He gave the new creeds of the church’s authority as equal to that of scripture. This opened the way for later teachings that scripture and church tradition have equal authority and that only priests of the catholic church have the right to read and interpret scripture.

In AD 207, Tertullian became a montanist and left the Catholic Church. His montanism led him to say that Christians should not be soldiers, civil servants or even teachers. They should avoid immoral public games and idolatry and they should not re-marry after the death of their first wife.

(iii) Origen C. 185 - C. 254

Origen or Origen Adamantius was a scholar and theologian. According to the tradition, he was an Egyptian who taught in Alexandria, reviving the catechetical school where Clement had taught. His parents were Christians. His father was probably martyred in AD 202 when Clement also had to leave Alexandria. Bishop Demetrius then appointed him to succeed Clement as head of the catechetical school although he was only about 20 years old.

He remained in this job until AD 230. He became the greatest Christian scholar of the early church. He was listened to with respect by many pagans including Julia Mammaea – the mother of the Roman Emperor. He was ordained Presbyter in Palestine in AD 230 much to the annoyance of Bishop Demetrius in Alexandria. He sacked Origen as head of the catechetical school and refused to recognize his ordination perhaps because he had taken matt 19:12 literally

as a young man. Demetrius may also have believed that Deut 23:1 forbids eunuchs from being ordained.

Origen had a speculative mind which followed ideas even when they went beyond the teaching of scripture. He believed that all human souls including that of Christ existed before they were born on earth. This view did not gain wide acceptance in the church. In AD 399, long after he had died, he was formally condemned by the church as a heretic.

On the atonement Origen taught that the death of Christ was a ransom price paid to the Devil. The cross was God's way of deceiving the Devil who thought that when Christ died, he had defeated God. This view of the atonement was widely held in the church until the time of Anselm in the 11th Century AD.

Origen was also Universalist. He believed that all people will in the end be saved by God. Origen struggled with scripture and at the same time be relevant to the pagan philosophical thinking of his day. In the Trinity doctrine, he had to say: The God and Father, is superior to every being that exists, for he imparts to each one from His own existence that which each one is, the son being less than the Father, is superior to rational creatures alone (for He is second to the Father). The Holy Spirit is still less and dwells within the saints alone. So that in this way, the power of the Father is greater than that of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and that of the son is more than of the Holy Spirit and in turn, the power of the Holy Spirit exceeds that of every other holy being.

Although he had said that the son is eternally begotten, in this passage, Origen comes close to saying that there are two Gods and that the Father is the greater of the two. The Holy Spirit is hardly considered to be divine. Origen suffered torture during the **Decian** persecution of AD 250-251 which hastened his death in AD 254.

(iv) Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage about AD 200 – 258

His parents were pagans. He was born in Carthage in North-west Africa in about AD 200. He was probably a lawyer. He was converted about AD 246. He was ordained Presbyter in 248 and elected bishop of Carthage soon afterwards. He admired Tertullian whom he called "The master" During the Decian persecution in about AD 250-251; he went into hiding and tried to run the Diocese by writing letters. He lost some respect because of this. Because he lived in a time of persecution, he had to deal with three serious pastoral and theological problems.

(a) The question of lapsed Christians

What was the church to do with lapsed Christians? During the persecution, some Christians had compromised and had paid bribes to buy certificate saying that they had worshipped the Emperor. Others had actually done so. Some said that these weak Christians could only be forgiven by ‘Confessors’ i.e. Christians who had suffered in prison during the persecution. Cyprian eventually decided that only bishops had the power of the keys matt. 16:19 to forgive those sinners who had lapsed. Ordinary Christians “confessors” did not have the authority to forgive such sins.

(b) The question of the Novatian schism at Rome

Novation was a candidate for election as Bishop of Rome. He opposed the view of Cyprian that Bishops could forgive lapsed Christians. When he failed to get elected in 251, he formed a breakaway church which refused to pardon Christians who had sacrificed to the Emperor or who had obtained certificates of sacrifice. Cyprian rejected Novatians church saying. He cannot have God for his Father who does not have the church for his mother”

(c) The question of baptism by Novatianists

What about the sacraments administered in a breakaway schismatic church? Are they valid? Cyprian said no, they are not valid. If Novatianists want to rejoin the Catholic church, they must be baptized again.

6.4 THE POST-NICENE CHURCH FATHERS

The post-Nicene church fathers are those who came after the council of Nicea in AD 325. These include:-

(i) Eusebius of Caesarea – AD 265 – 339

He is the father of Church History; much of our knowledge of the early church comes from his Ecclesiastical History. He was probably born of humble parents in Palestine. He was a follower of Origen. He was elected bishop of Caesarea in AD 314. He led the large moderate party at the council of Nicea. He submitted the first draft of the Nicene Creed, perhaps because he wished to clear himself of the charge of heresy. His draft creed was not adopted. The creed drawn up by the council was much clearer than that of Eusebius. It included the phrase of one substance which Constantine had wanted to be put in it. Eusebius never accepted Athanasius

hardline attitude to Arius. He took part in the condemnation of Athanasius at the synod of Tyre in AD 335.

(ii) Athanasius of Alexandria – AD 296 – 373

He was born of wealthy parents in Egypt. He studied in Greek at the catechetical school in Alexandria. He was present at the council of Nicaea as a Secretary to Archbishop Alexander though he was still only a deacon. He could not vote at the council but nevertheless he strongly opposed Arius.

He argues in notes and letters written on behalf of Alexander that there is no room in Christian thought for any being of intermediate status between God and His creatures because redemption belongs to God alone. Only God in Christ and not some intermediary or demi-god could redeem man. Only if Christ is God can he lead us to the Father. He argued that scriptures teach that the eternal sonship of the logos and the direct creation of the world by God himself.

Alexander died in AD 328 and although he was only 33 years old, Athanasius was the popular choice to succeed him. Because of his clear thinking and popular following, he was the chief target of attack by the Arians after the Council of Nicaea. Over a period of 18 years, he was banished five times from Alexandria by Constantine and later by his pro-arian son Emperor Constantius II. The chief opposition of Athanasius came from the East which was very influenced by Origen.

(iii) The Cappadocian Fathers

When Athanasius died in AD 373, his campaign against Arianism was carried on by Basil, Bishop of Caesarea in Eastern Turkey (died AD 379) by his brother Gregory Bishop of Nyssa died in AD 394 and by their friend Gregory of Nazianzus died about 390 AD. **They argued against those who said that the Holy Spirit was only a creature like an angel. They said that as the son was begotten of the Father, as the Nicene Creed had said, so also the spirit proceeds from the Father through the Son.” They also developed their doctrine of perichoresis – this says that each person of the Trinity is involved in the work of each other.**

Every divine action begins from the Father, proceeds through the son and is completed in the Holy Spirit. What the Father does, the son does. What the son does, the spirit does and so on.

Their teaching which stressed the divinity of the son and the Holy Spirit prepared the way for the final defeat of the Arians at the council of Constantinople in AD 381.

(iv) John Chrysostom – AD 347 – AD 407

John Chrysostom was Archbishop of Constantinople. He is known for his eloquence in preaching and public speaking. His denunciation of abuse of authority by both ecclesiastical and political leaders recorded sermons of writings made him the most prolific of the eastern fathers. After his death (or according to some sources, during his life), he was given the Greek epithet Chrysostom's – meaning "golden mouthed." – rendered in English as Chrysostom.

Chrysostom is known within the Christianity chiefly as a preacher and theologian, particularly in the Eastern Orthodox Church. He is the patron saint of orators in the Roman Catholic Church.

(v) Augustine of Hippo – AD 354 – AD 430

Augustine was born in present-day Algeria to a Christian mother, Monica of Hippo. He was educated in North Africa and resisted his mother's pleas to become Christian. He took a concubine and became a Manichean. He later converted to Christianity, became a bishop and opposed heresies such as pelagianism.

Augustine and the Donatists

Augustine felt that the continuance of the 85 years old Donatist schism was intolerable. He persuaded Aurelius the catholic metropolitan bishop of Carthage to call a series of church councils to discuss church discipline. These took place from AD 390 – 400. At first, he was not in favour of using force because he did not want false conversions to the catholic Christianity. So he began to write tracts to try and convince the donatists that they were wrong.

In his writings Augustine accepted the Roman view of the sacraments. However, he agreed with Cyprian that schismatic baptism has no value until the recipient is reconciled with the true church of the spirit which for him was the Catholic Church. He believed that the priests action in the sacrament, like the sacrament themselves belonged to God. Therefore the blessings received in the sacrament did not depend upon the spiritual state of the priest, but upon God.

He also produced an unfortunate argument that the priest was imprinted at his ordination with an indelible character or mark by God that made his sacramental ministry effective or not he was in a state of sin! This doctrine was much abused in the middle ages and it not surprising that Donatists were unimpressed by it and by his tracts as whole. His attempts to convince the Donatists through writing failed.

Emperor Honorius AD 395 – 423 determined to use state once more against the Donatists. In AD 405 he issued the edict of unity and wanted to use force to suppress the Donatists. The other catholic bishops urged Augustine to agree to the use of force. Eventually, he did so and he justified it on the ground that the church is like the parable of the wheat and weeds and the dragnet. It will only be pure of the Day of Judgment. Meanwhile here on earth, the church is a mixture of good and bad. This is the visible church. Those predestined to salvation from the invisible church. Mention should also be made of Augustine's other view of the sacraments. He said that grace in the sacraments is received from God through faith of the believer. If the receiver of the sacrament has faith, he or she receives God's blessing whether or not the priest is in state of grace. This was a much more useful argument to use against the Donatist because it shifted the discussion away from the priest to the person who receives the sacrament. It also points to God as the author of grace.

6.5 CHURCH MOTHERS

Writers on the early church speak often of church fathers, but were there any church mothers.

Because of the cultural situation of the time, Women wrote little and wielded power even less so it is hard to speak of church mothers in the same way we do the fathers. Nevertheless, many ancient Christian women were known for their heroic faith as martyrs, spiritual guiders, and teachers and of course as mothers.

The few testimonies we have are remarkable. Many women grace the lists of early Christian martyrs. Perhaps most famous is a pair of young North Africa mothers, perpetual and Felicity, whom the Romans threw to beasts in the early third century. We have the record of perpetuas own testimony in the face of death. "I cannot call myself by any other name than what I am a Christian.

After the age of persecution, women embodied heroic Christian sacrifice and equaled men in striving for Christian holiness. While ahead male monk of the Egyptian desert was called abba (father) a female leader as called Amma (mother). Some teaching of these ‘desert mothers’ survived including a few sayings of Amma Syncletica. She compared spiritual people to ships on a rough sea. Though often facing contrary winds, she said if we hold to the cross as our sail, we can set a safe course.

Another woman, Egeria literally sailed to Jerusalem and back in order to instruct her fourth century community with eye witness accounts of liturgies. Macrina was the elder sister of saints Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nyasa. Gregory was a mystic and theologian who spoke of his sister as his teacher, especially crediting her with unveiling the spiritual reality of the resurrection. He was changed within on hearing her words as she died, “O Lord, you have removed from us the fear of death.” Among faithful Christian mothers, none surpasses Monica, mother of St Augustine. When he was young and spiritually aimless, she wept and prayed ceaselessly for his return to faith. She was encouraged by a bishop who told her “it cannot happen that the son of these tears should be lost.” In his writings, Augustine lavishly praised her wisdom, holiness and perseverance. Just to mention those listed in the New Testament including: Mary, Mary Magdalene, Lydia, Priscilla and Phoebe.

7.1 DEVELOPMENT OF CREEDS AND CHURCH COUNCILS

A creed is a brief statement of faith used to list important truths to clarify doctrinal points and to distinguish truth from error. The word creed comes from the Latin word “credo” meaning I believe. The bible contains a number of creeds known as the Shema that comes from Deut. 6:4-9 and the Apostle Paul included several creed-like statements in his epistles for instance 1Tim. 3:16, 1Cor. 8:6, 12:3 and 15:3-4. When properly used, creeds are of great help to the church. They provide a concise basis for teaching (most are written to be easily memorized). They provide and safeguard correct orthodox biblical doctrine and they help provide a focus for church fellowship.

As the early church spread, there was the practical need to have a creed that would help believers focus on the most important doctrines of the Christian faith. One of the early creeds was known as the Apostles Creed not because its authors were the original apostles, but because it accurately reflects the apostles teaching. **Church fathers – Irenaeus, Tertullian, Augustine and other leaders had slightly different versions of the Apostles Creed, but the text of**

Pirminius (Ca. AD 750) was eventually accepted as the standard form in the Western Church.

As Christianity spread, so did heresies and the church needed to clarify the boundaries of the faith. In the early 300s, before the New Testament Canon had been finalized, controversy developed over the divinity of Jesus Christ.

In AD 325, at the request of Emperor Constantine, Christian bishops from across the Eastern Roman Empire with few from the West, met in the town of Nicaea near Constantinople to discuss the matter. Their consensus was written in what was called the Creed of Nicaea. That Creed was then expanded in 381 at another major church council held at Constantinople resulting into the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed common known as the Nicene Creed.

In 451 church leaders meet in the city of Chalcedon (also near Constantinople) to discuss among other things – various theories about the divine and human nature of Jesus Christ. The Creed that came from that council is called the chalcedonian definition or more commonly the Chalcedonia Creed.

(i) Nicaea Creed AD 325

Background

Different ideas about Christ's Divinity led to conflict.

This was the setting in which the doctrine of the Trinity emerged. In those early decades after Jesus Christ's ministry, death and resurrection and spanning the next few centuries various ideas sprang up as to His exact nature. Was He man? Was He God? Was he a mere man who became God? Was He created by God the Father? Or did He exist eternally with the Father.

All of these ideas had their proponents. The unity of belief of the original church was lost as new beliefs. Many borrowed or adapted from pagan religions replaced the teachings of Jesus and the apostles.

Let us be clear that when it comes to the intellectual and theological debates in those early centuries that led to the formulation of the Trinity, the true church was largely absent from the

scene have been driven underground. **For this reason, in that stormy period, we often see debates not between truth and error, but between one error and a different error.**

The above Creed is what led the Roman Emperor Constantine the Great to convene the council of Nicaea in modern-day Western Turkey in AD 325. **Constantine, although held by many to be the first Christian Roman Emperor was a sun-worshipper who was only baptized on his deathbed.** During his reign he had his eldest son and his wife murdered. He was also vehemently anti-semitic, referring in one of his edicts to “the detestable Jewish crowd” and “the customs of these most wicked men” – customs that were in fact rooted in the bible and practices by Jesus and the apostles.

As an emperor in a period of great tumult within the Roman Empire, Constantine was challenged with keeping the empire unified. He recognized the value of religion in uniting his empire. This was infact one of the primary motivations in accepting and sanctioning the “Christian” religion (which by this time had drifted far from the teachings of Jesus Christ and the apostles and was Christian in a name only)

Under this circumstance, Constantine faced a new challenge. This challenge was about the doctrine of God. It split Christians into bitterly warring camps. Constantine convened the council on Nicaea in the year 325 as much for political reasons – for unity in the empire – as religious ones. The primary issue at that time came to be known as the Arian controversy.

In the hope of securing for his throne, the support of the growing body of Christians, he had shown them considerable favour and it was to his interest to have a church vigorous and united. The Arian controversy was threatening its unity and menacing its strength. He therefore undertook to put an end to the trouble. It was suggested to him perhaps by the Spanish bishop, Hosius who was influential at court that if a synod were to meet, and representing the whole church, both East and West, it might be possible to restore harmony.

Constantine himself of course neither knew nor cared anything about the matter in dispute but eager to bring the controversy to a close saw Hosius advice appealed to him as sound.

Arius, a priest from Alexandria, Egypt taught that Christ because, He was the son of God, must have had a beginning and therefore was a special creation of God. Further, if Jesus was the son, the father of necessity must be older.

Opposing the teachings of Arius was Athanasius – a deacon also from Alexandria. His view was an early form of Trinitarianism wherein the Father, Son and Holy Spirit were one but at the same time distinct from each other. The decision as to which view the church council would accept was to a large extent arbitrary. When the bishops gathered at Nicaea on May 20, 325 to resolve the crisis, very few would have shared Athanasius – view of Christ. Most held a position midway between Athanasius and Arius.

As Emperor, Constantine was in the unusual position of deciding church doctrine even though he was not really a Christian. Constantine, like his Father worshipped the unconquered sun. His conversion should not be interpreted as an inward experience of grace – it was a military matter. His comprehension of Christian doctrine was never very clear.

When it came to the Nicene Council Constantine himself presided actively guiding the discussions and personally proposed the crucial formula expressing the relation of Christ to God in the creed issued by the council overawed by the Emperor, the bishops with two exceptions only signed the creed, many of them much against the inclination

With the Emperor's approval, the council rejected the minority view of Arius and having nothing definitive with which to replace it, approved the view of Athanasius – also a minority view. The church was left in the odd position of officially supporting, from that point forward, the decision made at Nicaea to endorse a belief held by only a minority of those attending. The groundwork for official acceptance of the trinity was now laid but it took more than three centuries after Jesus Christ's death and resurrection for this unbiblical teaching to enlarge.

The Nicene Creed

We believe in one God the Father, the Almighty, creator 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, of one being with the Father.

Through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven; by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man.

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 at 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). With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified. He 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.

(ii) Constantinople Creed of 381

The council of Nicaea did not end the controversy. Athanasius managed to impose his theology on the delegates with the Emperor breathing down their necks. The show of agreement pleased Constantine who had no understanding of the theological issues but in fact there was no unanimity at Nicaea. After the council, the bishops went on teaching as they had before and the Arian crisis continued for another sixty years. Arius and his followers fought back and managed to regain imperial favour. Athanasius was exiled no fewer than five times. It was very difficult to make his creed stick.

The ongoing disagreements were at times violent and bloody. Probably more Christians were slaughtered by Christians in these two years (342-3) than by all pagans in the history of Rome. Atrociously, while claiming to be Christians, many believers fought and slaughtered one another over their differing views of God.

During the middle decades of this century from 340 to 380, the history of doctrine looks more like the history of court and church intrigues and social unrest. The central doctrines hammered out in this period often appear to have been put through by intrigue or mob violence rather than by the common consent of Christendom led by the Holy Spirit.

Disagreement soon centred around another issue, the nature of the Holy Spirit. In that regard, the statement issued at the Council of Nicaea said simply “we believe in the Holy Spirit.” This seemed to have been added to Athanasius’s creed almost as an afterthought. People were confused about the Holy Spirit, was it simply synonym for God or was it something more.

In the second half of the fourth century, three theologians from the province of Cappadocia in Eastern Asia minor (today central Turkey) gave definitive shape to the doctrine of the Trinity. They proposed an idea that was a step beyond Athanasius view that God the Father, Jesus the Son and the Holy Spirit were co-equal and together in one being, yet also distinct from one another. These men-Basil, bishop of Caesarea, his brother Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa and Gregory of Nazianzus were all trained in Greek-Philosophy – which no doubt affected their outlook and beliefs. In their view, the Trinity only made sense as a mystical or spiritual experience. It was not a logical or intellectual formulation but an imaginative paradigm that confounded reason.

In the year 381, 44 years after Constantine’s death, Emperor Theodosius the Great convened the council of Constantinople (today Istanbul Turkey) to resolve these disputes. Gregory of Nazianzus, recently appointed as the Archbishop of Constantinople, presided over the council and urged the adoption of his view of the Holy Spirit.

Virtually, nothing is known of the theological debates of the council of 381 – but Gregory was certainly hoping to get some acceptance of belief that the Spirit was con-substantial with the Father (meaning that the persons are of the same being, as substance in this context denotes individual quality) Whether he dealt with the matter clumsily or whether there was simply no chance of consensus, the Macedonians bishops who refused to accept the full divinity of the Holy Spirit left the council – typically Gregory berated the Bishops for preferring to have a majority rather than simply accepting the Divine word of the Trinity on his authority

Gregory soon became ill and had to withdraw from the council. Who would preside now? So it was that one Nectarius, an elderly city senator who had been a popular prefect in the city as a result of his patronage of the games, but who was still not a baptized Christian was selected. Nectarius appeared to know no theology and he had to be initiated into the required faith before being baptized and consecrated.

Interestingly, a man who up to this point wasn't a Christian was appointed to preside over a major church council tasked with determining what it would teach regarding the nature of God!

The teaching of the three Cappadocian Theologians made it possible for the council of Constantinople 381 to affirm the divinity of the Holy Spirit which upto that point had nowhere been clearly stated, not even in the scripture.

The council adopted a statement that translates into English as in part.

“We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten son of God – begotten of the Father before all ages – And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceeds from the Father, who with the Father and Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets. The statement also affirmed belief in one holy catholic (meaning in this context universal, whole or completed) and apostolic church”

With this declaration in 381, which would become known as the Nicene Constantinopolitan creed, the Trinity as generally understood today became the official belief and teaching concerning the nature of God.

Thus emperor Theodosius who himself had been baptized only a year before convening the council was like Constantine nearly six decades earlier, instrumental in establishing major church doctrine. Theodosius had no theological background of his own and that he put in place as dogma a formula containing intractable philosophical problems of which he would have been unaware.

Now that a decision had been reached, Theodosius would tolerate no dissenting views issued his own edict that read “we now order that all churches are to be handed over to

the bishops who profess father, son and Holy Spirit of a single majesty of the same glory of one splendor who establish no difference by sacrilegious separation, but who affirms the order of the Trinity by recognizing the persons and uniting the Godhead.

Another edict from Theodosius went further in demanding adherence to the new teaching. “Let us believe that one deity of the Father, the son and the Holy Spirit, in equal majesty and in a holy Trinity. We authorize the followers of this law to assume the title of catholic Christians, but as for the others, since in our judgment they are foolish, madmen, we decree that they shall be branded with ignominious name of heretics.

“They will suffer in the first place the chastisement of the divine condemnation and the second, the punishment which our authority in accordance with the will of Heaven shall decide to inflict.

Thus, we see that a teaching that was foreign to Jesus Christ, never taught by the Apostles and unknown to the other biblical writers was locked into place and the biblical revelation about the Father, the son and the Holy Spirit was locked out. Any who disagreed were, in accordance with the edicts of the Emperor and church authorities branded heretics and dealt with accordingly.

(iii) Council of Ephesus 431

The council of Ephesus was convened in 431 by Theodosius II Emperor of the Eastern half of the Roman Empire and he did so at the request of Nestorius. Nestorius teaching about the nature of Christ was generating a great deal of controversy in the church and he requested a council in the hope of being able to prove his orthodoxy and silence his detractors.

While Theodosius II did not attend, he sent the head of his imperial palace guard, count Candidian to represent him. The council met in Ephesus, near present day Selcuk in Turkey with between 200 – 250 bishops in attendance.

This council came at a time of conflict over the authority within the church. The first council of Constantinople had established the bishop of Constantinople as second in authority following Rome whose Bishop carried the title of Pope and who claimed his authority from the line of Peter. Alexandria and Antioch were also powerful bishoprics and their schools of Christology historically came from different positions.

Though he would not actually be present, the dominant personality at the council of Ephesus was Nestorius who was originally from Antioch in Syria. Nestorius was a gifted speaker who had been appointed by Theodosius II as Archbishop of Constantinople. The second major character was Cyril Archbishop of Alexandria. The two men would represent the two sides in a conflict with profound implications to the Christian faith.

Once in Constantinople, Nestorius found himself caught between two factions: One faction insisted on calling Mary “Theotokos” (God bearer) while the other rejected the title because they held that an eternal being could not be born. **(Theotokos was an ancient title for Mary that had been in use since the 3rd Century, used by such men as Origen, Athanasius and Gregory of Nazianzus).**

In an attempt to mediate the dispute, Nestorius suggested calling Mary Christotokos (Christ bearer). He wanted to affirm that Christ had a fully human nature rather than a nature mixed with his Deity. He also wanted to affirm the full reality of his deity, which Nestorius believed could not involve change or suffering. By calling Mary Christotokos, Nestorius was suggesting that she gave birth to Christ but not God.

When news of Nestorius teachings reached Cyril, he responded privately to Nestorius but also publicly and this resulted in several letters back and forth in what became a growing public debate. Some have suggested that Cyril was partly motivated not only by theology but by the political implications of an Antiochene theologian now holding the chair of the second highest Bishopric. In addition to these letters, Cyril wrote to Pope Celestine who convened a synod in Rome and soon called for Nestorius to recant his teachings.

Cyril also convened a synod in Alexandria which came with the same decision. He wrote to Nestorius to deliver the news of both Rome’s and Alexandria’s synods and to call on him to recant. By this time, Nestorius had already appealed to Theodosius II for a council and the Emperor had agreed. At the council, Cyril would be the major defender of calling Mary Theotokos and the statement that Christ is the perfect unity of God and man.

Because Pope did not attend the Council, Cyril was made president. The council was scheduled to begin on June 7th but had to be postponed when a major contingency of Bishops from the

East had not arrived. On the 22nd Cyril finally decided to convene the council without them. Despite repeated requests for his attendance, Nestorius refused to attend because of Cyrils' role as president. The council met and voted to affirm Cyril's second letter to Nestorius in which he had outlined his Christology in full – as in agreement with the Nicene Creed denouncing Nestorius Christology outlined in his response to Cyril's second letter as blasphemous and opposed to the faith of Nicaea.

When Eastern bishops finally arrived they were outraged to find that the council had already been convened and had come to decision. They convened their own council immediately condemning and excommunicating Cyril and others. This led to confusion, conflict and intrigue. Ultimately, though the decision of Cyril's council was approved by both Rome and Constantinople.

The Result

The council of Ephesus confirmed the Nicene Creed and the title Theotokos for Mary as a legitimate title based on that Creed. They also condemned Nestorianism and excommunicated all those Bishops who did not hold to the council's decision. The council of Ephesus confirmed the hypostatic union of Christ as it was made explicit in the Nicene Creed. It caused Nestorian schism by which churches supportive of Nestorius especially in Persia, were severed from the rest of Christendom and became known as Nestorian Christianity, the Persian church or the church of the East whose present-day representatives are Assyrian church of the East, the Chaldean Syrian Church, the Ancient church of the East and the Chaldean Catholic Church.

Once again, Trinitarian doctrine had been defended and further clarified.

The council further passed eight canons including:

Canon 1-5 condemned Nestorius and Caelestius and their followers as heretics.

Canon 6 – decreed deposition from clerical office of excommunication for those who did not accept the council's decree.

Canon 7 – Condemned any departure from the Creed established by the first council of Nicaea 325.

Canon 8 condemned interference by the bishop of Antioch in affairs of the church in Cyprus and decreed generally that no bishop was to assume control of any province which has not heretofore, from the very beginning been under his own hand or that of his predecessors.

Count Candidian and his troops supported Nestorius. The Emperor had always been a firm supporter of Nestorius, but had been somewhat shaken by the reports of the Council. Cyril's group was unable to communicate with Emperor because of interference from supporters of Nestorius both at Constantinople and at Ephesus.

Theodosius II arrived at an extraordinary decision to ratify the depositions decreed by both councils. Thus he declared that Cyril and Eastern bishops were all deposed. They were both kept in confinement. But inspite of all the efforts of the Antiochene party, the representatives of the envoys whom the council was eventually allowed to send with the persuaded the Emperor to accept Cyril's council as the true one. Seeing the writing on the wall and anticipating his fate, Nestorius requested permission to retire to his former monastery.

The synod was dissolved in the beginning of October, and Cyril arrived amid much joy at Alexandria on 30 Oct. Pope Celestine had died on July 27th but his successor Sixtus III gave papal confirmation to the council's actions.

Conciliation

In 1994, the common Christological declaration between the Catholic Church and Assyrian Church of the East marked the resolution of dispute between those two churches that had existed since the council of Ephesus. They expressed their common understanding of the doctrine concerning the divinity and humanity of Christ and recognized the legitimacy and rightness of their respective descriptions of Mary as:

On the Assyrians side “The mother of Christ our God and Saviour” and on the Catholic side as “The mother of God and also as the mother of Christ”

(iv) THE COUNCIL OF CHALCEDON 451 AD

BACKGROUND

In 449, a second council of Ephesus was convened because of the excommunication of a monk named Eutyches who taught that Christ after his incarnation had only one nature. The council itself devolved into drama when those who supported Eutychus led by Dioscorus and supported by the Roman Emperor Theodosius II unilaterally and forcefully asserted their doctrine over against those who held the orthodox view that has two natures – one fully human and one fully divine which exist in hypostasis in one person. **When news of the council reached Rome, Pope Leo immediately termed it Latrocinium (“a rubber council”)**

When Marcian, an Orthodox Christian became Emperor, he wished to convene another council in order to resolve the turmoil that the second council of Ephesus had stirred up. This council met from Oct. 8 to Nov. 1, 451AD in Chalcedon – now a district of modern-day Istanbul. It was held here rather than in Italy because of the pressing threat to the Roman Empire from Attila and his Huns. Of the 350 to 500 bishops present, two stand out as the major characters, Eutychus and Dioscorus. Eutyches was an aged and influential monk from Constantinople. Because of his unorthodox teaching about Christ, he had already been condemned as a heretic in 448 by a local synod in Constantinople. Dioscorus became bishop of Alexandria after Cyril's death in 444. When Eutyches was initially excommunicated, Dioscorus came to his defense. Eventually, he would preside over the second council of Ephesus where he strong armed the assembly to restore Eutyches and depose those who had excommunicated him.

Eutyches doctrine appeared to be an overcorrection to the heresy of Nestorius. In essence, he taught that Christ had two natures before the incarnation – one human and one divine and that in the incarnation these two natures became one. He hated the idea of two natures in Christ after the incarnation because he understood nature to mean concrete existence. To affirm two concrete existences, two hypostases – two persons in Christ. The council of Chalcedon was forced to clean up the mess caused by the second council of Ephesus and they did this by re-affirming the Creeds of previous ecumenical councils and other expressions of faith which had been deemed Orthodox. Finally, they developed a creed that would re-state orthodoxy for a new generation and clarify it against the alternate views which had been battled through up to this point (Arianism, Nestorianism and now Eutychianism)

The Result

Dioscorus was tried, found guilty of abusing his priestly authority (most specifically at the second council of Ephesus) and defrocked. The council then prepared and affirmed a confession which denied a single nature of Christ and re-affirmed that he has two natures – a human and a divine which co-exist in hypostasis in his one person.

Partly, the confession states: “Following, then the holy fathers, we all unanimously teach that our Lord Jesus Christ is to us one and the same son, the self same perfect in manhood, truly God and truly man...

While the council did have some lasting significance, the definition of Chalcedon was not the end but the intensification of controversy. The intensification of this controversy would lead to further disagreements and taking of sides so that by 484, Felix III, Pope of Rome at that time, would decree Acarius the Archbishop of Constantinople “by sentences pronounced from heaven ejected from the priestly office.” Acacius would respond by erasing Felix name from the church diptych, thus symbolizing the breaking of communion with him. Within thirty-three years, because of the decision of these councils, there would be a full schism between the churches of the East and the West.

8.1 THE RISE OF MONASTICISM

The word “monk” comes from the Greek “Monachos” meaning one who lives alone. The first monks were just that they lived alone so that they could devote themselves to God free from the temptations of the world. They took Matthew 19:21 very seriously because they believed it to be perfect. Not only is it Matthew who include the phrase “if you would be perfect,” Mark and Luke do not say this.

So monks have nearly always sold their possessions before taking up solidarity life. They were also influenced towards this by the words of our Lord in Luke 6:20 “Blessed are the Poor” and by the fact that St Paul spent about three years alone in Arabia (Gal. 1:17-18). They also believed Paul’s words that it is better to be unmarried in order to devote oneself to be taken seriously (1Cor. 7:7, 25-38)

Notable monks include

(i) ANTONY – AD 251 – 356

He was born in Egypt. After the death of his parents, Antony obeyed Matthew 19:21 gave his goods to the poor and went to live in the desert as a hermit. Later he moved to mountain near to the Red sea. He fasted and prayed and ate only bread, salt and water. His holiness encouraged others to follow his example. He was not educated and spoke only Coptic. Although he knew no Greek, he supported Athanasius of Alexandria in his struggle against Arianism.

In AD 311, Antony visited Alexandria to encourage the Christians – (confessors) in prison. The Roman soldiers were afraid to arrest this bearded holy man in ragged clothes. Antony

supported the church but his way of life meant that he and his followers were more or less outside of the fellowship of the church in their search for individual perfection.

(ii) PACHOMIUS – AD 287 – 346

In their protest against the low moral standard and spiritual life of the churches, individual Anchorite monks often went to extremes in their search for spiritual perfection. Simeon the stylite (AD 390-459) in Syria for example lived 36 years on a platform on top of a pillar! However, in about AD 326, also in Egypt, a movement for communal rather than solitary monasticism began.

This was the monk of Pachomius. He had been conscripted into the army against his will and was converted through the kindness of Christians at Thebes. At first, he lived the life of solidarity monk but in AD 320, he moved to Tabennisi on the River Nile where he set up his Christian community. He became its first Abbot (i.e. “Father” from Syriac word Abba). He had 1300 monks under his charge. When he died in AD 346, there were about nine monasteries as well as two nunneries for women in Egypt making about 7000 people in all.

Each monastery was self contained unit growing its own food and providing different kinds of work for groups of monks such as farming, kitchen work, basket making, washing and even a hospital to care for the sick monks. Pachomius arranged this as a more sensible and useful substitute for the more extreme forms of ascetism. In this way, the needs of the community were met.

Pachomius drew up a careful “rule” so that each monk knew the discipline he was to obey. Each monk had his own cell to sleep in, but meals and worship were communal either in work groups or as a whole. They wore simple peasant dress.

The rules of entry into the community were very strict. They were:-

1. A New monk must learn to read and write in Coptic before he could join.
2. A new monk had to memorize certain prayers, psalms and scripture passages.
3. A new monk had to give away all his wealth to show that he trusted God completely for everything.
4. A new monk had to wait at the door of a monastery for a long period before he could be accepted. Although, Pachomius Rule was a great improvement, upon the

solitary Anchorite system, his monasteries were largely separate from the church and not concerned with the community outside the monastery.

(iii) BASIL THE GREAT OF CAPPADOCIA AD 329 – 379

Basil was one of the great Cappadocian Fathers. He was the eldest son of Christian parents from Cappadocia in modern Turkey. He studied at Caesarea (in Cappadocia), at Constantinople and at Athens. In AD 356, he returned home full of pride in his educational achievements but his elder sister persuaded him to leave the vain glory of the world and to become a monk. He visited monasteries in Egypt, Palestine, Syria and Mesopotamia before deciding to set up his own community.

He thought that monastic communities should not be as big as those of Pachomius so he decided to limit them to 40 persons. He continued the practice of poverty (i.e. the giving away of possessions before joining a monastery) chastity i.e. remaining unmarried) and obedience of the Abbot. He continued Pachomius practice that all monks should both pray and work. He also believed that the monastery should be under the control of the church and its bishop. In addition, it was not just to exist for itself. It should serve the community outside. So Basil's monks taught in schools for local children, ran hospitals for the sick and homes for lepers and a poor house where men could learn a trade.

Basil later became a bishop and even today all Eastern Orthodox churches insist that all bishops must be monks (i.e. unmarried) in order to become a bishop. Basil's rule still forms the basis for the monastic rules of the Greek churches today. Basil believed very strongly that communal life is much better than the solitary life.

Basil's four arguments in favour of communal living for monks

1. Monks need to live in community in order to be able to get their necessities i.e. food and clothing.
2. Christian spiritual virtues can only be practiced in community. Humility, Compassion and long suffering that can be only practices in the presence of other people.
3. Our spiritual gifts need to be used for the benefit of others.
4. Monks needs to live in a community so that each individual can be told his fault by the others. He cannot do this by himself.

(iv) JEROME AD 345 – 419

Jerome was born in Northern Italy and studied in Rome. He visited France and became acquainted with monks of Treves. He returned to Rome and joined a group of ascetics under Rufinus. In 386 AD, he left Rome to start a monastery at Bethlehem where he remained for the rest of his life. He was followed there by a rich woman Paula and her daughter Eustochium. Paula built Jerome's monastery and also a nunnery of which she became Abbess. Jerome was a great scholar. He was responsible for the revision of the old Latin version of the bible. This version became known as the vulgate – the bible of the people. This was his greatest work.

He wrote many letters in praise of the monastic life and he set an example of scholarly study.

(v) BENEDICT OF NURSIA AD 480 - 547

He was born in Italy and sent to Rome to study but he was shocked by the evil life of the city that he fled to Subiaco about 30 miles from Rome. There he lived in a cave and set up twelve small monastic communities. In AD 529, he was persuaded to move and start a monastery at Mont Cassino between Rome and Naples. He is chiefly remembered for his rule which borrowed ideas from Basil the Great in the East and from John Cassian in the West.

Pope Gregory the great popularized the rule of St Benedict throughout the church in the west and the Benedictine order grew to become the greatest in the medieval period.

Benedict wrote 73 rules for his order so that the monks would know what were the duties of the newest novice right up to the Abbot. The rule guided them how to pray, how to work, how to call meetings, how to arrange the affairs of the monastery how much food and how much sleep.

Discipline

Monks could be expelled from the monastery for serious offences. If they repented, they could be received back twice. But after a third expulsion, they could not be taken back. When administering discipline, the Abbot was instructed to show concern for the person being punished by sending older and wiser brothers to console the weak offender and lead him to repentance.

Regular times of prayers

The life of the monastery centered on the regular times of prayer described in rule 16. It reads partly:-

“As the prophet says – seven times in the day do I praise thee, for concerning the night hours, the same Prophet says – at midnight I arose to confess unto Thee Ps. 119:62).

Rule of Sleep

Rule 22 on how monks are to sleep ends with this: kindly advice. Let not the younger brothers have beds by themselves, but dispersed among the seniors. And when they rise of the service of God, let them gently encouraged one another because the sleepy ones are apt to make excuses.

The need for poverty

The vow of poverty was taken very seriously by Benedict as Rule 33 indicating: more than anything else, this rise of property it to be cut off root and branch from the monastery. But for all things necessary, they must not look to the Father of the monastery nor is it allowable to have anything which abbot has not given or permitted. All things shall be common to all, as it is written. “Let not any man presume or call anything his own (Acts 4:32)

Equal sharing

Rule 34 instructs that the necessities of life should be distributed according to each person’s need and not according to their rank – as it is indicated that distribution was made to each as any had need (Acts 4:35). And the rule goes on to state that each monk should receive what he gets with thankfulness without grumbling.

8.2 MONASTIC REFORM MOVEMENTS

(i) Cluniacs AD 909

This monastic order was founded by Berno in France at Cluny in AD 909. It was answerable directly to the pope and also Odo, the second Abbot. He urged monasteries to go back strictly to the rules of the St Benedict. Later the Cluniacs themselves became rich and corrupt.

(ii) Cistercians A 1098

The rule of St Benedict was also the basis of the Cistercian order which started in 1098 AD. The Cistercians wished to go back to the poverty simplicity and silence of Benedict's rule. Their greatest monk was Bernard of Clairvaux – AD 1090 – 1155 based in France. Bernard criticized the cluniacs for their spiritual decline caused by wealth. Bernard preached the need for the second crusade, but he was very disappointed in its result. He wrote hymns and was said to have had more spiritual power than the Pope himself.

(iii) Francis of Assisi AD 1182 – 1226

Francis was born in AD 1181 into a rich family in the middle ages. After reading Matthew 10:7-19, he changed from a cave free life to that of caring for the poor and the sick by living among them in similar poverty. In 1208, he started his group of Friars or minor brothers who

instead of retreating into a monastery lived in the world preaching and caring for the sick, gaining living by begging.

They soon won a reputation for missionary work following the example of the Apostles. Francis himself went with the fifth crusade to Egypt in 1209 and passed unarmed through the Muslim guards to preach Christ before the Muslims. Francis died in 1226 and the brothers who followed his rule are called Franciscans.

(iv) Dominic AD 1170 – 1221 and Dominicans AD 1215.

The second order of Friars was that of the Friars (Brothers) which were founded by Dominic at Toulouse in the Southern France in 1215. It received recognition from Pope Honorius III in 1216 to be a mendicant (begging) order like the Franciscans who devoted themselves to preaching to heretics. Dominic stressed that his Friars should be very well educated, whereas Francis was doubtful of the need for education. Dominic refused to become a bishop on three occasions because he wanted to concentrate upon his preaching ministry. His followers were called Black Friars because of the colour of their dress.

Thomas Aquina was a Dominican. Later the order became unpopular because of its close connection with the inquisition. Inquisition was to suppress heresy and it often used torture and death. In 1540, the Pope recognized a new order – the Jesuits (Society of Jesus). This pushed the Dominicans into background in the life of the Roman Church.

8.3 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MONASTERIES

There is no doubt that monasticism brought great benefits to the church in the middle ages.

- (a) Monasticism raised spiritual life of the church
- (b) It preserved learning and ancient manuscripts during the dark ages when education was almost impossible to get.
- (c) It cared for the needy and the sick.

9.1 COLLAPSE OF THE WESTERN ROMAN EMPIRE

Background

Emperor Diocletian divided the Roman Empire into two halves – East and West for defense purposes soon after he became Emperor in AD 284. He himself decided to rule the Eastern part of the empire from Nicomedia which is Northern Turkey close to the Black sea. Later

Constantine decided to build a new capital city for the empire and in AD 330 the founding of the new city of Constantinople not far from Nicomedia was celebrated. From AD 330, The Roman Empire really existed in two parts.

- (a) The Western Empire which spoke Latin and which still looked at Rome as its centre and capital and
- (b) The Eastern Empire which still spoke Greek and which looked to Constantinople as its centre and capital.

After the third barbarian invasion of Rome in AD 472, The Eastern part of the Roman Empire could no longer be called Roman because the barbarian leader Ricimer the Suave forced the last Roman Emperor to abdicate. So from AD 472, the Eastern continuation of the Roman Empire took the name “Byzantine Empire” after the second name of Constantinople which was Byzantium. Therefore from AD 472 the title Empire and Emperor refers to this Eastern Byzantine Empire. The Byzantine Empire managed to survive for nearly one thousand years inspite of being subjected to successive attacks from Persians, Goths, Arabs and Turks. Eventually in AD 1453, it fell to the Muslim Turks who killed its last Emperor although at that time, his empire was very small. Today the Turks call it Istanbul. The great Cathedral of Saint Sophia (Holy Wisdom) built by the Byzantine Emperor Justinian between AD 532 and 557 is now a Muslim mosque.

DECLINE OF THE WESTERN ROMAN EMPIRE

In 476 AD, Germanic king of the Torcilingi Odoacer deposed Romulus Augustulus, the last Roman Emperor to rule the Western part of the Roman Empire. The Eastern half became the Byzantine Empire with its capital at Constantinople (modern Istanbul)

Just as the fall of Rome was not caused by a single event, the way Rome fell was also complex. In fact, during the period of imperial decline, the empire actually expanded. That influx of conquered peoples and lands changed the structure of the Roman government. Emperors move the capital away from the city of Rome too. The schism of East and West created not just an Eastern capital first in Nicomedia and then Constantinople but also a move in the West from Rome to Milan.

Rome started out as a small hilly settlement by the Tiber River in the middle of the Italian boot surrounded by more powerful neighbours. By the time Rome became an empire, the territory covered by the term “Rome” looked completely different. It reached its greatest extent in the second century C.E. Some arguments about the fall of Rome focus on the geographic diversity and the territorial expanse that Roman Emperors and their legions had to control

Why the fall?

(i) Roman Empire lasted over a thousand years

This represented a sophisticated and adaptive civilization. Some historians maintain that the split into an Eastern and Western empire government by separate emperors caused Rome to fall. Most classicists believe that a combination of factors including Christian decadence, the metal lead in the water supply, monetary trouble and military problems caused the fall of Rome.

(ii) Christianity and Emperor Constantine

When the Roman Empire started there was no such religion as Christianity. In the 1st Century, Herod executed their founder Jesus for treasonous behavior. It took his followers a few centuries to gain enough clout that they were able to win over imperial support. This began in the early 4th century with Emperor Constantine who was actively involved in Christian policy making.

When Constantine established a state-level religious tolerance in the Roman Empire, he took on the title of pontiff. Although, he was not necessarily Christian himself (he wasn't baptized until he was on his deathbed). He gave Christians privileges and oversaw major Christian religious disputes. He may not have understood how the pagans' cults, including those of Emperors, were at odds with the new monotheistic religion, but they were and in time the old Roman religious lost out.

Over time, Christian church leaders became increasingly influential eroding the Emperor's powers. For example, when Bishop Ambrose threatened the sacraments, Emperor Theodosius did the penance, the Bishop assigned him. Emperor Theodosius made Christianity the official religion in 390 C.E. Since Roman civic and religious life was deeply connected – priestesses controlled the fortune of Rome. Prophetic books told leaders what they needed to win wars, and emperors were deified – Christian religious beliefs and allegiances conflicted with the working of the empire.

(iii) Barbarians and Vandals and Visigoth King Alaric

The barbarians which are a term that covers a varied and changing group of outsiders were embraced by Rome, who used them as suppliers of tax revenue and even promoting them to positions of power. But Rome also lost territory and revenue to them, especially in Northern Africa, which Rome lost to the vandals at the time of St Augustine in the early 5th century C.E. At the same time, the vandals took over the Romans territory in Africa. Rome lost Spain to the Sueves. The loss of Spain meant Rome lost revenue along with the territory and the administrative control. A perfect example of the interconnected causes leading to Rome's fall. That revenue was needed to support Rome's army and Rome needed its army to keep territory still maintained.

(iv) Decadence and Decay of Rome's control

There is no doubt that decay – the loss of Roman control over the military and populace – affected the ability of the Roman empire to keep its borders intact. The decay of the army came from within the army itself. The army grew weak from the lack of wars and stopped wearing their protective armor. This made them vulnerable to enemy weapons and this provided a temptation to flee from the battle.

In addition, as time went on, Roman Citizens including soldiers and their families living outside Italy identified with Rome less and less compared to their Italian counterparts. They preferred to live as natives, even if this meant poverty, which in turn, meant they turned to those who could help Germans – Christians and vandals.

(v) Lead poisoning

Some scholars have suggested that the Romans suffered from lead poisoning. The presence of lead in the drinking water leached in from water pipes used in the vast Roman water control system, lead glazes on containers that came in contact with food and beverages and food preparations technicians that could have contributed to heavy metal poisoning. The lead was also used in cosmetics, even though it was also known in Roman times as a deadly poison.

(vi) Economics

Economic factors are also often cited as a major cause of the fall of Rome. Some of the major factors like inflation, over taxation and feudalism are discussed elsewhere. Other lesser economic issues included the wholesale hoarding of bullion by Roman Citizens, the widespread looting of the Roman treasury by Barbarians, and massive trade deficit with the Eastern Regions of the Empire. Together, these issues combined escalated financial stress during the empires last days.

10.1 THE GREAT SCHISM

East and West Schism also called Schism of 1054 which precipitate the final separation between the Eastern Christian churches (led by the patriarch of Constantinople, Michael Cerularius) and the Western Church (led by Pope Leo ix). The mutual excommunications by the Pope and the patriarch in 1054 became a watershed in church history. The excommunication was not lifted until 1965, when Pope Paul Vi and Patriarch Athenagoras I following their historic meeting in Jerusalem in 1964 presided over simultaneous ceremonies that revoked the excommunication decrees.

The relation of the Byzantine church to the Roman may be described as one of growing estrangement from the 5th to the 11th Century. In the early church, three bishops stood forth prominently, principally from the political eminence of the cities in which they ruled – the bishops of Rome, Alexandria and Antioch. The transfer of the seat of empire from Rome to Constantinople and the later eclipse of Alexandria and Antioch.

The transfer of the seat of empire from Rome to Constantinople and the later eclipse of Alexandria and Antioch as battlegrounds of Islam and Christianity promoted the importance of Constantinople. Concurrently, the theological calmness of the West, in contrast to the often **violent theological disputes that troubled the Eastern Patriarchates, strengthened the position of the Roman Popes who made increasing claims to pre-eminence. But this pre-eminence or rather the Roman idea of what was involved in it was never acknowledged**

in the East. To press it upon the Eastern patriarchs was to prepare the way for separation – to insist upon it in times of irritation was to cause a schism.

The theological genius of the East was different from that of the West. The Eastern Theology had its roots in Greek Philosophy whereas a great deal of Western theology was based on Roman law. This gave rise to misunderstanding and at last led to two widely separate ways of regarding and defining one important doctrine – the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father or from the Father and the Son.

The Roman churches without consulting the East, added “and from the Son” (Latin: Filioque) to the Nicene Creed. Also the Eastern churches resented the Roman enforcement of clerical celibacy – the limitation of the rights of confirmation to the bishop and the use of unleavened bread in the Eucharist.

Political jealousies and interests intensified the disputes and at last after many premonitory symptoms, the final break came in 1054 when Pope Leo ix struck at Michael Cerularius and his followers with an excommunication and the patriarch retaliated with the similar excommunication. There had been mutual excommunication before, but they had not resulted in permanent schisms.

At the time, there seemed possibilities of reconciliation, but the rift grew wider in particular; the Greeks were bitterly antagonized by such events as the Latin capture of Constantinople in 1204. Western pleas for re-union (on western terms) such as those at the council of Lyone 1274 and the Council of Ferrava Florence 1439 – were rejected by the Byzantines.

The Schism has never healed, though relations between the churches improved following the second Vatican Council (1962 – 1965) which recognized the validity of the sacraments in the Eastern churches.

11.1 THE CRUSADES

Background

In the 11th Century, the Seljuk's – a tribe from Turkestan, moved westward from Baghdad and captured Jerusalem from their fellow Muslims. They then invaded Asia Minor which was part of the Byzantine Empire defeating Diogenes the Byzantine Empire at the battle of Manzikert in AD 1071. Half of the Byzantine Empire was now in the hands of the Turks. So the Emperor

appealed to the West for military help. Hildebrand (Pope Gregory vii) was sympathetic but pre-occupied with the problems of the church in the West. So he sent no help. However, in 1095 AD Pope Urban II preached a powerful sermon at Clermont in France calling for a crusade to re-capture Jerusalem from the Turks. He promised saintly martyrdom and indulgence (shortening of the time in purgatory) for those who would volunteer for this holy war. **The crowd responded enthusiastically crying out “Deus vult” (God wills it). This became the battle cry of the crusades. In this way, the Pope was able to respond to the Byzantine Emperor’s appeal for help and also to divert the energies of Europe’s warlike leaders away from Europe to more useful campaigns in the East.**

11.2 THE PEOPLE’S CRUSADE 1096

The first people to respond to Pope’s call were ordinary men and women. They were encouraged to volunteer by fiery preachers like Peter the Hermit and Robert of Abrissol. They taught that it was a disgrace not to join the crusade. Many people thousands of ordinary people left home without any preparation or knowledge of the warfare. They expected the walls of Jerusalem to fall down flat before them like those of Jericho before Joshua.

Excitement and religious fanaticism aroused by these preachers caused them to massacre the Jews in Germany whilst on their way to the East. The people who arrived in Constantinople demanded to be fed by the Emperor. He shipped them across the Bosphorus channel into Asia Minor where most of them were killed by the Turks.

11.3 THE FIRST CRUSADE 1096

The first military crusade took place soon after the people’s crusade. It was the first of about seven official and many more other unofficial, private crusaders. The first crusade consisted of about 5,000 armed soldiers. They quarreled frequently among themselves and this caused the Byzantine Emperor more alarm than encouragement.

However, it was the most successful of all the crusades. It captured Nicaea in 1097, Antioch in 1098 and Jerusalem 1099 where the soldiers killed all the inhabitants. Four Christian states were established at Edessa, Antioch, Tripoli and Jerusalem. These states were independent of Byzantine control.

They formed a balancing third force between the Muslims and the Byzantines Emperor. They introduced Latin (i.e. Roman Catholic) bishops at Jerusalem and Antioch as rivals to the Greek Byzantine patriarchs. The crusader states were protected by the knights, templar and the knights hospitable who were part of monks and part of soldiers. Their aims were to protect pilgrims coming to Palestine and to wage continuous war on the Muslims. In 1144, they were unable to prevent Edessa from being recaptured by the Muslims.

11.4 THE SECOND CRUSADE 1147

This was organized by the saintly Bernard of Clairvoux when the new crusader states, especially Jerusalem were threatened by the Muslims. Militarily the crusade ended in defeat at Damascus. Bernard was also bitterly disappointed that the crusade failed to live up to the spiritual hopes he had for it. Bernard began to blame the Greeks at Byzantium for their lack of support.

11.5 THE THIRD CRUSADE OF KINGS 1187 – 1192

In 1187, Saladin and Nureddin managed to unite the Muslims in Egypt and the near East who previously had been much divided. They recaptured Jerusalem. Emperor Frederick Barbarosa I of Germany, King Richard I of England and King Philip II of France led a crusade to recapture it. On the way, Frederick was drowned in a river in Syria. Philip went home after quarreling with Richard. Later Richard managed to gain a three year truce from Saladin in 1192 and free access to Jerusalem for Christian pilgrims. Christians continued to hold the coastal cities of Palestine as far South of Jaffa. Otherwise the crusade failed. On the way home, Richard himself was captured and imprisoned by the Christians.

11.6 THE FOURTH CRUSADE 1202 – 1204

This was called by Pope innocent III. Probably it was the most disastrous of all the crusades from the church's point of view. Some of the knights Templar obeyed the call but did not have enough money to pay for their voyage to Palestine. Venice had a long dispute with Byzantium for control over parts of Italy. Venice now saw the chance of using the knights to attack

Byzantium instead of Palestine. He used the excuse that the West had complained for a long time that the Greeks in Byzantium had not supported them in their struggles against the Muslims. So the Venetian ships carried the crusaders to attack the Christian Greeks instead of the Muslim Turks.

They sacked Constantinople and set up a Latin empire there with its own patriarch. This state lasted from 1204 – 1261. The knights were given land. The Greeks bitterly resented their presence and this fact more than the doctrinal split of AD 1054 caused the Eastern Christians to distrust the Western Pope who seemed to be using force to back up his claim to be Vicar of Christ over all the church.

11.7 THE CHILDREN'S CRUSADE 1212

The most extraordinary crusade was the children's crusade. A French boy named Stephen believed that Christ had called him to lead a crusade of Children which would succeed where older men had failed. Some children reached Genoa but failed to find a ship to take them to Palestine – others went to Rome where the Pope told them to go home. Others were shipped from Marseilles but sold as slaves to the Muslims in the North of Africa.

11.8 THE LAST CRUSADES AND THE FALL OF ACRE 1219 – 1291

The fifth crusade against Egypt in 1219 failed. The sixth in 1228 – 1229 led by Frederick II of Germany regained Jerusalem by negotiation with the Muslims but the agreement was rejected by the Pope because he had excommunicated Frederick. Jerusalem was lost again in 1244. The seventh crusade in 1248 – 1254 under Louis ix of France failed to recapture it. In 1270, the Pope officially abandoned the policy of crusades. The last crusader stronghold of Acre fell in 1291 to the Mameluke Sultans of Egypt. The crusader presence in Palestine was now over.

11.9 THE PROFIT AND LOSS OF THE CRUSADES

On the whole, they were a disastrous mistake because:

- (i) They permanently injured relations between the church in the East and the West.
- (ii) The fourth crusade weakened the Byzantine Empire so much that it fell in AD 1453 to the Muslims.
- (iii) The Crusades permanently embittered relations between Christians and Muslims so that Muslims still look upon Christians as the aggressors today.

11.10 THE CREDIT SIDE OF THE CRUSADES

Crusades opened the eyes of Christians in Europe to a wider world outside their own national boundaries. They helped forward the trade in ideas as well as goods between Christians in the West and Muslims in the East. The crusades inspired the foreign missionary movements. The moral failure of the crusades forced Christians to think of spiritual ways to spread the Gospel.