Christianity: 101

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## Table of Contents

* [Guide to app usage](#/slide-orge9767d4)
* [Distinctive aspects of Christianity](#/slide-orge4f5ce8)
* [Timeline of 3 religions](#/slide-orgb6d1cd6)

## Guide to app usage

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Key stroke | Effect |
| n, space | next slide |
| p | previous slide |
| f | fullscreen |
| esc, o | overview slide |
| m | toggle menu |
| audio inlay | start/stop audio playback |

## Distinctive aspects of Christianity

* [Circle graph of world religions](http://www.businessinsider.com/infographic-map-world-religions-2012-4)
* **Proselytizing**: Built on premise of expansion of Judaism **(evangelize)**
* A religion that appropriated another's **sacred text**
* **Prophetic, Sacramental**, and **Mystical**
* **Sacred text** not essentially in original language (**translations**)
* Anchored in **history** i.e. linear history that is fulfilled, brought to perfection,
* **progress** is built into the foundation of the religion
* **4 gospels** ,and many other issues, leads to a **critical** reading of scripture

Note:

* cf. we lived in Iran, we would think that Shia Islam was the only kind there was
* living in US until recently it seemed as if Protestant Christianity was the only kind

### From Judaism to Roman Empire

* Jesus was not the first Christian. He was a Jew.
* Paul's writing were the earliest testimony to the emerging Jewish sect
* Paul established the pattern of **evangelism**
* Only after the destruction of the temple by the Romans and dispersion (Diaspora) of the Jews did synagogue and church (**ecclesia**) separate

Note: These are historical aspects of the placement of Christianity in the opening centuries of **modern era** – i.e. beginning with what is designated year "0" up to circa 400.

The importance of history for understanding religion was perhaps first emphasized by Christianity

### From Old Testament to "Holy Bible"

* All of the writers of the NT understood the **Bible** to be what we would call the **Old Testament**
* consensus on what was in the New Testament was not reached until 4th-5th c.
* while the Rabbis pruned their Hebrew Bible, Christians continued to use the Jewish Bible from 300 BCE
* Reformation (16th c. and following) brought new standards for what was in the Bible

Note: - What precisely is in the Bible? Has lead to divisions within Christianity that are still with us to this day.

### Sacred Quest ch. 3: Appearance of the Sacred

Christianity displays each of the 3 patterns from *Sacred Quest*:

1. Prophetic
2. Sacramental
3. Mystical

Note:

* **Prophetic**; absorbing the OT prophets, John the Baptist as forerunner of Jesus, Jesus as the Prophet who is to come
* **Sacramental** priests who preside over the appearance of sacred in ordinary material things: 2 primary sacraments of Christianity
* **Mystical** from the transfiguration on the mountain to monks in the desert to spiritual writers through the centuries, growth of inner life is essential aspect

### Overlap of 2 religions

* From the beginning of Christianity there has been conflict and division with Judaism
* in teaching the Old Testament I came to realize that that text is the only one I am aware of that is sacred to two different religions
* interplay of how Jews interpret the text and how Christians approach it differently

Note: e.g. Rabbis knowing from centuries ago that there were 2 different narratives in Genesis. It was interpreted through variations of midrash and halakah. Christians have harmonized through the centuries. That led to divisions and claims of heresy in the early 20th century.

### Anchored in **history**

* eschatological
* fulfillment of linear history (progress)
* controversies over historical data are somehow peculiar to a particular brand of Christianity
* importance of rise of historical / critical

### From Jesus to Christ

* [Trailer](https://youtu.be/vxlpdDrj2Wg)
* Trailer focusing on Jesus' [teaching](https://youtu.be/FAa5vhLLhU0)
* Quotes from a [PBS](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/jesus/searching.html) series on the early centuries of Christianity.
* [Viewers guide with questions:](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/view/)

Note:

* Was available to view (4 hours) at [Youtube](https://youtu.be/UulusbcS8V0)
  + Part 1: [Judaism-Rome shaped Jesus' life](<https://youtu.be/kZPKCDOeyMg?list=PLC8QQh7gnOp21IP-EJidqOSQEOoEmQyBK>)
  + Part 2: [Beginnings of Jesus movement](<https://youtu.be/NB1WXhoEA0o?list=PLC8QQh7gnOp21IP-EJidqOSQEOoEmQyBK>)
  + Part 3: [first attempts to write life of Jesus](<https://youtu.be/S0pfQ2ZBe2Q?list=PLC8QQh7gnOp21IP-EJidqOSQEOoEmQyBK>)
  + Part 4: [Challenges of the spread of Christianity](<https://youtu.be/-_jY2E8I_mA?list=PLC8QQh7gnOp21IP-EJidqOSQEOoEmQyBK>>)

### **4 gospels** (and others)

* the "good news" were each written to bring about new followers
* relatively few details that are common across all 4 gospels
* **harmonizing** vs. **parallel**
* Some places to explore: <http://www.gospelparallels.com/> <http://sites.utoronto.ca/religion/synopsis/>

### Origins

* Paul established much of groundwork of early Christianity, but he's not the only one
* Bishops, presbyters, deacons and growth of Orthodox Church
* reputation as pacifist, care for widows and orphans, unwillingness to worship idols
* in the 4th c. CE persecution pivoted to **status quo** after Emperor Constantine
* need for **uniformity** led to creeds and orthodoxy, establishing canon of NT, theology, liturgical practice, etc.

### Theology to Creeds

1. **Orthodox** vs. **Orthopraxis**
2. **Heresy** repressed, censorship, persecution
3. **Creed**: "I believe …"

### History overview

* "Dark Ages": slow recovery of classical thought, science, literature
* Rise of Islam: spreading advanced knowledge from engineering, medicine, and more
* Dissolution of Roman Empire
* Competition with local expressions of Christianity (Celtic)
* splintering of Protestantism
* religious wars
* from pacifism to blessing battleships
* current struggle for place of Christianity in a world of diversity

## Timeline of 3 religions

<https://www.preceden.com/timelines/284990-children-of-abraham>

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