

**Teachings And  
Practices From  
AD 100 to AD  
1500**

# Teachings And Practices From AD 100 to AD 1500

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## Introduction

Many non-Biblical teachings, practices and interpretations have their roots in practices of the mystical and mythological religions and were introduced around 100 A.D. This study identifies some of these early teachings and interpretations. Perhaps you have observed variations of some of them in practice today.

## NOTE:

1. If Christians are not diligent in their study of the Bible but relying upon their preachers to do their interpreting for them, they may believe things that sound right but are only partially true.
2. In one generation error can creep into practices and beliefs
3. Quoting a 'church fathers' personal opinion about a Biblical truth to prove one's own belief is not the same as quoting the Bible.
4. No one has a perfect understanding of God's message even though they are willing to die for their belief.
5. Each and every Christian must study their Bible, challenge their belief or understanding and be willing to go where God's message takes them.
6. Many current day beliefs, opinions or doctrines have roots in some teaching of "church fathers." Many of whom did not shed all their Pagan or Gnostic beliefs. In fact, some studied in great detail the writings of earlier "church fathers" e.g., Ignatius of Antioch, Polycarp of Smyrna and Augustine (perhaps more than the writings of the apostles) in forming their beliefs.

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## Chapter 1

### First Centuries

God created man in His likeness, probably meaning His nature; which is love, truth, kindness, merciful, peaceful, meek, humble, just, holy and forgiving. Following his creation man lived in Eden, a paradise created for him, and among God's other creations without sin a harmonious relationship with God. We are all too familiar with their sin of disobedience and its consequences. They were driven out of paradise and separated from God. (Genesis 1-3)

Man would stay in this separated state until a redeemer provided an opportunity for him to be forgiven and reconciled to God. God did not forsake or abandon man for we see in Genesis 4 [after Adam and Eve were driven from Eden] that both Cain and Able presented offerings (tributes, gifts, presents) to God. Abel's offering was acceptable to God while Cain's was not. God even talked to the giver of the unacceptable offering.

As the years passed sin became more widespread "And Jehovah saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented Jehovah (regretted –ESV, the Lord was sorry-RSV, grieved-NIV) that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart." (Genesis 6:5-6 ASV)

However, "Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation; Noah walked with God." (Genesis 6:9-10 RSV) A few years after Noah's death, Abraham was born. The Hebrew writer states "By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. ... For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God." (Hebrews 11:8-10 ESV) While in Canaan, the area his descendants would eventually receive as an inheritance, "The angel (messenger – GWT) of the Lord called to Abraham from heaven a second time and said, "I swear by myself, declares the Lord, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring [offspring is singular meaning one] all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me." (Genesis 22:15-18) The apostle Paul referring back to this promise stated "Consider Abraham: 'He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.' Understand, then, that those who believe [put trust in God and obey] are children of Abraham. The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith [in the gospel], and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: 'All nations will be blessed through you [by the gospel].' So those who have faith [action based upon one's belief] are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith." (Galatians 3:6-9)

"The time is coming,' declares the Lord, 'when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers [covenant given by God through Moses] when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt ... 'This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time,' declares the Lord. 'I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts [not dead as tablets of stone but in the intellect, mind or heart of a living being]. I will be their God, and they will be my people.' ... 'For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more'" (Jeremiah 31:31-34).  
**Forgiveness - what an enormous difference between the two covenants.**

We can see the foundation being laid for the fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy in Peter's response to the question Jesus ask those closest to him, his apostles. Who do YOU say I am?

## Christ's Church

Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." ... Jesus stated "on this rock [the fact **that Jesus was the Son of the living God**] I will build my church" [gather unto myself an assembly, a body or group of obedient, trusting and faithful followers]. (Matthew 16:16-18)

After His betrayal and either during or following His last Passover, Jesus, as a testator, put His apostles into His kingdom. "You are those who have stood by me in my trials. And I **confer on you a kingdom** [*diatitheemi*: NT: Strong's #1303 to place separately, dispose, arrange, appoint, dispose of, one's own affairs or, of something that belongs to one by testator], just as my Father conferred one on me, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." (Luke 22:28-30)

A short time, just over 50 days, later Peter and the other apostles stated, "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ [messiah]." When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" Peter replied, "Repent <sup>1</sup> and be baptized [the Greek word *baptizo* (immersed), rather than *rantizo* (sprinkle), *cheo* (pouring) or *pros-chusis* (affusion), is used. Therefore, "baptized" means immersion], every one of you, in the name <sup>1</sup> of Jesus Christ [by the authority] for the forgiveness [remission, cleansing] of your sins [just as Jeremiah prophesied]. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children [Jews] and for all who are far off [Gentiles] — for all whom the Lord our God will call [through Christ's gospel]." With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt [wicked] generation." Those who accepted his message were baptized (immersed CJB), and about three thousand were added to their number that day. (Acts 2:36-41)

So, these approximately three thousand who "accepted the message and were baptized" were added to those on whom Jesus conferred a kingdom to - those who stood by Him during His trials. Thus, we see a growing kingdom, a church. [refer to Acts 2:27-30]

The missionary activity of the Apostles, including Paul of Tarsus, spread Christianity to cities throughout the Hellenistic [Greek] world, such as Alexandria and Antioch, and also to Rome and even beyond the Roman Empire. Christians continued to revere the Hebrew Scriptures, using the Septuagint translation that was in general use among Greek speakers, or the Targums, with some of their own writings added to it, were used among Aramaic speakers.

The glory and victory of Christianity and its rapid spread gave rise to fear and envy among the Jewish leaders. They began to pursue the Christians, to arouse the simple Jewish people against them and to accuse them to the Roman authorities resulting in persecution.

The Jews seized Christians, threw them into prisons, and killed them. The first one to suffer at the hands of the Jews in Jerusalem was Stephen. He was the first among all tortured for preaching about the Savior. The Jews cast him outside the city and began to stone him to death. He prayed

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<sup>1</sup> Refer to [thebiblewayonline.com](http://thebiblewayonline.com) study [In Jesus Name](#)

saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit,"<sup>2</sup> and then with the words, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them," he died.

By killing Stephen and many others of the faithful, the Jews were still not able to weaken faith in Christ. On the contrary, by doing this, they greatly kindled its spread among the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Because of the persecution, Christians dispersed into Judea, Samaria, and other countries; and everywhere they went, they preached about the Lord Savior and His teaching. No power in the world could stop the victorious spread of Christianity, for faith in Christ is the true faith. The teaching of Christ is divine teaching. Life according to the faith and teaching of Christ is a truly holy life, the Kingdom of God. The Heavenly Father strengthened the faithful, the Savior

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<sup>1</sup> Not a mere feeling; it has not the uncertainty of moods and sentiments. It is not a simple change in the weather of the soul. It is a distinct alteration of the focus of the intelligence; it carries with it a movement of the will; in short, it is a revolution in the very ground of the man's being" (*The Pulpit Commentary*, vol. 18, p. 66 quoted in REFLECTIONS #515 Al Maxey, January 3, 2012)

was with them, and they were comforted by the Holy Spirit, the Comforter. See Acts of the Apostles 6; 7; 8:1-2, 4. [orthodoxphotos.com/readings/LG/persecution.shtml](http://orthodoxphotos.com/readings/LG/persecution.shtml)

“A great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem and Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison.” (Acts 8:3)

“It was about this time that King Herod arrested some who belonged to the church, intending to persecute them. He had James, the brother of John, put to death with the sword. When he saw that this pleased the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also. This happened during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. After arresting him, he put him in prison, handing him over to be guarded by four squads of four soldiers each. Herod intended to bring him out for public trial after the Passover.” (Acts 12:1-4 NIV)

In Lystra some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowd over. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, thinking he was dead. (Acts 14:19)

In Philippi “when the owners of the slave girl realized that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities. They brought them before the magistrates and said, "These men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice." The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten. After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. Upon receiving such orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.” (Acts 16:19-24)

In Thessalonica “some of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and not a few prominent women. But the Jews were jealous; so, they

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<sup>2</sup> Refer to [thebiblewayonline.com](http://thebiblewayonline.com) study [Body, Soul, and Spirit – Where Do They Go When You Die?](#)

rounded up some bad characters from the marketplace, formed a mob and started a riot in the city. They rushed to Jason's house in search of Paul and Silas in order to bring them out to the crowd. But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some other brothers before the city officials, shouting: 'These men who have caused trouble all over the world have now come here, and Jason has welcomed them into his house. They are all defying Caesar's decrees, saying that there is another king, one called Jesus.' When they heard this, the crowd and the city officials were thrown into turmoil. Then they made Jason and the others post bond and let them go." (Acts 17:49)

"There arose a great disturbance in Ephesus about the Way. A silversmith named Demetrius, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought in no little business for the craftsmen. He called them together, along with the workmen in related trades, and said: "Men, you know we receive a good income from this business. And you see and hear how this fellow Paul has convinced and led astray large numbers of people here in Ephesus and in practically the whole province of Asia. He says that man-made gods are no gods at all. There is danger not only that our trade will lose its good name, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be discredited, and the goddess herself, who is worshiped throughout the province of Asia and the world, will be robbed of her divine majesty." When they heard this, they were furious and began shouting: "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" Soon the whole city was in an uproar. The people seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's traveling companions from Macedonia, and rushed as one man into the theater." (Acts 19:23-29)

Paul returned to Jerusalem, gave a report to the leaders of the Jerusalem church and prepared to go to the Temple. When the seven days [the time required for purification] were nearly over, some Jews from the province of Asia saw Paul at the temple. They stirred up the whole crowd and seized him, shouting, "Men of Israel help us! This is the man who teaches all men everywhere against our people and our law and this place. And besides, he has brought Greeks into the temple area and defiled this holy place." (They had previously seen Trophimus, the Ephesian, in the city with Paul and assumed that Paul had brought him into the temple area.) The whole city was aroused, and the people came running from all directions. Seizing Paul, they dragged him from the temple, and immediately the gates were shut. While they were trying to kill him, news reached the commander of the Roman troops that the whole city of Jerusalem was in an uproar. He at once took some officers and soldiers and ran down to the crowd. When the rioters saw the commander and his soldiers, they stopped beating Paul" (Acts 21:27-32).

Paul ask the commander if he could speak to the people and stated that the Lord had said to him "“Leave Jerusalem immediately, because they will not accept your testimony about me.’ ‘Lord I replied, these men know that I went from one synagogue to another to imprison and beat those who believe in you. And when the blood of your martyr Stephen was shed, I stood there giving my approval and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him. Then the Lord said to me,’ ‘Go; I will send you far away to the Gentiles.’” (Acts 22:18b-21)

"The crowd listened to Paul until he said this. Then they raised their voices and shouted, "Rid the earth of him! He's not fit to live! As they were shouting and throwing off their cloaks and flinging dust into the air, the commander ordered Paul to be taken into the barracks. He directed that he be flogged and questioned in order to find out why the people were shouting at him like

this. As they stretched him out to flog him, Paul said to the centurion standing there, ‘Is it legal for you to flog a Roman citizen who hasn't even been found guilty?’” (Acts 22:22-25)

“The next day, since the commander wanted to find out exactly why Paul was being accused by the Jews, he released him and ordered the chief priests and all the Sanhedrin to assemble. Then he brought Paul and had him stand before them. Paul looked straight at the Sanhedrin and said, "My brothers, I have fulfilled my duty to God in all good conscience to this day." At this the high priest Ananias ordered those standing near Paul to strike him on the mouth.” (Acts 22:30-23:2)

“The next morning the Jews formed a conspiracy and bound themselves with an oath not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul. More than forty men were involved in this plot. They went to the chief priests and elders and said, ‘We have taken a solemn oath not to eat anything until we have killed Paul. Now then, you and the Sanhedrin petition the commander to bring him before you on the pretext of wanting more accurate information about his case. We are ready to kill him before he gets here.’” (Acts 23:12-15)

### **Paul and Peter warn of false teachers and a falling away**

“There will be terrible times in the last days. People [Christians] will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— having a **form of** godliness [outward appearance but not the real] but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.” (2 Timothy 3:1-5)

Paul tells Timothy to: “Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage — with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths [things devised by man; i.e., not from God].” (2 Timothy 4:2-4)

“But there were also false prophets [teachers] among the people [Israelites] just as there will be false teachers among you [Christians]. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them — bringing swift destruction on themselves. Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.” (2 Peter 2:1-3)

### **Nero Burns Rome AD 67**

The first Roman persecution of the Church appears to have taken place in the year 67, [1 year following the Jews of Judea rebellion against Rome] under Nero, the sixth emperor of Rome. This monarch reigned for the space of five years, with tolerable credit to himself, but then gave way to the greatest extravagancy of temper, and to the most atrocious barbarities. Among other diabolical whims, he ordered that the city of Rome should be set on fire, which order was executed by his officers, guards, and servants. While the imperial city was in flames, he went up to the tower of

Macaenas, played upon his harp, sung the song of the burning of Troy, and openly declared that 'he wished the ruin of all things before his death.' Besides the noble pile, called the Circus, many other palaces and houses were consumed; several thousand perished in the flames, were smothered in the smoke, or buried beneath the ruins.

[jesus-is-savior.com/Books, Tracts & Preaching/Printed Books/FBOM/fbom-chap\\_02.htm](http://jesus-is-savior.com/Books, Tracts & Preaching/Printed Books/FBOM/fbom-chap_02.htm) [From *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, Chapter 2

Tacitus, a critic of Nero wrote, “Yet no human effort, no princely largess or offerings to the gods could make that infamous rumor disappear that Nero had somehow ordered the fire. Therefore, in order to abolish that rumor, Nero falsely accused and executed with the most exquisite punishments those people called Christians, who were infamous for their abominations. The originator of the name, Christ, was executed as a criminal by the procurator Pontius Pilate during the reign of Tiberius; and though repressed, this destructive superstition erupted again, not only through Judea, which was the origin of this evil, but also through the city of Rome, to which all that is horrible and shameful floods together and is celebrated. Therefore, first, those were seized who admitted their faith, and then, using the information they provided, a vast multitude were convicted, not so much for the crime of burning the city, but for hatred of the human race. And perishing they were additionally made into sports: they were killed by dogs by having the hides of beasts attached to them, or they were nailed to crosses or set aflame, and, when the daylight passed away, they were used as nighttime lamps. Nero gave his own gardens for this spectacle and performed a Circus game, in the habit of a charioteer mixing with the plebs or driving about the race-course. Even though they were clearly guilty and merited being made the most recent example of the consequences of crime, people began to pity these sufferers, because they were consumed not for the public good but on account of the fierceness of one man.”

[wsu.edu/wldciv/world\\_civ\\_reader/world\\_civ\\_reader\\_1/tacitus](http://wsu.edu/wldciv/world_civ_reader/world_civ_reader_1/tacitus) [Translated by Richard Hooker]

### **Temple destroyed**

In 70 AD Titus, who later became emperor, and the Roman Legion built a siege wall around Jerusalem. But the Zealots did not wait but attacked causing the Roman Legion to retreat. The Christians remembering Jesus statements recorded in Matthew 24 fled to the hills. The Temple was destroyed and animal sacrifices ceased as a part of Jewish worship. In c. 135 Jews were banned from the renamed city after the Bar Kokhba revolt. Following this time, early Church historian Eusebius of Caesarea records that ethnically Jewish leadership of the church in Jerusalem (literally those "of the circumcision") was replaced by Gentile leadership.<sup>[3]</sup> Most of the Christian population had left the city.

### **Christ through John warns congregations in Asia Minor**

Persecution is coming some will die while others will fall away. “The antichrist (those who deny Jesus is the Christ, Son of God, anointed one) is coming, even now many antichrists have come....Such a man is the antichrist — he denies the Father and the Son.” (1 John 2:18, 22)

**Ephesus** “... Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent [change one’s ways] and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place. But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.” (Revelation 2:4-5)

**Smyrna** "... Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you; the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life." (Revelation 2:10)

**Pergamum** "I know where you live-where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith in me. ... Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: You have people there ['Christians' in their assembly] who hold to the teachings of Balaam. ... Likewise, you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth." (Revelation 2:13, 14, 16)

**Thyatira** "Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols. I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling." (Revelation 2:20-21)

Practices of the Nicolaitans

Apparently, they were very similar to the *Balaamites* of the OT, they committed acts of immorality (fornication) and ate meat that had been offered to idols [probably in worship to

them]. In Rev. 2:14-15 the Lord makes this connection plain: "You have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols [as worship], and to commit acts of immorality. You also have some who *in the same way* hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans." <http://www.zianet.com/maxey/reflx73.htm>

#### Teaching of the Nicolaitans (Revelation 2:15)

Apparently, this differed little in principle from the teaching of Balaam, though seemingly different heretical group. Some would connect the Nicolaitans with Balaamites because of similarity of the Greek name Nicolaus and the Semitic name Balaam. That seems fanciful, however, since to be differentiated in vs. 14-15 · [thebiblewayonline.com/revelation](http://thebiblewayonline.com/revelation), by Cecil N. Wright

#### Teaching of Balaam (2:14)

The ancient prophet Balaam advised the pagan king Balak how he could cause God to curse the Israelites, of whom Balak was afraid but whom Balaam was unable to curse for him. Reference is made to such by Moses in Numbers 31:15-16, speaking of the occasion described in Chapter 25, as a result of which the Lord sent a plague that caused the death of 24,000 persons. The Jewish historian Josephus, in his Antiquities of the Jews, Book IV, Chapter VI, Sections 6-12, elaborates upon the details as they had come down to his day, which correspond with the summary description given by Christ in his letter to Pergamum. It was a compromise with paganism in worship and morals. [thebiblewayonline.com/revelation](http://thebiblewayonline.com/revelation), by Cecil N. Wright

#### The woman Jezebel (Revelation 2:20)

Most manuscripts have "the" woman, but a few have "thy" woman. Some have supposed her to be the wife of the one addressed as the "angel" of the church, since *sou* (thy) is singular. But the consensus of textual scholars favors *ten* (the) as having been the original reading. Here Jezebel is evidently a symbolic name for some prominent woman in the church at Thyatira, somewhat like the wicked wife of King Ahab who was guilty of "whoredom" and "witchcraft" (1 Kings 16:31; 2 Kings 9:22), promoting the worship of Baal and seeking to drive worshippers of God out of Israel. The Jezebel of Thyatira promoted both idolatrous and licentious practices among Christians. [thebiblewayonline.com/revelation](http://thebiblewayonline.com/revelation), by Cecil N. Wright

When we examine the Greek and Jew mind later these practices may be more clearly understood.

**Sardis** "... These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God." (Revelation 3:1-2)

**Philadelphia** "... Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth." (Revelation 3: 10)

**Laodicea** "... I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm- neither hot nor cold- I am about to spit you out of my mouth." ... "So be earnest, and repent. Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me." (Revelation 3: 15-16; 19-20)

The condition of the Asia Minor churches clearly shows not only individual Christians but entire congregations can stray away, and **forsake Christ**, His teachings and His saving Grace. If they do not repent and return to Him, they will be lost; i.e., have their lampstand removed. **Note:** Faithful Christians still assembling in the midst of persecution.

### **Trajan Persecution AD 108**

In the third persecution Pliny the Second, a man learned and famous, seeing the lamentable slaughter of Christians, and moved therewith to pity, wrote to Trajan, certifying him that there were many thousands of them daily put to death, of which none did anything contrary to the Roman laws worthy of persecution. "The whole account they gave of their crime or error (whichever it is to be called) amounted only to this - that they were accustomed on a stated day to meet before daylight, and to repeat together a set form of prayer to Christ as a God, and to bind themselves by an obligation- not indeed to commit wickedness; but, on the contrary- never to commit theft, robbery, or adultery, never to falsify their word, never to defraud any man: after which it was their custom to separate, and reassemble to partake in common of a harmless meal."

### **Timeline of the Church Christ established**

- Christ conferred the kingdom to His apostles
- Three thousand were added to them on Pentecost - 33 AD
- Stephen was martyred and Jewish persecution began – 35? AD
- Paul sent to Rome as a prisoner
- Rome burned and Roman persecution began - 64 AD
- Paul's death - 64 -65 AD
- Temple in Jerusalem destroyed - 70 AD
- John imprisoned on Patmos for the cause of Christ
- John's death – around 100 AD

The apostolic age ended with Christ's message of redemption having been spread throughout the Roman Empire. A new era is beginning.

### **Early Christianity**

During the second century [100-200 AD], Christianity spread further into the Latin-speaking western part of the Roman Empire. Notable leaders and writers of this time include Polycarp of Smyrna, Ignatius of Antioch,<sup>[4]</sup> Clement of Rome, Justin Martyr and Irenaeus of Lyon<sup>[4]</sup>.

During the third century [200-300 AD], Christianity further increased in numbers (Robin Lane Fox suggests that Christians composed about 2% of the Empire by 250<sup>[4]</sup>). Teachers of this period, including Origen in Alexandria and Tertullian in North Africa, expressed in their writings doctrines

such as that of The Trinity. Anthony the Great and others established Christian monasticism [pertaining to monasteries ] and Gregory the Illuminator was responsible for Armenia becoming the first officially Christian country. Following the conversion of Constantine the Great (just prior to the Battle of the Milvian Bridge in 312), the Roman Empire tolerated Christianity with the Edict of Milan in 313, leading later to the adoption of Christianity as the state religion [The Roman not the Roman Catholic Church ] by law not by conversion in 380 by Theodosius I and the rise of Christendom in the Byzantine empire.  
[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Early\\_Christianity](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Early_Christianity)

For 280 years Christianity was banned by the Roman Empire. It also conducted ten persecutions yet, during this time it continued to grow.

### Diocletian A.D. 302

The Diocletianic Persecution of 303 - 311 was the last and most severe persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire. Also known as the "Great Persecution," a key early event was the issuing in 303 of a series of edicts by Emperor Diocletian and his colleagues Maximian, Galerius, and Constantius [Constantine's father]. These edicts rescinded Christians' legal rights and demanded their compliance with pagan rituals. Later edicts targeted the clergy and demanded universal participation in sacrificial rituals, ordering all inhabitants to perform pagan sacrifices. The persecution varied in intensity and duration across the empire.

[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diocletian\\_Persecution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diocletian_Persecution)

Diocletian's edicts ordered the destruction of Christian scriptures and places of worship across the Empire, and prohibited Christians from assembling for worship. Later any known Christian was most cruelly put to death. Shortly after the death of Diocletian the persecution by the Roman Empire against Christians ended when after his "conversion" the Roman Emperor Constantine "legalized" Christianity at the Edict of Milan in AD 313.

Later, in AD 325, Constantine called together the Council of Nicea, in an attempt to unify the empire by a state religion. Constantine envisioned Christianity as a state religion that could unite the Roman Empire, which at that time was beginning to fragment and divide. Constantine refused to fully embrace the Christian faith and continued many of his pagan beliefs and practices, so the church that Constantine promoted was a mixture of Christianity and Roman paganism. "He (Constantine) kept his position as chief priest of the pagan state religion."

The Eternal Kingdom, F.W. Mattox, p. 127

While this may have seemed to be a positive development for the teaching of Christ's message of reconciliation and redemption, the results were anything but positive. It immediately achieved expansive influence at all levels of the imperial government.

Constantine found that with the Roman Empire being so vast, expansive, and diverse – not everyone would agree to forsake their religious beliefs and instead embrace Christianity. So,

Constantine allowed, and even promoted, the “Christianization” of pagan beliefs. Completely pagan and utterly unbiblical beliefs were given new “Christian” identities while being mixed with the altered church’s teachings and practices. Some clear examples of this are as follows:

### **(1) Henotheism or multiple gods**

Most Roman emperors (and citizens) were henotheists. A henotheist is one who believes in the existence of many gods, but focuses primary on one particular god, or considers one particular god supreme over the other gods. For example, the Roman god Jupiter was supreme over the Roman pantheon of gods; e.g., a god of love, a god of peace, a god of war, a god of strength, a god of wisdom, etc. These Roman gods were replaced with saints who were in charge or over each of these, and many other categories and the Roman god specific to the city was replaced with a “patron saint” for the city.

### **(2) Mother Goddess**

The Cult of Isis, an Egyptian mother-goddess religion, was absorbed into Christianity by replacing Isis with Mary. Many of the titles that were used for Isis, such as “Queen of Heaven,” “Mother of God,” and “*theotokos*” (God-bearer) were attached to Mary. Mary was given an exalted role in the Christian faith, far beyond what the Bible ascribes to her, in order to attract Isis worshippers to a faith they would not otherwise embrace. Many temples to Isis were, in fact, converted into temples dedicated to Mary. The first clear hints of what was to become Catholic Mariology occur in the writings of Origen (185-254), who lived in Alexandria, Egypt, which happened to be the focal point of Isis worship.

### **(3) Sacrificial Meal**

Mithraism was a religion in the Roman Empire in the 1st through 5th centuries AD. It was very popular among the Romans, especially among Roman soldiers, and was possibly the religion of several Roman emperors. While Mithraism was never given “official” status in the Roman Empire, it was the de-facto official religion until Constantine and succeeding Roman emperors replaced Mithraism with Christianity. One of the key features of Mithraism was a sacrificial meal, which involved eating the flesh and drinking the blood of a bull. Mithras, the god of Mithraism, was “present” in the flesh and blood of the bull, and when consumed, granted salvation to those who partook of the sacrificial meal (theophagy, the eating of one’s god). Mithraism also had seven “sacraments,” making the similarities between Mithraism and Roman Catholicism too many to ignore. Constantine and his successors found an easy substitute for the sacrificial meal of Mithraism in concept of the Lord’s Supper / Christian Communion. Sadly, some early Christians had already begun to attach mysticism to the Lord’s Supper, rejecting the Biblical concept of a simple and worshipful remembrance of Christ’s death and shed blood. The Romanization of the Lord’s Supper made the transition to a sacrificial consumption of Jesus Christ [transubstantiation], now known as the Catholic Mass / Eucharist, complete.

### **(4) Supreme Religious Leader**

The supremacy of the Roman bishop was created with the support of the Roman emperors. With the city of Rome being the center of government for the Roman Empire, and with the Roman emperors living in Rome, the city of Rome rose to prominence in all facets of life. Constantine,

and his successors, gave their support to the bishop of Rome as the supreme ruler of his state church believing it is best for the unity of the Roman Empire that the government and state religion be centered in the same location. While most other bishops [including the Bishop of Constantinople] and Christians resisted the idea of the Roman bishop being supreme, the Roman bishop eventually rose to supremacy, due to the power and influence of the Roman emperors. When the Roman Empire collapsed, the Roman Bishop took on the title that had previously belonged to the Roman emperor Constantine – Pontificus Maximus, [meaning high priest –but originally was the highest office in the polytheistic ancient Roman religion {during the time before Christ}].

[ccl.org/s/schaff/history/3\\_ch01.htm](http://ccl.org/s/schaff/history/3_ch01.htm)

Many more examples could be given. These four should suffice in demonstrating the true origin of the Catholic Church. Of course, the Roman Catholic Church denies the pagan origin of its beliefs and practices. The Catholic Church disguises its pagan beliefs under layers of complicated theology. The Catholic Church excuses and denies its pagan origin beneath the mask of “church tradition.” Recognizing that many of its beliefs and practices are utterly foreign to Scripture, the Catholic Church is forced to deny the authority and sufficiency of Scripture.

The origin of the Catholic Church is the tragic compromise of Christianity with the pagan religions that surrounded it. Instead of proclaiming the Gospel and converting the pagans, the state Church just “Christianized” the pagan religions, and “paganized” Christianity. By blurring the differences and erasing the distinctions, yes, the Catholic Church made itself attractive to the people of the Roman Empire, becoming the supreme religion in the Roman world for centuries. Therefore, Paul’s and Peter’s warnings and prophecies came true in the most dominant and altered form of Christianity.

[GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

As Bible believing Christians separated themselves from the Church of Rome, which they saw as apostate, they represented a formidable potential threat to the official new imperial religion. Persecution in varying degrees of severity was instituted over the centuries following.

Following the Early Christian Era, a new and ominous era began. The Middle Age, as the term implies, is the period which intervenes between ancient and modern times, and connects them, by continuing the one, and preparing for the other. It forms the transition from the Graeco-Roman civilization to the Romano-Germanic, civilization, which gradually arose out of the intervening chaos of barbarism.

Politically, the middle age dates from the great migration of nations and the downfall of the Western Roman Empire in the fifth century [Rome fell in 476 from Germanic invasions]; but for ecclesiastical history it begins with Gregory the Great, the last of the fathers and the first of the popes, at the close of the sixth century.

[ccl.org/s/schaff/history/4\\_ch01.htm](http://ccl.org/s/schaff/history/4_ch01.htm)

Gregory the Great served just before and after 600 A.D. (590-604). Gregory may be considered the first pope. ... as he was the first to be 1) a Bishop of Rome, 2) a Metropolitan (over Roman territory) and 3) a Patriarch (of Italy, for all the West).

Before examining some of beliefs and teachings of these “early church leaders” with their very limited resources but searching to know the will of God, we should benefit from an examination of the different perspective about man and God (or gods) of the Hebrew and Hellenistic (non-Jew or Gentile) peoples.

The Hellenists, Greek thinking, world had many gods.

1. There was a god for almost everything - war, love, fertility rain; etc.
2. The images of their gods and goddess were like men and women.
3. They had man’s characteristics i.e., love, hate, fits of rage and the extraction of revenge and were inconsistent, moody.
4. Their gods offered no guidelines or rules for moral or ethical conduct.

The Hellenists compartmentalized man into two parts, a soul and a body. In this dual system the soul was not concerned with the body and the body had nothing to do with the soul. In other words, man’s actions and his thoughts, intellect, were unrelated. Therefore, actions done in the body had nothing to do with his salvation. It was what he knew and thought that determined salvation; hence knowledge or Gnosticism.<sup>3</sup> The opposite was true of the Hebrew people where the where the body and soul were bound together where the actions of the body affected the future of the soul. Perhaps understanding the difference in thinking between Greek and Jew will assist in understanding Paul’s letters.

The Hellenists Gnostics taught that the psyche, or soul, was holy whereas the body, or flesh, was inherently evil. To the Gnostics salvation was not of faith or works, as they were evil, but knowledge or Logos (ultimate knowledge) which had no interest in the body which was all evil.

Since the flesh or body was evil or worldly, without any rule of morality and without any bearing on eternity or salvation, situation ethics was the norm. Any and all types of indulgences were acceptable, marriage was held in contempt. Prostitution and homosexuality were accepted without questions, in fact openly practiced in the temples of their gods.

But worship was at the heart of the Greek culture. Colosseums were built for the multitudes to gather [to go to worship] to idolize and revere their gods in an attempt to garner favor from them. [I give this to you so you will give to me – *quid pro quo*] Singing, playing and nude dancing to the gods was worship and it unified the people. With regard to the Greek concept of soul, worship, salvation or eternity were a state of the mind with knowledge and intellect being important.<sup>4</sup> Good works were unnecessary as whatever occurred with the body was irrelevant. This concept even exists today when people gather on Sunday to worship ignoring their actions of the past week.

This Greek dual concept of soul and body was foreign to the Jews who looked upon man as a whole where the body and soul were bound together. Their [Jew and Christian followers of Jehovah God] worship, when they had not departed from God, was a continuous act not limited to set times except

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<sup>3</sup> Refer to thebiblewayonline.com - Gnosticism

<sup>4</sup> Refer to thebiblewayonline.com - Body, Soul and Spirit

for special days. Service to God was not seen as secular and worship as religious. They were the same act. Everything was theological to the Jew. **God was not part-time; i.e., not separated between one's job and his religion.**

With this background in the difference in the Greek (Gentile) and Hebrew (Jew) thinking and the fact that many gentiles were turning to Christ and many Jews were returning to Judaism [which could possibly explain the purpose of the book of Hebrews], it should be easier to see how the Greek thinking influenced the writing of the "church fathers." Adapted from Hebrew mind Vs Greek Mind by Brad Scott wildbranch.org/Gkhebcia/index.html --2-10-2007

## Chapter 2

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### Church Fathers

The following is a closer look at the teachings, practices and interpretations of "church fathers" 100 - 476 AD. Although these men were not inspired of God, as is often clearly evident in their writings, nevertheless they *are* a valuable source of information and insight concerning the history and practices of the early church [which may or may not have been according to the teachings of Christ and apostles].

Adapted from

[www.zianet.com/maxey/reflx73.htm](http://www.zianet.com/maxey/reflx73.htm)

#### Apostolic Fathers

The earliest Church Fathers, (within two generations of the Apostles of Christ) include Clement of Rome [Italy],<sup>[2]</sup> Ignatius of Antioch [Syria], Polycarp of Smyrna [Asia Minor now Turkey] and Justin Martyr of Samaria. In addition, the Didache and Shepherd of Hermas are usually placed among the writings of the Apostolic Fathers although their authors are unknown. [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apostolic\\_Fathers#Apostolic\\_Fathers\\_and\\_their\\_work](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apostolic_Fathers#Apostolic_Fathers_and_their_work)

#### **Clement of Rome (35 – 101)**

His epistle, 1 Clement (*c* 96), was copied and widely read. Clement calls on the Christians of Corinth to maintain harmony and order.<sup>[2]</sup> It is the earliest Christian epistle outside the New Testament. [Catholic] Tradition identifies him as the fourth Pope and Bishop of Rome and his epistle assert Rome's apostolic authority over its audience,<sup>5</sup> the church in Corinth.

#### **Teachings of Clemet of Rome**

1 Clement does **not**, as some claim, establish the "orders" of the church. He refers only to elders and deacons, and he does not distinguish between clergy and laity. [His references strongly show that he did not recognize that he was a pope.] He does, however, suggest that seeking power or prestige within the church is wholly inappropriate, and that each person should be how lowly [they or others think] it may be.

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<sup>5</sup> Refer to the Hierarchal Authority - page 33.

## Ignatius of Antioch

Ignatius of Antioch (also known as Theophorus) (c 35-110)<sup>[3]</sup> was a student of the Apostle John. In route to his martyrdom in Rome, Ignatius wrote a series of letters which have been preserved as an example of the theology of the times. Important topics addressed in these letters include ecclesiology [the study of the church as a thing in itself], the sacraments<sup>6</sup> [a visible sign of an invisible reality], the role of bishops, and Biblical Sabbath.<sup>[4]</sup> He is the second after Clement to mention Paul's epistles.<sup>[2]</sup> [Note neither ecclesiology nor sacraments appear to have any Biblical origin].

[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ignatius\\_of\\_Antioch](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ignatius_of_Antioch)

There appears to be some evidence that prior to 150 AD there were a plurality of elders in churches. "It is definitely established that during the period from 100 to nearly 150 the church was generally governed by elders and deacons without any distinction between elder or bishop." The Eternal Kingdom, F.W. Mattox, p. 62

**Hierarchical and Authoritative Structure** "After the Apostolic Age (ended about AD 100), the church quickly became more hierarchical and authoritative. So, by early in the second century, church leadership began to transform into something strikingly akin to Roman civil government. The documents primarily responsible for suggesting this unbiblical change was Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, although there is some doubt about the authenticity of his letters. ... It will suffice to point out that in the eight Ignatian letters (ca A.D. 110) generally thought to be genuine, he insists on the division of the bishopric and the presbytery and the monarchical authority of the bishop, going so far as to compare the bishop with Christ Himself.

While there is really no authorization for exclusive and coercive authority for church leaders, it wasn't long after the death of the last Apostle that humans assumed it anyway. Paul clearly uses the elder (Greek, *presbuteros*, *an old man*), bishop (Greek, *episkopos*, *overseer or guardian*), and pastor (Greek, *poimen*, *shepherd*) role in the New Testament interchangeably in Acts 20:17-28. Furthermore, Paul does not imbue this role with a worldly type of authority. Elders are to be servants of the church, watching over the flock with care, presiding over meetings, and applying the wisdom gained with age.

[Note: Servants exercise the master's authority. Elders, as servants, exercise Christ authority in accordance with Biblical instructions. Any demand or directive not from scripture is personal authority not the masters.]

## Teachings of Ignatius

a. In like manner, let all reverence the deacons as an appointment of Jesus Christ, and the bishop as Jesus Christ, who is the Son of the Father, and the presbyters as the Sanhedrin of God, and assembly of the apostles. Apart from these, there is no Church" (*Ignatius to the Thrallians* III). Ignatius also claims that no Christian activity is valid without the participation or approval of

<sup>6</sup> Refer to [thebiblewayonline.com](http://thebiblewayonline.com) - Sacraments.

the bishop: "For, since ye are subject to the bishop (Polybius in this case) as to Jesus Christ, ye appear to me to live not after the manner of men, but according to Jesus Christ, who died for us, in order, by believing in His death, ye may escape from death. It is therefore necessary that, as ye indeed do, so **without the bishop ye should do nothing**, but should also be subject to the presbytery, as to the apostle of Jesus Christ" (*Ignatius to the Thrallians* II, emphasis added).

"Let that be deemed a proper Eucharist, which is [administered] either by the bishop, or by one to whom he has entrusted it...It is **not lawful without the bishop** either to baptize or to celebrate a love-feast..." (*Ignatius to the Smyrnaeans* VIII).  
[peculiarpress.com/index\\_main.htm](http://peculiarpress.com/index_main.htm)

- b. Ignatius was a bishop (presbyter, pastor) of the church at Antioch who separated the presbytery and the episcopate. Throughout these three letters, Ignatius writes of the bishop (singular), the presbytery, and the deacons, insisting that they be respected and obeyed. He equates the bishop to "the Lord himself" (L.Eph 6:1; L.Mag 6:1; L.Tra 2:1); the presbyter to "the council of the apostles" (L.Mag 6:1; L.Tra 2:2); and the deacons to servants of Christ himself (L.Mag 6:1) or to the "mysteries of Jesus Christ" (L.Tra 2:3). He commands the church "to act in harmony with the mind of the bishop" (L.Eph 4:1), and "not do anything without the bishop and the presbyters" (L.Mag 7:1; cf L.Tra 2:2). He seems to ascribe greater power to the prayer of a bishop (L.Eph 5:2), and even suggests the bishop is to be feared (L.Eph 6:1). To his credit, Ignatius does not call for such obedience to himself, but then he is not the bishop of these cities. Nevertheless, Ignatius projects a consistently humble attitude with such statements as "I am only beginning to be a disciple" (L.Eph 3:1); "I do not know whether I am worthy." (L.Tra 4:2)

This notion that Christians are "not to do anything without the bishop (and the presbyters) consent is particularly odious. "Without these (bishop, presbyters, deacons)," he writes. "No group can be called a church" (L.Tra 3:1) .  
[peculiarpress.com/ekklesia/archive/Ekklesia80.htm](http://peculiarpress.com/ekklesia/archive/Ekklesia80.htm)

### Polycarp of Smyrna

Polycarp of Smyrna (c 69- ca. 155) was a Christian bishop of Smyrna (now İzmir in Turkey). It is recorded that "He had been a disciple of John." The options for this John are; John the son of Zebedee traditionally viewed as the author of the Fourth Gospel, or John the Presbyter (Lake 1912). Traditional advocates follow Eusebius in insisting that the apostolic connection of Polycarp was with John the Evangelist, and that this John, the author of the Gospel of John, was the same as the Apostle John. Polycarp, 155, tried and failed to persuade Anicetus, Bishop of Rome, to have the West celebrate Easter [adapted from paganism dating back to Nimrod shortly after the flood. [christiananswers.net/q-eden/edn-t020.html](http://christiananswers.net/q-eden/edn-t020.html).] on 14 Nisan, as in the East. He rejected the Pope's suggestion that the East use the Western date. In c 155, the Smyrnans demanded Polycarp's execution as a Christian, and he died a martyr.  
[wikipedia.org/wiki/Church\\_Fathers](http://wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_Fathers)

### Teachings of Polycarp

The Bible itself clearly uses the Greek terms *episkopē* (watchman, sentinel, overseer, bishop) and *prebuteros* (elder, presbyter) interchangeably. There is not even a hint of apostolic teaching for one-man

(bishop) rule of an individual congregation, let alone an entire city or region. Yet, the monoepiscopate [single bishop] emerged in the second century, and Polycarp is cited as one of those city rulers. Throughout his seven authentic, extant letters, Ignatius of Antioch repeated[ly] separates the *episkopē* from the *prebuteros*, calling them respectively, God's "managers" (*oikonomos*, chamberlain, governor, and steward), and a civil term applied to Erastus in Romans 16:23; and "assistants" (*paredroi*, a term not used in the New Testament). This idea that elders are assistants to the bishop has no basis whatsoever in Scripture. In the Roman [Catholic] brand of Christianity, the presbytery morphed into the priesthood as a specialized class of intermediaries uniquely authorized to administer sacraments (baptism, communion, etc.) on behalf of the bishop. This too has no basis in Scripture, where **all** Christians are called priests.

Hierarchicalists in the modern Catholic, Anglican, and Orthodox churches use the letters of Ignatius as proof-texts to justify the monoepiscopate and the papacy. Polycarp is also used as a vital link in the doctrine of apostolic succession, which suggests that authority rests in bishops because of an unbroken chain of appointment through ordination back to the apostles themselves.  
[peculiarpress.com/ekklesia/archive/Ekklesia88.htm](http://peculiarpress.com/ekklesia/archive/Ekklesia88.htm)

### Justin Martyr 100 - 165

Justin was a Gentile, but born in Samaria, near Jacob's well. He must have been well educated: he had travelled extensively, and he seems to have been a person enjoying at least a competence. After trying all other systems, his elevated tastes and refined perceptions made him a disciple of Socrates and Plato.

[ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.viii.i.html](http://ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.viii.i.html)

Most scholars agree that Justin was verbose, confused, inconsistent and often not convincing in his arguments. Nevertheless, he is an important figure in the history of the Church. For him Christianity was "theoretically, the true philosophy, and, practically, a new law of holy living and dying."  
[earlychurc.org.uk/justin.php](http://earlychurc.org.uk/justin.php)

“Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly, because it is the first day on which God, having wrought a change in the darkness and matter, made the world; and Jesus Christ our Savior on the same day rose from the dead. For He was crucified on the day before that of Saturn (Saturday); and on the day after that of Saturn, which is the day of the Sun, having appeared to His apostles and disciples.

“All who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president [assumed to be one of the elders designated to preside over the assembly] verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. Then we all rise together and pray, and, as we before said, when our prayer is ended, **bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings**, according to his ability, and the people assent, saying Amen (Hebrew language - *so be it*); and there is a distribution to each, and a participation of that over which thanks have been given, and to those who are absent a portion is sent by the deacons. No one is allowed to partake but the man who believes that the things which we teach are true, and who has been washed with the washing that is for the remission of sins, and

unto regeneration, and who is so living as Christ has enjoined.  
[christianitytoday.com/ch/131christians/evangelistsandapologists/martyr.html](http://christianitytoday.com/ch/131christians/evangelistsandapologists/martyr.html)

They who are well to do, and willing, give what each think fit; and what is collected is deposited with the president to take care those in need:

1. orphans
2. widows
3. sick
4. any others in want,
5. those who are in bonds and
6. strangers sojourning among us

NOTE: All their giving was for others none for self.

### His Death

Justin and other saints were seized and brought before the prefect of Rome, [a Roman official having all authority necessary to protect Rome and the area within 100 miles] whose name was Rusticus. As they stood before the judgment seat, Rusticus the prefect said to Justin: "Above all, have faith in the gods and obey the emperors." Justin said: "We cannot be accused or condemned for obeying the commands of our Savior, Jesus Christ."

Rusticus said: "You are a Christian, then?" Justin said: "Yes, I am."

The prefect said to Justin: "You are called a learned man and think you know what is true teaching. Listen: if you were scourged and beheaded, are you convinced that you would go up to heaven?" Justin said: "I hope that I shall enter God's house if I suffer in that way. For I know that God's favor is stored up until the end of the whole world for all who have lived good lives."

The prefect Rusticus said: "Do you have an idea that you will go up to heaven to receive some suitable rewards?" Justin said: "It is not an idea that I have; it is something I know well and hold to be most certain."

The prefect Rusticus said: "Now let us come to the point at issue, which is necessary and urgent. Gather round then and with one accord offer sacrifice to the gods." Justin said: "No one who is right-thinking stoops from true worship to false worship."

The prefect Rusticus said: "If you do not do as you are commanded you will be tortured without mercy." Justin said: "We hope to suffer torment for the sake our Lord Jesus Christ, and so be saved. For this will bring us salvation and confidence as we stand before the more terrible and universal judgment-seat of our Lord and Savior." Other also said: "Do what you will. We are Christians; we do not offer sacrifice to idols."

The prefect Rusticus pronounced sentence, saying: "Let those who have refused to sacrifice to the gods and to obey the command of the emperor be scourged and led away to suffer capital punishment according to the ruling of the laws." Glorifying God, the holy martyrs went out to the accustomed place. They were beheaded, and so fulfilled their witness of martyrdom in confessing their faith in their Savior.

## Hippolytus of Rome

Hippolytus (c. 170 - c. 236) was one of the most prolific writers of the early Church. Hippolytus was born during the second half of the 2nd century, probably in Rome. Photius describes him in his *Bibliotheca* (cod. 121) [first Byzantine encyclopedia] as a disciple of Irenaeus, who was said to be a disciple of Polycarp.

wikipedia.org/wiki/Hippolytus\_of\_Rome#Life

**Teachings of Hippolytus:** And they shall baptize the little children first. And if they can answer for themselves, let them answer. But if they cannot, let their parents answer or someone from their family. And next they shall baptism the grown men; and last the women. (Apostolic Tradition 21.3-5) <http://www.orthodox.org/html/baptevid.html> [By requiring an answer, even if by someone else in cases where they were too young or mentally unable, requires some degree of knowledge or belief of sin, its consequences and the need for forgiveness unless infant baptism was just a ritual.]

The normal form of baptism for the first centuries—until at least the twelfth century—was immersion. “And concerning baptism, baptize this way: Having first said all these things, baptize into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, in living water [flowing or moving water]. But if you have no living water, baptize into other water; and if you cannot do so in cold water, do so in warm. But if you have neither, pour out water three times upon the head into the name of Father and Son and Holy Spirit.”

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aspersion

Hippolytus strongly opposed the growing hierarchy of the church.  
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The Eternal Kingdom, F.W. Mattox p.

## Greek Fathers

### **Irenaeus of Lyons**

Irenaeus, (b. 2nd century; d. end of 2nd/beginning of 3rd century) was bishop of Lugdunum in Gaul, which is now Lyons, France. His writings were formative in the early development of Christian theology. He was a notable early Christian apologist. He was also a disciple of Polycarp, who was said to be a disciple of John the Evangelist. The Shepherd of Hermas (2nd century) was popular in the early church and even considered scriptural by some of the early Church fathers, such as Irenaeus. It was written at Rome, in Greek. The Shepherd had great authority in the second and third centuries.

His best-known book, *Against Heresies* (c 180) enumerated heresies and attacked them. Irenaeus wrote that the only way for Christians to retain unity was to humbly accept one doctrinal authority—episcopal councils.<sup>[2]</sup> [Unity by authority rather than unity in Christ.] Irenaeus was the first to propose that all four gospels be accepted as canonical.

**Teaching of Irenaeus of Lyons** - For he came to save all by means of himself -- all, I say, who by him are born again to God -- infants, children, adolescents, young men, and old men. (Against Heresies II.22.4)

[orlutheran.com/html/baptevid.html](http://orlutheran.com/html/baptevid.html)

### **Clement of Alexandria**

Clement of Alexandria (Titus Flavius Clemens) (c.150-211/216), was the first member of the Church of Alexandria to be more than a name, and one of its most distinguished teachers. He united Greek philosophical traditions with Christian doctrine and **valued *gnosis***.<sup>7</sup> He developed a Christian Platonism.<sup>[2]</sup> The central concept is the Theory of Forms. The only true being is founded upon the forms, the eternal, unchangeable, perfect types, of which particular objects of sense are imperfect copies. Many Platonic notions are now permanent elements of Catholic/Protestant Christianity. Like pagans had before them, Christians understood Platonic forms as God's thoughts.

[wiki/Platonism](http://wiki/Platonism)

[wikipedia.org/wiki/Clement\\_of\\_Alexandria](http://wikipedia.org/wiki/Clement_of_Alexandria) and

Gnosticism (Greek: *gnōsis*, knowledge) humans are divine souls trapped in a material world created by an imperfect god, ... the Abrahamic god, and is contrasted with a superior entity, referred to by several terms.

[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gnosticism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gnosticism)

Gnosticism was applied to various early Christian sects that claimed direct personal knowledge beyond the Gospel or the Church hierarchy.

[etymonline.com/index.php?l=g&p=7](http://etymonline.com/index.php?l=g&p=7)

The Gnostic branch of Christianity that emerged in the second century practiced its own elitist brand of **onlyism**, claiming that Jesus passed "secret" Knowledge along to certain disciples, most notably Mary Magdalene and Thomas. Salvation, they claimed, came only through initiation— sometimes involving bizarre rites.

[peculiarpress.com/ekklesia/archive/Ekklesia67.htm](http://peculiarpress.com/ekklesia/archive/Ekklesia67.htm)

### **Origen of Alexandria**

Origen, or Origen Adamantius (c185 - c254) was an early Christian scholar and theologian. According to tradition, he was an Egyptian<sup>[5]</sup> who taught in Alexandria, reviving the Catechetical School, where Clement had taught. The patriarch of Alexandria at first supported Origen but later expelled him for being ordained without the patriarch's permission. He relocated to Caesarea Maritima and died there<sup>[6]</sup> after being tortured during a persecution.

Using his knowledge of Hebrew, he produced a corrected Septuagint.<sup>[2]</sup> He wrote commentaries on all the books of the Bible.<sup>[2]</sup> In *Peri Archon* (First Principles), he articulated the first

<sup>7</sup> Refer to [thebiblewayonline.com](http://thebiblewayonline.com) - Gnosticism.

philosophical exposition of Christian doctrine.<sup>[2]</sup> He interpreted scripture allegorically and showed himself to be a Stoic, a Neo-Pythagorean, and a Platonic.<sup>[2]</sup> Like Plotinus, he wrote that the soul passes through successive stages before incarnation as a human and after death, eventually reaching God.<sup>[2]</sup> He imagined even demons being reunited with God. For Origen, God was not Yahweh but the First Principle, and Christ, the Logos, was subordinate to him.<sup>[2]</sup> His views of a hierarchical structure in the Trinity, the temporality of matter, "the fabulous preexistence of souls," and "the monstrous restoration which follows from it" were declared anathema in the 6th century.<sup>[7][8]</sup>

[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Origen](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Origen)

**Teaching of Origen:** I take this occasion to discuss something which our brothers often inquire about. Infants are baptized for the remission of sins. Of what kinds? Or when did they sin? But since "No one is exempt from stain," one removes the stain by the mystery of baptism. For this reason, infants are baptized. For "Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven." (Homily on Luke 14:5).

[orlutheran.com/html/baptevid.html](http://orlutheran.com/html/baptevid.html)

### **Anthony the Great**

Anthony (c 251 – 356 also known as **Father of All Monks**) was from Egypt, a prominent leader among the Desert Fathers. He is celebrated in many churches on his feast days: 17 January in the Eastern Orthodox Church and Western churches; and Tobi 22, (January 30) in the Coptic Orthodox Church and the Coptic Catholic Church. [Coptic - A northern Afro-Asiatic language spoken in Egypt until at least the seventeenth century.]  
[wikipedia.org/wiki/Anthony\\_the\\_Great](http://wikipedia.org/wiki/Anthony_the_Great)

### **Latin Fathers**

#### **Tertullian**

Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullianus (c 160 - c 225), who was converted to Christianity before 197, was a prolific writer of apologetic, theological, controversial and ascetic works.<sup>[13]</sup> He was the son of a Roman centurion. He has been referred to as "the father of Latin Christianity."

[wikipedia.org/wiki/Tertullian#cite\\_note-2](http://wikipedia.org/wiki/Tertullian#cite_note-2)

(Ekonomou, 2007, p. 22)

Tertullian denounced Christian doctrines he considered heretical, but later in life adopted views that themselves came to be regarded as heretical. He wrote three books in Greek and was the first great writer of Latin Christianity, thus sometimes known as the "Father of the Latin Church."<sup>[14]</sup> He was evidently a lawyer in Rome.<sup>[15]</sup> He is said to have introduced the Latin term "*trinitas*" with regard to the Divine (Trinity) to the Christian vocabulary<sup>[16]</sup> (but Theophilus of Antioch (c115 - c183) already wrote of "the Trinity, of God, and His Word, and His wisdom", which is similar but not identical to the Trinitarian wording),<sup>[17]</sup> and also probably the formula "three Persons, one Substance" as the Latin "*tres Personae, una Substantia*" (itself from the Koine Greek "*treis Hypostases, Homoousios*"), and also the terms "*vetus testamentum*" (Old Testament) and "*novum testamentum*" (New Testament).

In his *Apologeticus*, he was the first Latin author who qualified Christianity as the "*vera religio*" [true religion], and systematically relegated the classical Roman Empire religion and other accepted cults to the position of mere "superstitions." His use of the "rule of faith" seems to be applied by Tertullian to some distinct formula of doctrine [(*De praescriptione*, xiii).] With the rise of formalism and sacramentalism, regulated ritual came to be viewed as highly relevant to one's approach to God. What was said, and how it was said; what was done, and how it was done ... and when and where and by whom ... all took on tremendous importance, with any deviation whatsoever bringing an almost instant rebuke from the "church powers that be." Wikipedia.org/wiki/Tertullian [One example is the phrase "in Jesus name" <sup>8</sup>used at the end of many prayers appears to have come into use several centuries after the church was established with the advent of regulated rituals.] en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church\_Fathers

Tertullian and Hippolytus were "the only two outstanding men who opposed the growing power of the Roman bishop. The Eternal Kingdom, F.W. Mattox p. 203

Later in life, Tertullian joined the Montanists, [direct revelations from the Holy Spirit, to speak as the passive mouthpieces of the divine and spoke in ecstatic visions ] a heretical sect that appealed to his rigorism.<sup>[13]</sup>

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church\_Fathers

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Tertullian took the view [about the scripture] that "what has not been freely allowed is forbidden." In other words, if the Holy Scriptures are *genuinely silent* about something, then that about which they are truly, utterly and absolutely silent is forever *forbidden*. Others of his day, however, declared just as confidently, "the thing which is not forbidden is freely permitted." The opposing view, therefore, was: if God said nothing *about* it, then He must have nothing *against* it. Thus, it should be *permitted* to His people. ... [Over a thousand years later] **Luther** and **Zwingli** also weighed in on this matter. The latter maintained that *anything* "not enjoined or taught in the New Testament should be unconditionally *rejected*," whereas Luther espoused the opposing view -- "What is not *against* Scripture is *for* Scripture and Scripture for *it*." ... But genuine biblical silence <sup>9</sup> (where God has truly *said absolutely NOTHING* one way or the other about something) is neither prohibits nor permits.

REFLECTIONS by Al Maxey Issue #401, June 30, 2009 from wikisource.org/wiki/

AnteNicene\_Fathers/Volume\_III/Apologetic/The\_Chaplet,\_or\_De\_Corona/Chapter\_II

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<sup>8</sup> Refer to thebiblewayonline.com - In Jesus Name

<sup>9</sup> Refer to thebiblewayonline.com - Silence of the Scripture.

### **Some Teachings and Practices of Tertullian**

Rule of Faith - It may be said that Tertullian is constantly using this expression, and by it means authoritative tradition handed down in the Church, now the Scriptures themselves, and, *perhaps* doctrinal formula. While he nowhere gives a list of the books of Scripture, he divides them into two groups, and calls them the *instrumentum* and *testamentum* . [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tertullian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tertullian)

Some 1200 to 1300 years later due to the reformation the Council of Trent (1545 – 1563) called by Pope Paul III decided that “traditions set forth by the councils and the church fathers constituted authority equal to that of the Scripture.”

The  
Eternal Kingdom, F.W. Mattox, p. 291

Fornicators and Murderers should never be admitted into the church under any circumstances. In *de pudicitia*, Tertullian condemns Pope Callixtus I for allowing such people in when they show repentance.

[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tertullian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tertullian)

### **Cyprian of Carthage**

Cyprian (Thascius Caecilius Cyprianus) was bishop of Carthage and an important early Christian writer. He was probably born at the beginning of the 3rd century in North Africa, perhaps at Carthage, where he received an excellent classical (pagan) education. After converting to Christianity, he became a bishop (249) and eventually died a martyr (September 14, 258) at Carthage.

### **Teachings of Cyprian**

As to what pertains to the case of infants: You [Fidus] said that they ought not to be baptized within the second or third day after their birth, that the old law of circumcision must be taken into consideration, and that you did not think that one should be baptized and sanctified within the

\_\_\_\_\_ eighth day after his birth. In our council it seemed to us far otherwise. No one agreed to the course which you thought should be taken. Rather, we all judge that the mercy and grace of God ought to be denied to no man born (Letters 64:2 [A.D. 253]).  
[Ricklobs.blogspot.com/2009/03/church-fathers-on-infant-baptism.html](http://Ricklobs.blogspot.com/2009/03/church-fathers-on-infant-baptism.html)

### **Ambrose**

Ambrose (337/340 – 397) was the Governor of Aemilia-Liguria in northern Italy. In 374 the bishop of Milan, Auxentius, an Arian, died, and the Arians challenged the succession. Ambrose went to the church where the election was to take place, to prevent an uproar, which was probable. His address was interrupted by a call "Ambrose, bishop!" At first he energetically refused the office, for which he was in no way prepared as he was neither baptized nor formally trained in theology but, upon receiving a letter from the Emperor praising the appropriateness of Rome appointing individuals evidently worthy of holy positions, within a week he was baptized, ordained and duly installed as bishop of Milan.

Ambrose is counted by the Catholic Church as one of the four original doctors of the Church. The others were Saint Augustine, Saint Jerome, and Pope Gregory I. It has been noted that Ambrose's theology was significantly influenced by that of Origen.

He applied this knowledge as preacher, concentrating especially on exegesis of the Old Testament, and his rhetorical abilities impressed Augustine of Hippo, his spiritual successor, whose conversion was helped by Ambrose's sermons.

### **Augustine**

Augustine (354 – 430) was trained to be a teacher and philosopher. His reading was confined almost exclusively to Latin authors. He had great admiration for Cicero and ranked him above all other ancient writers.

During his earlier years he found the teachings of Manichean, [two everlasting kingdoms, one of light under God and the other of darkness under the demon] to have a great resemblance to those of Gnosticism.

After some eight years he broke from the group moving to Neo-platonism [the absence of good being the source of evil (privatio boni), and that this absence of good comes from human sin]. At about 27 years of age he became a “Christian” but not necessarily from a study of the Bible. However, the older he became the more he moved in the direction of the Bible and away from philosophy. Often, they were mixed bringing inconsistencies.

“Ism’s”

Calvinism, REW

### Some Thinking and Beliefs of Augustine

#### 1. Definition of evil

God is eternal and cannot change. He is the ultimate good. Any movement from God is evil. Only God’s grace can keep men from sin. The choice of self instead of God is the essence of sin.

#### 2. Origin of Evil “Why should there be evil in a universe created out of nothing by a Being who is both good and all-powerful?” (McGiffert, A History of Christian Thought, 1933, p.89). Evil is the tendency of all created things to lapse again into the nothingness from which they came. God was not responsible for sin but permitted it.

#### 3. Origin of Sin (Total Hereditary Depravity)

Although Augustine did not believe God was responsible for sin, he accepted the Catholic traditions and doctrine of Original Sin.

#### 4. Free Will

Man inherited from Adam a corrupt nature and this became the incentive to sin. Men are endowed with free will but he could not choose God and live for him without divine help or grace.

#### 5. First Work of Grace

Faith is a divine gift and no one can believe in God unless moved thereto by His grace. These gifts are bestowed without regard to human merit either actual or foreseen.

#### 6. Irresistible Grace

Those whom God wills to save cannot prevent Him from doing so even if he wished to.

7. Sovereignty of God

God is absolutely supreme. His will is the only real will.

Predestination

Some people are foreordained to salvation and some to damnation, which is due wholly to God's unfathomable secret will.

8. Preservation of Saints

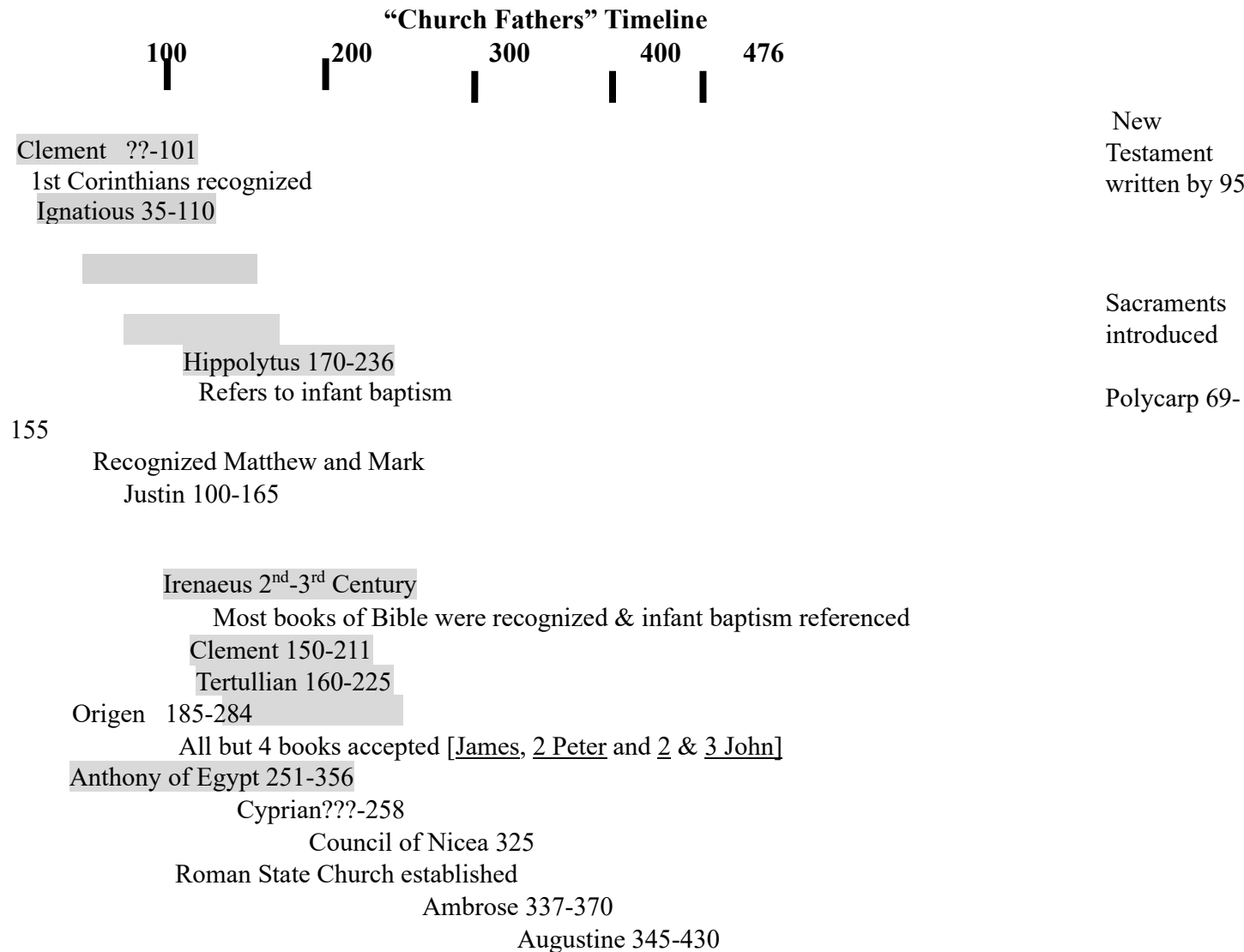
God gives to the chosen the gift of preservation so they can endure to the end. Therefore, none of the elect can fall away and be lost.

9. Number of the elect fixed

The number of the elect is unchangeably fixed and is the same as the number of fallen angels. This belief was based upon Revelation 3:11 "Hold fast that thou hast, lest another take thy crown."

"isms" Calvinism,

REW, pages 4 – 7



## Chapter 3

### Gnosticism

The beginnings of Gnosticism have long been a matter of controversy and are still largely a subject of research. Whereas formerly Gnosticism was considered mostly a corruption of Christianity, it now seems clear that the first traces of Gnostic systems can be discerned some centuries before the Christian Era. [catholic.org/encyclopedia/view.php?id=5209](http://catholic.org/encyclopedia/view.php?id=5209)

Some of the beliefs associated with Gnosticism appear to be from Zoroastrianism which has been dated "between the 18th and 10th centuries BCE." But "Some ancient authors also give a mythological "date" corresponding to about 6000 BCE. [wikipedia.org/wiki/Zoroaster](http://wikipedia.org/wiki/Zoroaster)

Plato lived from 428-348 BC. Most history books and encyclopedias credit Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle for being the most influential people in Western history. Their philosophical views sprang forth from Homer's great mythical heroes. This led to the ultimate philosophical goal of excellence which led to the various social structures of Greek life. Plato, of course, was a member of the social elite. This was part of the background of his most powerful contribution to religious thought, the dualism of man. Plato taught that man consisted of two parts, the "soul" and the "flesh". He taught that only the soul was good and good is what all men seek. The flesh was evil and could do no good. [This dualism of man (i.e., the soul and body are separate) is part of the Gnostic belief as will be noted below].

[wildbranch.org/Gkhebcia/index.html](http://wildbranch.org/Gkhebcia/index.html)

Brad Scott in The Greek Mind versus the Hebrew Mind wrote "In the times of Jesus and Paul there were many thinking groups that would fall under the banner of Gnosticism. The nihilists and the libertines would be two of these. Both of these groups would also be classified as antinomians or 'against the law' [opposite of legalism]. This would be the definition as it is commonly known in the English. However, in the Hebrew the word for 'anti' is *tachat*, which means 'instead of' or 'in place of'. You see, no one is really against laws, they simply deny GOD's laws and replace them with other laws. Every society, large or small, has rules. One may think he is free when unrestrained by law but he soon comes up with his own.

Since the rise of Gnosticism, I believe the 'church' has been theologically duped into believing that liberty is freedom from law. The only way that one could claim to be a 'Christian' and hold this theology is to allegorize or spiritualize the text. Allegorization [not real just symbolic] sprang forth from the early gnostics, and gnosticism is Hellenistic thought at its best.

So, what is Gnosticism? Literally the word *gnosis*, a Greek word, means 'knowledge'. This way of thinking was also a religious sect at the time of Jesus. However, more appropriately it is a way of thinking. Notice I said it IS a way of thinking, not it WAS a way of thinking. There is no way to define this word in a few sentences, so we will define it as we go. The whole idea of gnosticism dove-tails with the whole philosophy of the holy psyche or soul, and the evil body and physical world. There are degrees, if you will, of this philosophy. Much of what is taught in modern Christianity is very pale compared to some extremes of people like Simon, Saturninus, Cerinthus, Valentinus, or even Marcion. If you begin with a relatively small, unscriptural doctrine, it soon leads to a big one. Many of these men (circa 1-2nd century AD) concluded

that Jesus was not a man, but the spirit of the Messiah. Why? Because the "deity" would not have an evil body since the flesh is by nature wicked. Marcion taught that Jesus' body was a 'phantom'. Many early church fathers stood against this doctrine for a time, except for Clement and Origen, who were sympathetic to this doctrine. Fundamental to clearly gnostic systems is dualism, which opposes the transcendent God [a god without limitation] and an ignorant demiurge. (This was the caricature of GOD). In some systems, the creation of the world resulted from the presumption of wisdom (*Sophia*).

The material creation, including the body, was regarded as inherently evil. Sparks of divinity, however, had been encapsulated in the bodies of certain pneumatic or spiritual individuals, who were ignorant of their celestial origins. The transcendent God or demiurge sent down a redeemer (Christ), who brought them salvation in the form of a secret *gnosis* or knowledge. To the gnostics, salvation was not dependent upon faith or works but rather knowledge of one's nature, so there was much indulgence in licentious behavior. There were no rules for the body since the *logos* or ultimate knowledge was not interested in physical or material things. This also meant that marriage was held in contempt as well, for procreation involved the body. A "unisexual" being was held in hopeful reverence. The bottom line of Gnosticism is an 'other worldly' existence. Many New Testament doctrines are used to support this thought which we will put back into context later. Gnosticism, historically speaking, is simply the logical progression of Greek or Hellenistic thinking. This philosophy, several centuries later, led to the monastic system and eventually to the Papal system as well.

The Greek/gnostic thinking of 'inwardness' only sounds holy, good, and scriptural. The problem is this. Our mind and our bodies are created by GOD and have natural needs and desires. These needs and desires are anticipated by our Creator, so He has rules for the mind and the body. If our theology denies these rules (the reason is really irrelevant), our mind and body will satisfy them some other way. This is why in much Christian theology the laws of YHVH are superseded by the 'law of Christ' where there is the Spirit. God, who lives in the transmundane, is only interested in the spiritual and has no interest in the mundane cares of the world.

To the Greek mind there was so much diversity to be seen that there could not be just one God. This is why there could be just as much change and diversity in ethics and morals as well. There were no foundational guidelines for moral behavior. Behavior changed as the times changed [situation ethics of today], and each philosopher was no more or less correct than the last one. Christian teaching from the first century has taught that there is but one Elohiym (God), however, much Christian theology betrays this intellectual proposition about Elohiym (God). The early disciples, all Jewish, remained faithful in every way to the *Sh'ma* [central tenet of Judaism "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one" Deuteronomy 6:4]. All doctrine in the book of Acts attested to this fact. In the middle of the second century the church was dominated by gentiles, and gentile thought began to flow naturally into Greek thinking.

There are many aspects of the nature of Elohiym (God) that differs in these two contrasting cultural views. The two most important ones with respect to scriptural doctrine are found in His oneness and His unchangeableness. In Hebrew thought, His nature is intimately tied to His commands and instructions. Many religions may 'confess' that He is one and unchangeable, but they betray that confession doctrinally. This is because Greek thinking is embedded in our own thought process, and a mere confession of beliefs about Elohiym (God) is truly missing the mark. **Believing things about Elohiym (God) is not the same as believing Elohiym (God).**

## **WORSHIP**

Worship is at the very heart of Greek culture. Many great colosseums were built to accommodate the throngs of worshippers gathered to idolize and revere the gods [so they could go to worship]. These gatherings were thought to please the gods and cause them to cast favor upon the people. Different gods were worshipped for different reasons in that each god was hovering over a different aspect of the world. Songs were sung, instruments were played, and nude dancing was common. Singing songs, playing, and dancing to the gods was worshipping, and this worship is what unified the people. Homosexual acts were quite common in that the body is irrelevant to the gods. It was the state of mind that the gods were interested in. The Stoics however, would have nothing to do with this kind of activity. Worship to them was equally a state of mind; however, a proper state of mind does not succumb to the writhing pleasures of the body. The Greek concept of worship, (*proskuneo*), was seen as a specific act of reverence or homage. Modern worship is also seen from the Greek point of view. We worship on Sunday morning. Praise and worship teams are popular today, as those who lead in Sunday morning worship time. Praise is seen as upbeat with a faster tempo and worship is when the tempo is slowed down and more serious adoration is displayed. When the weekly, mundane, cares of the world go through their cycle, then Praise and Worship begins again with the next Sunday morning.

## **SPIRITUALITY**

To the Greek mind, true spirituality is "otherworldly". It is found in living outside of this world and this philosophy can and does lead to all kinds of "New Age" teachings and related religions including modern Christianity. The gods lived outside of this world and so a truly spiritual man lived outside of the cares of this world as well. Denying the physical and condemning emotion was part of this philosophy. Right thinking and right ideas were the hallmarks of the spiritual person. Only the truly educated (the rich) could attain true spirituality, as the poor were destined to take care of the mundane, daily necessities. They were the ditch diggers, caretakers, farmers, and of course carpenters.

Worshipping was something you did with the mind and was not to be demonstrative. Denying one's self was very spiritual, because the physical was evil. The sooner one entered the heavenlies the better. This is why suicide was a very noble thing in Greek thinking. Any Scriptures dealing with a heavenly citizenship was seen as advocating this otherworldly existence. Marriage was seen as of this world and was shunned. Abstaining from meat and certain foods was also promoted as obtaining a higher calling with the new *logos*. Since the *logos* was considered the mind of the minds, focusing on correct thinking was being "in the spirit".

Emotions were also looked down upon in Gnostic thinking. To show emotion was to demonstrate weakness and spiritual immaturity. When emotion was stoic and the body denied then the initiate was truly spiritual. Many early initiates of gnostic thought were vowed to silence, as there was nothing that a truly spiritual person could have to say. Early initiates would live together away from the 'other' people for a time in order to focus on their thinking. When they returned they were the truly spiritual people who only could communicate with the *logos* [count, tell, say, speak, thought, inward intention underlying the speech act]. This led to the great gulf fixed between clergy and laity. Jesus more than likely referred to this thinking when He condemned the Nicolaitans. These men would take a vow of celibacy for life, as they were married to the Lord (the only true bride).

## SALVATION

Salvation is right thinking and creedal in its nature. To 'believe' is to know the right things. This knowledge comes only from the gods. Salvation is a matter of creeds and correct knowledge about the gods. In gnostic thought, the concept of 'keys' is mentioned quite liberally. Scriptural terms such as, 'believe', to 'know' or 'knowledge', 'word' or 'words', 'keys' and 'gates', 'confess' and 'faith', are all tied in with this esoteric knowledge given by the gods. These terms were easily transferred to New Testament teaching. When Jesus said "*I am the door... I am the good shepherd... I am the light of the world... I am the way, the truth, and the life...*", these were understood to speak of the *logos* or the *nous* come down from heaven to distribute this knowledge or *gnosis*. He came to bring the 'keys' of salvation. Let me remind you that in Greek thought the *logos* was the collective mind or *nous* of the gods. In order for the soul to be destined for heaven one must 'believe' certain propositions about the *logos*. The early 'church' remained very 'Hebrew' for the first two centuries and this is why there is no record of 'creeds' being established. The creeds come later when the church is dominated by gentiles and the 'Jewish believers' have been chased away by the Jews and the Christians.

## PRAYER

Praying or communicating with the gods was not an everyday, consistent event in Greek life. The gods were primarily called upon when something was wrong or someone was in need. Prayers were offered by the individual spontaneously. When celebrations in the great arenas were observed, this would be a time of group participation in communicating with the gods. This would be primarily to help with the success of the spectacles arranged to entertain the participants. Prayers would usually be lengthy and colorful. Leaders in the gatherings would usually offer up these prayers to the gods for the people. Communication with the gods was primarily help and request orientated.

In Hebrew thinking, prayer is both ritual and spontaneous. Prayer was usually communal and in the plural. In Hebrew thinking, prayer is usually blessing Elohiym (God), thanking Him and speaking in the past tense. Prayer is much like the feasts in that it is also assigned to 'set times'. Prayer is part of discipline, to train one to daily communicate with the Creator.

Many times today:

- a. Someone is praying for everyone
- b. The preacher is studying the Scriptures for everyone.
- c. Man's soul can now be placed in an eternal, spiritual state by believing the right things and confessing certain propositions about the *logos*. [Acts to earn salvation rather than acts of love and praise.]

**What does God require of me?** has been replaced by **Who is the *logos*?**

adapted from Hebrew Mind vs. Greek Mind

[wildbranch.org/Gkhebcia/index.html](http://wildbranch.org/Gkhebcia/index.html) 2-10-2007

Understanding the differences in their view of man [Greek, (non-Jewish world) as dualism; i.e. soul and body are separate and the Hebrew (people through whom the Christ or Messiah came) as oneness; i.e. soul and body were inclusive as God created them] will provide a basis for understanding the teachings, practices and interpretations of the Bible following the Apostolic era (100 AD).

## Chapter 4

## Church Hierarchy

### The Church Foundation

Simon Peter answered, "**You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.**" Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and **on this rock I will build my church**, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. (Matthew 16:16-18)

To His devoted followers he said "You are those who have stood by me in my trials. And I **confer on you a kingdom**, just as my Father conferred one on me." (Luke 22:28-29) Then on the day of Pentecost "Peter replied, 'Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off — for all whom the Lord our God will call.' With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, 'Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.' **Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.**" (Acts 2:38-41)

### Purchased by Christ

Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the **church of God, which he bought with his own blood.** (Acts 20:28-29)

### Christ is the Head

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is **the head of the body, the church**; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. **For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things**, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace **through his blood, shed on the cross.** (Colossians 1:15-20)

[W]e will all stand before God's judgment seat. It is written: "'As surely as I live,' says the Lord, '**every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.**' All of us will have to give an account of ourselves to God." (Romans 14:10-12)

From the above scriptures it is rather clear that Christ is God, that by His blood; i.e., atoning sacrifice, He purchased the church and that trusting obedient people are placed in it by God and the Son. He, Christ, is the head or leader of these people, the church, to which all people will bow in recognition.

### Organization

"It was he [**Christ**] who gave some to be **apostles**, some to be **prophets**, some to be **evangelists**, and some to be **pastors and teachers**, [some translate this to be teaching pastors as 'some to be' is omitted] to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up

until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.” (Ephesians 4:11-13)

He prayed for unity of His believers “I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect [complete] in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.” (John 17:20-23 NKJV)

As the head of His Church, He established its organization by giving various duties and responsibilities rather than offices or positions that would be needed for the church to function as a unified body faithful and loyal to Him. They were:

- a. Apostles - to bear witness
- b. Prophets - to foretell and/or teach
- c. Evangelists - to proclaim His message of reconciliation, salvation.
- d. Pastors and teachers - elders, shepherds, watchmen, guardians, sentinels or overseers] to keep watch over, warn, encourage, train and teach those under their care.

Paul left Titus on Crete to appoint elders in every town. (Titus 1:5)

One cannot determine with an absolute degree of certainty if elders were appointed in every town or every congregation, if there were more than one congregation in a city or town. We know that Paul was in Ephesus for an extended period of time so it is possible there were more than one congregation or house church. Even if there were more than one group assembling at various places, one could only speculate if there were elders in each group of Christians meeting in homes or elders for the city of Ephesus or if elders from each assembly constituted elders of the city of Ephesus. The same is true of Jerusalem. However, in Jerusalem we know there were thousands of Christians. They met in homes and they also all assembled together; “all believers used to meet together in Solomon’s colonnade” (Acts 5:12) [until the persecution by the leaders of the Jews began]. Whether there were elders for each “home church” or for the entire city they were a united body of believers with singleness of purpose in fellowship and in unity with one another. There is no indication of one elder or one group of elders had a position of authority greater than any other elder or group of elders. Refer to [thebiblewayonline.com](http://thebiblewayonline.com) lessons Functions of Christ’s Church and His Shepherds also Servants of Christ.

Paul foresaw that man’s desires would attempt to alter Christ’s organization for “From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church. When they arrived, he said to them: ... For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God. Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers [watchmen]. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard!” (Acts 20:17-18, 27-31)

From Miletus Paul continued on his journey to Jerusalem. When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and elders, to whom they reported everything God had

done through them. Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, "The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to obey the law of Moses." The apostles and elders met to consider this question. (Acts 15:4-7)

This warning to the Ephesian elders appears to have come true not long afterwards, somewhere around AD 100 as seen in the writings of Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch, Polycarp of Smyrna and others. All refer to "the Bishop of some city." In fact, Ignatius insists on "the division of the bishopric and the presbytery and the monarchical authority of the bishop." The rule of one elder, bishop or pastor is nowhere to be found in the Bible.

Ignatius, Clement of Rome and others concluded that for unity of believers to occur there must be "one doctrinal (episcopate) authority." "So, by early in the second century, church leadership began to transform into something strikingly akin to Roman civil government. The documents primarily responsible for suggesting this unbiblical change was Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, although there is some doubt about the authenticity of his letters. ... It will suffice to point out that in the eight Ignatian letters (ca AD 110) generally thought to be genuine, he insists on the division of the bishopric and the presbytery and the monarchical authority of the bishop, going so far as to compare the bishop with Christ Himself [clearly different from Ignatius and Clement].

Shepherds of the church are to tend those placed in his care; i.e., they must see if any are injured, attack by the enemy, strayed away, hungry or thirsty and provide their need. This cannot be done from a distance. It must be the tender care by one who knows and loves them better than self like Jesus and His love for us.

## Chapter 5

### Middle (Dark) Ages 476 – 1517 AD

The Roman Church was founded by the pagan Roman Emperor Constantine at the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D. to consolidate his empire. It immediately achieved expansive influence at all levels of the imperial government. With the fall of the Western Roman Empire around 476 AD the Constantine Roman Church morphed into the Roman Catholic Church and became the most powerful political force in Europe. So, for nearly 1,000 years with the feudal system and the lack of opportunity for learning, the peasant masses were unable to, or for that matter dared to, challenge the powerful church hierarchy and its supportive lords, rulers and kings.

Around 1200 AD Bible believing Christians began to challenge the Catholic Church's official Bible interpretations, teachings and practices. They separated themselves from the Church of Rome, which they saw as apostate. Consequently, they were seen as a formidable potential threat. To eliminate this perceived threat persecution in varying degrees of severity was instituted and continued for centuries.

### Waldensians (around 1179)

The earliest Waldensians believed in **austerity, public preaching and the personal study of the scriptures**. The sect originated in the late 12th century as the *Poor Men of Lyons*, [France] a band organized by Peter Waldo, a wealthy merchant of Lyon, who gave away his property around 1177 and went about preaching apostolic poverty as the way to perfection. In 1179, they went to Rome, where Pope Alexander III blessed their life but forbade preaching without authorization from the local clergy. They disobeyed and began to preach according to their own understanding of scripture. Seen by the Roman Catholic Church as unorthodox, they were formally declared heretics beginning several centuries of persecution that nearly destroyed the sect.

[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Waldensian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Waldensian)

By the 11th century, in the zeal of the Catholic Church to establish their altered version of Christ's kingdom, the Roman popes began utilizing a new tool -- the Crusades. At first, the Crusades had as their object the conquering of Jerusalem and the "Holy Land". Along the crusaders' paths, thousands of innocent civilians (especially Jews) were raped, robbed, and slaughtered. In time, however, the crusade concept was altered to crush spiritual opposition within Europe itself. In other words, armies were raised with the intent of massacring whole communities of Bible believing Christians.

### Albigenses or Cathars (around 1200)

[Pope] Innocent III believed that Bible believing dissidents were worse than infidels (Saracens, Moslems, and Turks), for they threatened the unity of ... Europe. So Innocent III sponsored "crusades" to exterminate them. Pope Innocent (what a name!) called upon Louis VII to do his killing for him, and he also enjoined Raymond VI to assist him.

The Albigenses or Cathars in southern France were generally considered to be more highly educated and wealthier than others in France. They were labeled as heretics by the pope since they did not follow his edicts. They **owned and read their Bibles** which only priests were authorized to do. In the year 1209, the Catholic Church began its crusade against fellow Europeans Christian. They were referred to in Pope Innocent's Sunday morning messages as "servants of the old serpent". Innocent promised the killers a heavenly kingdom if they took up their swords against the unarmed populaces. The destruction of Catharism, which tended to run in families, was so complete that the Crusade is now considered by historians to be Europe's first genocide.

[quintessentialpublications.com/twyman/?page\\_id=10](http://quintessentialpublications.com/twyman/?page_id=10)

In July of 1209 AD an army of orthodox Catholics, probably part of the Cathars crusade attacked the city of Beziers, France and murdered 60,000 unarmed civilians, killing men, women, and children. The whole city was sacked, and when someone complained that Catholics were being killed as well as "heretics", the papal legates told them to go on killing and not to worry about it for "the Lord knows His own."

At Minerva, 14,000 Christians were put to death in the flames, and ears, noses, and lips of the "heretics" were cut off by the "faithful [Catholics]." <sup>A</sup> Note: According to Webster's II New Riverside University Dictionary, this is a heretic: "One who holds or advocates controversial opinions, **esp. one who publicly opposes the officially accepted dogma of the Roman Catholic Church.**"

These are examples from the long and sordid history of Catholic atrocities committed against their bitter enemies, the Bible believing Christians. Much worse treatment of Bible believers was forthcoming during that stage of bloody Catholic history known as the Inquisition. Pope Alexander IV established the Office of the Inquisition within Italy in 1254. The first inquisitor was Dominic, a Spaniard who was the founder of the Dominican order of monks.

From 1200 to 1500 the long series of Papal ordinances on the Inquisition, ever increasing in severity and cruelty, and their whole policy towards heresy, runs on without a break. It is a rigidly consistent system of legislation: every Pope confirms and improves upon the devices of his predecessor. All is directed to the one end, of completely uprooting every difference of belief... The Inquisition contradicted the simplest principles of Christian justice and love to our neighbor, and would have been rejected with universal horror in the ancient Church. <sup>D</sup>

The Inquisition was purely and uniquely a Catholic institution; it was founded for the express purpose of exterminating every human being in Europe who differed from Roman Catholic beliefs and practices. It spread out from France, Milan, Geneva, Aragon, and Sardinia to Poland (14th century) and then to Bohemia and Rome (1543). It was not abolished in Spain until 1820. <sup>E</sup>

[mtc.org/inquis.html](http://mtc.org/inquis.html)

<sup>A</sup> Peter S. Ruckman, Ph.D.; *The History of the New Testament Church* (Bible Believers Bookstore; Pensacola, Florida; 1 1989)

<sup>D</sup> J.H. Ignaz von Dollinger; *The Pope and the Council* (London, 1869); as cited in Dave Hunt, *A Woman Rides the Beast* <sup>E</sup> Peter S. Ruckman, Ph.D.; op cit.

### **John Wycliffe (1328-1384)**

Wycliffe was an English clergyman who studied and taught at Oxford for most of his life. During this period the Roman Church owned most of the property in England and Europe and the clergymen were nothing more than immoral and dishonest land owners resulting in a heavily burdened people.

In 1376 Wycliffe wrote *Of Civil Dominion*. In it he declared that there needed to be a moral basis for ecclesiastical leadership (All priests should be good men). Ownership of so much land was the root of the problem [this can probably equate to power]. John of Gaunt, acting as king for Richard II, a minor at the time, was delighted to relieve the Roman church of its property to "purify the priesthood." This also gave Wycliffe English Royal protection and led to church reform in 1378 AD.

Wycliffe opposed the Catholic dogma, the Pope's authority and the doctrines of Transubstantiation, private masses, extreme unction for money (anointing the sick, from James 5:14, 15) and purgatory, etc. He insisted in his writings that:

- a. The Pope was not the head of the church, Christ was!
- b. The Pope was the Anti-Christ!
- c. There were only two orders of officers in the church: elders and deacons.
- d. **The Bible, not the church, was the sole authority for man.**
- e. The church should re-model itself after the pattern of the New Testament.

In 1382, 71 years before the fall of the Eastern Roman Empire, he published the first English Bible. In 1428, forty-four years following his death, the Catholic Church denounced him as a heretic, dug up his bones, carried them outside the city and burned them.

### **Chaucer (c. 1343 – 1400)**

Geoffrey Chaucer was an English author, poet, philosopher, bureaucrat, courtier and diplomat. Chaucer's friend and patron was John of Gaunt 1st Duke of Lancaster, Duke of Aquitaine [perhaps the king or ruler of England during Wycliffe's time ] Although he wrote many works, he is best remembered for his unfinished frame narrative The Canterbury Tales, a collection of stories told by fictional pilgrims on the road to the cathedral at Canterbury. Sometimes called the father of English literature, Chaucer is credited by some scholars as the first author to demonstrate the artistic legitimacy of the vernacular English language, rather than French or Latin. Chaucer draws heavily on his source, the humanists Boccaccio.  
[wikipedia.org/wiki/Geoffrey\\_Chaucer](http://wikipedia.org/wiki/Geoffrey_Chaucer)

### **Jan Hus (1372 – 1415)**

Jan Hus was influenced by the teachings of John Wycliffe. He proposed to reform the church in Bohemia just as Wycliffe had in England. Some of his followers were known as Hussites, [who were propelled by social issues and Czech national awareness ([wikipedia.org/wiki/Hussite](http://wikipedia.org/wiki/Hussite))] while the more radical followers were called Taborites. The Taborites **rejected all teachings that were not Biblically founded**. Around 1450, some of the Taborites founded a group known as the Bohemian Brethren. The Moravian church was one of the first Protestant charismatic communities. The Roman Catholic Church considered Hus' teachings heretical. He was excommunicated in 1411, condemned by the Council of Constance, and burned at the stake in 1415 at the age of 43.

Hus was a key contributor to Protestantism, whose teachings had a strong influence on the states of Europe and on Martin Luther himself. The Hussite Wars resulted in the Basel Compacts which allowed for a reformed church in the Kingdom of Bohemia—almost a century before such developments would take place in the Lutheran Reformation.  
[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jan\\_Hus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jan_Hus)

Other Catholic practices also existed such as:

- a. Simony - Church offices were sold to the highest bidder allowing the most unsuitable persons to become bishops and abbots [head of a monastery with less authority than a bishop].

Mediaeval and Modern History, Myers,

p.115-116

- b. Indulgencies – the purchase of forgiveness, both now and after death. John Tetzel's sale of Indulgences was the occasion for Martin Luther's break with Rome – 1517. According to

Roman teaching, purgatory is very much the same as hell, only it does not last as long, but all have to pass through it. The pope claimed to have the authority and power to lessen or remit these sufferings. It began with Popes Pascal I (817-824) and John VIII (872-882) and became very profitable. This became a way of “selling the privilege to sin.”

Halley's Bible Handbook, p.787

[therestorationmovement.com/lessons/chlesson03.htm](http://therestorationmovement.com/lessons/chlesson03.htm)

### **Petr Chelčický (c. 1374 - 1460)**

Petr Chelčický was a Christian and political leader and author in Bohemia. His thinking was influenced by Thomas of Štítný, John Wycliffe, Jan Hus, and the Waldensian tradition.

He criticized the use of force in matters of faith. He taught that the Christian should strive for righteousness of his own free will, that he must not force others to be good, and that goodness should be voluntary. He believed that the **Christian must love God and one's neighbor, and that this is the way to convert people rather than by compulsion**. He maintained that any type of compulsion is evil, and that Christians should not participate in political power struggles.

Chelčický's teachings included ideas later adopted by the Moravians, Anabaptists, Quakers, and Baptists. He was the first pacifist writer of the Renaissance, predating Erasmus and Menno Simons by nearly 100 years.

[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anabaptist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anabaptist)

### **Erasmus (1466 – 1536)**

Erasmus was a “Dutch [humanists] scholar and an unusually brilliant student. He edited a series of studies on the Church Fathers which made available the early history of the departure from the New Testament pattern. He also edited the first printed Greek New Testament and exposed the inadequacy of the Latin Vulgate which had been used as the text of Scripture in the Catholic churches since the time of Jerome. Although Erasmus used ridicule extensively in his criticism of the Catholic church he did not launch out into an energetic program of reformation. He did, however, supply much of the material that other men used. It has been said that Erasmus laid the egg that Luther hatched.”

F.W. Mattox, p 229

The Eternal Kingdom,

### **Machiavelli (1469 – 1527)**

“Humanism in the extreme is a work of Machiavelli entitled *The Prince*. In this manual he stated:

- a. The successful prince must set aside all considerations of religion and ethics.
- b. It would be proper for him to appear religious and at the same time employ fraud.
- c. He might be ruthless when necessary.
- d. There would be two standards of morality – one for the prince and another for the nation.
- e. The prince must distrust the masses for they are ungrateful, inconsistent, deceitful and greedy.
- f. Accordingly, the prince should not consider himself bound to keep any promises he had made to the people.
- g. He emphasized that the state was supreme in power and must be made and kept strong.

In this he set forth the principle of totalitarianism. ... Mussolini wrote the dissertation for his doctorate on the 'Military Ideas of Machiavelli'." The Eternal Kingdom, F.W. Mattox, p. 236

## **Humanism and/or Humanists**

Humanists roots were centuries before the Renaissance.

### Greek humanism

Sixth-century BCE pantheists (one who believes in many gods) Thales of Miletus and Xenophanes of Colophon prepared the way for later Greek humanist thought. Thales is credited with creating the maxim "Know thyself". Xenophanes refused to recognize the gods of his time and reserved the divine for the principle of unity in the universe. ... These Ionian Greeks were the first thinkers to recognize that nature is available to be studied separately from any alleged supernatural realm. ... In the third century BCE, Epicurus became known for his concise phrasing of the problem of evil, lack of belief in the afterlife, and human-centered approaches to achieving *eudaimonia* (Greek meaning happiness).

### Ancient Asian humanism

Human-centered philosophy that rejected the supernatural and a skeptical attitude toward the supernatural can be found in:

- a.) 1000 BCE in the Lokayata system of Indian philosophy (philosophical skepticism and religious indifference)
- b.) 6th century BCE in Taoism (a system of morality to Confucianists)
- c.) Also in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE, Gautama Buddha, since neither soul or anything belonging to soul can really and truly exist, the view that the soul shall hereafter live permanent, persisting, unchanging, yea abide eternally: is not this utterly and entirely a foolish doctrine?<sup>[18]</sup>

### Dante (c.1265 – 1321)

Dante Alighieri an Italian poet of the Middle Ages. He wrote the Divine Comedy, originally called *Commedia* by the author and later nicknamed *Divina* by Boccaccio, [a Renaissance humanist (1313-1375)] is often considered the greatest literary work composed in the Italian language and a masterpiece of world literature. [Normally literary works were written in classical Latin rather than the Italian.]

The Divine Comedy describes Dante's journey through Hell (*Inferno*), Purgatory (*Purgatorio*), and Paradise (*Paradiso*), guided first by the Roman poet Virgil and then by Beatrice. The word "comedy," in the classical sense, refers to works which reflect belief in an ordered universe, in which events not only tended towards a happy or "amusing" ending, but an ending influenced by a Providential will that orders all things to an ultimate good i.e. the pilgrimage from Hell to Paradise begins with the pilgrim's moral confusion and ends with the vision of God. (wikipedia.org/wiki/Dante\_Alighieri) [Apparently this was the prevailing belief of the Catholic teachings of the day.]

### Renaissance Humanism,

Around 1806 *Humanismus* was used to describe the classical curriculum offered by German schools. Renaissance Humanism that flourished in Italy attempted to revive classical Greek and Latin learning. In the latter part of the 18th and the early 19th centuries numerous grass-roots "philanthropic" and benevolent societies were created. They were dedicated to human betterment and human virtue based on human reason alone independently from traditional religious institutions.

In the 19th century, the Catholic Church was seen as a political power exerting a strong influence.

([wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman\\_Catholicism\\_in\\_Germany](http://wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Catholicism_in_Germany))

At about the same time, "humanism" as a philosophy that centered around mankind (as opposed to institutionalized religion) was being used in Germany by the so-called Left Hegelians, Arnold Ruge and Karl Marx, who were critical of the close involvement of the church in the repressive German-Prussia government.

Renaissance humanism was an intellectual movement in Europe of the later Middle Ages and the Early Modern period to move from the age of Darkness by the careful study and imitation of the great classical authors. For Petrarch and Boccaccio, the greatest master was Cicero. Their purpose was to persuade others to lead the good life. As Petrarch put it, 'it is better to will the good than to know the truth.' Rhetoric thus led to and embraced philosophy.

The basic training of the humanist was to speak well and write (typically, in the form of a letter). Initially it was a philosophical rather than anti-Christian or even anti-clerical. But it was considered in some way hostile to the Church, or to the conservative social order in general. The *umanisti* criticized what they considered the barbarous Latin of the universities.

The humanists' close study of Latin literary texts soon enabled them to discern historical differences in the writing styles of different periods. By analogy with what they saw as decline of Latin, they applied the principle of *ad fontes* (back to the sources) across broad areas of learning, seeking out manuscripts of Patristic literature [writing of "church fathers"] as well as pagan authors. After the fall of the Byzantine Empire in 1453, refugees brought with them Greek manuscripts, not only of Plato and Aristotle, but also of the Christian Gospels, previously unavailable in the Latin West.

After 1517, when the new invention of printing made these texts widely available, the Dutch humanist Erasmus, who had studied Greek at the Venetian printing house of Aldus Manutius, began a philological [considers both form and meaning in linguistic expression, combining linguistics and literary studies] analysis of the Gospels, comparing the Greek originals with their Latin translations with a view to correcting errors and discrepancies in the latter. Erasmus, along with the French humanist Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples, began issuing new translations, laying the groundwork for the Protestant Reformation. Henceforth Renaissance humanism, particularly in the German North, became concerned with religion, while Italian and French humanism concentrated increasingly on scholarship and philology addressed to a narrow audience of specialists, studiously avoiding topics that might offend despotic rulers or which might be seen as corrosive of faith.

[wikipedia.org/wiki/Humanism](http://wikipedia.org/wiki/Humanism)

### Consequences of the Renaissance humanist movement

The *ad fontes* principle (back to the source) also had many applications. The humanists were often opposed to philosophers of the preceding movement of Scholasticism, the "schoolmen" of the universities of Italy, Paris, Oxford and elsewhere. The scholastics' methodology had developed out of their engagement with the science and philosophy of the ancient Greeks and medieval Arabs in an attempt to synthesize the thought of Aristotle with Catholicism. But they had not engaged with the literary, historical and other cultural texts of antiquity.

[wikipedia.org/wiki/Renaissance\\_humanism](http://wikipedia.org/wiki/Renaissance_humanism)

The re-discovery of ancient manuscripts brought a more profound and accurate knowledge of ancient philosophical schools such as Epicureanism, and Neoplatonism, whose Pagan wisdom the humanists, like the Church fathers of old, tended, at least initially, to consider as deriving from divine revelation and thus adaptable to a life of Christian virtue.

([en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humanism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humanism)) By refocusing on those literary, historical, oratorical, and theological texts, Renaissance humanism profoundly changed the cultural and intellectual direction of Europe. In philosophy Renaissance humanists tended to focus more attention on Plato's dialogues and less on the Aristotelian texts.

[wikipedia.org/wiki/Renaissance\\_humanism](http://wikipedia.org/wiki/Renaissance_humanism)

Better acquaintance with Greek and Roman technical writings also influenced the development of European science in which Platonism (the theory of forms and antitypes) stood in opposition to the Aristotelian concentration (the study or theory of design and purpose) on the observable properties of the physical world.<sup>[33]</sup> But Renaissance humanists, who considered themselves as restoring the glory and nobility of antiquity, had no interest in scientific innovation. However, by the mid-to-late 16th century, even the universities, though still dominated by Scholasticism (resolution of the disagreement through rational discussion), began to demand that Aristotle be read in accurate texts edited according to the principles of Renaissance philology, thus setting the stage for Galileo's quarrels with the outmoded habits of Scholasticism.

### Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

The phrase the "religion of humanity" is sometimes attributed to American Founding Father, Thomas Paine, though as yet unattested in his surviving writings. Thomas Paine called himself a *theophilanthropist*, a word combining the Greek for "God", "love," and "man", and indicating that while he believed in the existence of a creating intelligence in the universe, he entirely rejected the claims made by and for all existing religious doctrines, especially their miraculous, transcendental and salvationist pretensions. The Parisian Society of Theophilanthropy used Paine's book, the *Age of Reason* (1793), to pour scorn on scripture combined with Voltairean mockery "to expose the absurdity of a theology built on a collection of incoherent Levantine folktales." In the 19<sup>th</sup> century Ludwig Feuerbach of the Hegelians wrote ("Man is a god to man" or "god is nothing [other than] man to himself").

The original signers of the Humanist Manifesto I of 1933, declared themselves to be religious humanists. Because of the failure of traditional *religions to meet the needs of their day, the signers*

*of 1933 declared it a major necessity to establish a religion that was a dynamic force to meet the needs of the day. Since then two additional Manifestos were written to replace the first.*

In the Preface of Humanist Manifesto II, the authors Paul Kurtz and Edwin H. Wilson (1973) affirm that faith and knowledge is required for a hopeful vision for the future. Manifesto II references a section on Religion and states traditional religion renders a disservice to humanity. Manifesto II recognizes the following groups to be part of their naturalistic philosophy: scientific, ethical, democratic, religious, and Marxist humanism.

In 1941, the American Humanist Association was organized. After World War II, three prominent Humanists became the first directors of major divisions of the United Nations: Julian Huxley of UNESCO, Brock Chisholm of the World Health Organization, and John Boyd-Orr of the Food and Agricultural Organization.<sup>[49]</sup>

In 2004, American Humanist Association, along with other groups representing agnostics, atheists, and other freethinkers, joined to create the Secular Coalition for America which advocates in Washington, D.C. for separation of church and state and nationally for the greater acceptance of nontheistic Americans. The Executive Director of Secular Coalition for America is Sean Faircloth a long-time state legislator from Maine.

Modern Humanists, such as Corliss Lamont or Carl Sagan, hold that humanity must seek for truth through reason and the best observable evidence and endorse scientific skepticism and the scientific method. However, they stipulate that **decisions about right and wrong must be based on the individual and common good.** [i.e., there are no absolute values.] As an ethical process, Humanism does not consider metaphysical issues such as the existence or nonexistence of immortal beings. Humanism is engaged with what is human.<sup>[9]</sup> So there are no absolutes.

In 1925, the English mathematician and philosopher Alfred North Whitehead cautioned: "The prophecy of Francis Bacon has now been fulfilled; and **man, who at times dreamt of himself as a little lower than the angels, has submitted to become the servant and the minister of nature.** It still remains to be seen whether the same actor can play both body parts."<sup>[10]</sup>  
[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humanism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humanism)

## Chapter 7

### Summary

The apostles warned of time when people would turn away from sound doctrine and follow their own desires. It was evident this had already occurred by John's letters to the churches of Asia recorded in Revelation.

In the years following the apostolic era (after 100 AD) the writings of the "church fathers" begin following their own opinions. Over the years their teachings and practices became so bad or corrupt that Catholic Bible scholars rejected many of these practices and teachings at the risk of life and livelihood. Some wanted only to reform some of the worst practices rather than a complete return to the Bible for all teachings and practices.

For centuries students of the Bible have recognized the need to return to the Bible for guidance in living lives pleasing to God and in daily worship to Him. Wycliffe spoke out against teachings and practices of the Catholic Church that were not found in the scriptures. He also desired to provide the Bible in his native language for the common man to be able to gain a better knowledge of God's word rather than to rely on someone else's interpretation. It cost him his life.

Within a few years another Bible student Jan Hus spawned a following that rejected all teachings that were not biblically founded. He only survived a few short years having been considered a heretic by the Catholic Church, excommunicated, condemned by the Council of Constance and burned at the stake in 1415.

These men and others were persecuted because they dared put their faith in the Bible rather than the teachings and practices of man. But persecution was not something new it began with the Jews, escalated by the Roman Emperors and continued by the Roman Catholic Church, who massacred thousands for owning or just reading God's word. Persecution will not cease. It exists today in various forms – ridicule, bodily harm, property destruction and even death. Within less than fifty years from Hus's death the Guttenberg press made Bibles more accessible. As the Bible became available, more people began to question the teaching, practices and interpretations prevalent at the time. The embers of a call for reform and a return to the Bible lay smoldering for another fifty years. But in 1517 Martin Luther lit the fire when he posted his 95 thesis to the door at All Saints Church in Wittenberg. Soon Zwingli and others followed Luther in condemning the current teachings, practices and unscholarly interpretations. They demanded reform. But reform did not appear possible and many who opposed the established Catholic Church hierarchy lost their lives.

Soon others concluded that if their church [Catholic] could not be reformed, then it was time to abandon it. This resulted in several new religious orders being established based upon the teaching and practices of such men as Martin Luther, John Calvin and John Wesley to name three of the more prominent ones. Their followers developed from their understanding a standard, formulated it in writing and required all of their followers to comply and conform to their creed.

Those attempting to reform the Catholic Church focused on changing that organization. Others focused on teachings of those attempting to reform the Catholic Church. Neither group realized that man was the problem who needed to ask "What must I do to return to God?" This question is the same question that faced the Children of Israel every time they broke their covenant with God and followed the practices of those around them.

Man needed to return to God, remove all foreign practices and return to God's teachings using only the Bible. God had already established His Church and was putting all in it who put their faith, trust and obedience in Jesus, the Christ, His beloved son.

### **Some Controversial Teachings of "Church" Fathers**

1. Unity among believers can occur only from one doctrinal authority – Episcopal councils – Papal system.
2. The "Church" acting through the Bishop of Rome has authority over all Christians – church hierarchy established
3. Nothing should be done without approval of the Bishop.
4. Celebration of special days such as Easter.
5. Priesthood as specialized class of intermediaries on behalf of the Bishop – replacing Christ.
6. Development of Sacraments – some of Christ's teachings are of more importance than others.
7. Created mono-episcopate where Bishops were appointed from an unbroken chain from apostles to current Bishop, Pope, who had assumed the title conferred upon the Emperors, Pontificus Maximus.
8. Changes in practice and form of baptism:
  - a. Children baptized with parent confessing for them
  - b. Substituting pouring for immersion
  - c. Requiring specific words for baptism to be effective.
9. Called an Episcopal council to establish one acceptable doctrine.
10. Combined Greek philosophical tradition with Christian doctrine

11. Humans are divine souls trapped in a material world created by imperfect God.
12. Receiving of direct personal knowledge beyond Gospel. [Montanism]
13. Soul passes through successive stages before incarnation as a human and after death eventually reaching God.
14. Established rules for determining biblical doctrines:  
What was not allowed in scripture is forbidden

Versus

What was not forbidden by scripture is allowed

15. Established Rule of Faith where authoritative teachings handed down in the Catholic Church and scripture carry equivalent weight.
16. Calvin adapted some of Augustine's beliefs for his theology
  - a. Sovereignty of God
  - b. Total depravity of mankind
  - c. Unconditional election
  - d. Limited atonement
  - e. Irresistible grace
  - f. Perseverance of saints

### **Teachings and Practices Deemed Abusive by Catholic Scholars**

1. Wycliffe
  - a. Church owned most of the property in England
  - b. Clergymen were nothing more than immoral landowners
  - c. Pope's assumption of authority. Pope was not the head of the Church, Christ is.
  - d. Addition of multiple orders of leaders as only elders and deacons in church of the Bible
  - e. Doctrine of transubstantiation
  - f. Private masses
  - g. Extreme unction
  - h. Purgatory
  - i. Sale of church offices
  - j. Only the priest could own and read the Bible
  - k. Common man could no own or read the bible
2. Luther
  - a. Sale of indulgencies [sale of right to sin or pay for privilege to sin]
  - b. Purgatory
  - c. Doctrine of transubstantiation
  - d. Worship of saints
  - e. Sacraments
  - f. Pope or Church did not constitute final authority for a Christian
3. Zwingli
  - a. Church involvement in government
  - b. Fasting during lent
  - c. Use of images (Icons) within stages of worship
  - d. Corruption within church hierarchical structure
  - e. Prohibition of marriage in clergy

### **Some Teachings and practices of Reformers**

1. Wycliffe
  1. Christ is the head of the Church

2. Church Leaders must be moral men – not purchase position
  3. Bible is sole authority for man – not Catholic Church
  4. Only two orders of church leaders – elders and deacons
2. Luther
    1. Bible alone constitutes final authority for a Christian