



Church History, Development of Christianity and Church History up through 305 AD

Founding of the Jerusalem church: 30-44 AD

Pentecost: Peter's sermon, Holy Spirit given to all believers and, thereafter, at the moment of salvation, 3,000 saved.

Progress: Growth was rapid. Multitudes were saved daily.

Persecution: First, by the Sanhedrin. Peter and John were examples of victims. Secondly, political persecution. Herod killed James. Martyrs: Stephen. This caused the spread and growth of the Gospel.

Program and Policy. Charity was handled by the deacons. Sermons centered around the crucified, resurrected Christ.

The Church in Palestine:

Philip takes the Gospel to Samaria. Acts 8

Peter preaches to the Jews, then in Cornelius' house, then to the Gentiles.

The Gentile church then originates at Antioch. Paul preaches to the Gentiles.

The leadership in the early church: Apostle Paul

Paul's environment: He was trained under Gamaliel. He was a free born Roman citizen. He was a citizen of Tarsus. He operated under a specific political environment.

Caesar Augustus, Octavius, Julius Caesar's nephew: 27-37 AD.

Caligula: insane during part of his reign: 37-41 AD.

Claudius: excellent administrator during Paul's three missionary journeys: 41-54 AD.

Nero: insane most of the time. Paul was martyred under his reign: 54-68 AD.

Paul's social environment: There was the aristocratic group who was indifferent. They were philosophically oriented to salvation. There was the poor class.

Paul's work as a propagator of the gospel: Expansion to the West. Located in strategic centers. Began in Jewish synagogues. After preaching to the Jews would go to the Gentiles. Would organize a church, appoint leadership, then move on. Depended on the Holy Spirit for guidance.

Paul's publications contained: Human and spiritual wisdom. Morality in pagan environments. Cited lawsuits between Christians before pagan judges. Information on marriage problems. Information which dealt with social intercourse with pagan idolaters.

Paul's theology: It grew out of the teachings of Christ and was received by direct revelation from God. The Cross of Christ was the starting point for spiritual life not the Law. Ethical system based on personal union with Christ by faith. Rejected the evolutionary progress of history.

Paul as a polemicist: Fought for purity of Christian doctrine. Denounced doggedly Judaism as to its principles. Fought Gnosticism as the first heresy of the church. Gnosticism was salvation by ascetic acts to deny the desires of the material and evil body.



Early books and parchments in church history: 95 - 150 AD

Writing of the church fathers: 95-150 AD

Epistolary literatures:

Clement of Rome: Wrote to the Corinthians. Admonished Christians to end revolt against the elders and end their disturbances. Exalted the position of the bishop in the Church. Equivalent to the pastor-teacher. Obedience to the bishop was a must and guarantee of Christian unity.

Ignatius: Bishop of Antioch. Warns against Gnostics and Docetics (Christ was pure spirit). Insists on revelation of Christ in the flesh. Major contribution was the establishing of the monarchical bishop. Hierarchy of church authority was established - bishop, elder, deacon works and steadfastness.

Epistle of Barnabas: written by an Alexandrian believer. 130 AD. Christ completely adequate for salvation. Christians are not bound to observe the Law. Contrast of the two ways of life. Went beyond typology to allegory to make Scripture say what he wanted it to say.

Epistle to Diognetus: anonymous. Was a rational defense of Christianity. Emphasized the inadequacy of Judaism. Emphasized the superiority of Christianity in its beliefs, the character it builds and benefits it offers its converts.

The Second Epistle of Clement to Corinthians: Was not written by Clement of Rome. Was written about 150 AD. Presents sound view of Christ, resurrection of the body and the purity of life of the Christian. Emphasizes that the Christian is to enter conflict against the world by practicing Christian virtues and working out salvation begun in Christ.

Papias: Bishop of Hierapolis, life and words of Christ.

Apocalyptic literature:

The Shepherd of Hermas. 150 AD. Emphasizes need of repentance by the use of symbols. Aim is moral and practical. Uses visions and allegory. The relationship of the individual to Christian society and the church.

Catechistical literature:

The Didache discovered in 1873-75. It was a manual of church instruction. It emphasized ethical actions. It emphasized liturgical problems. It emphasized how to distinguish false prophets. It emphasized a watchful and consistent life.

The government of the church with bishops and deacons:

The government of the church, local, had its origin in Christ. He chose 12 Apostles.

Qualifications of the officials of the church:

Inward call by the Holy Spirit. This would be the spiritual gift seeking expression. External call by democratic vote of the church. This would be congregational recognition of the spiritual gift. Ordaining to office by the apostles. This would be public recognition of the spiritual gift.

There were two groups of officials: The charismatic officials: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastor-teachers who were chosen by Christ and endowed with the spiritual gift. The administrative officials who were chosen by the congregation after prayer and functioned in the administrative sphere.

Observation: There was a weakness in their understanding from the beginning and extra emphasis on the



pastor-teacher gift. Lesser emphasis was put on the other gifts. This will later give rise to a development of the bishopric hierarchy.

The administrative officials were divided into two groups also with each having distinguishing responsibilities. The elder was responsible for public worship, good government, and church discipline. Deacons were responsible for dispensing of charity and administering communion.

The development of the episcopate:

Three men largely were responsible for information on the development of the episcopacy: Ignatius in Syria: 107-115 AD, Ireneus in Gaul: 202 AD, and Cyprian in North Africa: 258 AD.

The information of Ignatius concerning the bishop:

The bishop was the head and center of a single congregation. He was not equally representative to the whole Church. He is a vicar of Christ and not merely a successor of the apostles. The presbyters and deacons were the successors of the apostles, therefore, the bishop is above the presbyters and deacons.

There is no distinction of order among bishops. They are of equal status among themselves with no trace of primacy and all fully coordinate. Therefore, this is congregation centered, not diocesan. This would be a growing new institution, not a policy of apostolic origin.

The information of Ireneus as to the bishop and episcopacy:

He presents the bishopric as a diocesan office. He presents it as a continuation of the apostolate. He presents it as the vehicle of the catholic tradition. He exalts the bishops of the original apostolic churches. He exalts even greater the church of Rome. He speaks emphatically of the unbroken episcopal succession.

The information of Cyprian as to the bishop and episcopacy:

He relates the bishop and episcopacy with a special priesthood and sacrifice. He considered the bishop as the bearer of the Holy Spirit, passed from Christ to the apostles, then on down to him giving efficacy to all religious exercises. "The bishop is in the church and the church in the bishop and if anyone is not with the bishop he is not in the church."

All bishops are expressing one office in their function and each is representing in himself the whole office. The bishop did not undertake any important matter without the advice of the presbyters or deacons. The ordination of bishops was performed by the neighboring bishops, requiring at least three in number.

The pseudo-Clementine episcopacy: Ebionitic sect version. Presents the bishop as the vicar of Christ. Bishop is the successor of the apostles. Held to the primacy or a universal church monarchy, in Peter and the Roman See.

The development of the rank system of the bishops: 300-400 (fourth Century).

The lowest level of bishop, the country church bishop *χαρεις*. They stood between the presbyters, deacons and the city bishops. Aren't mentioned until the fourth century but probably existed earlier.

Second level of bishop: the primacy of the bishop of a capital city over the rest of the city bishops. They ordained the bishops of the provinces. They presided over the provincial synods, *primi inter pares* (Latin for first among equals).

Third level of bishop: the primacy of the bishop of the apostolic mother churches, Jerusalem, Antioch,



Alexandria, Ephesus, Corinth and Rome. Alexandria, Antioch and Rome held primacy of these mother churches because they were capitals of three sections of the Roman Empire, combining apostolic origin with political weight. Bishop of Antioch: region of Syria. Bishop of Alexandria: Egypt. Bishop of Rome: central and lower Italy and indefinite boundaries.

The rise of the Roman bishop to position of Pope:

The claim of the Roman church: Peter by appointment of the Lord had not only a simple primacy, but a personal excellence, honor and dignity which must be given him. Peter had also a supremacy of jurisdiction over the other apostles. This is refuted by Galatians 2:11 where Paul opposed Peter to his face.

*"But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned."
(Galatians 2:11, NASB)*

The primacy and supremacy of Peter are not only personal, but official, hereditary and transferable. The transfer of the primacy and supremacy excluded the bishop of Antioch and the bishop of Alexandria and was given to the bishop of Rome. Peter acted as bishop of Rome until his martyrdom, appointed a successor, passing on all his primacy, supremacy and personal dignity. There is not one shred of historical evidence for this point. The bishops of Rome, as Peter's successors, always enjoy total universal jurisdiction over the entire Christian church.

Conditions favorable to the ascendancy of the Roman see (causes for the growth of the Papacy):

The Roman church was the only proper apostolic mother church in the west. It was revered from the first by the churches of Gaul, Spain and Italy. The martyrdoms and labors and burial at Rome of Peter and Paul gave an ardor to the whole church there. There was there a seeming halo of glory coming from the graves of the victims of persecution, figuratively speaking.

Rome had the political preeminence in the world. The executive wisdom of the Roman church made itself felt in three controversies on the time of Easter, the penitential discipline and validity of heretical baptism. The Roman church had great firmness under persecution.

The Roman church had great benevolent care of the suffering. The city of Rome itself was a factor. It was the battlefield of orthodoxy and heresy. It was a resort for all sects and parties. It attracted true and false philosophy and religion. Ignatius rejoiced over being able to suffer in the center of the world. Justin Martyr presented there in Rome his defense of Christianity to the emperors. Ireneus, Tertullian, and Cyprian stated that this Roman church had a very great position of singular preeminence.

The bishops and their contributions:

Clement of Rome: His writing to the Corinthian church in distress indicated that the hierarchal spirit originated more from the congregation rather than from the bishop himself, at least in its origin. A century later this was reversed. This was indicated by the Roman Vicar or Bishop excommunicating several churches in Asia in his own name.

Ignatius: Writing to the Romans he commended the congregation for its benevolence and position. They sent contributions to churches in other cities. This commendation went to the church and not to the bishop. Here again the church is noted rather than the bishop in its expression.

Ireneus: Philip Schaff quoted, "He calls the Roman church the greatest, oldest church, acknowledged by all, founded by the two most illustrious apostles, Peter and Paul, the church, with which, on account of her more important precedence, all Christendom must agree, or to which all other churches must resort."



Hippolytus (third century): From his writings, we learn that the Roman bishops were already claiming an absolute power within his own jurisdiction. Also, that a bishop can never be deposed by a presbytery.

Tertullian: He first lauded Rome with special prominence where Peter was crucified, Paul beheaded and John immersed unhurt in boiling oil and later banished. Later he became an opponent with Rome and called the Roman Bishop in irony and mockery, “pontifex maximus.”

Cyprian: He gave the best account and clearest presentation of what the episcopacy should be. His development would be as follows: The church will be built on Peter, having been stated by the Lord. Peter passed on the episcopacy to the bishop of Rome. The Roman church is the seat or chair of Peter’s bishopric and the fountain of the priesthood.

Firmilian: Cappadocian bishop, a disciple of Origen, took a firm stand against the bishop of Rome, indicating he did not fully concede the primacy to the bishop of Rome as the British churches neither would do.

The chronology of the Popes:

The question concerning Peter and the Roman Papacy:

Tertullian makes Clement as the first successor of Peter in Rome. This would imply that Peter, of course, being the first, was the original. Ireneus, Eusebius, Jerome and the Roman Catalogue, put Clement in third place and put Linus between Peter and Clement. (Confusion among the ranks.)

The earliest church fathers do not put Peter among the bishops of Rome at all. The Roman Catalogue in putting Peter in the list of Roman bishops leaves Paul cut altogether. Lipsius classifies after diligent study that Linus, Anacletus, and Clement were presbyters at the close of the first century.

The chronological list of the Popes (from Eusebius, Jaffe, Potthast, Lipsius).

Peter 42-67

Linus 67-79

Anacletus 79-91

Clements I 91-100

Evaristus 100-109

Alexander I 109-119

Xystus or Sistus I 119-128

Telesphorus 128-139

Hyginus 139-142

Pius I 142-154

Anicetus 154-168

Soter 168-176

Eleutherus 176-190

Victor I 190-202

Zephyrinus 202-218



Callistus 218-223
Urbanus I 223-230
Pontianus 230-235
Anterus 235-236
Fabianus 236-250
See vacant until Mar. 251
Cornelius 251-252
Lucius I 252-253
Stephanus I 253-257
Xystus II 257-258
See vacant till July 21, 259
Dionysius 259-269
Felix I 269-274
Eutychianus 275-283
Gajus 283-296
Marcellinus 296-304
Vacant 304-307
Marcellus 308-309
Eusebius 309-310
Vacant 309-310 after 9/26
Miltiades 311-314
Silvester I 314-335

The worship of the early church:

The places: homes, auditoriums, synagogues. The service: reading Scripture, exhortation by the leading elder, prayers and singing.

The evening service: love feast and then communion until the end of the first century. Then the love feast was dropped and communion held in the morning service.

The life of the church:

Was indigenous. Undercut slavery by bidding Christian masters and slaves to remember they were brothers. Insisted on separation from pagan practices.

Persecution in the Church or of the Church:

Causes of the persecution:

Political. As the church was connected or regarded an element of Judaism, it suffered little persecution.



Separate from Judaism, Christianity was classed as a secret society and became an illegal religion. Christians would not worship the emperor as well as Christ. This caused a feeling of suspicion, and disloyalty regarding Christian position. Christians held meetings at night and in secret.

Religious. Roman religion was mechanical: idols, images, priests, etc. Christianity was spiritual: no idols, eyes closed for prayer. Public rumor made them guilty of incest, cannibalism and unnatural practices.

Social. Christianity appealed to lower classes and was hated by the influential class. Christians held equality of all men. Christians separated themselves from temples, theaters and pagan recreation. Purity of Christians was silent rebuke to scandalous lives.

Economic. Christianity was a danger to many crafts, idol makers, soothsayers, painters, architects. Plague, famine, civic unrest of 250 AD was ascribed to Christianity as being an evil which appeared at the end of a millennium, of which they were superstitious.

Specific persecutions of the church:

Persecutions up to the date 250 AD were generally local and sporadic.

Nero: 54-68 AD. He was the first Roman emperor to persecute the Christian church. Blamed fire of Rome on Christians and sought to persecute them for it.

Domitian: 90 AD. He imposed tax on the Jews to support Capitoline Jupiter. The Jews refused. Christians associated with the Jews, therefore, suffered the emperor's wrath.

First organized persecution: 112 AD. This was by Pliny the Younger of Bithynia. He asked a Christian three times if he was a Christian. If he said "Yes," after the third time, he was sentenced to death. Christians were punished unless they recanted and worshipped Roman gods.

Specific persecutions after 250 AD:

The Emperor Decius: Issued an Edict in 250 AD that demanded annual sacrifice at Roman altars to the emperor. A Certificate of Libellus was given to those who would make the sacrifice and free them from persecution. This lasted one year.

Diocletian: 285 AD ended the Principate which was equal rule by the senate and the emperor. Issued the Edict of 303 AD. Ordered cessation of meetings of Christians. Ordered destruction of the churches. Ordered deposing of officials of the churches. Ordered imprisonment because of the persisting testimony of Christians. Ordered destruction of the Scriptures by fire.

Traditores: These were the ones who had given up portions of the Scripture to be burned.

Later Edict: Christians had to sacrifice to pagan gods or face death upon refusal.

Methods of persecution included loss of property, exile, imprisonment, execution by sword or beast, and labor camps. This slackened in 305 AD upon abdication and retirement of Diocletian. It lasted about two years.

Galerius: 311 AD. He gave toleration to Christianity, provided that the Christians did not violate the peace of the empire.

Constantine: 313 AD. Issued the Edict of Milan which brought freedom of worship not only to Christianity, but to all religions.

Results of the persecutions of the church:



The spread of Christianity to Latin and western sections of Europe. The church in Alexandria became the chief church in Europe. Five to twelve percent of the population of the empire was Christian.

Under Theodicius in 380 AD, Christianity was decreed a state religion. Later, in 395 AD, Christianity became the official religion.

Another result of persecution was the controversies it brought. It forced the problem of the Canon. Established the canonizing of the New Testament Scriptures. Raised the problem on the treatment of the Christians who had offered sacrifices to pagan gods in Decian persecution. Raised the problem on the treatment of the Christians who had given up the Scriptures to be burned under the Diocletian persecution.