

Early Church History

**A Compendium of the Course
as it is taught by
Dr. William Weinrich**

**Compiled by Rick Stuckwisch
Spring 1990**

COMPILER'S NOTE

This compendium represents a compilation of information derived from class notes, assigned texts and other related readings. No citations are given in the body of this work, since very little of it represents original authorship on the part of this compiler. Acknowledgement is given to Dr. William Weinrich, who was (essentially) the guide by which the materials contained herein were chosen. A History of Christian Thought, Volume 1 and The Story of Christianity, Volume 1, both by Justo L. Gonzalez, as well as A History of the Christian Church, by Williston Walker are the primary sources of the information (and in most cases the very wording) as it is here presented. Further credit should be given to Seminarian Wayne Morton and his wife, Beth, for their significant contribution to the organization of materials available.

This compiler has attempted to gather together, into an organized framework, highlights from the voluminous amount of material presented in the course. This compendium is by no means intended to serve as a substitute for class lectures or assigned reading, nor would it suffice in such a role. For the student who has participated in these things, however, this work will help to bring the pieces together into a concise summary.

Rick Stuckwisch
6 March 1990

For the Christians are distinguished from other men neither by country, nor language, nor the customs which they observe. For they neither inhabit cities of their own, nor employ a peculiar form of speech, nor lead a life which is marked out by any singularity. The course of conduct which they follow has not been devised by any speculation or deliberation of inquisitive men; nor do they, like some, proclaim themselves the advocates of any merely human doctrines. But, inhabiting Greek as well as barbarian cities, according as the lot of each of them has determined, and following the customs of the natives in respect to clothing, food, and the rest of their ordinary conduct, they display to us their wonderful and confessedly striking method of life. They dwell in their own countries, but simply as sojourners. As citizens, they share in all things with others, and yet endure all things as if foreigners. Every foreign land is to them as their native country, and every land of their birth as a land of strangers. They marry, as do all (others); they beget children; but they do not destroy their offspring. They have a common table; but not a common bed. They are in the flesh, but they do not live after the flesh. They pass their days on earth, but they are citizens of heaven. They obey the prescribed laws, and at the same time surpass the laws by their lives. They love all men, and are persecuted by all. They are unknown and condemned; they are put to death, and restored to life. They are poor, yet make many rich; they are in lack of all things, and yet abound in all; they are dishonoured, and yet in their dishonour are glorified. They are evil spoken of, and yet are justified; they are reviled, and bless; they are insulted, and repay the insult with honour; they do good, yet are punished as evil-doers. When punished, they rejoice as if quickened into life; they are assailed by the Jews as foreigners, and are persecuted by the Greeks; yet those who hate them are unable to assign any reason for their hatred.

From the Epistle to Diognetus, author unknown

EARLY CHURCH

First Tri-Testarian Period

INTRODUCTION

The study of Church history is a study of that community of faith founded upon the Prophets and Apostles, through which God works to bring about His purposes. A theologian, therefore, is necessarily a Church historian, since it is a historical reality to which the Church confesses.

All theology is historical, since God's action always comes to us in incarnational forms. As the Creator, it is through His creation that God speaks, and His Word always takes on concretion. God's Word is embedded in a history that produces effect, the apex of which is found in the Incarnation of Jesus the Christ.

Church history takes on the character of the cross, which may be referred to as its "cruciform" quality. Gospel preaching is not about Christ's death, but rather His death is itself proclaimed. Thus, the cross is not cemented in time as simply a past action. Instead, it is always before us; always coming to us, to be received by faith.

With these thoughts in mind, we approach the study of Church history, not as an attempt to avoid "repeating it," but with blessed assurance that we are yet living it.

THE CRADLE OF CHRISTIANITY

The Jewish World

Jesus the Christ was the fulfillment of Israel's hope. He was a Jew born into a Jewish world, and it was in Palestine, among Jews, that His Church arose. The Jewish world at that time, however, was no simple entity.

The Jews were, first of all, the people of the Law, or Torah. It was the center of their religion and of their nationality. Through the passage of years and of patriotic struggles, it became the symbol and bulwark of the Jewish national spirit. In Judaea, as well as in the Diaspora, the Law was Israel's identity as a separate people dedicated to the Lord. To study, understand and keep the Law was the calling and the delight of the serious Jew.

Palestinian Judaism

The scribes were responsible for the preservation of the Law as well as for its interpretation. Although differences of school and temperament divided them, they produced a great body of jurisprudence concerning the application of the Law in diverse circumstances. This because the Hebrew religion was becoming more and more personal, while interest in the Temple ritual was declining. As such, the Pharisees (Law-oriented) were beginning to overcome the Sadducees (Temple priests) in prestige and

authority.

The Pharisees strove to interpret the Law in such a way that it might serve as a daily guide for the religion of the people. Naturally, this led them into the legalism that has made them objects of much criticism, and it was also the basic cause of their opposition to the Sadducees.

The Pharisees had appeared around 330 B.C., but they became prominent after the Maccabean revolt (160 B.C.). They were somewhat anti-Roman in their attitude, though not openly or dangerously so. Their distinction lie in their Law orientation, including both written and oral traditions. The Pharisees looked for a Messiah who would be a new Moses; the giver of a new Law.

The Sadducees were the Jewish conservatives of the first century. They accepted only the five books of Moses as their religious authority and rejected all of the oral tradition that had developed. Thus, they denied the resurrection, the future life, the complicated angelology and demonology of late Judaism, and the doctrine of predestination. In this they opposed the Pharisees, who accepted all these things.

The Sadducees accommodated the Romans, finding ways to live together with them. Their religion centered on the Temple and its rites rather than the synagogue and its teachings. (Thus, it is not surprising that they disappeared soon after the destruction of the Temple.) The Sadducees looked for a Messiah who would be a new Aaron; a new priest, who would purify the Temple and usher in a new Temple worship.

The Zealots were consciously anti-Roman, politically opposed to any invader of the Holy Land.- The first century of Judaism was characterized by their guerilla tactics.

The Zealots saw the Messiah as a new David; a new king, who would overthrow the Romans and establish a new Israel.

The Essenes were a group with eschatological and purist leanings. They considered themselves to be the people of the New Covenant, which, while not essentially different from the Old, was its culmination and would finally acquire its true meaning on the "day of the Lord." Their expectations consisted in the restoration of Israel around a New Jerusalem.

The Essenes emphasized the laws of ceremonial purity and tended to withdraw from the great cities and the centers of political life in Palestine. They awaited the Messiah in the wilderness, because one entered the Holy Land from the wilderness. This led them to establish communities like that of Qumran, where the

Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered.

Diaspora

Judaism was not confined to Palestine. On the contrary, the Jews formed important communities throughout the Roman Empire. These Jews, along with the Gentile proselytes they attracted, constituted the Diaspora, a phenomenon which contributed notably to the expansion and shaping of Christianity in its early years.

Though scattered throughout the world, the Jews of the Diaspora felt themselves united by the Law and the Temple. Nevertheless, differences did spring up between Palestinian Judaism and that of the Diaspora. Of these differences, the most important was language.

Successive generations of Diaspora Jews were losing the use of Hebrew and beginning to use the local tongues, especially Greek, the language of government and commerce.

Greek Translations of the Old Testament arose to meet the needs of Jews who were no longer conversant in Hebrew. The first of these translations was called the Septuagint (LXX). Others were the Aquila, Theodotian (often used by the Early Church), and Symmachus. All four would later be included in Origen's Hexapla.

The LXX played an important role in the formation of Hellenistic Jewish thought. In order to translate ancient Hebrew concepts, it was necessary to use Greek terms already bearing connotations foreign to Biblical thought. Jews were thus obliged to acquaint themselves better with the philosophical literature of the day, and to interpret the Bible in such a way that its superiority would be evident.

Philo of Alexandria, a contemporary of Jesus, represented the greatest expression of this intent on the part of the Jews to harmonize their tradition with Hellenistic culture and philosophy. According to Philo, the Scriptures teach the same things that Plato does, although they use allegories to do it. Thus, the wise interpreter's task is to show the eternal sense that may be found behind the Scriptural allegories. Philo points out that Moses had lived long before Plato and the academicians, who must have known the Scriptures and from thence derived the best of their teachings.

The Greco-Roman World

In the first century A.D. the Mediterranean basin enjoyed a political and cultural unity never since equaled. This unity was the result of the dissemination of Greek thought, through Alexander's conquests and the ensuing Roman consolidation. From these had grown a universal culture that--while retaining important regional variations--united all the peoples of the

Empire.

Plato (and through him, Socrates) exercised the greatest influence, -in molding the philosophy of the period, and among all the ancient philosophers, it is Plato who had the greatest influence on the early development of Christian thought. Of his teachings,, those that most concern us here are the doctrines of "the two worlds," of "the immortality and the pre-existence of the soul," of "knowledge and reminiscence," and of "the Idea of the Good."

The Platonic doctrine of the two worlds was used by several Christian scholars as a means of interpreting the Christian doctrine of the "world," and also that of heaven and earth.

The doctrine of the immortality of the soul attracted many Christians searching in Greek philosophy for support of the Christian doctrine of the future life.

The Platonic doctrine of knowledge is based on a distrust of the senses as the means of attaining true knowledge, since true knowledge can only be knowledge of ideas.

Finally, the Platonic Idea of the Good markedly influenced the formulation of Christian thought about God. Plato states that the origin of the world was the work of a divine artisan, or demiurge, that took formless matter and gave it form.

Stoicism was second only to Platonism in its influence on the development of Christian thought. Its doctrine of the "logos," its elevated moral tone, and its doctrine of natural law made a profound impression on Christian thinking.

According to Stoic teachings, the universe is subject to a universal reason, or "logos." This "logos" is not simply an external force, but rather, it is the reason that is imprinted into the very structure of things.

From the existence of the universal reason follows the existence of the natural order of things, and above all, of a natural order of human life. This order is what the Stoics call "natural law," and they find it imprinted in our very being, so that we have only to obey it to be virtuous.

The Mystery Religions apparently had their origin in the ancient fertility rites that were central in the religious practices of many primitive peoples. Many of the Pagan/Mystery religions were very concerned with the cycle of Nature and the Seasons. They promised the immortality that exists in Nature through participation in the cultic drama.

The Mystery Religions generally included the view that the divinity existed in the material substance. Thought to be gods were the necessary shapes of forces in the natural world (ie. life, death, etc.)

An important aspect of the Mystery Religions was their individualistic quality. Membership in them was not through mere physical birth, but rather it was necessary to **be** initiated.

Primary Mystery Religions included:

Isis/Adonis (Egypt)
Dionysius (Greece)
Cybele (Phrygia)
Mithras (Persia)

Emperor Worship was not indigenous to the Roman Empire. It was characteristic of Eastern thought, where the idea of "ruler as deity" was more common. Roman emperors did not so much promote themselves as gods as allow themselves to be seen as such. It was never really a religion but rather a means for a public expression of loyalty and political allegiance. In a sense, it was more like our respect for the flag than faith in an emperor as a god.

Augustus Caesar, with much of the new Roman Empire in the East, found it politically necessary to present himself as at least a representation of the divinity, though he himself acted as a representative of the "ultimate goddess" Roma.

Syncretism was the common characteristic of the religions of the Hellenistic world. Every cult competed with the others, not to be the strictest, but to be the broadest; to include the most diverse doctrines. It was this context that made it so important and so difficult for the early Christians to resist the temptation to turn Christianity into a syncretistic cult like those that were in the vogue.

THE THEOLOGY OF THE APOSTOLIC FATHERS

The earliest surviving Christian writings, apart from those which now form part of the New Testament canon, are those of the so-called Apostolic Fathers. They have been given this title because at the time it was thought that they had known the Apostles. In some cases this seems quite possible, but in others it was a mere product of imagination.

With the sole exception of the Epistle to Diognetus (which will be discussed with the Greek Apologists), all these writings are addressed to other Christians. Therefore, they are very useful in giving us an idea of what the life and thought of the Early Church was like.

Clement of Rome

The first of the writings of the Apostolic Fathers which can be dated with some degree of accuracy is the First Epistle to the Corinthians from Clement of Rome. All that can be said with certainty about Clement is that he was Bishop of Rome toward the end of the first century, and that at that time--probably in A.D. 96--he wrote to the Corinthians an epistle that is his only genuine literary remain. It is really a letter from the church in Rome to the church in Corinth, and not from the Bishop, per se.

The reason for Clement's epistle is quite clear from the

beginning, and it reminds us of the situations in Corinth which the Apostle Paul had addressed in his letters to the church in that city. Once again, the Christians there were divided, and some had assumed a rebellious attitude that worried the Christians in Rome. Therefore, the Epistle is most practical in nature, dealing with the vices that cause divisions and the virtues that strengthen unity. Other theological subjects are treated only tangentially.

Clement seems to draw from two sources for his arguments against the rebellious: the Old Testament on the one hand, and the Stoic doctrine of the natural harmony of the universe on the other.

The Didache

The **Didache** (or "Doctrine of the Twelve Apostles") is without any doubt one of the most important literary discoveries of modern times. There is no certainty as to its date of composition, for some believe that it was written before the destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70), while others place it at a much later date. It seems probable that it was written toward the end of the first century or the beginning of the second.

The **Didache** has 16 chapters, which can be divided into three main sections. The first of these sections is usually called the "Document of the Two Ways." The way of life is that followed by those who love God and their neighbors, and who also avoid evil in all its manifestations and fulfill their Christian duties. The way of death is accursed, and those who follow it are given to untruth, vice, hypocrisy and avarice.

The second part contains a series of liturgical instructions, including a reference to baptism by means other than immersion (in cases of scarcity of water).

Finally, the third part of the **Didache** is a sort of manual of discipline. Among other things, it spells out how to recognize and deal with false prophets

Ignatius of Antioch

Through the epistles of Ignatius of Antioch we are given a glimpse into the situation of the Church at the beginning of the second century. Ignatius, a Bishop, was being led toward Rome, where he was to be executed. It was at that time that he wrote the seven epistles that have survived.

It was at the point of Christology that Ignatius saw Christian doctrine most threatened. Therefore, he was categorically opposed to the doctrine of the Docetists. Jesus Christ was truly of the lineage of David; he was truly born; he truly ate and drank; he was truly baptized by John; he was truly nailed to a cross; and he truly rose from the dead. This affirmation of the reality of Christ's humanity did not lead Ignatius to leave aside His divinity, however. He clearly states that Jesus Christ is "our God." Jesus Christ is God made human.

Ignatius is closer to John than to Paul in the interpretation of

the work of Christ. For him, the core of Christianity is revelation. God cannot be known apart from revelation in Christ. God is silence, and Jesus Christ is the Word that comes from silence, although the unity between silence and the Word is such that the latter expresses the essence of silence. Thus the work of Christ is, above all, one of revelation.

However, the contrast with St. Paul should not be exaggerated. The revelation about which Ignatius speaks is not a mere intellectual knowledge of God, but consists rather in the divine action through which we are united to God and thus are freed from our great enemies: death and division. For Ignatius, the work of Christ consists, at least in part, in conquering the Devil and making the believer a participant in His victory.

Ignatius is a theologian who is not inclined to systematic or speculative construction, but who has a profound sense of the importance of some of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, as well as a far-reaching vision of the consequences of those doctrines.

Polycarp of Smyrna

The Epistle of Saint Polycarp to the Phillipians was written in connection with the martyrdom of Ignatius. It shows a theological outlook similar to that of Ignatius and of John's Gospel, although with a more practical intent. Polycarp does not reach the depths of the Fourth Gospel or of Ignatius, but he does follow them in underscoring the reality of the humanity of Christ, whom he places in the center of his doctrine of salvation.

Papias of Heriapolis

Papias was among the disciples of John, and later became Bishop of Heriapolis. He took upon himself the task of collecting every saying or teaching of the Lord which he heard. Thus, he compiled and composed his Exposition of the Sayings of the Lord, of which only a few fragments have survived.

Papias is often discussed (and criticized) because of his chiliasm (millenialism)--the view that after Christ's return there would be a period of a thousand years during which He would reign on earth.

More recently, scholars have discussed the fragments of Papias inasmuch as they refer to the authorship of the first two Gospels and to the existence of two Johns, the Apostle and the Elder.

The Epistle of Barnabas

The Epistle of Barnabas, probably written in Alexandria around A.D. 135, was sometimes included among the canonical writings of the New Testament. It was most certainly not written by Barnabas, the companion of Paul.

The work is composed of two clearly distinguishable parts. The first is doctrinal in character, whereas the second is more

practical.

The doctrinal part is devoted mostly to an allegorical interpretation of Old Testament texts. The writer does not deny the historicity of the Old Testament accounts, but he does affirm that they point to Jesus.

The practical part of the Epistle repeats the teaching of the two ways found at the beginning of the Didache.

The Shepherd of Hermas

The most extensive work amongst the "Apostolic Fathers" is the Shepherd of Hermas, who probably lived toward the end of the first century and the first half of the second, and whose work consists of a collection of materials produced at different stages during his career as a prophet in the Roman church. His main concern seems to have been the lack of zeal and dedication of some believers, and especially the problem posed by post-baptismal sins. These concerns are dealt with in a collection of five visions, twelve mandates and ten parables.

According to the doctrine of Hermas, it is possible to repent once more after baptism, and anyone who sins again after this second repentance will find it very difficult to be forgiven.

It seems that for Hermas Christianity is, above all, a series of precepts that must be followed. One does not find here the profound mystical sense of Ignatius, nor the theological investigations of "Barnabas." His practical interest in sins and their remission leads Hermas to offer (for the first time in the history of Christian thought) the theory that it is possible to do more than the commandments of God require, and thus to attain a greater glory.

THE GREEK APOLOGISTS

Toward the middle of the second century, a number of Christian writers took upon themselves the task of defending their faith in the face of false accusations that were at the heart of persecutions. Although most of these works are addressed to the emperors, their authors actually hoped that they would be read by a wide circle of educated persons.

In their attempt to defend Christianity, the Apologists found it necessary to attack paganism on the one hand, and to refute the accusations made against the Christians on the other. Although the Apologists themselves did not establish such a distinction, one can say that these accusations were of two sorts: some of them were mere popular gossip, while others were more sophisticated attacks on Christian faith and practice.

In the case of popular rumors, quite clearly the product of fantasy, the Apologists found it sufficient simply to deny them. But the more sophisticated attacks could not be set aside with such ease, and they had to be seriously refuted.

The Epistle to Diognetus

The Epistle to Diognetus (actually included among the Apostolic Fathers), by an unknown author, is difficult to date. In twelve brief chapters, this unknown Christian presents a most noble defense of the new faith.. (A portion from the Epistle is included as a prologue to this Compendium.)

Aristides

The most ancient apology that has survived is that of Aristides, who addresses his defense of Christianity to emperor Hadrian, and who therefore must have written it before the year A.D. 138.

Aristides begins with a brief discourse regarding the nature of God and the world. God is described as the first mover of the world, who made all things for humankind. After this brief introduction, Aristides classifies humankind in four categories: the barbarians, the Greeks, the Jews and the Christians. He goes on to demonstrate that all but the Christians have followed a religion that is contrary to reason.

Justin Martyr

Justin Martyr is without any doubt the most important of the Greek Apologists of the second century. A philosopher at heart, he came to Christianity 'after an intellectual pilgrimage of which he himself tells in his Dialogue with Trypho.' But even after his conversion he did not set aside the cloak of the philosopher, but rather claimed that in Christianity he had found the true philosophy. This is the thesis of his two Apologies.

In his task of defending Christianity, Justin faces two basic problems: on the one hand, that of the relationship between Christian faith and classical culture, and on the other, that of the relationship between that faith and the Old Testament.

Justin deals with the first of these problems by appealing to the doctrine of the logos, long present in Greek philosophy. He affirms that all knowledge is the product of the logos. For him, this Logos is not only the rational principle of the universe, but is also the pre-existent Christ of the Fourth Gospel. Combining these two traditions, Justin concludes that every knowledge is a gift of the Christ, including those truths which can be found in the Greek philosophers.

For Justin, the Old Testament refers to the New in two manners: by means of events that point to other events in the New Testament, and by means of prophecies that speak of that which becomes a reality in the New Testament. The first of these are "types," and the latter are "sayings."

Tatian

Tatian seems to have been converted to Christianity in Rome through the efforts of Justin, who was then teaching in the imperial city. After Justin's martyrdom (c. A.D. 165), Tatian founded his own teaching center. Some years later he left Rome

for Syria, where we are told that he founded a heretical school. After this, **Tatian** simply disappears from history.

In attacking Greek civilization, **Tatian** expounds on what he calls the "barbarian religion" of Christianity. It is clear that the center of his Christian theology is God and the Logos. This Logos springs from God in a manner similar to that in which from one light others may be lit, with no loss for the first.

Athenagoras

Athenagoras "the philosopher" was a contemporary of **Tatian**, although his spirit and style are very far from those of Justin's disciple. His attitude toward the relationship between philosophy and theology is similar to that of Justin. However, Athenagoras affirms that the great difference between the philosophers and the Christians is that the former followed the impulses of their own souls, whereas the latter follow the revelation of God.

Theophilus of Antioch

Theophilus, Bishop of Antioch, wrote his Three Books to Autolycus around the year 180 or slightly thereafter. His purpose is to persuade his friend Autolycus that Christianity is true. His work is neither as profound as that of Justin, nor as elegant as that of Athenagoras'. His knowledge of classical culture seems to have been rather superficial, and such is the case also with his defense of Christianity. Nevertheless, Theophilus is the first Christian author to use the term "Trinity."

Hermias

The Mockery of the Pagan Philosophers, written by Hermias, is usually included among the Greek Apologists of the second century. However, its date of composition is very doubtful, and some critics place it as late as the sixth century. His work is totally lacking in literary elegance, as well as in theological interest.

Melito of Sardis

Although his Apology has been lost, there is a homily of Melito that has survived. It differs from the Apologies in that philosophical concepts do not play a role in it. Instead, Melito summarizes the history of Israel, laying special emphasis on the Exodus and the paschal institution, and interpreting the totality of that history typologically, so that it refers to Jesus Christ.

THE EARLY HERESIES

Gnosticism

Gnosticism was characterized by a metaphysical dualism; a dualism of being rather than ethics. The **Gnostics** came to the conclusion that all matter is evil, or at best unreal. A human being is in reality an eternal spirit that somehow has been imprisoned in a body. Since the body is a prison to the spirit, and since it

misguides us as to our true nature, it is evil. Therefore, the Gnostic's main concern and final goal (ie. their salvation) is to escape from the body and this material world in which we are exiled.

In order to achieve such liberation, a spiritual messenger had to come to this world, to waken us from our "dream." This messenger brought the **gnosis**, the secret knowledge and inspiration necessary for salvation. According to the Gnostics, they possessed a special "inner spark", reserved for those with true understanding, which was necessary for a proper receipt of the gnosis.

What Christ had done, according to the Gnostic, was come to earth in order to remind us of our heavenly origin, and to give us the secret knowledge without which we cannot return to the spiritual mansion.

Most Christian Gnostics rejected the notion that Christ had a body like ours. The varying degrees of this notion all fall under what the rest of the Church called "docetism," meaning "to seem," for they implied, in one way or another, that the body of Jesus appeared to be fully human, but was in fact not.

Most Gnostics declared that, since the body is the prison of the spirit, one must control the body and its passions and thus weaken its power over the spirit. But there were also some who held that, since the spirit is by nature good and cannot be destroyed, what we are to do is leave the body to its own devices and let it follow the guidance of its own passions.

Valentinus, the most important second century Gnostic teacher, divided mankind into three classes:

Gnostics --those who have the "inner spark" of divine fullness within them;

Psychics (common Christians)--those without the spark, but who nevertheless recognized Christ as the Savior;

Hylics--those totally devoid of the spark and therefore unable to be redeemed.

In brief, the Gnostics denied several crucial Christian doctrines: Creation, Incarnation and Resurrection.

Marcionism

Since Marcion was convinced that the world is evil, he came to the conclusion that its creator must either be evil or ignorant. According to him, the God and Father of Jesus was not the same as Jehovah, the God of the Old Testament.

Jehovah, according to Marcion, was an arbitrary god, who chose a particular people above all the rest. He was also vindictive, constantly keeping an account on those that disobey him, and punishing them. In short, Jehovah was a god of justice.

Far above Jehovah is the Father of Christians. This God is not vindictive, but loving. This God requires nothing of us, but

rather gives everything freely, including salvation. This God does not seek to be obeyed, but to be loved. Jesus was not really born of Mary, since such a thing would have made him subject to Jehovah. Rather, he simply appeared as a grown man during the reign of Tiberius.

All this led Marcion to set the Hebrew Scriptures aside. He compiled a list of books that he considered true Christian Scriptures. These were the epistles of Paul--who, according to Marcion, was one of the few who had really understood Jesus' message--and the Gospel of Luke (severely edited).

Marcion posed an even greater threat to the church than did the Gnostics. He went beyond them in that he organized a church with its own bishops and its own scripture. Furthermore, Marcionism was characterized by fundamental Christian doctrine, specifically the Pauline distinction of Law and Gospel and the idea of salvation by grace through faith.

Montanism

Montanism maintained that the Holy Spirit--paraklete--had come upon its founding prophets: Montanus, Priscilla and Maximilla. For them, this revelation signified that the final work/dispensation of God had begun, and that the final days had come.

Montanism emphasized a continuing revelation. For Montanism, authority was prophetic. It was characterized by:

1. Visions and ecstasies (prophetic utterances)--prophets were dumb instruments of the divine, who spoke through them while they were entranced.
2. Strict ethic, in light of the belief that the end time was upon them. Ordered life accordingly, preparing for the final onslaught of evil through fasting, abstinence and martyrdom.

Montanism's greatest convert, through whom we have received the bulk of our information on the heresy, was (ironically) Tertullian, a staunch defender of orthodoxy.

EARLY CHURCH
Second Tri-Testarian Period

THE DEPOSIT OF THE FAITH

Response to Heresy: Canon, Creed, and Apostolic Succession

Out of the challenge posed by the early heresies already discussed 'arose the question of **authority**. The Gnostics found authority within themselves, in the form of an "inner spark." Montanus, on the other hand, designated a continuing prophetic revelation as authoritative.' Finally, **Marcion** found his authority in the Pauline corpus. To meet these challenges, the orthodox Church necessarily had to identify where its own authority was to be found.

Canon, from the Greek **kanon**, designates (in the theological arena) that listing of books considered as standard. Inclusion in the "canon," per se, was recognition that the truth was found within, with "truth" being that which traced back to the apostles,

There was no question within the orthodox community that the Hebrew Scriptures were to be included as part of the Christian canon. Christian faith is, and was identified as, the fulfillment of Israel's hope, and not a sudden apparition from heaven.

The Gospels were the first to attain general recognition as belonging to the "New Testament." The Church at large sought to show that its doctrines were not based on the supposed witness of a single apostle or Gospel, but on the consensus of the entire apostolic tradition. (A Harmony of the Gospels, called the Diatessaron, was developed by Tatian.)

Next to the Gospels, the book of Acts and the Pauline epistles enjoyed early recognition. It was in the second half of the fourth century that a complete consensus was achieved as to exactly which books ought to be included in the New Testament, and which ought not to be included.

Marcion had been the first to set forth a "canon", i.e. a list of books considered standard. The Muratorian Canon, on the other hand, was the first **such** list set forth within the orthodox community. It reveals the canonical list of the church in Rome c. 200. As compared to our New Testament, it . . .

lacked: Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter

added: Wisdom of Solomon, and Revelation of Peter

The first canonical list identical to ours appears in the 39th Paschal Letter of Athanasius in the year 367.

Creed Another element in the Church's response to heresies was what we now call the "Apostle's Creed." The truth is that its basic text was put together, probably in Rome, around the year 150.

One of the main uses of this "symbol," or creed, was in the

baptismal rite, in which it was presented to the candidate as a series of three questions, built around the Trinitarian formula.

The liturgical context of the Creed dictated a set form that also allowed for its use as a guide or rule of measure. It provided a concise summary of divine activities for the creation & salvation of the world.

The "Rule of Faith," by contrast, tended to be polemical, put forth in response to controversy. Fluid in its form, it manifested itself in response to specific questions about the Christian faith. Though it agreed in essential content with the Creed, the Rule of Faith, as it were, was not set in literary form anywhere. Rather, the "Rule" is the very Faith itself.

Apostolic Succession

Even the heretics agreed that the true message was the one which had been taught by Jesus, but over against Marcion and the Gnostics, the Church at large claimed to be in possession of the original gospel and true teachings of Jesus.

At this point, the notion of apostolic succession (first introduced by Clement) became very important. The orthodox Church of the second century could show its connection with the apostles (and thus to Christ Himself) in a way which Marcion and the Gnostics could not.

The issue was not that every local church could prove apostolic origins, but rather that each agreed on the one faith, and could jointly prove that this faith was indeed apostolic.

"Authority" in the Church is, ultimately, more than just that which is true. It is reflected in the communal life of the Church. It implies being intimately and organically bound up with the author or beginning of the Church, and in continuity with it. Doctrine was not an unconnected set of beliefs, but rather an expression of how what was believed impacted on reality.

THE TEACHERS OF THE CHURCH

Writers of the Church, by geographical location:

Asia Minor: Polycarp; Irenaeus
Alexandria: Clement; Origen
North Africa: Tertullian; Cyprian
Rome: Hippolytus; Novation

Irenaeus of Lyons

Irenaeus was the earliest theological leader of distinction in the debate with Marcion and the Gnostics. Regrettably, only two of his works survive: the Demonstration of Apostolic Faith, and

the Refutation of the So-Called Gnosis--also known as Against Heresies. In the first of these, he instructs his flock on some points of Christian doctrine. In the latter, he seeks to refute gnosticism. In both, his goal is to expound the faith that he has received from his teachers, without adorning it with his own speculations. In keeping with that spirit, Irenaeus was the first to develop an appeal to tradition (the rule of faith).

For Irenaeus, the entirety of history appears as the process whereby the Divine Shepherd leads creation to its final goal. That goal he identified as God's ultimate purpose that human beings would grow in communion with the divine, eventually surpassing even the angels.

Against the Gnostics, Irenaeus maintained only one God, He being the Creator spoken of in Scripture, and that salvation is not a correction but rather a fulfillment of creation. Humankind is to be instructed to this end by the "two hands" of this one God: the Logos/Son and the Holy Spirit.

As a result of sin, the human creature was expelled from paradise, and its growth was thwarted. From that point on, history has unfolded under the mark of sin.

However, the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ is not the result of sin. On the contrary, God's initial purpose included being united with humankind. In fact, the future incarnate Logos was the model that God followed in making humans after the divine image.

Israel served an important role in the drama of redemption, for it is in the history of the chosen people that the two "hands of God" continued their work, preparing humankind for communion with God.

Irenaeus' doctrine of Redemption is known as "Recapitulation," the capstone of which is that Christ, as the second Adam, brought man to completion.

Jesus is the "second Adam" because in his life, death, and resurrection a new humanity had been created. In all his action Jesus had corrected that which had been twisted because of sin. Those who are joined to Him in baptism, and nourished in His body through communion, are also participants in His victory. Jesus Christ is literally the Head of the Church, which is His body.

Clement of Alexandria

Clement was the first great Christian teacher of Alexandria, a converted professional intellectual who moved to Alexandria after being instructed in the faith. His goal was not so much to expound the traditional faith of the Church as to help those in quest of deeper truth, and to convince pagan intellectuals that Christianity was not the absurd superstition that some claimed it to be.

Clement was convinced that there is only one truth, and that therefore any truth to be found in Plato can be none other than

that truth which has been revealed in Jesus Christ and by the Scripture. According to him, philosophy was given to the Greeks just as the Law had been given to the Jews. Both had the purpose of leading to the ultimate truth, which had finally been revealed in Christ.

For Clement, the sacred text had more than one meaning. The literal sense, he felt, ought not to be set aside, but those who are content to remain with it are like children who are content with milk, and never grow to adulthood. Beyond the literal sense of the text there are other meanings that the truly wise must discover. Henceforth, the Alexandrian method of interpretation was dubbed "allegorical."

Clement maintained that reason builds its arguments on "first principles", which cannot be proven, but which are accepted by faith. For the truly wise, faith is the first principle, the starting point, on which reason is to build. Clement saw a saving change from heathenism to faith; then from faith on to knowledge; and finally, from knowledge to love.

For Clement, God was the "Ineffable One," about whom one can only speak in metaphors and in negative terms. This Ineffable One is revealed to us in the Word or Logos, from which the philosophers as well as the prophets had received whatever truth they knew and which had become incarnate in Jesus. Thus, the history of God with humankind is a process of education.

In contrast to Irenaeus, Clement saw Adam as a symbol of what happens in each of us individually, rather than as the head of mankind. God offers us faith, through the Word, which we in turn choose to accept or reject.

Origen of Alexandria

Born into a Christian family, Origen became the greatest and most influential Christian thinker of his age.

Clement's greatest disciple, Origen spent several years teaching catechumens. After leaving this task to some of his own best disciples, he devoted himself entirely to running a school of Christian philosophy that was very similar to those founded by the great classical philosophers. He was excommunicated by Bishop Demetrius after being ordained in Caesarea. In addition to other, personal concerns, Demetrius did not believe Origen was eligible for ordination since he had removed his sexual organs (in a literal response to a passage of Scripture).

Origen was convinced that the only way to wisdom was through prayerful and exacting study of the divine revelation of Scripture. In keeping with this spirit, he was really the first to establish the principle of sola scriptura.

He compiled the Hexapla, an edition of the Old Testament in six columns: the Hebrew text, a Greek transliteration of the Hebrew, the LXX, and three other Greek translations.

Origen was aware of the danger of abandoning Christian doctrine

in favor of the teachings of the philosophers, and thus declared that "nothing which is at variance with the tradition of the apostles and the Church is to be accepted as true." This included:

1. There is only one God, creator and ruler of the universe.
2. Jesus: Christ is the Son of God, begotten before all creation, and his incarnation is such that, while becoming human, he remained divine.
3. Tradition is not entirely clear as to the Holy Ghost, except in affirming that the Spirit's glory is no less than that of the Father and the Son.
4. At a future time the soul will be rewarded or punished, according to its life in this world, and there will be a final resurrection of the body, which will rise incorruptible.

Origen's Exegetical Principles:

1. In many places the strict, literal sense is absurd, or inconsistent with other passages.
2. Writings inspired by God must "superabound" in meaning,, so that even where the literal sense is meaningful in itself, much more is also meant.
3. Fundamental bearing of the spiritual sense is an understanding of man's relation to God in Christ.

Once these points have been affirmed, Origen feels free to rise in great speculative flights. As such, it is important to note that on many points Origen is more Platonic than Christian. Nevertheless, he is less enthusiastic about Hellenic philosophy and culture than either Clement or Justin.

According to Origen, the first creation was purely spiritual. God's purpose was that the spirits thus created would be devoted to the contemplation of the divine. However, some of the spirits strayed from that contemplation and fell. It was then that God made the second creation. This second creation was the material, which serves as only a shelter or temporary home for fallen spirits.

This implied that all human souls existed as pure spirits before being born into the world, and that the reason we are here is that we have sinned in that prior, purely spiritual existence.

In the present world, the Devil and his demons have us captive, and therefore Jesus Christ has come to break the power of Satan and to show us the path we are to follow in returning to our spiritual home. In the end, even Satan will be saved, and the entire creation will return to its original state. There is nothing to guarantee that there will not be a new fall, a new material world, and a new history.

Origen's doctrine of Redemption is known as **Apokatastasis--the**

"Restoration of all things."

Tertullian of Carthage

Tertullian was the first Christian theologian to write in Latin, which was the language of the western half of the Empire, and thus he may be considered the founder of Western theology.

The treatise where Tertullian's legal mind shines is Prescription Against the Heretics, in which his aim is to show, not simply that the heretics are wrong, but rather that they do not even have the right to dispute with the Church. To this end, he claims that Scriptures belong to the Church.

His legal mind leads him to affirm that, once one has found the truth of Christianity, one should abandon any further search for truth.

Around the year 207, this staunch enemy of heresy and untiring advocate of the authority of the Church, joined the Montanist movement. Tertullian seems to have been attracted by Montanist rigorism. The rest of the Church, on the other hand, opposed Montanist preaching because of its claim that with them (rather than with the Christ) the last age of history had dawned.

Even after he became a Montanist, Tertullian continued his campaign against doctrinal error. Probably the most significant of his written works during this period is his brief treatise Against Praxeas, in which he coined formulas that would be of great importance to later Trinitarian and Christological debates.

According to **Praxeas**, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost were simply three modes in which God appeared, so that God was sometimes Father, sometimes Son, and sometimes Holy Ghost. This is what has been called "**patripassianism**" (the doctrine that the Father suffered the passion) or "**modalism**" (the doctrine that the various persons of the Trinity are "modes" in which God appears).

Tertullian explains how the Trinity is to be understood. He proposes the formula "one substance and three persons." Likewise, when discussing how Jesus Christ can be both human and divine, he speaks of "one person" and "two substances" or "natures," the divine and the human.

Tertullian's "**Traducianism**," which maintained that the soul is transmitted from parents to children, formed the basis for the doctrine of original sin.

PERSECUTION IN THE THIRD CENTURY

Persecution under Septimius Severus

Early in the third century, Emperor **Septimius Severus** proposed to bring all of his subjects under the worship of Sol **invictus**--the Unconquered Sun--and to subsume under that worship all the various religions and philosophies then current.

Two groups refused to yield to syncretism: the Jews and the Christians. Semptimus Severus then decided to stop the spread of these two religions, and thus outlawed, under penalty of death, all conversions to Christianity or to Judaism.

The first universal persecution of the Christians, however, was instituted by the Emperor Decius.

under Decius

Decius was simply a Roman of the old style, whose main goal was to restore Rome to her ancient glory. There were several factors contributing to the eclipse of that glory, but to a traditional Roman such as Decius, it seemed obvious that one of the reasons for all this was that the people had abandoned the ancient gods.

As such, Decius' religious policy did not consist of rumors about Christian immorality, nor of punishing the obstinacy of those who refused to worship the emperor. It was rather an entire religious campaign for the restoration of ancestral religion.

It is clear that what he ordered was not that Christians as such ought to be persecuted, but rather that the worship of the gods was now mandatory throughout the Empire. Those who complied would be given a certificate attesting to that fact. Those who did not have such a certificate would then be considered outlaws.

Some Christians ran to obey the imperial command. Others stood firm for a while, but when brought before the imperial authorities offered the required sacrifice to the gods. Still others obtained fraudulent certificates without actually worshipping the gods. Yet, there were a significant number of Christians who resolved to stand firm and refused to obey the edict.

Due to the policies established by Decius, there were now those who remained firm in their faith, even in the middle of cruel torture, but who never received the crown of martyrdom. Those who had confessed the faith in such circumstances were given the title of "confessors," and were highly respected by other Christians.

The Emperor Diocletian later began what would be the last major persecution of the Church.

The Question of the Lapsed: Cyprian and Novatian

In short, the great question before the Church was what to do about the "lapsed"--those who, in one way or another, had weakened during the persecution.

Given the great prestige of the confessors, some thought that they were the ones with authority to determine who among the lapsed ought to be restored to the communion of the Church, and how. Some confessors, particularly in North Africa, claimed to have that authority and began restoring some of the lapsed.

Cyprian, who had been a teacher of rhetoric and a careful student of Tertullian, became a bishop shortly before the persecution. He felt that his duty was to flee to a secure place with other leaders of the Church, and continue guiding the flock through an extensive correspondence. His authority was questioned because of this, and there were many who claimed that the confessors of Carthage, who had suffered for their faith, had more authority than he did, particularly when it came to the question of the restoration of the lapsed.

Cyprian then called a synod--that is, a gathering of the bishops of the region (College of Bishops)--which decided that those who had purchased or otherwise obtained certificates without actually having sacrificed would be immediately readmitted to the communion of the Church. Those who had sacrificed would only be readmitted on their deathbeds. Those who had sacrificed and showed no repentance would never be readmitted. All these actions were to be taken by the bishops, and not by the confessors.

The main reason behind Cyprian's insistence on the need to regulate the readmission of the lapsed into the communion of the Church was his own understanding of the Church. The Church is the body of Christ, and will share in the victory of its Head. Therefore, "outside the Church there is no salvation," and "no one can have God as Father who does not have the Church as Mother."

Cyprian maintained that the Church was founded upon the Apostles, whom Christ Himself had commissioned, and therein lay the Church's identity, holiness and unity. Christ had initially given Peter alone the Office of Authority, and then afterwards equally to all the disciples, to demonstrate the unity of the Church as emanating from a single source or point of reference.

The Office of Bishop is essentially a Petrine office, and therefore each Bishop is equally representative of Peter and possesses equally the authority given.

Bishops are placed into office (regardless of what human process is employed) by Divine judgement. Because he is God's choice, the Bishop is God's man, to whom God had given the duty of distributing the Means of Grace. Each Bishop, in his own place, fully stands in the stead of Christ--as such, no bishop is higher than another.

The "Catholic" Church was not seen in contradistinction to the local church. The local church, rather, is the Church in all its fullness (Catholicity)--all that pertains to divine life is present.

Cyprian had been influenced by Tertullian's rigorism, and he revolted at the idea of restoring the lapsed too easily. The Church was to be a community of saints, and the idolaters and apostates had no place in it.

The third century dispute over Baptism was primarily between

Cyprian and Bishop Stephen of Rome. Stephen urged that rightly administered Baptism, even when done by heretics, was valid. Cyprian did not recognize any Baptism apart from the Church and thus advocated (re-)baptism for those who had been heretics.

Early in the third century, Hippolytus, a Roman presbyter, engaged in controversy with Bishop Callistus of Rome, whom he accused both of being taken in by the monarchians and of relaxing the rigor of the moral standards exacted of Christians at Rome. In the end, Hippolytus set up a schismatic community at Rome, so alienated was he by the success and the teachings of Callistus.

Hippolytus reports that Bishop Callistus claimed the authority to remit sins (no doubt after penance) of the flesh and apparently even mortal sins. Callistus seems to have argued that the Lord's command to let wheat and tares "grow together until the harvest" meant that the Church had a place in it even for sinners, a view which portended a fundamental alteration in the Church's picture of itself.

Hippolytus (and Tertullian) saw the Church as the society of the redeemed, where serious sin could not be tolerated. Callistus' argument suggested that it was rather a mixed society, whose aim was precisely to bring sinners to salvation.

Novatian, a later presbyter in Rome, was more rigorous even than Cyprian. He clashed with the Bishop of Rome, Cornelius, because in his opinion the lapsed were being readmitted too easily. He led a rigorist schism in the conviction (like unto Hippolytus') that a church that restored apostates betrayed its own nature and calling. As in so many cases, the issue was whether purity or forgiving love should be the characteristic note of the Church.

EARLY CHURCH
Third Tri-Testarian Period

INTRODUCTION

Since God's highest will for the world is in Christ Jesus, **doctrine** is that which elucidates the fundamental Christian affirmation that **God was in Christ saving the world**. In other words, doctrine is that which must be said about God, Christ, mankind, etc. so that the **gospel of salvation** in Christ Jesus is guaranteed, made certain, protected from aberrations, and seen to be sure and efficacious.

Doctrine is not a private matter; but rather, since it expresses the **divine reality** into which all 'Christians by grace have been brought, all doctrine is **universal** and has always been believed; has everywhere been believed; has by all Christians been believed.

Doctrinal development, then, is not the addition of truths but the increasing elucidation of the one Truth. With this in mind, the following doctrines are considered as that which the Church, out of its concern for the Gospel, found that it must say, teach and confess.

THEOLOGY (Talk of God)
Doctrine of the Trinity in the Early Church

Requirements to be found in description of God:

- Unity
- Distinction
- Equality
- Personal

Early Problem

The Church had moved from its existence within a basic Jewish arena of absolute monotheism (as expressed in the ancient **Shema**), which rebelled at the idea of "divisions" in the Divinity, to the arena of Greco-Roman thought, which gladly accepted various divinities of differing degrees.

The Church was thus faced with the challenge of maintaining that the Godhead was simple (undivideable), while **conversly** asserting that God, in Himself, emits a certain number of equal distinctions, each being personal.

Justin Martyr's attempt to do this became known as Logos Theology, in which the expressions "Son of God" and "Christ" denoted a mediatorial figure who was another God alongside the sole-unbegotten Father. For Justin, this was a distinction of number rather than will, as in one torch lit from another. In order to avoid dualism, he asserted that the Son was not co-eternal with the Father. Instead, the generation of the Logos took place only with a view to the world's creation.

Justin's Logos Theology bothered many who felt that it not only compromised divine unity, but also tended toward subordinationism.

Monarchianism

Toward the end of the Second Century, a coalescence of theological thought opposed to Justin's Logos Theology came into being. Known generally as Monarchianism, this movement expressed itself in two successive, waves, representing significantly different points of view.

Dynamic Monarchianism (Adoptionism) attempted to preserve UNITY by claiming that Christ was an impersonal power proceeding from God.

Originating with Theodotus (the Banker and/or Tanner), Adoptionism maintained that God is one, undesignated deity who chose Jesus (the man) as a receptacle into which He poured His divine, impersonal power. Jesus is said to have become the Christ at his baptism, and adopted into the divine status when God vindicated him from the dead--God by grace but not by nature.

Paul of Samosata the Bishop of Antioch, was the greatest exponent of Adoptionism. He stressed the UNITY of God and explained the incarnation as an instance of the divine Logos' indwelling of a human person. His view, which was more sophisticated than earlier forms, denied that Jesus earned divine favor by virtue of his merits. Rather, God predestined Jesus to become the Christ, which he became upon conception.

Modalism (Sabellianism) was a much more powerful influence than dynamic monarchianism, which had failed to give God any contact with the world. To meet this need, Modalism asserted both the UNITY of God and the deity of Christ (EQUALITY).

Modalism first appeared toward the end of the Second Century in the person of Noëtus, who proposed that God was (successively) Father in creating, Son in the incarnation (and Holy Spirit in His activities within the Church). For him, God worked in a trinitarian fashion, but was not, in Himself, a Trinity.

Noëtus' views came to Rome, presumably by way of Praxeas, who (according to Tertullian's treatise) "crucified the Father" by saying that the Father became the Son. This form of modalism is known as Patripassianism.

Sabellius disregarded the idea of a simple succession, in light of the presence of all three "persons" in various Scriptural accounts. He maintained that God is undifferentiated in Himself, but sometimes acts/appears as Father; sometimes as Father and Son; and sometimes as Father, Son and Spirit.

Arianism

The Arian controversy began with Arius, around the year 318, in Alexandria, where Arius had been a presbyter of a suburban parish.

Arius proposed that the Logos was a creature, called into being by God out of nonexistence, subject to change and capable of vice or virtue. It was through this created Logos that the world was created, and it was the created Logos who became incarnated in Jesus Christ. He found support for these ideas in Eusebius, Bishop of Nicomedia.

He was opposed by Alexander, Bishop of Alexandria, who echoed Origen without relying on his ideas of subordinationism.

Both Arius and Alexander questioned the traditional hierarchical scheme, which bridged the gap between an immutable God and a mutable creation by appealing to the Logos as a "half-way" point. For this reason, the Bishops of the East rejected the views expressed by both men and reaffirmed the traditional standpoint.

When the controversy became widespread in the East, Constantine called for a Council of Bishops from throughout the Empire to convene at Nicea.

Council of Nicaea (325)

The Proceedings of the First Ecumenical Council:

- Condemnation of Arianism through the formulation of the "Nicene Formula" as, a test of orthodoxy

- Attempt to heal the Meletian Schism in Egypt

- Discussion of when Easter should be celebrated

- Establishment of Canons concerning ecclesiastical discipline and organization

Working from the basic text of a baptismal creed (or at least with a similar format in mind), the Council composed a formula which attempted to denounce Arianism without excluding the traditional view. It ended with a short series of anathemas which directly condemned the basic Arian propositions.

Excluded absolutely was the idea that the Logos is a creature. He is truly the eternally-generated "Son" of God, of the same order of being as God.

Significant Expressions from the Nicene Formula:

- "very God from very God"** - affirmed that the Son was God by nature and not simply by adoption into divinity

- "begotten not made"** - made "begotten" a theological term, as much a characteristic of the Godhead (in the Son) as "unbegotten" (in the Father).

- "of the essence (ousia) of the Father"** - the Son shares equally in the divinity of the Godhead, whose unity is found in the Father

"being of one essence (homoousios) with the Father" - the Son was co-eternal with the Father and therefore had no beginning

HISTORICAL INTERLUDE

Sometime after the Council, Eusebius of Nicomedia (who continued to support Arianism covertly) was called as Bishop of the imperial capital and soon became Constantine's ecclesiastical advisor. From that vantage he managed to have deposed the strongest enemies of Eastern Subordinationism. This included Athanasius, who had succeeded Alexander as Bishop of Alexandria.

After Constantine's death the Empire was divided between his three sons: Constantine II, Constantius II and Constans. After Constantine II succumbed to Constans the latter dominated the greater part of Rome's rule.

The first focus of controversy was the standing of Athanasius and Marcellus, whom the eastern leaders had deposed. The new emperors allowed Athanasius to return to Alexandria, but Eusebius made it impossible for him to stay.

Athanasius fled to Rome, where he was joined by Marcellus. Together they enjoined the support of Bishop Julius in appealing to Constans, who declared their depositions to be unjust.

The eastern bishops, who suspected Athanasius and Marcellus of monarchianism, presented a confession (against such a view) to Constans. Because the attitude of the Greek churches threatened to destroy the unity of the Empire, a compromise was reached in which Athanasius was reinstated as Bishop and the case of Marcellus was abandoned.

After Constans' death, Constantius II gained control of the entire Empire. Athanasius was once again deposed, along with those western bishops who supported him. From exile, Athanasius continued to support the Nicene Formula, convinced that the eastern notion of Christ as a "half-way" house was unacceptable. Needed was a way to combine the eastern insistence upon three "hypostases" with the Nicene language of "one substance."

Constantius II was succeeded by Julian (his cousin), known as "the Apostate." Julian, who wanted to bring about reform and revival of pagan religion, took steps to limit the influence of Christians and to discourage Christian customs. The effect of this was that theology became dissociated from politics and began to be discussed for its own sake once again.

Athanasius

Constantly seeking the religious significance of every doctrinal issue, Athanasius determined truth or falsehood on the basis of the degree and manner to which it expressed the principles of Christian religion, which he saw as:

Monotheism, and

The Doctrine of Salvation.

Athanasius was convinced that the Savior had to be God. There was, therefore, no alternative left but to affirm that the Logos was God in the strictest sense. Thus, Christ is of the same nature as' the Father and equally divine.

Since the Church had always worshipped and adored Jesus the Christ, Arius' position that He was not truly God was, in effect, to say that the Church was practicing idolatry. On the other hand, if Christ was duly worshipped as God, but was not equally divine **with** the Father, then Arius was suggesting polytheism.

Athanasius affirmed both Son and Spirit as being of the same substance as the Father, but without a fixed terminology he was unable to **adequately** express the multiplicity that existed within the unity of the Trinity. He took steps to reconcile the Greek and Latin views by declaring that the eastern idea of "three hypostases" did not intend to mean three gods, but that neither did the western idea of "**homoousios**" deny the distinction of Father, Logos and Spirit.

The Cappadocian Fathers

By the time of Athanasius' death in 373, the struggle against Arianism had passed into the hands of the "new **Nicene**" party, led by Basil the Great and Meletius of Antioch. Basil, along with his brother Gregory of Nyssa, and his close friend Gregory of Nazianzus, became known as the Cappadocian Fathers.

As Bishop of Caesarea, Basil worked to reconcile West and East, "old" and "new" **Nicenes**, in the struggle with Arianism. He also confronted two new theological problems: Pneumatomachi and Anomoeans, both of which denied the divinity of the Holy Spirit.

Assisting Basil was his close friend, Gregory of Nazianzus, an orator of great distinction and an imaginative and discerning theologian, whose greatest permanent contribution is the body of thoughtful and eloquent sermons which he left behind.

Basil's younger brother, Gregory of Nyssa, possessed the most theological depth and penetration of the three. Most of his work came after Basil's death, when he took up the pen in defense of his brother's teaching.

The Cappadocians argued that each of the three hypostases instantiates a single, identical Deity; three distinct ways in which the same being exists. Each one is involved, albeit in distinguishable ways, in every divine action. What sets them apart is the way in which they relate to each other--as Source, Offspring and Procession, respectively, of the same Deity.

Council of Constantinople (381)

The Proceedings of the Second Ecumenical Council:

Settlement of the Arianism controversy through reaffirmation of the Nicene language in a new formula,

which included defense of the Spirit's divinity (known as the Nicene Creed)

Condemnation of Macedonianism

Condemnation of Appollinarianism

Attempt to heal Antiochene schism

Establishment of Canons which grouped provinces into dioceses and placed Constantinople next after Rome in order of precedence

AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

Raised in the Christian Faith. by his mother, Augustine nevertheless meandered in his views during the first part of his adult life. He spent some time as a Manichaean, and persistently sought explanations within Neo-Platonism.

Augustine eventually completed his catechumen, after being convicted through the preaching of Ambrose, and was finally baptized into the Catholic faith. Not long after, he was reluctantly made into a presbyter and finally Bishop of Hippo in North Africa.

As a bishop, Augustine's views became less philosophical and more pastoral, which, turned his attention increasingly to the Scriptures and their exposition, and to the practical problems of the the churches in North Africa.

The first such problem with which he dealt was the growing Donatist movement, which was flourishing in North Africa. Augustine regarded the Donatist body as being "church," but considered their hostility toward the Catholic Church as preventing the fruition of their faith. His efforts, therefore, were directed toward reconciling as many Donatists as possible to the universal Church.

After 411, Augustine's attentions turned from Donatism to the completion of his treatise On the Trinity.

Augustine accepted Trinitarian doctrine as a matter of faith: therefore, his treatise is not a proof so much as an affirmation. His idea was that God is known and experienced most certainly in the act of love, of which God is the Source, the Object and the Power. After reading the works of the Cappadocian Fathers, Augustine further developed the idea that "Father," "Son," and "Spirit" are names not of different beings but of relations.

Working from man as created in God's image, Augustine went on to describe the Trinity in terms of the relationship of memory, understanding, and will within a person

Augustine's understanding of the Spirit as being the love between the Father and the Son, prompted him to speak of the Spirit as proceeding from "the Father and the Son," which eventually led to the inclusion of the famous **filioque** in the Nicene Creed.

With the fall of Rome to the Visigoths, many who had believed that a **Christian** Empire could not fall began to have doubts and suggested a return to the old pagan gods. Augustine turns his attention to this problem in his treatise "On the City of God," in which he argues that God's true kingdom exists outside of history and no earthly government--regardless of how pious it might be--could ever be eternal. All earthly governments, he said, **are** the products of a falsely directed love of self. Nevertheless, even in such "cities of men," Christians have the right and obligation to cooperate in effecting, so far as possible, the relative peace and order which a self-seeking and competitive love can contrive.

It was, however, against the Pelagians that Augustine wrote his most important theological works.

Pelagius a British ascetic, took up residence in Rome around 390. His message called for strict standards of moral perfection for all Christians, and he asserted that it was their obligation to achieve perfection by keeping all the commandments of God. He maintained that Adam's fall did not effect his descendants, so that at birth each man has the free choice to do good or to do evil.

In refuting the'se' views, Augustine asserted that salvation depended entirely upon the grace of God in Christ. Augustine firmly believed that Adam's fall had placed all of his descendants under the bondage of sin. He regarded this sinful condition, which he said existed even in infancy, as a misdirected and disoriented love.

In writing against Pelagianism, Augustine also developed a strong doctrine of **predestination**, according to which it is God's choice and action, taken without regard for human merit foreseen, which at once starts people on the road to salvation and enables them to persevere in it.

CHRISTOLOGY

Doctrine of the Person of Christ in the Early Church

Options In The East

Antiochene vs. Alexandrian Schools of Thought

Both Agreed:

That the Logos was the real subject of everything which the Christ did and suffered, and

That the humanity belonging to God's Logos in the incarnation was "body."

The Antiochenes stood in a tradition which stressed Christ's role as "Second Adam," whose human obedience had a central place in the work of salvation. Even more important, as defenders of Nicene dogma, they rejected any notion that the divine Son could bear human characteristics or -limitations. Their intention was to retain integrity of the divine in Jesus (immutability) and of

the human in Jesus (growth in obedience); thus, **distinction** between the natures is emphasized.

Diodore of Tarsus spoke of the Christ as a union of Logos with flesh, but insisted on a clear distinction between the two. For Diodore, flesh and Logos did not compose one single "thing," but each remained distinct, however intimately united.

Theodore of Mopsuestia a student of Diodore, fully developed the **Antiochene** position, emphasizing the old image of indwelling. The Christ was one person with two natures, one being human and the other God's Logos, which indwelt the man from the moment of conception.

Maintained that the divine Son of God dwelt in the man Jesus of Nazareth, guiding him in perpetual obedience to God's will.

Nestorius fully embraced Theodore's teaching. While Bishop of Constantinople, he brought condemnation upon himself by insisting that Mary could rightly be called "**the** bearer of Christ," but not "**the** bearer of God," as had been tradition.

Central to the **Alexandrian** tradition was that the redemption of mankind required a nonmediated presence of God with and for humanity, through which the creature might come to participate in divine life. Their intention was to ensure indivisibility of Logos and flesh so that in Christ salvation is eternal; thus, **unity** of Christ is emphasized.

(cf. Athanasius above)

Apollinaris of Laodicea was the first thinker of his era to develop a systematic Christology. Driven by a desire to affirm that in Christ, the divine Son is immediately present to transform and divinize the sinful mortality of the human creature.

Unfortunately, Apollinaris looked upon the divine Logos as substituting for the usual human spirit or intellect (as even Athanasius seems to have taken for granted), which view was attacked by the Cappadocians and later condemned, both by a Roman Synod and an Antiochene Synod.

Cyril of Alexandria took up the Christological cause in reaction against Nestorius. His doctrine, therefore (which inadvertently borrowed from Apollinaris), stressed the unity over against distinction. In Christ Jesus, he said, the divine Logos took on "flesh" (an impersonal humanity).

Cyril maintained that in Christ there is one subject--that of the divine Logos. The humanity of Christ, both body and soul, was a mode of existence which the Logos had made his own through his birth of a woman. He summed this up as "union in **hypostasis**," or "natural union."

Cyril emphasized unity to such an extent that it became difficult for him to show in what sense the Savior was truly human. He

agreed that Christ had a human soul, but considered it to be so absorbed by the divine as to be inconsequential.

Eutyches asserted that there were "two natures before the union," but only one afterwards. This because, in opposing Nestorianism, he wanted to emphasize unity over distinction, but in doing so lost entirely the distinction. He maintained that after the incarnation the human and divine natures were **so mixed** as to form one nature (divine).

Council of Ephesus (431)

The Proceedings of the Third Ecumenical Council:

Condemnation of Nestorianism ,

Condemnation of Pelagianism

Liberation of Cyprus from Antioch

After the Council of Ephesus, a tentative truce existed between the Antiochene and Alexandrian Schools, largely because Cyril, once satisfied that Nestorius was finished, relaxed his position enough to compromise with the Antiochenes.

The conflict rose again after Cyril's death, when his successor, Dioscorus, rigorously attacked Flavian of Antioch. He maneuvered to have Eutyches deposed, thinking that he would be able to gain Rome's help in "vindicating" the Alexandrian thinker (who really had gone too far). Rome was brought into the picture when both Flavian and Eutyches wrote to Pope Leo I regarding the matter, but to Dioscorus' surprise the Latin church sided with Antioch.

Western Christology

Leo I, Bishop of Rome responded to the appeals from Flavian and Eutyches with a letter known as the "Tome." In it he states that Christ has two substances or natures and that "the characteristic properties of both are kept intact and come together in one person." Furthermore, each of these natures "carries on its proper activities in communion with the other. The Logos does what belongs to it and the flesh carries out what belongs to it. His answer basically developed the Trinitarian concepts that Tertullian had long ago set forth.

Council of Chalcedon (451)

The Proceedings of the Fourth Ecumenical Council:

Condemnation and Deposition of Dioscorus

Re-affirmation of the Nicene Formula and the Nicene Creed from Constantinople

Approval of Leo's "Tome" as dogma

Formulation of the "Definition of Faith," a statement of the Catholic doctrine of 'One Christ in Two Natures,' which was largely based on Leo's "Tome" and letters Cyril had written against Nestorius; ruled out Apollinarianism, Nestorianism and Eutychianism (cf.

below)

Establishment of Canons defining the jurisdiction of Constantinople's bishop and dividing the Empire into five Patriarchates--Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem

Within the "Definition of Faith," statements of distinction were directed against Eutyches, while statements of unity were directed against Nestorius, as follows:

"Of reasonable soul and human body consisting" -	
	against Apollinaris
"consubstantial with the Father as touching his Godhead" -	
	against Eutyches
"consubstantial with us as touching his manhood" -	
	against Eutyches
"the Mother of God according to his manhood" -	
	against Nestorius
"unconfusedly" -	
	against Eutyches
" immutably " -	
	against Eutyches
"indivisibly" -	
	against Nestorius
"inseparably united" -	
	against Nestorius
"without the distinction of natures being taken away by such union" -	
	against Eutyches
"not separated or divided into two persons" -	
	against Nestorius

Sola Deo Gloria