

The Early Church: The First Four Centuries

**Sunday Night Seminar
Tulsa Christian Fellowship
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Introductory Remarks

Over the next several weeks, we will explore the development of the early church as it grew from locally led congregations on the fringes of society into the established official religion of the Roman Empire. We will begin with the birth of the Church on Pentecost, 30 AD, and conclude with the waning years of the Fourth Century.

We will give our attention to a rather broad range of topics, including:

- the development of church government
- life within the church community
- the content and timing of the church gatherings
- the spread of Christianity
- the firming up of doctrine and the controversy stirred by heretical movements
- the impact that government and society made upon the development of the Church
- the history of martyrdoms
- unplanned topics as we encounter them upon our journey through the centuries

The first section of our study will explore the First Century Church, as it existed under the leadership of the apostles and those associated with them. After the death of John, at the close of the First Century,¹ the churches were led by those who had been discipled by the apostles; then, as the century progressed, these in turn discipled their successors. Thus, even into the earliest years of the Second Century, it would not be incorrect to describe the Church as the “Apostolic Church.” In the ensuing centuries, even though the apostolic presence was manifest through the authority of Scripture, pragmatism and hierarchical authority often dominated the molding of the established Church,. These matters will become evident as we progress through our study.

PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

Before launching into the historical study, there are preliminary considerations and questions that must be settled concerning the Church. Two questions immediately before us are the exegesis of Matthew 16:16-19 and the definition of the term, *Church*.

Upon this Rock I will build my Church

Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

¹ The most probable date for John's death is 98 AD. For a discussion of this conclusion and how it is achieved, see Lightfoot, *History of the Christian Church*, Volume I, “Apostolic Christianity” (Peabody, MA, Hendrickson Publishers) 1996, pages 424-429

And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.

"I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.

"I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven."²

According to the Gospel record, this is the first time that Jesus spoke of the *Church*.³ Among the various comments that could be made on these verses, two things are apparent and require little comment:

- The Church would be Jesus' Church
- Jesus, Himself, will be the builder of His Church

A third, and very important element, is the identity of the *rock* upon which Jesus said He would build His Church. Three points of view exist concerning the meaning of Jesus' statement, *you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church*:

View #1 Jesus will build His Church upon Peter

View #2 Jesus will build His Church upon the confession, *You are the Christ, the Son of the living God*.

View #3 Jesus will build His Church upon the fact stated in the confession, i.e., Christ Himself will be the foundation.

Advocates of View #1 point to seven things as the basis for their position:

1. Jesus' gave the name, *Peter*, to the disciple whose birth-name was Simon Barjona (i.e., *Simon, Son of John*, Matthew 16:17). *Peter* is the Anglicization of the Greek, *Petros* (πέτρος), which means, *rock*. The bestowal of this new name is followed immediately by Jesus' statement, *and upon this rock I will build My Church*. Thus, Jesus stated that He would build His Church upon the person of Peter – *the Rock*.
2. The *you* is singular in Jesus' statement concerning the giving of the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven.⁴ Thus, Jesus did not say to the Twelve that He would give them the keys, but He only promised this to Peter.
3. The, *you*, in the promise made concerning binding and loosing is singular,⁵ indicating that on this occasion, the promise was made only to Peter.
4. Paul wrote that the household of God is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets (Ephesians 2:19-20), which includes Peter.
5. In the formative days of the Jerusalem Church, Peter stood out as the dominant leader.
6. Peter possessed exceptional miraculous powers, to the point that people put their sick along the roadway, hoping that Peter's shadow would fall on them (Acts 5:15).
7. Some writers in the ensuing centuries spoke of Peter as the first bishop of Rome.

Arguments presented by opponents to View #1

² Matthew 16:16-19

³ Only Matthew contains any record of Jesus' using the term, *church*, and he only records two instances in which the term occurs – the first is the one before us and the second is Matthew 18:17, in which Jesus discusses church discipline.

⁴ Greek: σοι dative, singular of the Greek word signifying *you*

⁵ Greek: σοι dative singular of the Greek word signifying, *you*

1. The first argument presented in opposition to View #1 addresses the name, *Peter* (πέτρος - *petros*).

A day or two after being immersed by John, Jesus met Simon. In this initial meeting, Jesus gave Simon a nick-name that was descriptive of Simon's character and personality. The Gospel of John describes the scene.

One of the two who heard John speak and followed Him, was Andrew, ...He found first his own brother Simon and ...he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John; you shall be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter).⁶

Jesus spoke Aramaic. The Gospel of John occasionally quotes Jesus literally and then translates the Aramaic into Greek. In the short section before us, this occurs three times (John 1:38, 41, 42). *Cephas* (κηφᾶς) is the Chaldean/Aramaic word for *stone*⁷ – the equivalent of the Greek term πέτρος (*petros*), which is Anglicized as *Peter*.

Thus, according to the Gospel of John, Jesus gave to Simon the nick-name, *Peter* (i.e., *Cephas*), about three years prior to the episode recorded in Matthew 16. When Jesus said, *you are Peter, and upon this rock....* He was not bestowing the name, but rather was affirming the nick-name that He had given to Simon at their first meeting.

The Issue of Two Different Terms in Matthew 16:17

Two Greek terms meaning, *rock*, are used in Matthew 16:17. The first, as already noted, is πέτρος (*petros*), the nick-name given to Simon. The other term is πέτρα (*petra*), the term used for the foundational rock upon which Jesus will build His Church.

A survey of the use of the two Greek terms in the New Testament and secular literature will demonstrate the difference in meaning between the two.

I. The term, πέτρα, occurs nine times in the New Testament

A. In six instances, the meaning of the term clearly is bedrock or a mountainous rock.

Matthew 7:24-26 *"Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the **rock**. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the **rock**. Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand..."*

Matthew 27:51 *And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook and the **rocks** were split.*

Matthew 27:60 *and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the **rock**; and he rolled a large stone (λίθος - lithos)⁸ against the entrance of the tomb and went away.*

⁶ John 1:40-42

⁷ Gerhard Kittel & Gerhard Friederich editors, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Volume VI, (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company) 1968, page 100.

⁸ λίθος is a third Greek word meaning, *stone*. This term is used for stones of any sort, including building stones, precious stones, millstones, stones used to seal graves, etc. Note that the tomb was hewn out of πέτρα, a solid rock cliff or mountain side, whereas λίθος, here describes a moveable stone

Mark 15:46 *Joseph bought a linen cloth, took Him down, wrapped Him in the linen cloth and laid Him in a tomb which had been hewn out in the **rock**; and he rolled a stone (λίθος)⁹ against the entrance of the tomb.*

Luke 8:6 *"Other seed fell on **rocky** soil, and as soon as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture.*

Revelation 6:15 *Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the **rocks** of the mountains;*

B. In three instances, the exact nature of πέτρα is ambiguous¹⁰

Romans 9:33 *just as it is written, "Behold, I lay in Zion a stone (λίθος)¹¹ of stumbling and a **rock** of offense, and he who believes in him will not be disappointed."*

1 Peter 2:8 *and, "A stone (λίθος)¹² of stumbling and a **rock** of offense"; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed.*

1 Corinthians 10:4 *and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual **rock** which followed them; and the **rock** was Christ.¹³*

II. The term, πέτρος, occurs in the New Testament only as Simon's nickname. Thus, the New Testament provides no help in seeking a definition of the term.

III. πέτρος, is found frequently in apocryphal and secular literature. In each genre the term is used with a consistent meaning.

A. Here are two examples from II Maccabees:

II Maccabees 1:16 *Then they opened a hidden trapdoor in the ceiling, hurled **stones** at the leader and his companions and struck them down. They dismembered the bodies, cut off their heads and tossed them to the people outside.*

II Maccabees 4:41 *Reacting against Lysimachus' attack, the people picked up **stones** or pieces of wood or handfuls of the ashes lying there and threw them in wild confusion at Lysimachus and his men.*

B. Here are two examples from Homer's, *The Iliad*

Book II, 16.734 *and Patroclus over against him leapt from his chariot to the ground with a spear in his left hand, while with the other he grasped a **stone**, shining and jagged, that his hand compassed about. Firmly he planted himself, and hurled it,*

⁹ See previous footnote

¹⁰ Note that Romans 9:33 and I Peter 2:8 quote Isaiah 8:14. These two New Testament quotations use the Greek terms that are used in the Septuagint Version of Isaiah 8:14.

¹¹ See footnote 7

¹² See footnote 7

¹³ In later Jewish speculation a combination of Exodus 17 and Numbers 20 gave birth to the legend of a rocky fountain which followed the people in the time of Moses and supplied them with water: 'Even so it was with the fountain which was with Israel in the wilderness; it resembled a rock full of holes like a sieve, and the water trickled through and rose up as from the opening of a flask. It went up the mountains with them and descended with them to the valleys' (Tractate Sukka 3, 11ff. in Str. B., III. 406) as quoted in Kittel, page 97. Paul used this legend to affirm a truth about Christ – somewhat of an *ad hominem* argument.

Book II 7.270 *and he burst the buckler inwards with the cast of the rock that was like unto a mill-stone, and beat down Hector's knees...*

C. In secular Greek, the term also is used metaphorically to describe a soul that is unyielding or unfeeling. Here are two examples of such usage from Euripides:

Medea line 28 *She is as deaf to the advice of her friends as a stone*

Heracles line 1397 *Ah! Would I could become a stone upon this spot, oblivious of trouble.*

From this inductive study, it becomes apparent that the two terms, πέτρα and πέτρος, normally are used to indicate two different types of stone:

Πέτρα (*petra*) is a feminine noun, referring to a solid virgin mass of rock, such as bedrock or rocky cliffs into which tombs and caves can be hewn. This is the term that always is used when such rock or stone is being described.

Πέτρος (*petros*) is a masculine noun, referring to a stone small enough to be used in a slingshot, thrown by hand, or one that can be set up as a boundary marker – in essence a piece broken off of a mass of rock. In literature it is a figure of speech for one with a hard heart or an unyielding nature.

Advocates of Views 2 & 3 conclude that Jesus used these two terms with their normally understood meanings. The nickname, πέτρος, was given to Simon because it was descriptive of his personality and character.

Opponents of View #1 point out that there is no evidence that Peter claimed to be that foundation. The following quote from R. C. Foster presents this argument,¹⁴

“The best interpreter of what Jesus said and meant should be Peter to whom He spoke. As we turn to the fulfillment of this prediction in the Book of Acts, do we find Peter informing the multitude at Pentecost that Jesus had predicted at Caesarea Philippi that he [Peter] would be the foundation of the church, and did he offer himself as this foundation? Read his opening sermons again and see that he pointed to the Stone which the builders had rejected and which God had made the Head of the corner. When he wrote his epistles late in life, he returned again to this theme and exalted Christ as the foundation of the church. All Christians are living stones built into the structure, and the apostles have places of honor, but it is Christ who is the living Stone on whom the church is founded, *...if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord. And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God.*”¹⁵

2. The second issue addressed by advocates of Views #2 & #3 is the interpretation of Jesus’ statement concerning the Keys to the Kingdom of Heaven

Because the second person pronoun, *you*, is singular in Jesus statement concerning the keys, any honest exegete must conclude that Jesus gave to Peter the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. The challenge is to determine what Jesus meant when He said this. Those who argue that Peter is the rock upon which the Church is built conclude that Peter through the Church built upon him, bestows and withholds salvation from individuals.

¹⁴ R. C. Foster, *Studies in the Life of Christ*, (Joplin, MO, College Press) 1996, p. 716

¹⁵ I Peter 2:3-4

In opposition to this view, advocates of Views 2 & 3 present different scenarios and many of them are quite weak. Their strongest and most reasonable explanation declares that the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven were given to Peter and that he did exercise the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven when:

- He preached the Gospel on Pentecost and unlocked heaven to the Jews (Acts 2).
- He validated the preaching of the Gospel to half-breed Jews when he and John visited Philip's Samaritan evangelistic event and bestowed the Holy Spirit upon the converts (Acts 8).
- He preached the Gospel to Gentiles and unlocked heaven to all non-Jews (Acts 10).

In all three of these instances, the Holy Spirit was bestowed through the work of Peter. It is the Holy Spirit that is the believer's guarantee that he has a place in heaven.

In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation-- having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.¹⁶

Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God, who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge.¹⁷

Each time a category of humanity was offered the opportunity to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, Peter is the one who opened the door and promised heaven to the converts:

- Jews on Pentecost (Acts 2);
- half-breed Jews in Samaria (Acts 8);
- Gentiles in Caesarea (Acts 10).

The result was that all of humanity was offered heaven through Peter's inaugural work. Advocates of views #2 & #3 understand this as being the fulfillment of Jesus promise to Peter that he would be the administrator of the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven.

3. Binding and Loosing are the third topic addressed by those who oppose View #1

Even as the pronoun *you* is singular in reference to the Keys of the Kingdom, so it also is singular with reference to binding¹⁸ and loosing.¹⁹ Most advocates of View #1 declare that only the institutional Church (as Peter's successor) can extend grace and forgiveness, as well as pronounce anathema upon individuals.

In order to understand what Jesus said to Peter concerning binding and loosing, one must pay attention to the Greek verbs used in the promise. The Greek verbs are periphrastic future perfect tense,²⁰ passive voice. A near literal translation of Jesus' statement concerning binding and loosing (both here and elsewhere in Scripture) contains the concept, "already has been."

*...shall already have been bound....shall already have been loosed.
...shall already have been forgiven.... shall already have been retained.²¹*

¹⁶ Ephesians 1:13-14

¹⁷ II Corinthians 1:21-22

¹⁸ δῆσῃς subjunctive aorist active second person singular

¹⁹ λύσῃς subjunctive aorist active second person singular

²⁰The form of the verb is perfect tense. However, when a perfect tense verb is used with a future tense of the state of being verb, εἶμι (*eimi*), the tense becomes periphrastic future perfect.

²¹ Most interlinear Bibles bring out this sense of the Greek in their literal translations

Thus, Peter was given the authority to bind what heaven decreed as bound and to loose what heaven has decreed as loosed. When Peter preached the Gospel and when someone accepted it, God already had declared such to be freed from sin. On the other hand, God already had declared that those who reject the Gospel will continue to be bound in their sin.

How a tenant is evicted from a house illustrates the point of the Greek terminology.

- A judge issues an eviction notice.
- The sheriff goes to the house and physically removes the tenant.
- The sheriff has no authority to remove the tenant unless the judge has issued an eviction notice.
- If such an eviction notice has been issued, all of the authority of the state is vested in the sheriff as he carries out the court order.

Likewise, Peter could not bind anything or loose anything that heaven had not decreed already bound or loosed. This truth stands in stark contrast to the view that heaven must honor what the Church decrees. It is the other way around, the Church is to honor and execute what heaven already has decreed.²²

Advocates of Views #2 & #3 point out that Jesus made statements later in His ministry that removed Peter from being the exclusive “binder and looser.” Here are two examples:

- The same Greek terms are used in the record of Jesus’ instructions concerning Church discipline and reconciliation between disputing brothers.

And if your brother sins, go and reprove him in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed. And if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax-gatherer. Truly I say to you, whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. (Matthew 18:15-18)²³

- After His resurrection, the Lord appeared to the apostles and used similar, if not identical,²⁴ terminology.

Jesus therefore said to them again, Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you." And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained. (John 20:21-23)²⁵

In order to understand what Jesus meant by this declaration, we must examine how the apostles carried out this decree. The Pentecost event was the first opportunity that they had to forgive and

²² Not only Roman Catholicism, but many Word of Faith teachers and others who speak on “the authority of the believer,” fall into this error.

²³ In the scene described here, the gathered church functions as a court, judging between two brothers who are at odds with one another. When the church pronounces judgment, its decision is binding. This reflects the rabbinical practice of binding certain matters within synagogues. In the rabbinical literature, one finds expressions such as, "Rabbi X binds..." and "Rabbi C looses..." Thus, when the disputing brothers come before the church, the church hears them out and pronounces a decision. This decision is binding upon the brothers. If one party to the dispute does not heed the church's pronouncement, he is to be excommunicated.

²⁴ The Greek terminology is not periphrastic future perfect. See following footnote.

²⁵ Our Lord here referred to the general ministry of the apostles. Their ministry of preaching the Gospel certainly is included in this statement. Only through the preaching of the Gospel can we offer forgiveness of sins. Therefore, when the Gospel is preached, if a hearer receives Christ, his sins are removed. If a hearer rejects the Gospel, his sins are retained. Church discipline also could be in view, here. The obdurate brother who refuses to "hear the church" in Matthew 18:17 is loosed from the church, retaining his sin.

retain sins. Their actions and message described in the Acts 2 narrative present, in a general manner, the apostolic pattern of binding and loosing of sins. Note the following.

1. The Holy Spirit was involved;
2. The promise of forgiveness to those who would repent and be immersed;
3. The promise of the reception of the Holy Spirit to all who would repent and be immersed.

Note what did not happen:

None of the apostles imparted forgiveness with the personal authority that Jesus displayed during His earthly ministry. Here are two clear examples:

- *Seeing their faith, He said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven you." The scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, "Who is this man who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?" But Jesus, aware of their reasonings, answered and said to them, "Why are you reasoning in your hearts? "Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins have been forgiven you,' or to say, 'Get up and walk '? "But, so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins,"-- He said to the paralytic-- "I say to you, get up, and pick up your stretcher and go home." Immediately he got up before them, and picked up what he had been lying on, and went home glorifying God."²⁶*
- *And there was a woman in the city who was a sinner; and when she learned that He was reclining at the table in the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster vial of perfume, and standing behind Him at His feet, weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears, and kept wiping them with the hair of her head, and kissing His feet and anointing them with the perfume....Turning toward the woman, He said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has wet My feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. "You gave Me no kiss; but she, since the time I came in, has not ceased to kiss My feet. "You did not anoint My head with oil, but she anointed My feet with perfume. "For this reason I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little."²⁷*

Although the textual integrity of the account is questionable, the story of the woman taken in adultery illustrates Jesus' exercising the authority to forgive sin.

The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery, and having set her in the center of the court, they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in adultery, in the very act. "Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women; what then do You say?" They were saying this, testing Him, so that they might have grounds for accusing Him. But Jesus stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground. But when they persisted in asking Him, He straightened up, and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." Again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. When they heard it, they began to go out one by one, beginning with the older ones, and He was left alone, and the woman, where she was, in the center of the court. Straightening up, Jesus said to her, "Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?" She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more."²⁸

²⁶ Luke 5:20-25

²⁷ Luke 7:37-38, 44-47

²⁸ John 8:3-27

The biblical record is consistent that after Pentecost forgiveness or retention of sin was based on a hearer's response to the Gospel message. Forgiveness of sin is promised to those who hear the Gospel message, believe it, and submit to immersion as a sign of their acceptance and surrender to Christ's Lordship.

There is another dimension, however. What about the scripture passages stating that those who are in the Kingdom have their sins forgiven if they confess them? Does this not justify the Roman Catholic establishment of a confessional, in which a priest hears confession and then absolves a person of sin?

An examination of the passages that make this statement do not speak of any clergy or person of spiritual authority's being required to be a part of the event in order for sins to be forgiven.

- *Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.*²⁹
- *but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*³⁰

In both of these passages there is an exhortation to confess sins with the promise of forgiveness and in once instance, healing. Yet in neither of these is there any hint of a clerical presence. James for that matter, urges Christians to confess sins to one another. All of this is consistent with the statement, *For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus*³¹

With this evidence before us, we must reject the idea that Jesus imparted to the apostles special powers of forgiveness and retention of sin. We also must reject the idea that a clergyman must hear one's confession for it to have any heavenly import.

The point of all of this is that Peter and those who succeeded him do not have the authority to do things that heaven has to honor. Rather, Peter and those who succeeded him must honor what heaven already has done. Neither was the ministry of binding and loosing given exclusively to Peter.

4. The fourth assertion challenged by those who oppose View #1 is the declaration that Peter was the first bishop of Rome and that his successors occupy his place of supreme earthly authority for the Church.

The first thing that has to be ascertained concerning this assertion is the validity of the claim that Peter spent time in Rome.

- There is no clear biblical record of Peter's presence in Rome. For that matter what record there is indicates that at the time of the writing of Acts and Paul's Epistle to the Romans, Peter probably was not in Rome.³² This leads to the conclusion that Peter did not visit Rome before the terminal date of these documents, which was 63 AD.

²⁹ James 5:16

³⁰ I John 1:7-9

³¹ I Timothy 2:5

³² "The entire silence of the Acts of the Apostles, in Chapter 28, respecting Peter, as well as the silence of Paul in his epistle to the Romans, and the epistles written from Rome during his imprisonment there, in which Peter is not once named in the salutations, is decisive proof that he was absent from that city during most of the time between the years 58 and 63. A casual visit before 58 is possible, but extremely doubtful, in view of the fact that Paul labored independently and never built on the foundation of others [Romans 15:20; II Cor. 10:16] ; hence he would probably not have written his epistle to the Romans at all, certainly not without some allusion to Peter if he [Peter] would have

- On the other hand, the traditions concerning Peter's presence in Rome are so prevalent in post-biblical literature that they must be based upon some fact. It is the uniform tradition of both the Eastern and Western Church that Peter preached in Rome and was martyred there during the Neronian persecution,³³ which, according to Tacitus, began in July 64 AD. Various ones have assigned Peter's death to every year between 64 and 69 AD. Many consider "Babylon," in I Peter 5:13 to be a veiled reference to Rome.

The second thing to examine is the claim that Peter was the first Bishop of Rome and thus exercised some sort of primacy over other bishops in the world-wide Church. Is there anything to hint that Peter occupied the place claimed by Roman Catholic Popes?

- That Peter was the most dominant of the Twelve apostles is apparent, both from the Gospel records and the early chapters of Acts. However, it is a far stretch to move from being a preeminent apostle to being the bishop of Rome, i.e., the Pope, who since 1870 has been declared as infallible when speaking *ex-cathedra*.
- One would think that if Christ had appointed Peter to such a role, there would be some passage in Scripture in which this clearly is stated. There is no such statement in Scripture, unless one interprets the Matthew 16 passage in such a manner.
- Clement of Rome, who in 95 AD mentioned Peter's martyrdom, and Ignatius of Antioch, who in the first decade of the Second Century alluded to Peter and Paul as having exhorted the Roman Church, have not a word to say about Peter's authority or his bestowal of authority upon any successors.
- There is no hint in the New Testament of a magisterial bishop. The first mention of such is in the writings of Ignatius, early in the Second Century (which we will examine later). According to Ignatius' scheme, a magisterial bishop resided in each of the churches to which he wrote. However none of these was elevated above bishops in other churches. Interestingly, in the seven letters that Ignatius wrote³⁴, the only one in which he does not mention a magisterial bishop is the one he wrote to Rome.
- There are several conditions in Peter's life that do not fit the role of the papacy as it presently is defined.
 1. Peter was married and took his wife with him on missionary journeys (Matthew 8:14; I Corinthians 9:5). Patristic tradition says that he had children, at least a daughter named, Petronilla. Such does not fit the papal picture.
 2. In the council at Jerusalem, Peter appears as the first speaker and debater, not as the president and judge; James seems to have presided (Acts 15:1-11). In this council, Peter assumes no special prerogative. He is not the infallible arbiter. He occupies a role similar to a witness testifying in a court case.

been in any proper sense the founder of the church of Rome." Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Volume 1 (Peabody, Mass., Hendrickson Publishers) 1996, page 251

³³ Although there is some obvious error in the writings and differences, even contradictions, concerning specifics and circumstances, the testimony of Peter's martyrdom in Rome is consistent. This is the testimony of Clement of Rome (who mentions the martyrdom but not the place) at the close of the First Century; Ignatius of Antioch (vaguely), Dionysius of Corinth, Irenaeus of Lyons, Caius of Rome, in the Second Century; Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Hippolytus, Tertullian, in the Third Century; Lactantius, Eusebius, Jerome, and others in the Fourth Century (see Schaff, page 251ff)

³⁴ Ephesians, Magnesians, Trallians, Romans, Philadelphians, Smyrnaeans, Polycarp whom Ignatius addressed as the bishop of the Smyrnaeans.

3. At Antioch, Peter was rebuked by Paul, who as far as seniority is concerned was Peter's junior (Galatians 2:11-14). Peter's conduct on this occasion was not indicative of infallibility in either doctrine or conduct. Neither is there any indication that Peter was Paul's overseer.
4. The greatest of the Roman Bishops, from Leo I (c. 450) onward, assert their authority over all of the bishops and churches. Peter never did so. Peter presented a picture of humility and being one of the "elders," rather than one who lorded it over others (I Peter 5:1-3).

In summary, it seems evident that in the period preceding his death, Peter did visit Rome and that he and Paul were there at the same time. Peter and Paul certainly would have been dominant leaders of the Roman Church, but there is no biblical record of Peter's becoming the magisterial Bishop of Rome. After five years (more or less) of his arrival in Rome, Peter was martyred. He hardly spent enough time there to become the Roman Bishop. Furthermore all biblical evidence rules against Peter's being the founder of the Roman Church.³⁵ The documents declaring that he did occupy that role are dated years after his death and all of them are suspect.³⁶

Does View #2 or View #3 Prevail?

We must conclude that in consideration of these points, advocates of Views #2 & #3 have prevailed in their assertion that Peter was not the foundation upon which the Church was to be built. The next question to be faced is, "which of the remaining views prevails – View #2 or #3?"

To summarize what was stated earlier, View #2 declares that Jesus will build His Church upon the confession, *You are the Christ, the Son of the living God*. This could be classed as a liturgical view. In other words, the Church will consist of those who have made this confession. The foundation is the confession itself.

The basis for View #2 is found in a number of scriptural statements.

Matthew 10:32 *"Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven.*

Romans 10:9-10 *that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.*

2 Corinthians 9:13 *Because of the proof given by this ministry, they will glorify God for your obedience to your confession of the gospel of Christ and for the liberality of your contribution to them and to all,*

1 Timothy 6:12 *Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate,*

These and similar passages emphasize the good confession, i.e., that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God. Advocates of View #2 conclude that the confession is the foundation and thus, as people make that confession, Christ builds His Church.

³⁵ Peter might have been the founder in a remote sense, since visitors from Rome were present when Peter preached the inaugural Gospel sermon on Pentecost (Acts 2:10). We would assume that some of these returned to Rome with the Gospel message.

³⁶ The claim is made by some that after being freed from prison, Peter traveled extensively (see Acts 12:17). A number of Roman Catholic authorities claim that during this time, Peter paid a visit to Rome. As noted by Schaff, if Peter did visit Rome, the visit would have been quite brief (for a summary discussion of these claims, see Schaff, Volume I, pages 258-263).

The Essential Difference Between Views 2 & 3

The difference between View #2 and View #3, although subtle, is important. View #3 declares that it is not the confession itself, but the truth contained in the confession, i.e., that Christ Himself will be the foundation. View #3 advocates also cite scriptural statements as the basis for their view. Here are two of those most often cited. The first is in Paul's argument that no teacher or preacher can be the foundation of the Church.

According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.³⁷

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul used foundational terminology to illustrate certain truths about the origin and the identity of the Church,

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone,³⁸

Paul makes two important points in this statement.

1. The first is the role of the apostles. The apostles are the foundation of the church in the manner described by Jesus in his High Priestly prayer.

John 17:8 *for the words which You gave Me I have given to them; and they received them and truly understood that I came forth from You, and they believed that You sent Me.*

John 17:14 *I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.*

John 17:18 *As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.*

John 17:20 *I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word;*

John 17:26 *and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them."*

These foundational apostles were chosen by Our Lord to receive the revelation of Himself and of important truths of the Kingdom so that they could impart these to all generations. In this manner, they are foundational to the Church. If a church manifests doctrines and/or conduct that contradicts apostolic teaching, then that church is an aberrant church – it is not the Church that Jesus built.

The apostles also were foundational in that the Church began with them. They were the one's whom Jesus instructed immediately prior to His ascension. Their role in the inaugural Pentecost event makes them foundational. Acts presents them as the first leaders of the Church.

2. The second point that Paul made in this Ephesian passage is, *Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone.*

In ancient times, more than is true today, the cornerstone determined the configuration of the building. The foundation is an expression of the cornerstone – its angles, its alignment with the points of the compass, its vertical alignment and relationship to the horizon, etc. Thus, according to this figure, the Church is to be an expression of Christ, the cornerstone.

As we harmonize Paul's statements to the Corinthians and the Ephesians, we conclude:

³⁷ I Corinthians 3:10-11

³⁸ Ephesians 2:19-20

- Jesus is the foundation of the Church
- Jesus is the cornerstone of the Church to which the entire building must conform
- The apostles are the foundation in that they are the ones who were the first leaders of the Church and the communicators of what Jesus stated the Church would be.

CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY

Both View #2 and View #3 have a biblical basis, but View #3 seems to get closer to the heart of the matter. Therefore, View #3 provides the following paradigm by which we will measure the evolution of the church in the succeeding centuries:

- Jesus is the foundation of the Church
- Jesus is the builder of the Church
- Jesus is the possessor of the Church
- The apostles would be responsible for imparting to this Church the things revealed to them by Christ through the Holy Spirit.

What is a “Church”?

The second preliminary consideration before we begin the historical study is arriving at an understanding of the term, *Church*. What was in Jesus’ mind when he made the statement, *I will build my Church*? How did the Twelve understand this term? In order to answer these questions, we must inform ourselves concerning the biblical use of the term, *church*.

The word, *church*,³⁹ is the term used by English translators to render the Greek term, ἐκκλησία (*ekklesia*), literally meaning, *called out ones*.⁴⁰

In the Greek city states, ἐκκλησία referred to those who had been called together by the city herald. When a decision had to be made in the community, a herald was sent through the streets calling the citizens to a town meeting. Various sorts of individuals would be found in the streets of the city – travelers who just happened to be passing through, slaves, merchants who were in town to sell their wares, visitors who were in town for one reason or another, dwellers who were not citizens, etc. – but only the citizens were summoned to the meeting. The ἐκκλησία, therefore, were the citizens who had been called to an official assembly.⁴¹

Interestingly, the Septuagint reflects this understanding at the time of its production (the third century before Christ). Deuteronomy 31:28, 30 reads,

Assemble (ἐκκλησιάσατε - ekklesiasate)⁴² to me all the elders of your tribes and your officers, that I may speak these words in their hearing and call the heavens and the earth to witness against them...Then Moses spoke in the hearing of all the assembly (ἐκκλησία) of Israel the words of this song, until they were complete:

³⁹ *Church* is the evolution of the Middle English term, *chirche*, which was brought into English through the German, *kirke*. The Greek term for Lord, κύριος, (*kyrios*) in time came to be the basis for the term, (*kyriake*) – “Lord’s” and from this the German term, *kirke*, seems to have derived.

⁴⁰ ἐκ (*ek*) - out of; κάλειν (*kalein*) - to call

⁴¹ Gerhard Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Volume III (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans’ Publishing Company) 1965 page 513; See also Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford, Clarendon Press) 1992, page 509

⁴² verbal form of the noun, ἐκκλησία: imperative, active, 2nd person, plural

Here we see the verbal form of the word used as a command to call an assembly of tribal leaders, then as a noun describing the assembly of those officials who were called to assemble.

Evolution of the Term and Its Usage in the New Testament Era

In time, this restricted use of the term passed and ἐκκλησία came to mean any assembly, but especially an official one. An excellent illustration of this usage is seen in Acts 19. Paul and his coworkers had experienced unusual success in their evangelistic endeavors in Ephesus. Ephesus was the site of the Temple of Artemis and the silversmiths of the city made their living by manufacturing and selling silver idol-statues of the goddess. When great numbers of Ephesian citizens accepted Christ, the idol making business fell off dramatically. The idol makers reacted to this threat to their business by stirring up a riotous mob. Most of the mob had no idea what the riot was all about, but carried along by herd mentality the crowd rushed into the Ephesian amphitheatre. The town clerk, realizing that they were in danger of bringing Roman censure on their city, dispersed the crowd. In his description of the scene, Luke displayed the common use of the term, ἐκκλησία.

Verse 32: *So then, some were shouting one thing and some another, for the assembly (ἐκκλησία) was in confusion and the majority did not know for what reason they had come together.*

Verse 39: *But if you want anything beyond this, it shall be settled in the lawful assembly (ἐκκλησία).*

Verse 41: *After saying this he dismissed the assembly (ἐκκλησία).*

It is significant that in verses 30 & 33 Luke also used the term, δῆμος (*demos*) to describe the same crowd that he had described as an ἐκκλησία.

Acts 19:30 *And when Paul wanted to go into the assembly (δῆμος), the disciples would not let him.*

Acts 19:33 *Some of the crowd concluded it was Alexander, since the Jews had put him forward; and having motioned with his hand, Alexander was intending to make a defense to the assembly (δῆμος).*

δῆμος is another term that means simply, “an assembled crowd of people.” Thus, in describing the scene (Acts 19:30-41), Luke used the two terms, ἐκκλησία and δῆμος as interchangeable synonyms for the crowd that had gathered in the amphitheatre. This is a clear illustration of the meaning of the term, ἐκκλησία, as it was used at the time that the New Testament was written – *an assembled group of people*. Ἐκκλησία, which originally was a technical term referring to the constituency of town meetings of the Greek city states, had evolved into a general term denoting any assembly.

The Technical Use of the Term in reference to Christ’s Kingdom

Significantly, Our Lord chose this common term, ἐκκλησία, to describe those whom He had called into His Kingdom.⁴³ When so used, the term once again becomes a technical term for a particular group of people.

⁴³ Rob Bell, in *Velvet Elvis*, (Grand Rapids, Zondervan) 2005, page 162, states, “Throughout the Roman Empire the Caesars called on people to worship them as divine saviors of humankind, and a city that acknowledged Caesar as Lord was called an *ekklesia*.” Commenting on the name by which Christian gatherings were called, he states, “And what did they call their gatherings? Ekklesias.” As authority for these statements, Bell cites Ethelbert Stauffer’s, *Christ and the Caesars*, but he does not indicate where in the book this information is to be found. In an effort to evaluate Bell’s citation, I read, *Christ and the Caesars*, page by page, paragraph by paragraph. I did not find any statement by Stauffer that the emperors applied the term, *ekklesia* to those cities that recognized them as being divine. Even if it could be proven that *ekklesia* was a label that deistic emperors gave to cities that recognized them as deity, it does not remove the well-documented origin of the term, as described in our text. Neither does it negate

The disciples of Christ are those whom God has called out of the world. Yet, not only are they *called out*, but they are *called to* something – an assembly. This of course reflects the origin of the term, i.e., the citizens of the Greek city-state who were called out of society for the purpose of attending a town meeting. They are *the assembled*, and they are assembled because they have been called to be a part of *the assembly*.

The term, ἐκκλησία, is used in the New Testament with modifications such as, *Churches of Christ*,⁴⁴ *Church of God*,⁴⁵ *Church of the Living God*,⁴⁶ etc. but the term rendered, *church*, always is the Greek term, ἐκκλησία, singular or plural.

As demonstrated in these examples, the term is used to signify two entities:

1. Individual congregations, i.e., *churches* (plural), or, when singular, a particular *church* in a particular locality;
2. The *Universal Church*.

It is in this universal sense that Jesus used the term as recorded in Matthew 16:18.

*I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church (ἐκκλησία); and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.*⁴⁷

Everyone in every generation who has been called into the Kingdom of God is a part of the Church to which Jesus referred. The writer of Hebrews presents an even fuller description of this Universal Church.

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels in festal⁴⁸ assembly⁴⁹, and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel. (Hebrews 12:22-24).

This list interweaves various concepts but for our purposes, the focus is on two phrases,

- the general assembly and the church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven;
- the spirits of the righteous made perfect.

These two phrases describe redeemed humans who are a part of the glorious company destined to spend eternity with God.

the origin of the term for those called into the Kingdom of Our Lord. Christ chose the term; the early Christians did not do so.

⁴⁴ Romans 16:1 Acts 20:28; 1 Co. 1:2; 10:32; 11:22; 15:9; 2 Co. 1:1; Gal. 1:13; 1 Tim. 3:56

⁴⁵ Singular: Acts 20:28; I Corinthians 1:2; 10:32; 11:22; 15:9; II Corinthians 1:1 ; Galatians 1:13; I Timothy. 3:5; Plural: I Corinthians 11:16; ; I Thessalonians 2:14; II Thessalonians 1:4; 2:14

⁴⁶ I Timothy 3:15

⁴⁷ Matthew 16:18

⁴⁸ Some versions render the Greek term πανήγυρος (*panegurus*), as *the general assembly*. , The term refers to more than just an assembly, it is *a festal gathering*. The term pictures an assembly of individuals in a celebratory mood.

⁴⁹ By the placing of commas, The King James Version, The New King James Version, and The New American Standard Version, cause the terms, *general assembly* and *church of the firstborn*, to refer to the same group. In my opinion, The New International Version, The Holman Christian Standard Bible, The Revised Standard Version, The New Living Translation, among others, adhere more closely to the Greek syntax of this verse. These versions present *general assembly* as a description of the myriads of angels, not a description of the church. The seven elements in the list are separated from one another in the Greek text by the conjunction, καί (*kai*). There is no conjunction between *angels* and *festal assembly*. However, there is a conjunction between *festal assembly* and *Church*. Therefore, *festal assembly* would be a description of the angels, not a description of the Church. For this reason, we have altered the quoted NAS text to read *angels in festal assembly*.

The church of the firstborn, is the ἐκκλησία that Christ built upon the rock. At the present time, this ἐκκλησία exists in two realms:⁵⁰

- local congregations all over the world;
- members of the Church who have departed this life.

Those who have departed this life are biding their time with Christ,⁵¹ waiting for the moment in which He will return to the earth to catch up the portion of His Church that dwells upon the earth.⁵²

We cannot close this section without injecting an important caveat. Defining the term, ἐκκλησία, is not sufficient for determining the elements that must be present before a group can be called a *church*. Many of the topics discussed in the following pages concern the requisites that must be present in some form before a group can be a *church*.

The Essential Role of the Holy Spirit

In addition to the two previous topics, there is a third preliminary consideration, *the essential role of the Holy Spirit*.

John came out of the wilderness and began preaching a message of repentance to the people of Judea. He was filled with the Holy Spirit⁵³ and his preaching carried Divine authority. Large crowds flocked to hear this flaming prophet and then to respond to his message by being immersed. His presence and message carried such spiritual authority that many of his followers began to speculate as to whether or not he might be the Christ. Three of the Four Gospels contain the record of John's response.

"As for me, I immerse you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will immerse you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." (Matthew 3:11-12)⁵⁴

One day, while John was preaching, his cousin, Jesus, from the village of Nazareth, came to be immersed.

Then Jesus arrived from Galilee at the Jordan coming to John, to be immersed by him. But John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I have need to be immersed by You, and do You come to me?"

But Jesus answering said to him, "Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he permitted Him.

After being immersed, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him, and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased." (Matthew 3:13-17)

⁵⁰ Note the language of Hebrews 12:22. It is not, *you will come* (someday when you die, or someday when Jesus comes for His Church), but *you have come*.⁵⁰ The condition of which the author speaks is a present reality for all who are a part of the Church. This Universal Church is more than a theoretical entity. It is reality in the here and now.

⁵¹ II Corinthians 5:1-9; Philippians 1:3;

⁵² I Thessalonians 4:13ff

⁵³ Luke 1:15

⁵⁴ See also, Mark 1:8 and Luke 3:16

After a time of wrestling with Satan in the wilderness west of the Jordan, Jesus began preaching the same message that John was proclaiming, The Kingdom of Heaven. In a sense, Jesus had entered into John's ministry, but He brought other dimensions. Toward the end of His ministry, Jesus made several statements about the future presence of the Holy Spirit. One of the most memorable was made in the Temple in the context of various ones' arguing about His identity.

Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'" But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. (John 7:37-39)

In the very last hours before his arrest and crucifixion, Jesus gave a special promise of the Spirit to the apostles. He told them that when the Holy Spirit came, He would cause them to remember everything that Jesus had taught and that He would give them understanding of the things that they did not understand. Not only that, but the Holy Spirit also would give them knowledge of things that were related to the future (detailed comment on this exchange will be made later).⁵⁵

After his resurrection, just before He ascended, Jesus met the apostles and gave them a final charge. Luke presents two accounts of this charge, the first one is in his Gospel and the second in his Acts of the Apostles:

- *and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high." (Luke 24:46-49)*
- *Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "Which," He said, "you heard of from Me; for John immersed with water, but you will be immersed with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." (Acts 1:4-8)*

Indeed, ten days after Jesus' ascension, the predicted event took place. The Holy Spirit filled them and they began to proclaim God's glory in languages that none of them knew. Peter declared,

Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear. (Acts 2:33)

Peter promised the Gift of the Holy Spirit to those who responded to the sermon and were immersed into Jesus Christ for the remission of their sins.

Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be immersed in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38)

From this point onward, the life-thrust of the Church was the indwelling Holy Spirit – indwelling the individual members and indwelling the Church as a whole. This indwelling is described by many figures in Scripture but one of the most telling is the figure of a Holy of Holies within the Temple. It is important to note that there are two Greek words that are translated, *temple*.

⁵⁵ John 14:26; 16:13-15; 15:15-16, 26-27

- ἱερόν (*hieron*) which refers to the Temple complex
- ναός (*naos*) which refers to the Holy of Holies, the inner sanctum which contained the Ark of the Covenant and the Holy Shekinah – the Glory of God.

The second of these, the ναός, the Holy of Holies, is the term that is used in all three of the following passages.⁵⁶

Describing the individual Christian's body, Paul wrote,

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? (I Corinthians 6:19)

Describing the local Church, Paul wrote,

Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?(I Corinthians 3:16)

Describing the world-wide Church, consisting of believers from every nation, Paul wrote,

... in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit. (Ephesians 2:21)

The Holy Spirit credentialed the proclamation of the Gospel to, and the reception into the Church of,

- the Jews (Acts 2),
- the half-breed Jews (Acts 8)
- the Gentiles (Acts 10).

If any of these groups had not received the Holy Spirit, they would not have been participants in the Kingdom.

However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. (Romans 8:9)

The importance of this fact is seen in the Jerusalem Church leaders' reaction and response to the report of Peter's preaching to the Gentiles in Caesarea.⁵⁷ When Peter returned to Jerusalem the leaders of the church took him to task for preaching to Gentiles. Peter responded by reporting all that had taken place. The fact that God had given him a vision of clean and unclean animals and then had commanded him to rise, kill, and eat, did not satisfy the Jerusalem establishment. Neither were they satisfied by the report that the Holy Spirit had instructed Peter to travel to Caesarea and meet with the Gentiles. They were not ready to acknowledge that Gentiles could be in the Church until Peter reported that the Holy Spirit had fallen upon them. When Peter described that phenomena, they relented.

"And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as He did upon us at the beginning. And I remembered the word of the Lord, how He used to say, 'John immersed with water, but you will be immersed with the Holy Spirit.' Therefore if God gave to them the same gift as He gave to us also after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?" When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying, "Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life." (Acts 11:15-18)

The indwelling Holy Spirit directed, empowered, and sustained the individual believers and the churches from Pentecost onward. Because of this, events that took place often were outside of the scenario that one would expect. As Welsford wrote,

⁵⁶ The context of each of these passages makes apparent the particular entity that Paul is describing

⁵⁷ Acts 10

“The mysterious ways of God cause much perplexity to those tidy souls who wish to fit the whole universe into a pattern of their own devising. To such men Church History must be peculiarly exasperating, for the Spirit, like the wind, blows where it listeth,⁵⁸ and the history of the Church is the record, not of orderly progress, but of the concertingly unexpected acts of God.”⁵⁹

The Holy Spirit had an agenda which was implemented through faithful ministers who were subservient to His direction. The ministry of Paul contains several examples of the Spirit’s controlling and directing the ministry. Here is one example:

They passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia; and after they came to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them; and passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. A vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing and appealing to him, and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." When he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them. (Acts 16:6-10)

Another interesting example of the Holy Spirit’s direction of the Church is seen in the Jerusalem Council. The council was convened to resolve the issue of Gentile admission into the Church. At the conclusion of the conference, a letter was composed to be distributed among the Gentile churches, which stated, *it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and us (Acts 15:28)*.

Because of the Holy Spirit’s executive activity in the Church and His control of the direction and activity of the apostles, some have suggested that *The Acts of the Holy Spirit* would be an appropriate alternative name for the *Acts of the Apostles*

⁵⁸ John 3:8

⁵⁹ A.E. Welsford, *Life in the Early Church, A.D. 33 to 313* (Greenwich, Connecticut, The Seabury Press) no copyright dated listed on title page, page 33

PART ONE: THE BEGINNING

When John the Baptist was questioned about whether or not he was the Messiah, he answered,

*He who sent me to immerse in water said to me, 'He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who immerses in the Holy Spirit.'*⁶⁰

Forty days after His resurrection, Jesus took His apostles⁶¹ to the Mount of Olives, in preparation for His ascension. He gave them instructions and a commission.

*Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "Which," He said, "you heard of from Me; for John immersed with water, but you will be immersed with the Holy Spirit not many days from now... but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."*⁶²

Immediately after speaking these words, Jesus ascended into the clouds. The apostles, in obedience to his instructions, returned to Jerusalem. They and approximately 120 other disciples spent the next ten days praying and waiting. Then, the predicted event took place.

*And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.*⁶³

The exact location of this event is not mentioned in the account. It might have been the upper room of 1:13, which either was one of the meeting rooms in the Temple or an upper room in a house in Jerusalem. A room in the Temple complex fits the scene best – a place where crowds would be present to hear the sound and available for the forthcoming sermon; it also fits the picture displayed in the words, *But Peter, taking his stand with the eleven...*⁶⁴. A meeting room in the Temple also fits the picture of the early gatherings in Acts. On the other hand, the Greek term, οἶκος (*oikos*) literally means, *house*. Thus, honesty demands that we leave the question unanswered.

The sound quickly attracted a crowd of onlookers, no doubt those who had come early to the Temple. Whether the sound referred to was the noise from heaven like a violent rushing wind, or the sound of a group of men speaking in a variety of languages, or perhaps both, is not clear. Even so, the crowd gathered and heard with amazement these rural folk speaking in a variety of languages. The speakers were *speaking the mighty works of God*. What that means cannot be determined. Were they praising God in some general way or were they talking about the miracles that had been worked by Jesus, or some other matters that glorified God? In Acts 10, the only other episode that Scripture labels the immersion in the Holy Spirit, those on whom the Spirit fell also are described as exalting God (Acts 10:46). We must leave the exact content of their exaltation in the realm of uncertainty.

⁶⁰ John 1:33; see also Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16

⁶¹ There were eleven, at this time, since Judas had become the betrayer and in remorse had taken his life (Acts 2:13, 16-19)

⁶² Acts 1:4-5, 8

⁶³ Acts 2:2-4

⁶⁴ Acts 2:14

Whatever the specifics of their utterances might have been, the thing that astounded the listeners from many nations and regions was that these ignorant Galileans were speaking a variety of languages. It cannot be determined how many languages were being spoken, because the list of auditors in Acts 2:9-11, contains regions in which languages overlapped. Even so, these Spirit-filled speakers were not just uttering gibberish. They spoke a variety of languages that were recognized and understood by those in the audience who were from the nations where those languages were spoken.

Palestinian Jews who did not understand any of these languages also were in the audience. To these Jews, the many languages sounded like meaningless babbling. Therefore, they said, *They are filled with new wine.*

Two languages would have been understood by almost everyone present:

- Aramaic, the language of Palestine, a language that all Jews from all nations would have used while in Palestine;
- Greek, which was the universal language of the Mediterranean.

Peter stood up with the other apostles and declared that the men were not drunk, but that what was happening was the fulfillment of Joel 2:28-32. Peter probably spoke in Aramaic so that everyone in the crowd would understand him. He preached the first Gospel sermon of the Church age. His sermon had six points:

1. The audience knew of the miracles that God had performed through Jesus.
2. By God's predetermined plan, those in the audience, even though they knew of the miracles, had crucified Jesus, through their manipulation of the Romans
3. God raised Jesus from the grave as David had prophesied of the Messiah
4. The apostles were witnesses of Jesus' resurrection
5. When Jesus ascended to the right hand of God the Father, He received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and consequently poured forth the phenomena that was being witnessed.
6. This Jesus whom they had crucified, God had made Him both Lord and Christ.

Many in the audience were pricked in their hearts and in anguish cried out, *What shall we do?* Peter's answer provided the pattern of salvation that the Church consistently followed during the First Century and for many generations thereafter,

*Repent, and let each of you be immersed in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and your children, and for all who are far off, as man as the Lord our God shall call to Himself. And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation!"*⁶⁵

About 3000 people accepted Peter's challenge and, as instructed, were immersed.⁶⁶

*So then, those who had received his word were immersed; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.*⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Acts 2:38-40

⁶⁶ Not only the Greek lexicons, but external statements also understand the Greek term βαπτίζω to refer to immersion. Here is a quote from the *New Catholic Edition of the Holy Bible*, explaining Romans 6:3: "St. Paul alludes to the manner in which Immersion was ordinarily conferred in the primitive Church, by immersion. The descent into the water is suggestive of the descent of the body into the grave, and the ascent is suggestive of the resurrection to a new life." *New Catholic Edition of the Holy Bible*, Confraternity Edition; a Revision of the Calloner-Rheims Version Edited by Catholic Scholars under the Patronage of the Episcopal Committee of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (New York; Catholic Book Publishing Company) 1957, New Testament page 199

Thus, the Church of Jesus Christ came into existence on Pentecost Sunday, 30 AD.⁶⁸

As we study the early Church and the Church that followed the First Century, we must be aware of the foundational patterns, practices, and doctrines that were taught and displayed during the period when the apostles led the Church. We will pause to look at these matters when they arise. Peter's answer is the first of these.

What did Peter mean when he exhorted the audience to *repent*? The Greek term that Luke used to record the event is significant. There are two Greek terms that most English New Testament renders as, *repent*. There is a significant difference between the two.

Μεταμέλλομαι (*metamellomai*) – The underlying sense of this term is “remorse,” or “sorrow.” This is the term used to describe Judas in Matthew 27:3. When one has sorrow over his sins, it is *metamellomai*.

Μετανοέω (*metanoëo*) – This term means, “to change one's mind.” When the crowd cried out and asked Peter what they should do, he did not tell them to *metamellomai* – to sorrow over their sins. They already were doing that. What he did tell them to do was to *metanoëo* – to change their minds about the identity of Jesus – the one whom they had crucified - that God had made him both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36). This is the term consistently used in the New Testament to describe the repentance that leads to salvation – one must believe that Jesus is the resurrected and glorified Lord before he can accept Jesus as Saviour.

The second thing that Peter instructed the people to do, after they had *metanoëod*, was to be immersed in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of their sins. Here again we see a consistent pattern displayed in the New Testament.

In The Acts of the Apostles, and in the epistles, there are several instances in which the salvation event is described in a manner that makes apparent what a new convert did in order to become a recipient of salvation and to enter the Church.⁶⁹

Acts 2:38, 41 *Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be immersed in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit...."*

Acts 8:12 *But when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being immersed, men and women alike.*

Acts 8:36-38 *As they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said, "Look! Water! What prevents me from being immersed?" And Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." And he ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch, and he immersed him.*

Acts 9:17-18 *So Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit."¹⁸ And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he regained his sight, and he got up and was immersed;*

⁶⁷ Acts 2:41

⁶⁸ Herod the Great died in March, 4 BC. He was the king visited by the wise men, the king who slew the infants of Bethlehem, and the king whose death made it safe for Joseph to take his family back to Palestine (Matthew Chapter Two). Thus, it is apparent that Jesus was born 4-5 BC. Jesus was about 30 years of age when he was immersed (Luke 3:23), and began his ministry almost immediately. By noting the Passovers and other Jewish feasts that transpired during His ministry (John 2:13; 5:1; 6:4; 12:1), it is clear that his public ministry lasted 3 years plus some months. – possibly 3 ½ years. Since the Pentecost of Acts 2 occurred 10 days after the ascension of Christ, we arrive at 30 AD as the date of the birth of the Church. Some argue that it should be 33 AD, but such proponents do not take into account the evidence that Jesus was not born in 0 AD, but in 4-5 BC.

⁶⁹ There are some instances in which no detail is given, or mere summary statements are made. These are not relevant to our study.

Acts 22:12-13, 16 *A certain Ananias, a man who was devout by the standard of the Law, and well spoken of by all the Jews who lived there, came to me, and standing near said to me, "Brother Saul, receive your sight!" And at that very time I looked up at him... Now why do you delay? Get up and be immersed, and wash away your sins, calling on His name."*

Acts 10:44-48 *While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message. All the circumcised believers who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God. Then Peter answered, "Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be immersed who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did, can he?" And he ordered them to be immersed in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay on for a few days.*

Acts 16:13-15 *and we sat down and began speaking to the women who had assembled. A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul. And when she and her household had been immersed, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us.*

Acts 16:30-33 *and after he brought them out, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house. And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was immersed, he and all his household.*

Acts 18:8 *Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his household, and many of the Corinthians when they heard were believing and being immersed.*

Acts 19:1-5 *It happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus, and found some disciples. He said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they said to him, "No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit." And he said, "Into what then were you immersed?" And they said, "Into John's immersion." Paul said, "John immersed with the immerse of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus." When they heard this, they were immersed in the name of the Lord Jesus.*

Romans 6:3-4 *Or do you not know that all of us who have been immersed into Christ Jesus have been immersed into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through immersion into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.*

1 Corinthians 12:13 *For by one Spirit we were all immersed into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.*

Ephesians 4:5 *one Lord, one faith, one immersion,*

Colossians 2:12 *having been buried with Him in immersion, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.*

Galatians 3:27 *For all of you who were immersed into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.*

1 Peter 3:21 *Corresponding to that, immersion now saves you-- not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience-- through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,*

Clearly, the practice of the First Century Church was to immerse, immediately, those who believed the Gospel and trusted in the cross of Christ as the means of redemption. Immersion was God's designated method for responding to the Gospel. Not long into the Second Century, the record makes clear that an understanding of the place of purpose of immersion began to change. Much later, sprinkling and pouring became substitutes for immersion and in some quarters replaced it. We will examine those matters as we progress through the centuries.

The Meeting

Immediately after recounting the events that transpired on Pentecost, Luke stated,

*They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.*⁷⁰

This verse provides the first glimpse into the content of the meetings of the New Testament Church. Given the immediacy of this verse, it is appropriate that for this to become the next topic of our study. For our purposes, we are going to refer to the assembly as *The Meeting*.

No single passage of the New Testament instructs us concerning what should be included in *The Meeting*. The historical record of Acts either uses the broadest of terms to describe *The Meeting*, or describes only certain elements of *The Meeting*. The same is true of the corrective and instructional material in the epistles. Even so, by examining the passages that do describe some aspect of *The Meeting*, we can get a fairly accurate picture of what took place in the gathered local church. As we progress in our study, it will become apparent that the apostles' doctrine, the fellowship, the breaking of the bread, and the prayers, were the core elements of *The Meeting*, in every locale.

The First Church Acts 2:42

In order to have a foundational understanding of the topic, we begin by examining in detail the statement made in Acts 2:42.

The verb translated, *devoting*, in verse 42, *proskartereo* (προσκαρτερέω), indicates constant attention. Its meaning is heightened in this verse by the use of the present tense, *proskarterountes* (προσκαρτεροῦντες), which literally means, *continually devoting*.⁷¹

The use of the definite article with each of the four elements that were the object of devotion indicates that each of these terms refers to a very specific item. Literally, the verse reads,

*And they were continually devoting themselves to **the** teaching of **the** apostles and to **the** fellowship, to **the** breaking of **the** bread and to **the** prayers.*

- Thus, *the teaching of the apostles* refers to a specific body of instruction imparted by a particular set of apostles. Obviously the expression refers to the activity of the Twelve. They were fulfilling the role of New Covenant scribes.

And He said to them, "Therefore every scribe who has become a disciple of the kingdom of heaven is like a head of a household, who brings forth out of his treasure things new and old." (Matthew 13:52)

The apostles were able to fulfill this role because they were experiencing the fulfillment of the unique promise that Jesus had given to them.

⁷⁰ Acts 2:42

⁷¹ In my opinion, "devoting" [RSV, NAS, NIV, et al.] is not a good term to use in rendering *προσκαρτερέω* in this passage. They were "devoted" to Christ, not to those things that were instruments or expressions of Him. It seems to me that a better rendering would be "continually gave their constant attention to," or "spent their time listening to the apostles' doctrine, participating in the fellowship, ..."

John 14:26 *But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.*

John 16:13-15 *But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He shall glorify Me; for He shall take of Mine, and shall disclose it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said, that He takes of Mine, and will disclose it to you.*

John 15:15a-16a, 26-27 *for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you. You did not choose Me, but I chose you, ...When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness of Me, and you will bear witness also, because you have been with Me from the beginning.*

The Twelve had been with Jesus from the beginning. He had chosen them out of the company of the disciples. They had seen and heard all that had transpired during Jesus' three and one-half year ministry. They did not remember everything nor did they understand all that they did remember. The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, would overcome this human deficiency and cause them to remember and to understand the things that Jesus had said and done. John records an example of this refreshed memory:

Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews therefore said, "It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" But He was speaking of the temple of His body. When therefore He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture, and the word which Jesus had spoken.⁷²

The apostles' primary role in the Church was to impart this revelation concerning Jesus and the Kingdom of Heaven. Their role outside of the Church was to give testimony that Jesus had come forth from the tomb.⁷³

F. F. Bruce accurately describes the apostolic role displayed in Acts 2:42,

“Luke presents in this paragraph an ideal picture of this new community, rejoicing in the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Spirit. The community, the apostolic fellowship, was constituted on the basis of the apostolic teaching. This teaching was authoritative because it was the teaching of the Lord communicated through the apostles in the power of the Spirit. For believers of later generations the New Testament scriptures form the written deposit of the apostolic teaching. The apostolic succession is recognized most clearly in those churches which adhere most steadfastly to the apostolic teaching.”⁷⁴

The apostles understood their role. Acts 6:4 records their declaration of ministry priorities.

But we will devote ourselves to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.

Our examination of other scriptures and post-biblical writings will demonstrate that the teaching of the apostles always had a prominent place in *The Meeting*.

- *And to the fellowship*, as stated earlier, because of the definite article the expression must refer to something definite. The terms could not mean that these Jerusalem believers were devoted to the experience of fellowship, or just to fellowship in general. The expression describes a commitment to the local body of believers, the community of the saints. Among other things, commitment to the fellowship would include faithful attendance at the gatherings, but it includes much more than that.

⁷² John 2:19-22

⁷³ Acts 1:8, 22; 2:32, et al.

⁷⁴ Bruce, F.F., *The Book of Acts in The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988) p. 73

Paul uses the term, *koinonia*, (the term translated, "fellowship," in Acts 2:42) to refer to the collection and distribution of gifts.

*Romans 15:26 For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a **koinonia** [contribution] for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem.*

*2 Corinthians 8:4 begging us with much entreaty for the favor of **koinonia** [participation] in the support of the saints,*

*2 Corinthians 9:13 Because of the proof given by this ministry they will glorify God for your obedience to your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for the liberality of your **koinonia** [contribution] to them and to all,*

*Hebrews 13:16 And do not neglect doing good and **koinonia** [sharing]; for with such sacrifices God is pleased.*

Of signal interest is Paul's use of *koinonia* in his letter to the Philippians.

*Philippians 1:3,5 I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, ... in view of your **koinonia** [participation] in the gospel from the first day until now.*

As Lightfoot points out, the correct rendering of the Greek expression in Philippians 1:5 is not, *in the Gospel*, but rather, *into or toward the Gospel* (Greek: εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον *eis to euangelion*).⁷⁵ Thus, it is apparent that the *koinonia* referred to in this verse was the money that they had collected and sent to Paul so that he could give himself fully to the preaching of the Gospel (cf. Philippians 4:15-16).

In the light of the verses that follow Acts 2:42 (44 & 45), and the manner in which Paul accommodated the term, *koinonia*, the collection and distribution of money and goods for the needy must be included in the meaning of *devoted to the fellowship*. This understanding of *koinonia* was quite evident in the early church.

- **The breaking of the bread** refers to more than sharing a meal. Without the definite article, "to break bread," is an euphemism for eating a meal (cf. Verse 46). However, a definite event is signified by **the breaking** and a definite bread is signified by **the bread**. This expression became an euphemism for the Lord's Supper.

*1 Corinthians 10:16 Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ?*⁷⁶

It should be noted that the early post-biblical Church considered some of the passages where the definite article was missing also to refer to the Lord's Supper.

The Lord's Supper is another expression of *koinonia*: *...the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing [koinonia] in the blood of Christ? ... the bread which we break a sharing [koinonia] in the body of Christ?* This is why the Lord's Supper also is called "communion."

- **And to the prayers**, implies to definite prayers. The language used here could not refer to one who is "devoted to prayer," as is mentioned in Acts 1:14; 6:4; etc. The definite article infers that there either were set times of prayer, which would be consistent with those who were of Jewish background (Acts 3:1 *Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the ninth hour, the hour of prayer*), or that there were prescribed prayers, a lectionary, as would be followed in a synagogue. In the Jewish lectionary, certain Psalms were recited as prayers at prescribed times. Since the synagogue seems to have been the

⁷⁵ Lightfoot, J.B., *St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians* (Hendrickson Publishers, third printing 1995 [original 1868]) page 83

⁷⁶ I Corinthians 10:16

model for *The Meeting*, the practice of following a lectionary could have been carried over from the synagogue. Following a lectionary is a practice that is followed in many contemporary churches.

In all probability, the expression, *the prayers*, refers to the prayers that were offered in the corporate gathering of the Church. These inaugural believers were faithful to be present when the church met for prayer.

These four elements, described in Acts 2:42, constituted the activity, as well as the devotion and attention, of the gathered New Testament Church:

1. The teaching of the apostles
2. The sense of community, including the reception of an offering for the community
3. The Lord's Supper
4. The Prayers

As stated above, an examination of post-biblical record confirms that these four elements continued to be the core elements in the Church's regularly scheduled meetings. This will be studied later.

The Church at Troas **Acts 20:5-11**

But these had gone on ahead and were waiting for us at Troas. And we sailed from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread, and came to them at Troas within five days; and there we stayed seven days.

And on the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul began talking to them, intending to depart the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight. And there were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered together. And there was a certain young man named Eutychus sitting on the window sill, sinking into a deep sleep; and as Paul kept on talking, he was overcome by sleep and fell down from the third floor, and was picked up dead. But Paul went down and fell upon him and after embracing him, he said, "Do not be troubled, for his life is in him." And when he had gone back up, and had broken the bread and eaten, he talked with them a long while, until daybreak, and so departed.

By this time, the Church was approximately twenty-five years old. Established routines had developed under the guidance of the apostles. One of these was the practice of meeting regularly on the first day of the week. Note that Paul and his company had arrived in Troas on Monday. They were on a schedule, but they chose to remain for seven days so that they could join the church at its weekly meeting.

"The first day of the week" was Jewish terminology. So, the question must be asked, "Was Luke using Jewish or Roman time in Acts 20:7, in determining the first day of the week?" In other words, "Was the meeting held after sunset on Saturday evening, (when the Jewish first day of the week began) or late Sunday night?" We must reject the idea that Luke is using the Jewish method of reckoning the day, because Luke describes sunrise as the next day (verses 7 and 11 harmonized). Thus, using Roman time, midnight and sunrise mark the next day even as they do in our present usage.

Both Greeks and Romans used the seven-day week for their dating and life routines. However, there was not a set day of rest. The non-work days were festival days, and special holidays. The exception in the Roman and Greek empires were the Jews, who observed the seventh day of the week, the Sabbath, as a day of rest and worship. From the earliest days of the Church, the first day of the week became the Christian's day of worship, rather than the Sabbath.

The first day of the week had great significance for the Church. This was the day that Christ had come forth from the grave. Several of Christ's appearances were on the first day of the week. The Church was born on Pentecost, which was the first day of the week. Thus, the first day of the week became the day for the Church's regularly scheduled meeting.

It is interesting to note how Paul mentions the first day of the week in I Corinthians.

*Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also. On the first day of every week let each one of you put aside and save, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come.*⁷⁷

This passage addresses Paul's gathering of an offering from the Gentile churches to be given to the Christians in Judea. Note that Paul already had instructed the Galatian churches to do what he now was requiring of the Corinthians. On the first day of each week, each individual was to take stock of his money and put some of it into a private hoard, which he would release upon Paul's arrival. The Greek participle in this passage (θησαυρίζων *thesauridzon* - "storing up") indicates that each individual himself is to save up the money until the designated time. The believers were not instructed to bring the money to a church service and put it into an offering, week by week.

Since this was to be done as a private act, why did Paul instruct them to make this transaction on the first day of the week? We must not assert more than the passage states. However, we can make passing comment. Gordon Fee points out that since Paul mentions this day at all, rather than saying, "once a week," implies significance to the day. This was not the day on which people were paid, so there must have been another reason. The only possibility is that this is the Christian's special day.⁷⁸

By the time that the Apocalypse was written (95-99 AD), the first day of the week had become "the Lord's Day" (Revelation 1:10). This is the name for the first day of the week that we find in post-New Testament Christian literature.

It was not until the reign of Constantine, 200 years after Pentecost, that Sunday became a day off. Constantine made this change in Roman society so that Christians would not have to work on their day of worship. Here are two quotes from early post-biblical documents mentioning Sunday (the Lord's Day) as the day of *The Meeting*. The first is from the Didache (c.120 AD); the second is from Justin Martyr (c. 140 AD).

The Didache: On the Lord's own day gather together and break bread and give thanks, having first confessed your sins so that your sacrifice may be pure. But let no one who has a quarrel with a companion join you until they have reconciled, so that your sacrifice may not be defiled. For this is the sacrifice concerning which the Lord said, "In every place and time offer me a pure sacrifice, for I am a great king, says the Lord, and my name is marvelous among the nations."⁷⁹

Justin Martyr: And on the day called Sunday⁸⁰ there is a meeting in one place of those who live in cities or the country, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read as long as time permits. When the reader has finished, the president in a discourse urges and invites [us] to the imitation of these noble things. Then we all stand up together and offer prayers. And, as said before, when we have finished the prayer, bread is brought, and wine and water, and the president similarly sends up prayers and thanksgivings to the best of his ability, and the

⁷⁷ I Corinthians 16:1-2

⁷⁸ Fee, Gordon, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians in The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1987) p. 813

⁷⁹ Translated by J.B. Lightfoot and J.R. Harmer, *The Apostolic Fathers, Greek Texts and English Translations of their Writings* (Grand Rapids, Baker Book House, 1992) page 267
ibid. page 267

⁸⁰ Because Justin was writing to Romans, he used the Roman name for the first day of the week.

congregation assents, saying the Amen; the distribution, and reception of the consecrated [elements] by each one, takes place and they are sent to the absent by the deacons.⁸¹

Where there is a record of the hour of *The Meeting* (pre-Constantine), it was early Sunday morning before the workday began, or in the evening.⁸² In some places, it seems to have been both.

Thus, it is highly probable that *The Meeting* in Troas began after the close of the workday and lasted all night. Paul and his company left early Monday morning, without any sleep. *The Meeting* was important to them.

The purpose of *The Meeting* (verse 7) was to "break bread." Verse 7 must be understood in the light of verse 11, which speaks of Paul's breaking *the bread*.

*And when he had gone back up, and had broken **the** bread and eaten*

The church had gathered for an *agape* feast. The Lord's Supper was the central event. So, in verse 11, Paul is pictured as participating in the Lord's Supper (breaking the bread), then snacking at the *agape* feast (the word translated, "eaten," [*geusamenos* - γευσόμενος] literally means, "to taste") while continuing to discourse with the brothers.

Three of the Acts 2:42 elements in *The Meeting* are mentioned, therefore, in this passage:

1. The Lord's Supper
2. The Teaching of the Apostles (Paul's speech).
3. The Fellowship (the *agape*)

There is no mention of The Prayers in this account, although Paul did pray for Eutychus.

Excursus: The Agape Feast

The *agape* had its origin in the shared meals in Jerusalem. The Jerusalem communal meals came into existence because of the need for a communal existence in the embryonic Church. Poverty in Jerusalem always had been very great, but a new element was added when many of the Jews from the Diaspora accepted the Gospel. As noted in Acts 2, the audience for Peter's Pentecost sermon included Jews and proselytes from fifteen nations or regions. They had come to Jerusalem to celebrate Pentecost. Many of these accepted the Gospel message and remained in Jerusalem to be a part of the newly formed Jerusalem Church. This is evident from the Acts 6 record of the conflict between Palestinian Jewish Christians and those from the Diaspora. These former pilgrims had no place to stay, no income, and their resources quickly were exhausted.

As the Holy Spirit shed love abroad in the hearts of the new converts (Romans 5:5), those with means surrendered their possessions for the use of the corporate body (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32, 37; 5:2). Hospitality became a necessary means of survival. Believers' homes became boarding houses with free room and board. Those with property sold their assets and gave the money to the apostles for the provision of food for the common meals. These shared meals came to be called, "*agape* feasts," after a period of time, since they were an expression of the love for Lord and for the brethren. The terms, "brother" and "sister," had real meaning. They were the family of God.

By the time that the Acts 6 controversy arose, there seems to have been an adjustment to the pattern. In Acts 6, food is distributed to the widows, rather than having them share in a communal meal provided by the common purse.

⁸¹ *Readings in Christian Thought*, Hugh T. Kerr, Editor (Abingdon, Nashville, 1978) pages 25-26

⁸² Pliny, *Letter to Trajan*, 112 AD

When the need for the communal meal ceased, the *agape* continued as a tradition in many quarters. The continuance of this tradition probably was enhanced by the fact that Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper in conjunction with a sacred meal. In some regions, the *agape* became a regular part of *The Meeting* (perhaps even the heart of *The Meeting*).

It should be no surprise to us that the *agape* was observed among many of the Gentile churches. Most religions of the Gentiles included feasts in the pagan temples as a part of their religious expression. Thus, when these pagans became Christians, the *agape* was a very natural transition. A study of the churches of the New Testament and their respective cultures cause us to conclude that in each locale, the culture did affect what happened in *The Meeting*.

The Lord's Supper and the Abuse of the Agape in Corinth I Corinthians 11:17-34

But in giving this instruction, I do not praise you, because you come together not for the better but for the worse.

For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that divisions exist among you; and in part, I believe it. For there must also be factions among you, in order that those who are approved may have become evident among you.

Therefore when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper, for in your eating each one takes his own supper first; and one is hungry and another is drunk. What! Do you not have houses in which to eat and drink? Or do you despise the church of God, and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? In this I will not praise you.

For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it, and said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same way He took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.

Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself, if he does not judge the body rightly. For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep. But if we judged ourselves rightly, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord in order that we may not be condemned along with the world.

So then, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. If anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, so that you may not come together for judgment. And the remaining matters I shall arrange when I come.

In Corinth, the *agape* had gotten out of hand. The purpose of the Sunday gathering should have been to partake of the Lord's Supper. Instead, the Corinthians were focusing on the *agape*, and had become very self-indulgent at the meal. Not only were they given to gluttony and drunkenness, but they also were very insensitive to the poor among them.

In order to understand the scene, we must pay attention to the place of *The Meeting*. The Sunday meetings at Corinth were held in the more spacious homes of prosperous Christians. The New Testament records two and possibly three such homes among the converts of Corinth. The first is the home of Titius Justice,

whose house was next to the synagogue. This is where the church gathered after being excluded from the synagogue.⁸³

The second house was that of Gaius (I Corinthians 1:15), whom Paul described as *host to me and the whole church* (Romans 16:23, written from Corinth).⁸⁴

A third possibility was the home of Crispus, the ruler of the Corinthian synagogue (Acts 18:8). A person of this high status in society would have had a fine house.

The architecture of these houses helps to understand some of Paul's comments. The average Corinthian house contained a dining room, called the *triclinium* (the term, *triclinium*, refers to a three-sided table at which the diners reclined while eating), which could accommodate 9 to 12 diners (average size of a *triclinium* was about 18 x 18 feet) and an *atrium* (a large entry courtyard), which would accommodate 30 to 50 guests. Thus, the host and those whom he invited, would eat in the *triclinium*. The majority of the church would eat in the *atrium*.

Gordon Fee states,

“In a class-conscious society such as Roman Corinth would have been, it would be sociologically natural for the host to invite those of his/her own class to eat in the triclinium, while the others would eat in the atrium. Furthermore, it is probable that the language, "one's own supper," (v. 21) refers to the eating of private meals by the wealthy, in which at the common meal of the Lord's Supper they ate either their own portions or perhaps privileged portions that were not made available to the 'have-nots.'”⁸⁵

Paul did not eliminate the social distinctions as such. They still would have their houses in which to eat their private meals (vv.22-23). What he did speak against was the insertion of these social distinctions into *The Meeting*, where Christ had made them one, signified by their eating *one loaf*.

*Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread.*⁸⁶

Instead of sharing as an expression of *koinonia*, the *agape* in Corinth had become an occasion of self-display and self-indulgence. Each person satisfied his own hunger, even to the point of gluttony. The *agape* had become the opposite of what its name implies.

The Lord's Supper, which should have been the focus of their meeting, was obscured by the *Agape*. The Lord's Supper had become just another element in a common meal. This blasphemy brought forth a stinging rebuke from Paul. Their irreverence toward the loaf and the cup of the Lord's Supper not only made their partaking an empty gesture, but it also made them *guilty of the body and blood of the Lord* (v. 27). He told them that if eating and drinking is why they got together, they should do it at home.

Paul's statement, that they could eat at home, places the *agape* in the realm of tradition, but not a necessary one. The Lord's Supper, however, was another matter. It was sacred and should have been the focus of their gathering.

The verses before us in I Corinthians 11 constitute a key passage concerning the regular gathering of the local church. First is the language that Paul uses in verses 18 and 20.

⁸³ Acts 18:7

⁸⁴ Bruce suggests that Gaius and Titius Justice are the same person (Bruce, F.F. *1 and 2 Corinthians*, New Century Bible [London, 1971]. Thus, his full Roman name would have been Gaius Titius Justice. This is plausible, but there seems to be no reason to take this position.

⁸⁵ Fee, Gordon, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* in *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1987) p. 534

⁸⁶ I Corinthians 10:17 The Greek term translated, "bread," in this passage is ἄρτος (*artos*), which mean's "loaf."

For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that divisions exist among you; and in part, I believe it... Therefore when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper.

The phrase, *when you come together* in verse 18, and *meet together*, in verse 20, are renderings of the Greek term, συνέρχεσθε (*sunerchesthe*). This term is repeated five times in verses 17-22 and 33-34. It is used the same way in 14:23 and 26. In addition to ἐκκλησία, συνέρχεσθε had become a semi-technical term for the "gathering together" of the people of God for worship (*The Meeting*). Note that both terms occur in verse 18.

The expression, *as a church*, is a rendering of ἐν ἐκκλησία (*en ekklesia*), which more accurately rendered would read, *in church* or *in assembly*. In previous pages we have discussed the etymology and evolution of this term, as it applies to the Church. Suffice it to say that it is not incorrect to say that we are "going to church," when we speak of attending *The Meeting*.

Thus, informal gatherings in their homes or other impromptu meetings are not described in this passage. This passage refers to the set meeting of the church - in our tradition, the Sunday morning worship service. It was *The Meeting*. The group gathered with that as its identity.

We will not at this point embark upon a theology of communion, i.e., whether it is a sacrament, or a memorial, etc. That will be a topic to consider as we move into later periods of Church History. The point that is relevant to our present quest is the fact that the Corinthian Church considered the reason for their being gathered together was to partake of the Lord's Supper and Paul affirmed that this should have been the purpose of their gathering.

We find two elements in this passage that are relevant to our study:

1. *Koinonia* (although *koinonia* was aborted) in the *Agape* feast (which Paul said was optional)
2. They partook of the Lord's Supper

Charismata in *The Meeting* in Corinth I Corinthians 14:26-33

What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.

If anyone speaks in a tongue, it should be by two or at the most three, and each in turn, and let one interpret; but if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in the church; and let him speak to himself and to God. And let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment. But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, let the first keep silent.

For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted; and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets; for God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

The three chapters, Twelve through Fourteen of First Corinthians, speak to the problem of spiritual manifestations in Corinth. In these chapters Paul gives correction concerning the abuses of tongues and prophecy that were present in the Corinthian Church. For the purposes of our study, only verses 26-33 (especially verse 26) are relevant.

First, we must state that outside of this passage, there is no mention of charismatic activity (as was displayed in Corinth) in a worship service until the Montanist movement in the last quarter of the Second Century. Even among the Montanists, charismatic activity seems to have been limited to prophecy and in the one description that we have of a Montanist meeting, prophecy was not delivered in *The Meeting*, but to

the leadership following *The Meeting*.⁸⁷ That movement, incidentally, was very heretical and will be studied in connection with that period of history.

The existence of prophets is mentioned both in Scripture and post-biblical documents. One of the post-biblical documents (the *Didache*) instructs the church to give the prophets, all of which were itinerant, freedom to speak in The Meeting. However, there is no description of the sort of activity described in I Corinthians 12 -14.

Paul is not exhorting the church to include these gifts in The Meeting, but is giving guidelines for their use, if they are present. That they were being manifested in the gathering at Corinth should not surprise us.

The Corinthians had been won to Christ out of religions in which this sort of activity took place in the temples. That is why Paul wrote, *Therefore I make known to you, that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus is accursed"; and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit*⁸⁸.

In some of the Corinthian cults, "inspired utterances" (including tongues) were a part of the worship, in spite of the fact that the adherents were worshipping mute idols. The inspired utterances in the pagan worship probably came from demons (I Corinthians 10:20-21). Therefore, when tongues began to be manifested in the gatherings of the Corinthian church, some wanted to forbid them. They were seen as an intrusion of the demons from the pagan religions.

One of the noteworthy differences between the prophetic and inspired utterances of the pagans and that of the Christians was the matter of ecstasy. In ecstasy, the worshipper has no control over himself. He is "beside himself." The servant of Christ, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, never loses the ability to choose his behavior.⁸⁹ Paul wrote, *and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets;*⁹⁰

⁸⁷ "For, seeing that we acknowledge spiritual charismata, or gifts, we too have merited the attainment of the prophetic gift, although coming after John (the Baptist). We have now amongst us a sister whose lot it has been to be favored with sundry gifts of revelation, which she experiences in the Spirit by ecstatic vision amidst the sacred rites of the Lord's day in the church: she converses with angels, and sometimes even with the Lord; she both sees and hears mysterious communications; some men's hearts she understands, and to them who are in need she distributes remedies. Whether it be in the reading of Scriptures, or in the chanting of psalms, or in the preaching of sermons, or in the offering up of prayers, in all these religious services matter and opportunity are afforded to her of seeing visions. It may possibly have happened to us, whilst this sister of ours was rapt in the Spirit, that we had discoursed in some ineffable way about the soul. After the people are dismissed at the conclusion of the sacred services, she is in the regular habit of reporting to us whatever things she may have seen in vision (for all her communications are examined with the most scrupulous care, in order that their truth may be probed). "Amongst other things," says she, "there has been shown to me a soul in bodily shape, and a spirit has been in the habit of appearing to me; not, however, a void and empty illusion, but such as would offer itself to be even grasped by the hand, soft and transparent and of an ethereal color, and in form resembling that of a human being in every respect." This was her vision, and for her witness there was God; and the apostle most assuredly foretold that there were to be "spiritual gifts" in the church. "A Treatise on the Soul," *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1975 American Reprint of the Edinburgh Edition), Volume 3, Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian (Hendrickson) page 336.

⁸⁸ I Corinthians 12:3

⁸⁹ The only recorded possible exception to this axiom was when classes of individuals had an initial encounter with the Holy Spirit (Jews in Acts 2; Gentiles in Acts 10; and disciples of John the Baptist in Acts 19). The manifestation in each case was praising god in a language unknown to the speaker and in one instance (Acts 19), prophesying. Although it is not stated, some would understand the recipients of the Spirit in these three passages to be speaking in tongues apart from their will to do so. The case could be argued, however, that this is not the necessary meaning of the language of the text.

Throughout this section, Paul speaks of order, which is not possible in the presence of ecstasy, but very necessary in a meeting that has the approval of God.

*for God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.*⁹¹

The expression, *each one* (verse 26), describes a service in which there is general participation. This verse (26) as well as verse 23, and 11:2-16 (in which women are praying and prophesying in the assembly), indicate that at Corinth (whether such was true elsewhere is a matter of debate) there was general participation by all members and that there was considerable expression of the more spontaneous gifts of utterance. Paul spoke no word of disapproval of this meeting style, as long as it was regulated. For instance, he regulated the demeanor of women who were involved in such public expressions (11:2-16).

One evidence of the congregational participation is the "amen" (14:16). Everything that took place should involve the whole congregation. Every prayer should be intelligible so that every member could respond by saying, "Amen."

The elements which Paul sought to regulate but also to allow in the service were singing (in this case, it seems that the singing was solos or possibly chants that someone might have composed and taught to the congregation), instruction, revelation (prophecy), tongues, and interpretation of tongues. The phrase, *when you come together each one has*, implies that at least some of these items had been prepared before arriving at the service.

- *Each one has a psalm.* The Greek word, ψάλλω (*psallo*), originally meant, "to touch," then came to mean, "to pluck" the string, to cause it to spring, referring to the string of an archer's bow. Very early, the term also came to refer to plucking the strings of a musical instrument. The term occurs forty times in the Septuagint, always referring to playing a stringed instrument, sometimes including a song that is sung. In some instances in the New Testament, the term refers to one of the Old Testament psalms. In the passage before us (I Corinthians 14:26) the term would refer to a song that someone had composed to be sung in the worship service. The composer probably planned to sing a solo, perhaps accompanied by a musical instrument.
- *Has a teaching* is difficult to define. Perhaps certain ones had insight into Old Testament scriptures that they wanted to elucidate. Testimony may have been involved here.
- *Has a revelation* would refer to prophecy. This is seen from the use of the term in verses 29 & 30.
- *Has a tongue, has an interpretation* are a unit. In 14:5 & 13, the tongues speakers are urged to seek the gift of interpretation. It follows that someone could have received a tongue with an interpretation during the week. On the other hand, if someone had a tongue without the interpretation, and there is no known interpreter present, then the one with the message in tongues is to keep silent. Paul's command goes against the common practice in Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches in which a word in tongues is given and then there is a pause to see if anyone has the interpretation. Verse 28 clearly indicates that tongues messages should be given in the service only if the presence of an interpreter is known in advance of the delivery of the tongues message. The implication of this is that those who had the gift of interpretation were known for having that gift and were so identified.

The purpose of all activity at *The Meeting* should be to build up the corporate body as well as to encourage individual believers in holy living.⁹²

⁹⁰ I Corinthians 14:32

⁹¹ I Corinthians 14:33

⁹² "The building up of the community is the basic reason for settings of corporate worship; they probably should not be turned into a corporate gathering for a thousand individual experiences of worship" (Fee, Gordon, *I Corinthians* NICN)

*What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, ...let all things be done for edification.*⁹³

Hebrews 10:23-26 addresses this purpose of *The Meeting*.

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near. For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain terrifying expectation of judgment, and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries.

This passage from Hebrews is one of several in the epistle that warn against apostasy and/or backsliding. The main concern is that no believer falls back into willful sin. The prescription for avoiding this is for believers to stimulate and to encourage one another in godly living. The setting for this edifying activity is in *The Meeting of ourselves* (literal translation).⁹⁴ Thus, a primary purpose for *The Meeting* is for the mutual encouragement of believers. Hebrews does not spell out how that is to be done.

The concept of mutual encouragement is a remote concept in many church gatherings today. This passage describes something far different from a meeting in which church members enter the building, sit down as spectators, and listen to professional singers, professional choirs, and a professional orator, then go home. It's not that having musicians and speakers is wrong, but *stimulating one another* and *encouraging one another* just can't happen if the structure of the service does not allow for some interaction between believers, before, during, or after *The Meeting*.

Two exceptions to this last statement are attendance and congregational singing. Just being present in a meeting is an encouragement. To miss a meeting is to discourage. All of us have experienced the difference between the encouragement of a full room, and the discouragement of empty seats. Every believer should feel the need to be present in *The Meeting*, because his presence is uplifting to the church. The biblical standard is that no believer should consider attendance at *The Meeting* to be something that is optional.

In present-day churches congregational singing, in which the congregants blend their voices, mutually encourages all who participate, as well as those who listen. However, with the exception of Corinth,⁹⁵ there is no evidence that singing was a part of the early church service, except for a closing hymn. The practice of closing the service with a closing hymn probably resulted from the description of the Last Supper's ending with the singing of a hymn.⁹⁶

I Corinthians 14:26 is an important element in making effective the sort of service that seems to have been the Corinthian style. When the Holy Spirit gives individual members songs, words, and prophecies, and these are spoken in *The Meeting*, Paul states that there should be only a limited number in any given service (verses 27 and 29).

If anyone speaks in a tongue, it should be by two or at the most three, and each in turn, and let one interpret; ...And let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment.

⁹³ I Corinthians 14:26

⁹⁴ The Greek terms here are very rich in meaning. We must avoid the temptation to pause and consider them, because this would not be relevant to the theme of this paper

⁹⁵ This is another bit evidence that *The Meeting* in Corinth was not consistent with the pattern of *The Meeting*, in other local churches.

⁹⁶ Matthew 26:26-30; Mark 14:22-26

Exhorting one another in Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Song Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 5:18-20

Two other passages that relate to mutual edification are Colossians 3:16 and Ephesians 5:18-20

Although there is a legitimate dispute over whether or not these verse refer to activity in *The Meeting*, they clearly speak of mutual edification and so at least in a general way do apply to *The Meeting*.

Colossians 3:16 *Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.*

Ephesians 5:18-20 *...be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father...*

There is much similarity between these two passages, but each one does add details omitted in the other. We will consider the content of both passages.

Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you. The Greek term, *of Christ*, is subjective genitive, indicating that Christ is the speaker of the word. There doesn't seem to be any reference to any specific body of truth, either written or oral, but the idea is that the word spoken by Christ should be in the heart of the believer as an inner monitor. Over the centuries, the expression usually has been interpreted as the Gospel.

The exhortation is, *richly dwell within you*, not *among you*. The Greek term is *enoikeo* (ἐνοικέω), which means to "indwell." Therefore, this is an exhortation to the individual Colossians. Lightfoot renders this phrase, "richly dwell in your hearts."⁹⁷ Parallel passages are I John 1:10; 2:14b.⁹⁸

1 John 1:10 *If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.*

1 John 2:14b *I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.*

- *Be filled with the spirit* [literal translation - "all of you keep on being filled with the Spirit"]⁹⁹, is a statement contrasting two states: one is the result of wine's influence upon the emotions and the other is the result of the inspiration and the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. The Colossian letter's exhortation to allow the Word of Christ to dwell richly in the heart, and this exhortation to remain filled with the Spirit, encompass the two sources of spiritual life for the believer: the Word (Scripture) and the Spirit.
- *With all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another...speaking to one another.* This brings to mind Paul's description of his role as preacher, *And we proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, that we may present every man complete in Christ* (1:28).

Here, he states that not only is it the preacher's responsibility to admonish and teach, but it is the responsibility of the entire congregation to be so engaged. "Teaching and "admonishing" are opposite sides of the same activity.

- *with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.* This is how the teaching, admonishing, and speaking to one another is to take place, through the positive action

⁹⁷ Lightfoot, J.B., *St. Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and Philippians* (Hendrickson Publishers, reprint of 1875 edition, reprinted in 1995) page 224

⁹⁸ Acts 18:5 is another possible parallel: But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul began devoting himself completely to the word [literally, "was pressed by the word], solemnly testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.

⁹⁹ The Greek term, πληροῦσθε (*plerousthe*) is imperative, passive, present tense, 2nd person plural. Thus, the exhortation is not to become filled with the Spirit, but to keep on allowing the Spirit to fill oneself.

of reciting psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, couched in a spirit of thanksgiving. There is nothing here of "speaking into one another's lives." Instead, through our singing, we should create an atmosphere in which teaching and admonishing are the spiritual air breathed by our redeemed spirits.

1. *Psalms* may be restricted to Old Testament Psalms, but this is improbable, here. Psalms would be more formal compositions. Because of the etymology of the term, we assume that they are songs that lend themselves to being accompanied by a musical instrument.
2. *Hymns* are songs or poems sung or recited to God in praise of God. Very few songs in "the hymnal" are hymns. Most are psalms or spiritual songs. Whereas psalms and hymns are terms used exclusively for religious songs or poems, the term translated *songs*, both in the Ephesian and the Colossian passages, is a general word for any type of song.
3. *Spiritual songs* are songs that are neither psalm nor hymn, but still are uplifting songs, and spiritual in nature. This would include, but not be limited to, spontaneous songs given by the Holy Spirit.

The import of these verses is that whether a psalm, a hymn, or a spiritual song, each one should be the vehicle of instruction, admonition, and encouragement of thanksgiving to God.

As intimated earlier, neither of these passages (Colossians 3:16 and Ephesians 5:18-20) can be restricted to being a description of only what happens in *The Meeting*. This is an exhortation concerning the general conduct and attitude of believers.

The question arises, "Were musical instruments used in *The Meeting*?" This is an age-old question that often has divided the Church. This question was a source of conflict in almost every denomination in America, during the early years of our nation's history. The New Hampshire State Museum contains musical instruments that caused division among the Congregational Churches of New England. Various groups spun off from the parent denominations as a result of the debate over musical instruments. For example, there still is a group of Presbyterians that are "non-instrumental." The largest contemporary group of non-instrumentalists are the Churches of Christ. In the northern and eastern states, various Anabaptist groups are *acappella*. It is doubtful that this question can be decided with certainty.

The Prayers in Colossae Colossians 4:2-3

Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving; praying at the same time for us as well, that God may open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned;

The Greek terminology in this verse, relating to prayer, is the same as Acts 2:42. Literally, the passage reads,

In the prayer, all of you continue, watching in it with thanksgiving, praying together also concerning us...

The definite article, *the prayer*, and *praying together*, indicate a prayer meeting of the church. This is not just an exhortation to individuals to be "devoted to prayer." Again, it is an exhortation to faithfulness to the times of prayer in the church, when they are together.

Reading Apostolic Letters in Colossae & Laodicea Colossians 4:16

Colossians 4:16 *And when this letter is read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and you, for your part read my letter that is coming from Laodicea.*

Tychicus was Paul's companion and fellow laborer. He was with Paul in Rome, where Paul was a prisoner awaiting judgment before Caesar. Epaphras, a member of the Church at Colossae, visited Paul and Tychicus in Rome. He reported to Paul that a strange heresy was spreading at Colossae and in the

surrounding churches. From the statements in the Colossian epistle, the heresy seems to have been a mixture of Judaism and Gnosticism. Paul's distress was extreme. He responded immediately by writing three letters (or four, see footnote).¹⁰⁰ The first was to Colossae and a second to Laodicea. A third letter, Ephesians, probably was written as circular letter for the churches of Asia (Ephesus was the leading city) which Tychicus would carry from church to church. A fourth personal letter was written to Philemon.

Onesimus, a fugitive slave from Colossae, had come to Rome, hoping to find anonymity there. Through some unknown means, he met Paul and became a Christian. Since Tychicus was traveling to Colossae with the letters, he took Onesimus with him, planning to return him to his master, Philemon. Tychicus was greatly respected among the churches since he was known to be Paul's companion fellow laborer. He could provide protection from Philemon's anger toward Onesimus, but Paul did not leave it at that. He wrote a letter to Philemon.

Paul assumes that his Colossian letter will be read in *The Meeting*. He urges the church also to read the Laodicean letter. The circular letter, Ephesians, also would have been read at Colossae. Thus, The Teaching of The Apostle(s), the apostolic epistles carried by Tychicus, would have been read in *The Meeting*.

Paul's Instructions to Timothy

In his first letter to Timothy, Paul wrote that the reason for his writing the epistle was to give instruction on proper behavior in the church.

*but in case I am delayed, I write so that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.*¹⁰¹

The epistle contains a number of instructions relating to church life, including qualifications for leadership, proper conduct in meetings, the behavior of women believers, etc. Some statements are relevant to *The Meeting*. Two exhortations concerning *The Prayers* are relevant to our study:

*First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.*¹⁰²

*Therefore I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension. Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments;*¹⁰³

Two exhortations concerning The Teaching of The Apostles are relevant:

*Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching.*¹⁰⁴

*Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things; for as you do this you will insure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.*¹⁰⁵

Thus, Paul instructed Timothy on the proper conduct of two elements in *The Meeting*:

¹⁰⁰ The Laodicean letter has been lost, unless this title refers to the Letter to the Ephesians. There is an argument that can be made for the view that Ephesians is the letter coming from Laodicea, since Tychicus would have visited Laodicea before he came to Colossae and would have read the Ephesian circular letter there. If this is true, then Paul wrote only three letters, instead of four.

¹⁰¹ I Timothy 3:15

¹⁰² I Timothy 2:12

¹⁰³ I Timothy 2:8-9

¹⁰⁴ I Timothy 4:13

¹⁰⁵ I Timothy 4:16

1. The Teaching of The Apostles
2. The Prayers

This brief survey gives us a rather comprehensive picture of what took place in *The Meeting* during the period in which the Church was led by the apostles.

Life in the First Church

Immediately after describing the elements that were at the heart of community, Luke summarizes the character of the daily life in the new-born Church.

Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles.

And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need.

Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people.

And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.¹⁰⁶

And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them.¹⁰⁷

For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales and lay them at the apostles' feet, and they would be distributed to each as any had need.¹⁰⁸

The days immediately following Pentecost were halcyon days. There was an atmosphere of wonder and anticipation as all of the converts sensed that God had initiated a new day in the history of the Jewish nation. During this period, the Church assumed that only Jews were recipients of the Good News proclaimed by the apostles. Persecution and a sovereign act of God were required to change this mind-set.

The ministry of the apostles

Until the selection of the first deacons, the apostles were the sole government of the Church. They were the overseers of the Church finances, especially the distribution of funds. This topic will be discussed in detail in a later section.

Initially, the apostles were the only ones preaching and teaching. This is not surprising since the apostles were the ones to whom Jesus had given the charge to deliver what He had taught them.

Miraculous events took place through the ministry of the apostles, some of which are described in the succeeding chapters of *Acts*. It was not until the ordination of the first deacons that *Acts* records anyone other than apostles preaching and performing miraculous signs. The miraculous powers displayed exclusively through the apostles set them apart from the rest of the believers.

At the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were taking place among the people; and they were all with one accord in Solomon's portico. But none of the rest dared to associate with them; however, the people held them in high esteem.¹⁰⁹

The miracles performed by the apostles were the leading element in enlarging the Church during its earliest days.

¹⁰⁶ Acts 2:43-47

¹⁰⁷ Acts 4:32

¹⁰⁸ Acts 4:34-35

¹⁰⁹ Acts 5:12-13

And with great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all.¹¹⁰

And all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women, were constantly added to their number, to such an extent that they even carried the sick out into the streets and laid them on cots and pallets, so that when Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on any one of them. Also the people from the cities in the vicinity of Jerusalem were coming together, bringing people who were sick or afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all being healed.¹¹¹

The purpose of the miracles was to validate the message that was being proclaimed. The apostles understood that their primary role was to declare the resurrection of Jesus and they gave themselves to that activity without any restraint.

And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.¹¹²

The activity of the apostles stirred opposition from the Jewish leaders. The message of Jesus' resurrection included the charge that the Jewish establishment had crucified the Messiah. It is not surprising that the Temple rulers tried to squelch these preachers. The apostles were not intimidated by these authorities, even when they were flogged for their boldness.

The first conflict was the result of the healing of a well-known Jerusalem cripple. The event took place at the Temple and was witnessed by scores of people.¹¹³ This gave Peter the ideal opportunity to preach once again the essentials of the sermon that he had preached on Pentecost. Peter and John were arrested almost immediately and brought before the Temple council. Even though the council could not deny that a notable miracle had taken place, they tried to stifle the two preachers. Peter and John were not to be silenced.

But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge;²⁰ for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard."²¹ When they had threatened them further, they let them go (finding no basis on which to punish them) on account of the people, because they were all glorifying God for what had happened;¹¹⁴

The second time that they were arrested, they were flogged but even then they were not silenced.

...and after calling the apostles in, they flogged them and ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and then released them. So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name. And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.¹¹⁵

Communal life in the first Church

There was an immediate sense that the Church was one large family. Those with assets began selling their real estate and valuable possessions in order to have money to put into the common purse. We assume that the circumstance which prompted this was the presence of people from other nations and villages who had

¹¹⁰ Acts 4:33

¹¹¹ Acts 5:14-16

¹¹² Acts 5:42

¹¹³ Acts 3

¹¹⁴ Acts 4:19-21

¹¹⁵ Acts 5:40-42

come for the Pentecostal Feast, and did not return home after they were immersed into Christ.¹¹⁶ These individuals had enough money to cover their expenses during the Feast of Pentecost, plus the expenses they would incur in traveling back to their homes. However, when they stayed in Jerusalem with the rest of those who responded to Peter's Pentecost sermon, they soon would have emptied their money bags. They had no jobs and they had no place to stay. Therefore, the Jerusalem Christians, plus any of the travelers who had means, began to liquidate their assets in order to provide for every member of the community.¹¹⁷

Participation in the common purse was voluntary. No one was instructed or compelled to sell assets and surrender the profit to the Church. This is apparent in Peter's rebuke of Ananias and Sapphira who sold some land and brought to the church only part of the profit from the sale. Their sin was presenting the money as if it were all that had been received for the land.

*While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.*¹¹⁸

Some members of the Church, instead of selling their Jerusalem homes, turned them into hostels. Thus, the new believers were housed together in a network of homes in which they lived together and consumed their meals at a common table. From the description in Acts, it appears that there was a lot of intercourse between the residence of the different houses.¹¹⁹

It is inappropriate to describe the first Christians as Communists. The common purse was not a tenet of the apostles' doctrine. Their communal life was not an "ism" (as in *Communism*). The common purse and communal living resulted from the love that the Holy Spirit had shed abroad in their hearts.¹²⁰ Their communal life was in response to a need – it was circumstantial and situational, and it was temporary.

¹¹⁶ Some of the converts may have returned to their home countries, but the picture presented in *Acts* is of a Church contained entirely in Jerusalem.

¹¹⁷ The statement in Acts 2:5, *there were dwelling in Jerusalem devout Jews from every nation...* could be understood to refer to those who were permanent residences of the city. However, the language also can be understood to refer both to those who were permanent residences and to those who were dwelling in the city for a season in order to participate in the Pentecostal celebration.

¹¹⁸ Acts 5:4

¹¹⁹ After the immigrant converts found jobs and became self-supporting, there was no need for communal living arrangements to continue. By the time that the first deacons were installed, the custom was to provide a daily distribution of food for widows, rather than having communal meals for all of the Church. Scripture contains no record of such a living arrangement in any other church.

¹²⁰ Romans 5:4

Welsford beautifully describes life in these earliest days of the Church.

“The life of the primitive Church, in the years that immediately followed our Lord’s ascension, was poetry where ours is prose. They moved to a different rhythm, as people do when they are happily in love. Their standards were not the standards of commonsense or of this world at all; to them the world was well lost, for they desired a better country – that is, an heavenly. They did not look forward to long centuries of earthly progress and the slow redemption of all mankind. Instead, they eagerly expected the end of the world within the lifetime of their own generation, and they were constantly preparing themselves to play their part in the final act of the great drama: the Day of Judgment and the triumph of Christ and his chosen. Meanwhile their daily lives were altered to conform to this great change of heart. They must still eat and drink, buy and sell; but though they must continue to be in the world for the short time that remained, they need not be of it. They no longer cared about possessions or saving money for the future; instead they sold what they had and laid the money at the apostles’ feet, so that the whole brotherhood might share alike and none be rich or poor among them.”¹²¹

The Temple was the natural gathering place for good Jews to assemble. It was the custom for various rabbis, surrounded by disciples, to teach in the Temple area, daily. The apostles began speaking in the Temple daily and the converts were there to hear them and support them. By their behaviour, we see that they were fulfilling the pattern of the Great Commission:

1. Immerse those who believe;
2. Teach the converts to observe all things commanded by Christ¹²²

Since the new converts viewed themselves as the fulfillment of the Messianic promises to Israel, they were faithful in observing the various Jewish rites, especially the ritual of praying in the Temple at the appointed hours.

Church Government in the Early Church

During the Apostolic Era, Church government and ministry leadership evolved from a Church led by the Twelve, to local churches led by a council of elders. In addition to local church leadership, other ministries also were active and present in the larger Church.

Pre-Pentecostal Apostolic Government

Following the ascension of Jesus, the eleven Apostles returned to Jerusalem to wait for the promised "immersion in the Holy Spirit." They were joined in their prayerful vigil by approximately one hundred twenty of Jesus' disciples. There was one item of business that the group had to take care of - the selection of a replacement for Judas. In accomplishing this goal, the group functioned congregationally.

And at this time Peter stood up in the midst of the brethren (a gathering of about one hundred and twenty persons was there together), and said, "Brethren, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit foretold by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. For he was counted among us, and received his portion in this ministry... For it is written in the book of Psalms,

¹²¹ A.E. Welsford, page 33

¹²² The primitive Church did not have extensive classes teaching converts the full meaning of immersion before they performed the rite. They immersed the believer and instructed them afterwards. To that end Paul wrote Romans 6, Colossians 2:11ff; Galatians 3:27ff; etc.

*'Let his homestead be made desolate,
and let no man dwell in it; and,
His office let another man take.'*

It is therefore necessary that of the men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us - beginning with the immersion of John, until the day that He was taken up from us - one of these should become a witness with us of His resurrection.

And they put forward two men, Joseph called Barsabas (who was also called Justus), and Matthias. And they prayed, and said "Thou, Lord who knowest the hearts of all men, show which one of these two Thou hast chosen to occupy this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.

And they drew lots for them, and the lot fell to Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.¹²³

Here, prior to Pentecost and the reception of the Holy Spirit, the group manifested a congregational government with *Peter's functioning as president*. The casting of lots is reminiscent of the Urim and Thummim of the Old Testament priest (Ex. 28:30; Nu. 27:21; 1 Sam. 28:6). This is the only New Testament record of a congregational form of government.¹²⁴

Post-Pentecostal Apostolic Government

In the months immediately following Pentecost, the Apostolic Council functioned as the government of the Church. No other governmental roles are mentioned in the early post-Pentecostal chapters of *Acts*. The apostles oversaw every aspect of the church, including the treasury (Acts 2:43; 4:32-37; 5:2). The Apostolic Council continued to lead the Church for a period of twelve to eighteen months.¹²⁵

The First Managerial Addition To The Church¹²⁶

Now at this time, while the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food. And the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said "It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables. But select from among you, brethren, seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task. But we will devote ourselves to prayer, and to the ministry of the word."

And the statement found approval with the whole congregation; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicola,

¹²³ Acts 1:15-17, 20-26

¹²⁴ The same *style* is found in Acts 6, but not the same *type*. In the instance before us, Peter clearly is the president. In Acts 6, the government is a council of apostles.

¹²⁵ The arrival in Judea of Festus provides a peg for those who seek to arrange a chronology of *Acts*. This event is well established in Roman history as occurring in 60 AD. Paul was arrested in Jerusalem on Pentecost, two years prior to Festus' arrival (Acts 20:16; 24:27; etc.). J. W. McGarvey, using this peg, attempts to move backward through *Acts* and Paul's letters in order to establish a chronology (J. W. McGarvey, *Acts of the Apostles* [Cincinnati, Standard Publishing Co. 1892] Using this method, McGarvey arrives at Pentecost 34 AD as the birthday of the Church. He does state that much of his conclusions are speculative. This date contradicts the conclusion that is reached when one considers the date of the death of Herod (4 BC) and the fact that Jesus was born before Herod's death. Jesus began His public ministry when he was about thirty years of age and his public ministry lasted about three and one-half years. Thus, 30 AD is more certain for the birth of the Church, rather than 34 AD, as McGarvey and others contend.

¹²⁶ As contrasted with ruling

a proselyte from Antioch. And these they brought before the apostles; and after praying, they laid their hands on them. (Acts 6:1-6 NAS)

The Church had grown to the point that the Apostles no longer were able to manage and oversee every detail of the Church's affairs. Because of this reality, seven men were chosen to be the administrators of the benevolent funds.

NOTE: Here is a clear example of the principle, *leaders may delegate a portion of their responsibility and authority to others, who will function in the leaders' stead*. The apostles installed the seven in their new roles by the laying on of hands.¹²⁷ These seven men were to function as servants.¹²⁸ They were given managerial, rather than governmental or ruling roles. They were to oversee one distinct aspect of the life of the Church.

Evidence of the esteem for the servants in a church is seen in Paul's salutation to the Philippian church. As noted in the previous section, he began his epistle by giving special greeting to the *overseers and servants*. (Philippians 1:1)

One of the reasons for writing the *Epistle to the Romans* seems to have been to provide a church letter for Phoebe who was a *servant of the church which is at Cenchrea...* (Romans 16:1-2)

Governmental Transition To Elders

The first record of a governmental change occurs in Acts Chapter Eleven. In the opening verse of the chapter, the Church is described as *Apostles and brethren*. *Brethren* is the general term that Luke used in *Acts* to describe believers.¹²⁹ The first mention of *elders* is found in the last verse of Chapter Eleven.

And in the proportion that any of the disciples had means, each of them determined to send a contribution for the relief of the brethren living in Judea. And this they did, sending it in charge of Barnabas and Saul to the elders. (Acts 11:29-30)

As we already have noted, up this point the Apostles had handled the treasury. In verse 30, without any explanation of their origin, we are introduced to a council of elders. We are not told when or how the Holy Spirit brought forth these men. However, from this point onward, until the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., the Jerusalem Church was led by a council, consisting of the Apostles and elders (in the final years, James was the only apostle present, the others having traveled to many different locations, proclaiming the Gospel in response to the Great Commission).

¹²⁷ The implication of the Acts record is that after Pentecost only the apostles worked miracles (Acts 2:43; 5:12). With the launching of the ministry of the Seven, this changed. At least two of the Seven (Stephen and Philip – Acts 6:8; 8:6) *performed great signs and wonders among the people*. It could be textually inferred, though not proven, that Stephen and Philip received the anointing to perform signs and wonders at the laying on of the Apostles' hands. It also is noteworthy that both of these performed signs and wonders to credential their evangelistic activity, in conformity with the statement in Mark 16:20.

¹²⁸ The Greek term, *diakonein*, "to serve," in verse 2, and, *diakonia*, "service," in verse 1, are forms of the term, *diakonos*, Anglicized as *deacon*. Because the title, *deacon*, has come to mean something far different from what *diakonos* meant in the New Testament, we would avoid many problems if we ceased using the Anglicized term and began using the English word, *servant*, which is the translation of the Greek term. (see, *New Testament Church Leadership*, Chapter 9, "The Role of Deacons in the New Testament Church")

¹²⁹ Acts 1: 15; 6:3; etc.

The Jerusalem Council, in which Paul and Barnabas defended their ministry among Gentiles, consisted of Apostles and elders. The Acts 15 account of the event describes the Apostles and elders together in an equal relationship.¹³⁰ Five times in this account, they are mentioned in this manner.¹³¹

In time, the Twelve left the scene, and the Church was led by the elders and James (Jesus' half-brother who was called an *apostle*).¹³² When Paul visited Jerusalem several years later, he reported to James and *all the elders*.¹³³

Church Government In Paul's Church Planting Ministry

When the Church spread beyond Jerusalem, the governmental pattern displayed in each place was a council of elders.¹³⁴ For example, when Paul and Barnabas had reached the end of their first missionary journey, they retraced their steps, revisiting each church that they had planted. In each city, they installed elders as the government of the local church.

And after they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God." And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed (Acts 14:21-23)

This became Paul's consistent pattern. Either he personally installed elders, or he left behind an apostolic delegate to lead the new church until elders had been installed. One example of such action is the work of Titus in Crete.

...to Titus, my true child in a common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior. For this reason I left you in Crete, that you might set in order what remains, and appoint elders in every city as I directed you. (Titus 1:4-5)

Timothy was another delegate whom Paul left behind to complete the development of a council of elders (see I Timothy 3).

¹³⁰ Note the interesting manner in which this council functioned in Acts 15:

- Both sides of the debate presented their case before the council of apostles and elders, with the congregation as witness;
- The apostles and elders had discussion;
- One of the council members, James, delivered the consensus;
- The entire church confirmed the decision.

¹³¹ Acts 15:2,4,6,22,23

¹³² Galatians 1:19

¹³³ Acts 21:17-18

¹³⁴ This, of course, refers to those where any information is given concerning the local church government. No such description exists for some churches, but since when information is given, the pattern is consistent, we conclude that eventually, if not initially, a council of elders became the pattern. This pattern also is displayed in the immediate post-New Testament literature.

There Was Only One Governmental Body In The Local New Testament Church

From the following Scriptures, we see that in the New Testament Church three terms (*overseers* [bishops], *shepherds* [pastors], *elders*) are used to describe a single group of men, rather than three different groups.¹³⁵

Acts 20:17-18, 28

*From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the **elders** of the church...Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you **overseers**, to **shepherd** the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.*

Paul and his traveling companions were sailing to Jerusalem, hoping to arrive in time for Pentecost. Enroute, they had to change ships at Miletus, a port-city about thirty miles from Ephesus. The travelers had to wait in Miletus for the winds to be right before the ship could leave for Jerusalem. The passengers had to be ready to board on short notice. Paul wanted to meet with the elders of the Ephesian Church, but he did not dare make the trip to Ephesus. The ship might have departed while he was in Ephesus. So, he called for the Ephesian elders to come to Miletus. If the ship set sail before the elders arrived, they would suffer only the inconvenience of the short journey. They did arrive before Paul's ship departed. Paul's charge to them is one of the most important passages of Scripture relating to elders.

The three terms pertinent to our study are found in Paul's exhortation.

1. The **Elders** (πρεσβύτερος - *presbuteros*) of Ephesus were called to meet Paul at Miletus. v17
2. Paul stated that the Holy Spirit has made them **overseers** (bishops, ἐπίσκοπος - *episkopos*)v28
3. He instructed them to **shepherd** (pastor or feed, ποιμαίνω - *poimaino*) the church.v28

Thus, we see that the work of the elders of Ephesus was to oversee (bishop) the church and to shepherd (pastor) the church.¹³⁶ There was not one group of men responsible for *elding*, another group responsible for *shepherding*, and another group, *overseeing*. There was a single group of men to whom all of three of these terms and activities applied.

I Peter 5:1-4

*Therefore, I exhort the **elders** among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, **shepherd** the flock of God among you, **exercising oversight** not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God,- and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge but proving to be examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.*

Peter wrote this epistle to a broad audience, most of whom were far distant from him (I Peter 1:1). He probably had not met most of those who were the audience of this letter. So, the instructions can be

¹³⁵ The KJV uses the Middle English term, *bishop*, to render the Greek, ἐπίσκοπος, meaning, *overseer*, and the Middle English term, *pastor*, to render the Greek, ποιμήν, meaning, *shepherd*.

¹³⁶ The terms, *pastor* and *bishop*, are old English words for *shepherd*, and *overseer*. Because these terms have taken on improper ecclesiastical significance, it would be better if their use in the church were discontinued. It would be better to use the translation of the Greek terms, *shepherd*, and *overseer*.

taken to be very appropriate for all of the churches. In this passage, Peter uses the same terms for leadership that Paul had used in his exhortation to the Ephesian leaders.

- 1 . Peter addressed *elders* (*presbuteros*) v 1
- 2 . He instructed them to *shepherd* (pastor or feed, *poimaino*) the flock. v2
- 3 . He instructed them to exercise *oversight* (bishop, *episkopeo*) from the right motive. v2

Again, we see one group of men, elders, charged with the work of shepherding and overseeing (pastoring and bishoping) the church. There were not three different groups of men given these different functions or titles.

Titus 1:5-7

*For this reason I left you in Crete that you might set in order what remains and appoint **elders** in every city as I directed you, namely, if a man be above reproach, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion, for the **overseer** must be above reproach as God's steward...*

Two things in this passage are relevant for our study:

- Paul left Titus in Crete to ordain *elders* (*presbuteros*) in every city. v5
- He used the term *overseers* (bishop, *episkopos*) to describe *elders* vs5,7

From these passages, it is clear that both Paul and Peter considered there to be one governmental group in the New Testament. The most common term used to describe these men is *elder*, (*presbuteros*). The work that they do is shepherding and overseeing the church.

Summary of terms

The term, *shepherd* (*or pastor*), is used as a noun only once in the New Testament to describe the leaders of the church.¹³⁷ On all other occasions, it is a verb, *to shepherd* (*or pastor*), describing what church leaders (*elders*) do. Even in the passage where it is used as a noun, the term is a job description, rather than a title.

And He gave some as... shepherds and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service... (Ephesians 4:11)

The term, *overseer* (bishop), is used three times to describe the leaders of the local church.

- We already have noted Titus 1, in which elders and overseers are equated as being the same men.
- A second occurrence is I Timothy 3, in which Paul's description of qualifications for those who are selected to be overseers almost parallels what he wrote to Titus.
- The third occurrence is in the salutation of Philippians 1:1, in which Paul greets the two classes in leadership, overseers and deacons.

Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons:

Since it is apparent from the other passages that Paul considered the elders to be the overseers of the church, both I Timothy 3:1ff and Philippians 1:1 would refer to the elders. It is natural to call one who does overseeing, an *overseer*.

Thus, in *Acts* and the epistles, the term most commonly used as the descriptive term for local church leadership is *elder*. The work that elders do is shepherding, and overseeing. These latter two terms,

¹³⁷ Ephesians 4:11

recognizing the function of elders, are used to describe them¹³⁸ (shepherds [one instance¹³⁹] and overseers [three instances¹⁴⁰]).

The Principle Of Plurality

After the initial planting of a church, the leadership of each congregation always consisted of a plural group, rather than an individual leader. We find no record of anyone who was *the elder*, or *the pastor*, or *the overseer*. In III John, Diotrephes who wanted to be *the leader*, is condemned for his desire to have the pre-eminence in the church.

I wrote something to the church; but Diotrephes, who loves to be the first among them, does not accept what we say. For this reason, when I come I will call attention to his deeds... (III John 9-10)

Note that in all of the passages that we have examined, the terminology always is plural.

SUMMARY

1. After the initial years in Jerusalem, the consistent pattern is seen in which the Holy Spirit raised a group of men who functioned as elders of the church.
2. There always was a plurality, a council of elders.
3. The work of elders was shepherding (pastoring) and overseeing (bishops) every aspect of the life of the church.
4. The elders delegated responsibility and authority to men and women in the church, who had the oversight and implementation of specific ministries in the local body.

Translocal Ministry in the New Testament Church

In addition to the council of elders in each local church, there were other ministries that were active in the Church at large. These fall under the general term, *trans-local ministries*. They are given that title because they were recognized by all churches and because they ministered to the entire Church, not just a single congregation. Ephesians 4:11 states,

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as shepherds and teachers...

The shepherd/teachers are elders which, as already described, were the government of a local church. Apostles, prophets, and evangelists, on the other hand, were men whom God gave to the Church to carry out ministries, often moving from church to church, but also locating for a season in a particular community because of a need in that community.¹⁴¹ We will briefly examine the roles of these three ministries in the New Testament Church.

¹³⁸ Even as one who builds houses is called a *builder*, so one who oversees is called an *overseer*

¹³⁹ Ephesians 4:11

¹⁴⁰ Philippians 1: 1; Titus 1:7; I Timothy 3:2 (Note: In most versions, the translation of I Timothy 3:1 does not convey, accurately, the sense of the Greek. The language used here implies one who aspires to the work of overseeing, not the office of overseer. It is the work that is to be desired, not the office).

¹⁴¹ An example of extended ministry in a single locale, are Paul's approximately three years in Ephesus and about eighteen months in Corinth.

Definition of the term, “apostle”

The English term, *apostle*, is the Anglicization of the Greek noun, *apostolos* (ἀπόστολος). *Apostolos* is the noun form of the verb, *apostello* (ἀποστέλλω). A frequently repeated statement is that apostles are "sent ones," the implication being that the significant characteristic of apostles is that they are "sent." Such a definition misses the significance of the Greek term. There are a number of Greek verbs that communicate the concept of sending. Each of them tends to be used with a particular understanding about the nature of the sending. The most common of these is *pempo* (πέμπω), which conveys the simple idea, *to send*. *Apostello*, however, conveys a particular type of sending. J. G. Machen states, "*pempo* is the general word for 'send,' while *apostello* means 'I send with a commission.'"¹⁴² The meaning of the verb prevails in the definition of the noun. The noun form, *apostolos*, means "one sent with a commission." The distinctive characteristic of this word is not the fact that one is sent, but that one is sent to do something - its focus is upon the purpose of the sending.¹⁴³

That being true, when someone is called an *apostle*, in order to understand how the term applies to him, we must discover what that particular apostle is commissioned to do.

The Distinction between the Generic and the Technical use of the Terms

The noun, *apostle*, and the verb, *apostello*, are found in the New Testament both in their generic sense and as technical terms for a class of individuals to whom God imparted lifetime commissions related to His Kingdom.¹⁴⁴

In its generic sense, *apostolos* simply means "one who is sent to do something." If a man sent his son to fetch a pail of water, he would use the word, *apostello*, and in that sense, his son would be his *apostolos*. In such common usage, the term does not imply any special calling or an ecclesiastical role. Examples 4 & 5 in the following list are examples of this common use of the term. In addition to these two examples, the term is used in this generic sense with reference to Timothy, Erastus,¹⁴⁵ Judas, Silas,¹⁴⁶ and Tychicus.^{147 148} In these instances there is no sense of a Christ-given call to a specified ministry. Rather, these were messengers commissioned to go to certain places and carry out certain things.

Here are five examples of those whom the New Testament labels, *apostle*. Note the variety in their respective commissions:

¹⁴²J. Gresham Machen, DD., Litt.D. *New Testament Greek for Beginners*, (New York, The Macmillan Company, 1923) page 64

¹⁴³ If we chose to do so, we could translate the term, *a commissioned one*, instead of Anglicizing the Greek term into *apostle*. Since it is easier to say, *apostle*, than it is to say, *a commissioned one*, we will stick with the Anglicized term in this study.

¹⁴⁴ examples of the technical use of the term: I Corinthians 9:1-2; 12:28; 15:9; II Corinthians 12:11-12; Ephesians 2:19-20; 3:5; 4:11

¹⁴⁵ Acts 19:22

¹⁴⁶ Acts 15:32-33

¹⁴⁷ II Timothy 4:12

¹⁴⁸ In each of the three passages, a form of the verb, *apostello*, is used. In Acts 19:22 (referring to Timothy and Erastus) and in Acts 15:32-33 (referring to Judas and Silas), the verb form is a masculine participle, aorist, active; The literal translation would be *having sent*, or *apostled*, them. In II Timothy 4:12 (referring to Tychicus), the verb form is first person, singular, first aorist, indicative. The literal translation would be, *I sent*, or *I apostled*, him.

1. Jesus¹⁴⁹ was commissioned to:
 - redeem those under law (this involves His atoning death, victory over the grave, impartation of the Holy Spirit and abundant life, and the consummation of the kingdom);¹⁵⁰
 - reveal the person and character of God.¹⁵¹
2. The Twelve¹⁵² were commissioned to:
 - testify to the fact that Jesus was resurrected;¹⁵³
 - cast out demons and heal every kind of disease;¹⁵⁴
 - make disciples of all nations;¹⁵⁵
 - be agents, used of the Holy Spirit, to proclaim accurately the teaching and person of Christ;¹⁵⁶
 - open up the kingdom of heaven to all mankind, binding and loosing people in their relationship to the Church.¹⁵⁷
3. Barnabas and Paul¹⁵⁸ were commissioned to:
 - be propagators of the Gospel before Gentiles, kings, and Jews¹⁵⁹ - but especially to the Gentile world.¹⁶⁰
 - Paul considered himself called to be a "master-builder" of local churches. His responsibility was to lay the foundation of Jesus Christ. Other local leaders then would build the local church upon the foundation laid by Paul.¹⁶¹
 - Paul also was one of the revelatory apostles, in the same sense as were the Twelve.¹⁶²
4. Epaphroditus¹⁶³ was commissioned to carry a love offering from Philippi to Paul during his imprisonment in Rome.¹⁶⁴
5. Representatives¹⁶⁵ of the Gentile congregations were commissioned to travel with the offering to Jerusalem so that no one could accuse Paul of misuse of funds.¹⁶⁶

¹⁴⁹ Hebrews 3:1; Galatians 4:4 (The term "He sent forth" in Gal. 4:4 is ἐξαπέστειλεν [*ekzapesteilen*], a form of ἐξαποστέλλω [*ekzapostello*] "sending someone away to fulfill a mission in another place." W. Bauer *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, translated and edited by W.F. Arndt and F.W. Gingrich (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1957)2 pg. 272

¹⁵⁰ Galatians 4:4-5

¹⁵¹ Hebrews 1:1-3; John 14:7-10

¹⁵² Matthew 10:1-4; Acts 1:2, 26; etc. (The term, *apostoloi*, is applied to this group more than 40 times in the New Testament.)

¹⁵³ Acts 1:8, 21-22; 2:22-24, 32; 3:15, 4:2, 33; 5:30-32; 10:39-42 etc. The Twelve considered this to be their primary mission.

¹⁵⁴ Matthew 10:1-4; Mark 3:13-19;

¹⁵⁵ Matthew 28:16-20

¹⁵⁶ John 14:25-26; 15:26-27

¹⁵⁷ (to Peter) Matthew 16:18-19; (to all the apostles) Matthew 18:18; John 20:22-23

¹⁵⁸ Acts 14:14

¹⁵⁹ Acts 13:1-3; 9:10-15; Romans 11:13; etc.

¹⁶⁰ Galatians 1:16a; 2:9

¹⁶¹ I Corinthians 3:10

¹⁶² Galatians 1:11-12

¹⁶³ Philippians 2:25 (Although the word, *messenger*, occurs in some versions, the word in the original is *apostle*.)

¹⁶⁴ Philippians 2:29-30; 4:15-18

6. The seventy were commissioned to be advance-men, going into cities in advance of Jesus' arrival, preaching and healing in order to prepare the people for Jesus' arrival.¹⁶⁷

From these examples it is apparent that there are different types of apostles (commissions) displayed among those bearing that label in the New Testament.

The New Testament's technical use of the term

Our interest lies in the New Testament's technical use of the term, *apostolos* and its verbal form, *apostello*.¹⁶⁸

Within this class of called and commissioned individuals, there are two groups: *pre-ascension apostles* and *post-ascension apostles*.

Pre-ascension Apostles

The Twelve, chosen by Jesus during His earthly ministry, were commissioned prior to His ascension. Thus, the Twelve were *pre-ascension* apostles. They were recognized as being a special class.

The original Twelve consisted of men who had been with Jesus from the immersion of John until Jesus' ascension. John, one of the Twelve, wrote that he and his companions had heard Jesus, seen Jesus, and had touched Him with their hands.¹⁶⁹ When a replacement was sought for the pre-ascension apostle, Judas, Peter stated this qualification:

*It is therefore necessary that of the men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us - beginning with the immersion of John, until the day that He was taken up from us - one of these should become a witness with us of His resurrection.*¹⁷⁰

Matthias, one of two men in the post-ascension prayer meeting who met these qualifications, was chosen by lot to occupy the vacated position.¹⁷¹ The Twelve understood that their unique commission was to be witnesses to the fact that Jesus had been resurrected.¹⁷²

Post-ascension Apostles

The most famous post-ascension apostle is Paul. Other post-ascension apostles include:

- Matthias¹⁷³
- James, the Lord's brother¹⁷⁴

¹⁶⁵ 2 Corinthians 8:23 (Although the word *messenger* occurs in many versions, the word in the original is *apostle*.)

¹⁶⁶ 2 Corinthians 8:16-21

¹⁶⁷ Luke 10:1-20. Some ancient manuscripts state that their number was seventy-two. Although the noun, *apostle*, is not used for the seventy, the verb, *apostello*, is used in reference to their commission (verses 1 & 3, and by inference, verse 16 [God *apostled* Jesus, and Jesus, by inference, *apostled* the seventy])

¹⁶⁸ A modern example of how a generic term can become a technical designation is the manner in which the word, *messenger*, is used for delegates of churches in some Baptist conventions. The generic term becomes an official title for voting delegates; *messenger* becomes, *Messenger*.

¹⁶⁹ I John 1:1 John uses an interesting term to describe their "hands handled." The term is *ψηλαφάω*, which implies "to feel around for." It is the word used to describe a blind man's feeling of something in an effort to determine its identity.

¹⁷⁰ Acts 1:21-22

¹⁷¹ Peter justified this action by citing Psalms 69:25 and 109:8 (Acts 1:20)

¹⁷² Acts 1:8, 22; 2:24, 32; 3:15; 4:2, 33; 5:30-32; 10:39-42

¹⁷³ Acts 1:26 Because Matthias replaced Judas and thus became one of the Twelve, his inclusion in this list is arbitrary.

- Barnabas¹⁷⁵
- Apollos¹⁷⁶
- Silas and Timothy¹⁷⁷
- Unnamed apostles to whom the resurrected Lord appeared¹⁷⁸

The Special Role of the Twelve and Paul

As stated and intimated in matters already considered, it is apparent that the Twelve and Paul, by revelation and inspiration of the Holy Spirit,¹⁷⁹ were responsible for presenting the Gospel and truths related to it. Their teaching became the doctrines that are essential and non-negotiable in the Church. Jude lamented the fact that in his day, some were distorting the apostolic teaching; he appealed to the Church to do battle to keep the teaching free from alteration.

Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints. (Jude 3)

Prophets: General Information and Background

The New Testament does not contain as much information on prophets as it does on apostles. The English term, *prophet*, is an Anglicization of the Greek term, *prophetes* (προφήτης), which etymologically means, *one who speaks forth*.¹⁸⁰ Yet, the term means more than its etymological definition. A prophet is one who speaks forth what another has given him to say. A clear illustration of this meaning is seen in God's ultimate response to Moses' pleading that he wasn't able to speak well. God said that Aaron would be Moses' spokesman.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "See, I make you as God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron shall be your prophet. You shall speak all that I command you, and your brother Aaron shall speak to Pharaoh that he let the sons of Israel go out of his land." ¹⁸¹

A prophet did not speak forth his own thoughts. He was to speak forth the thoughts and messages that were imparted to him by God. The Old Testament prophet primarily was concerned with the present, often proclaiming righteousness to those who were out of step with God. That ministry, however, could involve predicting the future, should God give such a prediction. One of the tests of a prophet was the accuracy of what he predicted.

¹⁷⁴ Acts 1:14; I Corinthians 15:7; Galatians 1:19; 2:9

¹⁷⁵ Acts 4:36; 11:22-30; 14:1, 4, 14; I Corinthians 9:6

¹⁷⁶ I Corinthians 4:6-9

¹⁷⁷ I Thessalonians 1:6

¹⁷⁸ I Corinthians 15:7 We can only speculate about the identity of, "all the apostles." The order and enumeration of those to whom the resurrected Jesus appeared imply that they were not any of those previously named in this section. Since the identity of this group cannot be determined with any degree of certainty, it is best to acknowledge that the New Testament Church recognized as apostles men other than those whom this passage identifies.

¹⁷⁹ Earlier we have discussed Jesus' statements to the Twelve, concerning their role as communicators of the truth. Paul is the only other person whom the New Testament describes as being in that role. Paul states of himself, *For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. (Galatians 1:11-12)*

¹⁸⁰ The word is formed from the pronoun *προ*, which carries the idea, *to place before*, and the verb, *φημί* which means, *to speak or to make known one's thoughts*.

¹⁸¹ Exodus 7:1-2

And you may say in your heart, "How shall we know the word which the LORD has not spoken?" When a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him.¹⁸²

Prophets didn't have X-ray vision that allowed them to go around reading everyone's mind or seeing through walls. They did not know what was happening everywhere, nor always what would happen in the future. If God did not give them knowledge, and the words to speak, they had nothing to say unless they were false prophets. True prophets, speaking in obedience to God, often spoke to their own hurt.

An example of a prophet's limitation is seen in an interesting episode involving the building of a lodge for Elisha's disciples. In the process, an axe head came off its handle and fell into a stream. A young man had to show Elisha where it was, before the prophet could perform a miracle. Elisha did not automatically know everything.

But as one was felling a beam, the axe head fell into the water; and he cried out and said, "Alas, my master! For it was borrowed." Then the man of God said, "Where did it fall?" And when he showed him the place, he cut off a stick, and threw it in there, and made the iron float.¹⁸³

This lack of full knowledge in every circumstance reflects Paul's comment on the limitation of prophecy, *For we know in part, and we prophesy in part;*¹⁸⁴

Jesus, the One of whom all apostolic and prophetic ministry is an expression, confessed that He did not know everything.

But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone....¹⁸⁵

Jesus continually declared that He spoke only the words that the Father gave Him and did only what He saw the Father doing.¹⁸⁶ That is the picture of a true prophet. If no word is given to him, nor any direction given to him from heaven, then he is inactive and silent.

The New Testament identifies only four individuals or groups label, *prophet*. These are

1. Agabus¹⁸⁷
2. Judas¹⁸⁸
3. Silas¹⁸⁹
4. The Antioch leadership council¹⁹⁰

In the first mention of Agabus (Acts 11:27-28), he was accompanied by a band of prophets, but the others are not named. We are unable to identify them.

Acts 13:1 informs us that the Antioch leadership council consisted of prophets and teachers. The names of those who constituted the council are given,¹⁹¹ but the text does not inform us as to which ones were prophets, which ones were teachers, and if any were both.¹⁹²

¹⁸² Deuteronomy 18:21-22; et. al.

¹⁸³ II Kings 6:5-6

¹⁸⁴ I Corinthians 14:9

¹⁸⁵ Matthew 24:36-37

¹⁸⁶ John 5:19-20, 30; 8:28; 12:49-50; 14:10; 15:15

¹⁸⁷ Acts 11:27-28; 21:10

¹⁸⁸ Acts 15:32

¹⁸⁹ Acts 15:32

¹⁹⁰ Acts 13:1-2

The term, *Revelatory Apostles*, which we earlier applied to the Twelve and Paul, is appropriate, to a degree, for the First Century prophets who accompanied the apostles. Paul wrote to the Ephesians,

*...that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief. And by referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel,*¹⁹³

The Greek term rendered *mystery* (*musterion* μυστήριον), means something that God has revealed, and had He not revealed it, it could not be known. The mystery to which Paul refers in this passage is that people of all races can be partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus, through the Gospel. This mystery was revealed to Paul as well as to Christ's other holy apostles and to the prophets. The part of this statement relevant to our study is that not only apostles, but prophets also were God's vehicles for delivering insight into the full dimension of the Kingdom.¹⁹⁴

Acts 15:32 relates to the statements made in Ephesians 2:20 concerning the foundational work of apostles and prophets.

And Judas and Silas, also being prophets themselves, encouraged and strengthened the brethren with a lengthy message [better rendered, through much discourse].

The Greek term rendered, *strengthened*, is *episteridzo* (ἐπιστηρίζω), which carries the idea of *settlement on a foundation*.¹⁹⁵ Thus, in keeping with the other scriptures noted, Acts 15:32 describes two prophets, Judas and Silas, doing the work of firmly establishing individual lives and the life of the Antioch Church upon the foundation of Jesus Christ. As Paul wrote in Ephesians 2:20, the work of establishing churches on

¹⁹¹ *Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.*

¹⁹² In addition to these, the question of Philip's daughters has to be considered. *And on the next day we departed and came to Caesarea; and entering the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, we stayed with him. Now this man had four virgin daughters who were prophetesses. And as we were staying there for some days, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea....* (Acts 21:8-10) *The Greek text literally says, and this one had four daughters, virgins, prophesying.* (participle present active nominative feminine plural)

The manner in which this is stated in the midst of the narrative makes it clear that these young women did not just occasionally "have a word." They spoke prophetically to the degree that it was a defining part of their identity. The gift of prophecy must have been theirs. However, they are not given the title of prophetesses. In writing Acts, Luke recorded what they did, not who they were. This is significant because in the very next verse, Luke wrote, *And as we were staying there for some days, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea* (Acts 21:10). The contrast between Philip's daughters who prophesied, and Agabus who was a recognized prophet cannot be missed. Philip's daughters did not have a word for Paul. Agabus did.

Although instructions are given for the attitude and modest dress of women who prophesy in the local assembly, (I Corinthians 11:4ff) no women in the New Testament are given the title, *prophetess*. Whether they were a part of the leadership of a local church (Acts 13:1), or traveling prophets (Acts 11:27ff and Acts 21:10), they were men. Those who bore the label, *prophet*, were known, trusted, and carried spiritual authority.

¹⁹³ Ephesians 3:3-6

¹⁹⁴ Even so, prophets did not displace the Twelve and Paul as the vehicles through whom the foundational truths concerning the identity of Christ were communicated, as well as the matters related to the entrance and functioning of the Church.

¹⁹⁵ See H.C.G. Moule, *Studies in Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, Kregel Publications, 1977) page 84

the foundation of Jesus Christ was not just the work of apostles, but also the work of prophets. This especially would have been true for the *revelatory prophets*, and *revelatory apostles*, who delivered *once for all the faith delivered to the saints*.¹⁹⁶

Predictive Prophecy

In I Corinthians 14: 3, Paul stated that the purpose of prophecy in a corporate meeting is *for edification and encouragement*¹⁹⁷ and *consolation* (which the Holy Spirit could impart to anyone He chose in the meeting – not necessarily one who was a prophet). However, the two prophecies of Agabus (the most dominant prophet in the early church) that are recorded in Acts do not fit that description.

*Now at this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. And one of them named Agabus stood up and began to indicate by the Spirit that there would certainly be a great famine all over the world. And this took place in the reign of Claudius.*¹⁹⁸

And as we were staying there for some days, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. And coming to us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands, and said, "This is what the Holy Spirit says: 'In this way the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'"¹⁹⁹

Both of these were predictive prophecies. The first one resulted in the Antioch Church's sending an offering to Jerusalem. The second one confirmed what other prophetic words had been saying to Paul as he proceeded to Jerusalem.²⁰⁰ Neither of these words fits Paul's statement concerning the purpose of prophecy in the local assembly. Both of Agabus' prophecies were predictive warnings. The ministry of ascension-gift prophets was not bounded by Paul's statements to the Corinthian Church concerning the manifestation of the gifts in the corporate meeting of the local church.

The Ministry Of Evangelists

The New Testament contains less information on evangelists, than it does on apostles and prophets. The term, *evangelist*, occurs only three times in the New Testament, and the title is given to only one person, Philip, one of the seven Jerusalem deacons.²⁰¹

*And on the next day we departed and came to Caesarea; and entering the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, we stayed with him.*²⁰²

¹⁹⁶ Jude 3

¹⁹⁷ This term, *παράκλησις*, in the New American Standard Version is rendered as: counsel (one time), consolation (one time), exhortation (one time), appeal (one time), encouragement (one time), and comfort (six times). Out of all of these renderings, in every passage, the sense of encouragement seems to be the underlying tone. Therefore, we have so rendered the term, here.

¹⁹⁸ Acts 11:27-28

¹⁹⁹ Acts 21:10-11

²⁰⁰ Paul's proceeding to Jerusalem, in the face of these prophetic disclosures is similar to that of Jesus who proceeded to Jerusalem, knowing that the Jewish establishment was going to arrest Him and crucify Him.

²⁰¹ Acts 6:1-6 Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John have been called, *The Evangelists*, in many classic documents of the Church, but no such label is given to them in Scripture. Certainly, others went forth evangelizing and very possibly were described as, *evangelists*. The point being made here is that Philip is the only person so labeled in Scripture.

²⁰² Acts 21:8

Timothy, although not an evangelist is urged to *do the work of an evangelist*.²⁰³

*But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.*²⁰⁴

The only other place that the term occurs in the New Testament is in Ephesians 4:11, cited earlier.

It is obvious that evangelists were gifted in a special way with the ability and impulse to proclaim the Gospel, often in virgin territory. As we will discover in future studies, the early Church of the Second Century considered evangelists to be the successors to the apostles.

Undefined Translocal Ministries

The effort to clearly define and label each minister and ministry becomes somewhat forced, when all of the traveling ministries are taken into account. This especially is true of those who fulfilled one role at one time and another role at another time. Paul's occasional traveling companions certainly fit this description. The two most prominent are Timothy and Titus. Clearly, both of these men were apostolic delegates at various times. Frequent comment on their fulfilling of that role has been made in earlier sections.

Both of these, especially Titus, seemed to have had an independent ministry apart from being Paul's delegate. When we read of Paul's reference to Titus in various epistles, we get the picture of a mature and strong believer who moved among the churches dealing with difficult issues. Titus often was Paul's encourager.²⁰⁵ The same could be said of Timothy who traveled independently, from time to time, and seems to have had a ministry of the Word in his own right. Paul's exhortations in the two letters to Timothy, as well as *Acts'* description of Timothy's activities display a variety of roles and ministries fulfilled by Timothy.²⁰⁶

Another such minister would be Silas who is described in a number of circumstances and roles.²⁰⁷

Doctrinal Controversies in the First Century

As long as the Church consisted totally of Jewish believers, centered in Jerusalem and blessed with the presence of the Twelve, doctrinal controversy did not exist. As soon as the Holy Spirit sanctioned the preaching of the Gospel among Gentiles and their reception into the Church, doctrinal controversy became a pressing issue. A major portion of Paul's writings deal with doctrinal issues. His warning to the Ephesian elders displays the apostolic concern that false teachers would bring division in the Church.

*and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.*²⁰⁸

²⁰³ From all of the duties and responsibilities given to Timothy, it is clear that he was not an evangelist, in so far as the fact that evangelism was not the focus of his life. Even so, evangelism was one of the things expected of Timothy.

²⁰⁴ II Timothy 4:5

²⁰⁵ 2 Co. 2:13; 7:6, 13f; 8:6, 16, 23; 12:18; Gal. 2:1, 3; 2 Tim. 4:10

²⁰⁶ Acts 16:1; 17:14f; 18:5; 19:22; 20:4; Rom. 16:21; 1 Co. 4:17; 16:10; 2 Co. 1:1, 19; Phil. 1:1; 2:19; Col. 1:1; 1 Thess. 1:1; 3:2, 6; 2 Thess. 1:1; 1 Tim. 1:2, 18; 6:20; 2 Tim. 1:2; Philemon 1:1; Heb. 13:23

²⁰⁷ Acts 15:22, 27, 32, 34, 40; 16:19, 25, 29; 17:4, 10, 14f; 18:5

²⁰⁸ Acts 20:30

The exhortation and prediction that Paul wrote to Timothy, not long before Paul's execution, expresses the same concern.

I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.²⁰⁹

Peripheral doctrinal controversies usually were dealt with quickly by apostolic intervention but two doctrines arose in the First Century that threatened the very core of the faith. Both of these proved to be tenacious.

Legalism and Judaizing Teachers

The early Jewish believers rightly understood the coming of the Messiah to be the fulfillment of the goal of the Mosaic covenant. Because of this, they considered themselves to be participating in a new chapter of that covenant, i.e., they were covenant-keeping Jews who believed in Jesus as the Messiah. They continued to observe the rites of Judaism, continued to participate in the Temple activities, and continued to look to the covenant sign of circumcision as essential for all who were acceptable to God.

One thing that made the acceptance of Gentiles into the Church a difficult issue, was the presence of many Pharisees who had become believers. F.F. Bruce has written,

Pharisees, as believers in the doctrine of the resurrection, could become Christian without relinquishing their distinctive beliefs. To what they already believed they could add the belief that Jesus had been raised from the dead and was thus divinely proclaimed to be the Lord and Messiah. But if their Christianity did not amount to more than this, they remained legalists at heart – unlike their illustrious fellow Pharisee Paul, whose whole outlook was totally re-oriented by his Damascus-road experience; not only was Jesus revealed to him as the risen Lord but he was called to preach a law-free gospel in his name. The believing Pharisees in the Jerusalem church were naturally the leaders in insisting that Gentile converts should be instructed to submit to circumcision and the general obligation to keep the Mosaic law²¹⁰ which circumcision carried with it. The Church continued to display this character until God sovereignly began to bring about change.²¹¹

Philip's evangelistic success in Samaria,²¹² Peter's Holy Spirit directed success among the Gentiles of Caesarea,²¹³ the evangelistic success among the Gentiles in Antioch,²¹⁴ and the landmark missionary trip of Barnabas and Paul,²¹⁵ forced the Church to deal with the question of uncircumcised converts. To this end, the first ecumenical²¹⁶ Church council convened to deal with the Gentile question. The council was held in Jerusalem, probably in 49 AD.

²⁰⁹ II Timothy 4:1-4

²¹⁰ Acts 15:5

²¹¹ F.F. Bruce, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament, The Book of Acts* (Grand Rapids, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company) 1988, pgs. 288-289

²¹² Acts 8

²¹³ Acts 10 & 11

²¹⁴ Acts 11:19ff

²¹⁵ Acts 13 - 14

²¹⁶ An *ecumenical council* refers to a council in which, theoretically, the entire church is represented in a gathering, usually for the purpose of defining doctrine and/or ecclesiastical matters. In recent days, various groups, such as the

The conclusion reached by the Jerusalem council was in favor of the law-free Gospel. Acts records the summation of James and the letter written to the Antioch Church. This letter was meant to be a circular letter to be distributed and read among all of the churches in Gentile cities.

"Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles, but that we write to them that they abstain from things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood. For Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath."

Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them to send to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas-- Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren, and they sent this letter by them,

"The apostles and the brethren who are elders, to the brethren in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia who are from the Gentiles, greetings. Since we have heard that some of our number to whom we gave no instruction have disturbed you with their words, unsettling your souls, it seemed good to us, having become of one mind, to select men to send to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore we have sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will also report the same things by word of mouth. For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these essentials: that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication; if you keep yourselves free from such things, you will do well. Farewell."²¹⁷

One would think that this conference and the letter that came out of it would have settled the issue, but it did not. Throughout the balance of his life, in church after church, Paul had to deal with the Judaizing teachers who sought to follow after him and bring his Gentile converts under the Mosaic Law. At one point, even Peter was influenced by peer pressure to express the attitude of the Judaizers who had entered the church at Antioch. Paul confronted him publically for this aberration.²¹⁸ To some degree, in every one of his Epistles, except Philemon, Paul addressed this heresy. The entire Epistle to the Galatians was written to refute the legalists, as was the major portion of his Epistle to the Romans. Although with the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD the activity of legalistic Judaizers ceased to be a threat to the church, legalism always has been a problem in the church in every age.²¹⁹

Greek Mysticism and Gnosticism

After the fall of Jerusalem, and the demise of Judaizers, the next heresy with which Satan sought to infect the Church was *Gnosticism*.

The Greek word for *knowledge* is γνῶσις (*gnosis*). A Greek philosophy/religion arose in the First Century, claiming to have a higher, secret knowledge, a *gnosis*. The Gnostic movement had two prominent features:

World Council of Churches as well as the Roman Catholic Church have held significant gatherings which they have labeled ecumenical councils. It would be almost impossible today, given the many denominations, to have a true ecumenical council.

²¹⁷ Acts 15:19-29

²¹⁸ Galatians 2:11ff

²¹⁹ In Colossians 2:8, 20, Paul calls legalism the *elementary principles of this world*. This description is very fitting because it is the nature of humanity to feel the need to earn salvation. If one can earn heaven by his good works, or following ritual, or conforming to a list of do's and don'ts then the individual is in charge – his humanity is elevated because he has done it through his own effort. Legalism can also exist in an underlying attitude that says, "God cannot accept me some days if I haven't gone something 'jus right'" whatever that might mean in a given situation.

1. The claim to present a secret lore that explained otherwise incomprehensible mysteries;
2. The assertion that its secrets are accessible only to the elite. All who take an active interest in the movement are the elite.

Gnosticism presented itself as a supernaturally revealed, divinely guaranteed wisdom. Its background was Greek mythology. It was expressed in various ways, but one element that was present in all of its various expressions was the concept of dualism.

- good and evil
- light and dark
- flesh and spirit

In Gnosticism, the spirit is good; matter is evil.

Gnosticism had many variations, but in its classic expression, it was presented in the following fashion:

- *Autopater*, the “Self Father,” is good and is capable of only spiritual activity.
- By his spiritual activity, *nous*, meaning, Mind, proceeded from Him and produced aeons.
- One of the three highest aeons, Sophia, drew an image of an aeon, called the *Demiurge*.
- From that time onward, there were two forces in the universe. The *Urge*, which was the spiritual Father (the *Autopater*), and the *Demiurge*, which created all physical things.

The spiritual primal Father has nothing to do with base material reality. The material world can have nothing to do with the spiritual. All spiritual things proceeding from the Father, the *Urge*, and are inherently good. All material things proceeded from the *Demiurge* and are inherently evil.

Those who sought to reconcile Gnosticism with Christianity declared that Christ was the offspring of Sophia. Christ revealed the Father to those who have spiritual nature and led them to salvation by the path of enlightenment (note the similarity to present day Eastern religions.), which meant grasping Gnostic concepts.

Although the Gnostic movement was only in its embryonic stage during Paul’s lifetime, he probably was referring to the Gnostic movement when he said that the preaching of the cross is folly to the Greeks – *but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness,*²²⁰

Paul’s letter to the Colossians seems to deal with a form of Jewish Gnosticism.

Since, according to Gnosticism all spirit is good and all material matter is evil, two different moral attitudes developed among Gnostics:

1. One group of Gnostic teachers taught asceticism – destroy the flesh by refusing to pamper it or give in to its needs.
2. Another group taught profligacy and debauchery, which expressed itself in two ways:
 - What the body does cannot touch the spirit, so the enlightened should release the body to its full hedonistic self
 - Spiritual individuals should destroy the body through profligacy and debauchery

According to the Gnostics, Christ could not have come in the flesh, since all flesh is evil and Christ is spirit. Therefore, He only appeared to have come in the flesh. He was an hallucination, a holograph. The technical term for this view is *docetism* (from the Greek term, *δοκέω* [*dokeo*] meaning, “to appear”).

²²⁰ I Corinthians 1:23

According to the early Church Fathers, the man who first began to teach Gnosticism among Christians was Simon Magus, the magician described in Acts 8. A rather extensive lore developed about Simon and his Gnosticism.

John's Gospel and his First Letter were written specifically to refute this heresy, especially as it was being taught in Ephesus by one notable teacher, Cerinthus.

Irenaeus records Polycarp's report of an encounter between John the Apostle and Cerinthus.

There are also those who heard from him that John, the disciple of the Lord, going to bathe at Ephesus, and perceiving Cerinthus within, rushed out of the bath-house without bathing, exclaiming, "Let us fly, lest even the bath-house fall down, because Cerinthus, the enemy of the truth, is within."

The prologue to John's Gospel, John 1:1-18, declaring that the *Word became flesh* stands in opposition to Gnosticism (The Word, *became*, not just *entered*). Many of the difficult sayings in John's letters become clear, when this background is understood.

I John 1:1-3 is in direct opposition to Gnosticism

What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we beheld and our hands handled, concerning the Word of Life-- and the life was manifested, and we have seen and bear witness and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us-- what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, that you also may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.

I John 4:1-2 is a strong direct statement against Gnosticism

*Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God;*²²¹

When Our Lord was upon the earth, demons acknowledged Him as coming in the flesh:

- Gadarene demoniac: Matthew 8:28-24; Mark 5:1-17; Luke 8:26-17;
- The demons that attacked the Seven Sons of Sceva in Acts 19, acknowledged the Jesus that Paul preached. Since Paul preached that Jesus had come in the flesh, these demons were confirming that truth.

Christians who teach that there is hidden or secret knowledge available only to the elite, or the informed, have fallen into Gnosticism.

Gnosticism continued to plague the early Church for many years well into the Second Century.

Persecution and Martyrdom in the First Century

The earliest opposition encountered by the Church and its leaders was in reaction to incidents, and they were somewhat spontaneous. The Church was not the object of deliberate and organized opposition until Saul of Tarsus launched his vigorous campaign, following Stephen's death.²²²

²²¹ John's statement, *every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God*, must be understood as addressing the Gnostic heresy that was afflicting the Church in Ephesus, since demons acknowledged that Jesus had come in the flesh and they certainly were not from God. It was advice to the particular group to whom it was written, dealing with the specific heresy that they faced.

Opposition and persecution were motivated by various factors.

- In some cases, it was the establishment's jealousy over the success and popularity of the Christian preachers.²²³
- Frequently, the opposition was the result of a perceived threat to the faith of Judaism.²²⁴
- In at least one instance the opposition was the result of the Gospel's threatening the livelihood of businesses associated with the worship of idols.²²⁵
- In one instance, the Church was made the scapegoat for societal tragedy.²²⁶
- In the last third of the First Century the Roman government began to distinguish the difference between Judaism and Christianity. Judaism was a legal religion (*religio licita*). When the Roman Emperors began to view Christianity as a secret sect which might threaten the Empire they declared it to be a *religio illicita* – an illegal religion.

The first opposition experienced by the Church occurred when the newly formed community was but a few days old. In a short span of time, the apostles were arrested three times for preaching in the Temple.²²⁷ In the third of these instances they were whipped.²²⁸

Stephen, the First Martyr

The first Christian martyr was Stephen, one of the seven deacons. Acts 6:8–7:60 contains the account of the incident. The background of Stephen's martyrdom is important in understanding the full nature of the episode.

The orthodox Jews had been wary of all Greek influence, since the Selucid ruler, Antiochus IV, in the early years of the Second Century BC, had sought to replace Orthodox Judaism with Greek culture and religion. Because of this, the Jerusalem establishment viewed with suspicion Jews living in Greek influenced cultures outside of Palestine.

There always were Jews of the Dispersion residing in Jerusalem. Some were young men who had come to Jerusalem to sit at the feet of the famous rabbis. Synagogues from all over the Roman Empire sent their annual offerings to Jerusalem for the upkeep of the Temple – these were delivered by men who spoke the language of the culture from whence they had come. These Hellenistic Jews²²⁹ differed from the stricter Jews of Palestine. They did not mix easily with the Jerusalem natives but, rather, they tended to group together in synagogues in which Greek, rather than Aramaic, was the dominant language. Their outlook was both cosmopolitan and Jewish. The Jerusalem Jews suspected these outsiders of being contaminated by their intercourse with the Gentiles and even of having sold their birthright for a mess of pottage.

From Pentecost onward, the membership of the Jerusalem Church included Hellenists. As already noted, the selection of the first deacons was the result of their presence in the Church. The Hellenists, knowing the prejudice that Palestinians had toward them, suspected that because of this their widows were not getting their fair provision. The Church displayed its ethnic egalitarianism by selecting seven men with Greek names as the managers of the daily distribution.

²²² Acts Chapters 8 & 9

²²³ Acts 5:17; 13:45; 17:5. In the second of these instances, that jealousy caused the Jewish establishment to follow Paul and Barnabas from city to city and bring persecution in each locale.

²²⁴ The martyrdom of Stephen (Acts 7) is an example of such a motivation.

²²⁵ Acts 19

²²⁶ Nero's persecution of Christians after the burning of Rome is a clear example.

²²⁷ Acts 4; Acts 5:17, 26

²²⁸ Acts 5:40

²²⁹ The Greek name for Greece is Ἑλλάς – *Hellas*. A Greek person is Ἕλληνας *Hellen*. Thus, Jews who came from outside of Palestine, for whom Greek was their international language, were known as *Hellenistic Jews*

At least two of the deacons, Philip and Stephen, not only fulfilled their role of almoners, but they also were preachers. Stephen's arena seems to have been the Hellenistic synagogues. He was very direct in his presentation and always won the debates that followed his proclamation. In one of these synagogues, *The Synagogue of the Freedmen*, some of the members reacted against Stephen's preaching and an acrimonious debate ensued. Unable to defeat Stephen in debate, his opponents acted on the adage, "If you can't defeat the message, attack the messenger." They induced false witnesses to bring charges against Stephen. As a result, he was hauled before the Sanhedrin and accused of blasphemy.

Stephen's masterful speech was not a defense; it was an indictment.²³⁰ He became the prosecutor and his accusers were "in the dock." His speech so frustrated and angered the audience that they dragged him out of the court and stoned him to death.²³¹ Stephen, an Hellenistic Jewish believer, had the honor of being the first Christian martyr.

The First Organized Persecution

The persecution that followed Stephen's death was the first severe trial faced by the Church. The chief instigator of the persecution was Saul, a zealous young Pharisee.

*Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.*²³²

Saul was not a native Palestinian. He was a native of the Roman colony, Tarsus, in Cilicia. By birth, Saul was a Roman citizen. However, he was a full-blooded Jew and certainly no Hellenist. Later he wrote that he was a Pharisee of Pharisees.²³³ One has to wonder what inner drives motivated Saul to become such an intense persecutor of the Church. Perhaps he struggled with an inner conscience over the death of Stephen, or perhaps felt his own Jewish faith shaken, thus in a reaction lashed out against that threat. Be that as it may, Saul became the leading instigator and driver of the persecution against the Church. It is interesting that the Romans seemed to be ignorant of, or else chose to ignore, this persecution as an internal Jewish matter. To the Romans, Christianity was just another Jewish sect.

Saul ferreted out Christians and hauled them off to prison. When the Jewish council debated the fate of any of the prisoners, Saul always voted for the execution.²³⁴ The Christians fled Jerusalem, taking refuge in Judean villages and in Samaria. Only the apostles remained in the city.²³⁵ Upon learning that there was a growing Christian presence in Damascus, a leading city of Coele-Syria, Saul sought and received a warrant to proceed to that Gentile city, intending to bring down upon the Damascus Christians the persecution that he had facilitated in Judea.²³⁶ This particular wave of persecution ended after Saul's conversion.²³⁷

Incidental Persecution in Jerusalem

Acts 12:1-4 describes an isolated incident about which only sparse information is given.

Now about that time Herod the king laid hands on some who belonged to the church in order to mistreat them. And he had James the brother of John put to death with a sword. When he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. Now it was during the days of Unleavened

²³⁰ Acts 7:2-53

²³¹ Acts 7:54-60

²³² Acts 8:1

²³³ Acts 23:6

²³⁴ Acts 26:10

²³⁵ Acts 8:1

²³⁶ Acts 9:1-2

²³⁷ recorded three times in Acts (Acts 9:3ff; 22:3ff; 26:10ff)

Bread. When he had seized him, he put him in prison, delivering him to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending after the Passover to bring him out before the people.

Luke reported that James was beheaded and that Peter was delivered by an angel, but no information is given concerning the fate of the other members of the church who were arrested. This seems to be an isolated incident without any ongoing activity.

Although not recorded in Scripture, historical documents record an episode that occurred in the early 60's. In 62 AD, the Roman procurator of the region, Festus, died in office. Before his replacement was installed, Herod Agrippa II grabbed the opportunity to forward his political ends and removed the Jewish High Priest, Joseph Kabi. Herod appointed Ananus, son of Ananus, in his place. Ananus was a supporter of the Sadducees.

At this time, it seems that the Jerusalem Christians were on friendly terms with the Pharisees, because the Jerusalem Nazarenes (Christians) were "zealous for the law".²³⁸ Later, in one of the instances in which Paul described the source of his troubles, he defined his case as being the differences between the beliefs of the Sadducees and Pharisees.²³⁹ At times the conflict between these two parties became quite intense, even bloody.

When he was made High Priest, Ananus convened the Council, and accused James (Jesus' half-brother, the dominant leader of the church at that time) of having broken the Law. The charges were without any basis. James was admired by the Pharisees as a devout keeper of the Law. Ananus succeeded in leading the Council to execute James. He was thrown from the Temple, stoned, and finally dispatched by a blow from a fuller's club.²⁴⁰ This caused an uproar among the Pharisees and great unrest in Jerusalem.²⁴¹

Thus, it is clear that although there were incidents, after the conversion of Saul of Tarsus there was no ongoing organized persecution of the Jerusalem Church

Incidental and Occasional Persecution in Paul's Ministry

During Paul's ministry, there often were incidents in which violence erupted against the apostles and their converts. During the first missionary journey, recorded in Acts 13-14, the Jewish establishment of the region pursued the apostolic team from city to city, rousing opposition in each location. In Lystra, Paul was stoned and left for dead.²⁴² The reaction to Paul's preaching on this tour did not develop into an international crusade.

In Paul's later missionary activity, persecution by various Jewish or Gentile establishments often erupted, but once again, the result was not organized persecution against the Church as a whole. These episodes were local reactions against the preachers and converts in a particular locality.²⁴³ Usually, the opposition

²³⁸ Acts 21:20

²³⁹ Acts 23:6-10

²⁴⁰ Eusebius, quoting Hegesippus, *Ecclesiastical History*, 2.23.3-18 (Grand Rapids, Baker Book House) reprinted 1994, pgs. 75-79

²⁴¹ Before the new procurator, Lucceius Albinus, arrived, he was advised by Ananus' opponents of Ananus' action against James. It was illegal for the High Priest to convene the Council without permission from a procurator. Furthermore, only a governor of a province legally could inflict capital punishment. Albinus wrote an angry letter to Ananus and Herod Agrippa prudently fired him as High Priest before Albinus could reach Jerusalem (see Josephus, *Jewish War*, 201-203)

²⁴² Acts 14:19

²⁴³ Philippi (Acts 16:19ff); Thessalonica (Acts 17:5ff); Berea (Acts 17:13); Corinth (Acts 18:12); Ephesus (Acts 19:23); Greece (Acts 20:3); Jerusalem (Acts 21:27)

was the result of jealousy, or the perceived threat to the establishment, or a threat to some business, rather than opposition to the Gospel message.

Persecution under Nero

The first organized and deliberate Roman persecution of the Church began as a result of the burning of Rome. Beginning the night of July 18 and becoming full-blown on July 19, A.D. 64, a great fire engulfed much of Rome. The city consisted of fourteen districts and all but four either were destroyed or seriously damaged. The following is an excerpt from an eyewitness account penned by Tacitus, written in about 116 A.D.²⁴⁴

There followed a disaster, whether due to chance or to the malice of the sovereign is uncertain — for each version has its sponsors — but graver and more terrible than any other which has befallen this city by the ravages of fire. It took its rise in the part of the Circus touching the Palatine and Caelian Hills; where, among the shops packed with inflammable goods, the conflagration broke out, gathered strength in the same moment, and, impelled by the wind, swept the full length of the Circus: for there were neither mansions screened by boundary walls, nor temples surrounded by stone enclosures, nor obstructions of any description, to bar its progress. The flames, which in full career overran the level districts first, then shot up to the heights, and sank again to harry the lower parts, kept ahead of all remedial measures, the mischief travelling fast, and the town being an easy prey owing to the narrow, twisting lanes and formless streets typical of old Rome. In addition, shrieking and terrified women; fugitives stricken or immature in years; men consulting their own safety or the safety of others, as they dragged the infirm along or paused to wait for them, combined by their dilatoriness or their haste to impede everything. Often, while they glanced back to the rear, they were attacked on the flanks or in front; or, if they had made their escape into a neighbouring quarter, that also was involved in the flames, and even districts which they had believed remote from danger were found to be in the same plight. At last, irresolute what to avoid or what to seek, they crowded into the roads or threw themselves down in the fields: some who had lost the whole of their means — their daily bread included — chose to die, though the way of escape was open, and were followed by others, through love for the relatives whom they had proved unable to rescue. None ventured to combat the fire, as there were reiterated threats from a large number of persons who forbade extinction, and others were openly throwing firebrands and shouting that "they had their authority" — possibly in order to have a freer hand in looting, possibly from orders received.

Nero, who at the time was staying in Antium, did not return to the capital until the fire was nearing the house by which he had connected the Palatine with the Gardens of Maecenas. It proved impossible, however, to stop it from engulfing both the Palatine and the house and all their surroundings. Still, as a relief to the homeless and fugitive populace, he opened the Campus Martius, the buildings of Agrippa, even his own Gardens, and threw up a number of extemporized shelters to accommodate the helpless multitude. The necessities of life were brought up from Ostia and the neighbouring municipalities, and the price of grain was lowered to three sesterces. Yet his measures, popular as their character might be, failed of their effect; for the report had spread that, at the very moment when Rome was aflame, he had mounted his private stage, and typifying the ills of the present by the calamities of the past, had sung the destruction of Troy.

²⁴⁴ The historian Tacitus was born in the year 56 or 57, the son of a Roman Knight (more properly called the *Equestrian Class*). Even though he was but a child at the time, Tacitus witnessed the great fire that destroyed most of Rome. Tacitus wrote a number of histories chronicling the reigns of the early emperors.

Only on the sixth day, was the conflagration brought to an end at the foot of the Esquiline, by demolishing the buildings over a vast area and opposing to the unabated fury of the flames a clear tract of ground and an open horizon. But fear had not yet been laid aside, nor had hope yet returned to the people, when the fire resumed its ravages; in the less congested parts of the city, however; so that, while the toll of human life was not so great, the destruction of temples and of porticoes dedicated to pleasure was on a wider scale. The second fire produced the greater scandal of the two, as it had broken out on Aemilian property of Tigellinus and appearances suggested that Nero was seeking the glory of founding a new capital and endowing it with his own name. Rome, in fact, is divided into fourteen regions, of which four remained intact, while three were laid level with the ground: in the other seven nothing survived but a few dilapidated and half-burned relics of houses.

It would not be easy to attempt an estimate of the private dwellings, tenement-blocks, and temples, which were lost; but the flames consumed, in their old-world sanctity, the great altar and chapel of the Arcadian Evander to the Present Hercules, the shrine of Jupiter Stator vowed by Romulus, the Palace of Numa, and the holy place of Vesta with the Penates of the Roman people. To these must be added the precious trophies won upon so many fields, the glories of Greek art, and yet again the primitive and uncorrupted memorials of literary genius; so that, despite the striking beauty of the rearsen city, the older generation recollects much that it proved impossible to replace. There were those who noted that the first outbreak of the fire took place on the nineteenth of July, the anniversary of the capture and burning of Rome by the Senones: others have pushed their researches so far as to resolve the interval between the two fires into equal numbers of years, of months, and of days.²⁴⁵

Because Nero was known for his flagrant debauchery, his desire to be a great harpist, his obsession with wanting to be known as a poet, his desire to be a great charioteer, his huge narcissistic ego, and the general knowledge that he wanted to build a bigger palace, the rumor successfully spread that Nero had set the fire and had watched the inferno from a hillside overlooking the city. Nero had a history of singing and reciting poems before a “command performance.” Because of this, it is not surprising that one dominant rumor that circulated was that even though he had no audience, Nero, from a nearby hill, used the flaming city as “stage prop” for his recitation of *The Sack of Troy*, a poem that he had composed. Tacitus’ history, quoted above, gives a different picture, but the rumors continued to spread.

Some suspected that Nero had started the fire in order to rebuild the city in a manner that would glorify him, as well as build the new palace. Indeed, after the fire he did all of those things. Rome was rebuilt in a very ordered and grand fashion. Nero built himself an amazing palace, fronted by a large opulent garden. He had canals and water ways flowing into the gardens, some of which required significant engineering feats to accomplish.²⁴⁶ If the fire had not eliminated the suburbs surrounding the center of the city, Nero could not have undertaken his extensive building projects. It is surprising that he was able to accomplish all of this within four years after the fire.

Nero did a number of things to quell the rumors that he was the arsonist. At first, he tried to blame the fire on the Jews, but that didn’t stick. He tried to organize the city in such a fashion that no future fire could do the damage that the great fire had done. None of these things squelched the rumors. Again, we turn to Tacitus to read an account of what happened next.

So far, the precautions taken were suggested by human prudence: now means were sought for appeasing deity, and application was made to the Sibylline books; at the injunction of which

²⁴⁵ *The Annals of Tacitus*, Volume XV, 38-41 www.livius.org, Tacitus

²⁴⁶ A description of this amazing building activity is given in *Tacitus Annals*, XV, 42-43

public prayers were offered to Vulcan, Ceres, and Proserpine, while Juno was propitiated by the matrons, first in the Capitol, then at the nearest point of the sea-shore, where water was drawn for sprinkling the temple and image of the goddess. Ritual banquets and all-night vigils were celebrated by women in the married state. But neither human help, nor imperial munificence, nor all the modes of placating Heaven, could stifle scandal or dispel the belief that the fire had taken place by order.

Therefore, to scotch the rumor, Nero substituted as culprits, and punished with the utmost refinements of cruelty, a class of men, loathed for their vices, whom the crowd styled Christians. Christus, the founder of the name, had undergone the death penalty in the reign of Tiberius, by sentence of the procurator Pontius Pilatus, and the pernicious superstition was checked for a moment, only to break out once more, not merely in Judaea, the home of the disease, but in the capital itself, where all things horrible or shameful in the world collect and find a vogue. First, then, the confessed members of the sect were arrested; next, on their disclosures, vast numbers were convicted, not so much on the count of arson as for hatred of the human race. And derision accompanied their end: they were covered with wild beasts' skins and torn to death by dogs; or they were fastened on crosses, and, when daylight failed were burned to serve as lamps by night. Nero had offered his Gardens for the spectacle, and gave an exhibition in his Circus, mixing with the crowd in the habit of a charioteer, or mounted on his car. Hence, in spite of a guilt which had earned the most exemplary punishment, there arose a sentiment of pity, due to the impression that they were being sacrificed not for the welfare of the state but to the ferocity of a single man.²⁴⁷

It is almost certain that both Peter and Paul were executed during the persecution instigated by Nero. Although it is impossible to know the actual number of Christians who were killed during this period of persecution, it is clear that the numbers were significant. As noted by Tacitus, the Roman populace became sick of Caesar's slaughter of Christians and the persecution wound down before his death four years after the great fire.²⁴⁸

The Illegal Status of Christianity

Note in the above quotation from Tacitus, that Christianity is described as,

a class of men, loathed for their vices, whom the crowd styled Christians. Christus, the founder of the name, had undergone the death penalty in the reign of Tiberius, by sentence of the procurator Pontius Pilatus, and the pernicious superstition was checked for a moment, only to break out once more, not merely in Judaea, the home of the disease, but in the capital itself, where all things horrible or shameful in the world collect and find a vogue. ...vast numbers were convicted, not so much on the count of arson as for hatred of the human race.

Rome was tolerant of the religions of the various peoples who comprised the empire, unless the religion posed a threat to the empire. The tolerated religions, as already noted, were *religio licita*, "legal religion." From the burning of Rome onward, it was not possible for Christianity to attain that status. The sect was viewed as a deadly superstition, rather than a religion and thus was worthy of repression. It was so viewed by the Roman authorities until the Edict of Milan in 313 AD.

There is no clear record of organized government opposition to the Church in the remaining years of the First Century. Domitian, who ruled Rome from 81 – 96 AD, was described by the Roman author, Pliny, as the beast from hell who sat in its den licking blood. Many who consider the Revelation of John to have been written during the reign of Domitian, consider John to be referring to this emperor – when he wrote of

²⁴⁷ Tacitus, *Annals*, XV 44

²⁴⁸ Political reverses forced Nero to commit suicide in 68 AD. His final words were, "What a showman the world is losing in me." *Christian History Magazine*, Volume IX, No. 3, page 22

the beast from the abyss who blasphemes heaven and drinks the blood of the saints. They further understand Babylon in the Revelation, to be a reference to Rome.²⁴⁹

Domitian was the first emperor to have himself officially titled, *God the Lord*, and demanded that he be given divine honors by all people. The Jews, and no doubt, Christians balked. There is well-documented proof of the persecution of the Jews who would not bow, but no clear record of Christians' being persecuted. That possibly is because in the mind of some, Christianity still was an illegal Jewish sect. Domitian had certain ones killed or exiled for reasons that are not clear and many historians interpret these actions being the result of their being Christians. Among these was the consul, Titus Flavius Clemens, who was executed and his wife sent into exile. Many speculate that the reason for Clemens execution and his wife's exile was their being Christians.

The close of the First Century

The First Century appropriately closed with the death of John, the last remaining member of the Twelve. All of the other members of the original apostolic group had preceded him in death by more than a decade. John died an old man, evidently of natural causes, in Ephesus in 95-96 AD.

By the close of the First Century, the Church consisted of hundreds, probably thousands, of congregations throughout the Roman Empire, each one led by a council of elders and served by deacons. Doctrinal orthodoxy was fairly stable because the churches were led by those who had been taught by the apostles or were associated with one of the apostles. Persecution was not organized but always was present in some form.

PART TWO: THE SECOND CENTURY

Solidification and Change

The adage, *necessity is the mother of invention*, proved its veracity in the Church of the Second Century. A number of developments in the Church, both additions and changes, were the product of circumstances faced without the leadership of the apostles. Among the things that bridged the First and Second Centuries were documents reflecting Church life and practice that were written on the cusp of the new century. One of these is the *Didache*. The full title of the document is *Teaching of Lord through the Twelve Apostles to the Gentiles*.²⁵⁰ The Greek word in the title for "teaching" is *Didache* (διδάχη). Thus, the document popularly is known as, *The Didache*.

The Didache

This document frequently was mentioned in early writings, but no copy of it was known until 1873, when a scholar named Brynnois discovered a codex containing *The Epistle of Barnabas*, *I Clement*, *II Clement*, the long form of the Ignatian letters, and *The Didache*. Portions of the *Didache* in one form or another are found in other ancient writings (*The Epistle of Barnabas*, for example). Thus, the predominating view is that *The Didache* and these other documents were relying on common sources which the compiler of *The Didache* stitched together in a somewhat orderly fashion.²⁵¹ There is some debate as to when the document was finalized. Dates argued by one scholar or another range all the way from 50 AD to 150 AD. Lightfoot and other conservative scholars consider the last quarter of the First Century to be the most likely

²⁴⁹ Revelation 16:6; 17:5-6; 18:24, etc.

²⁵⁰ Διδάχη κυρίου διὰ τῶν δώδεκα ἀποστόλων τοῖς ἔθνεσιν

²⁵¹ Lightfoot calls attention to the "awkward transition in 6:2-3." J.B. Lightfoot and J.R. Harmer, *The Apostolic Fathers*, Edited and revised by Michael W. Holmes, "The Didache" (Grand Rapids, The Baker Book House) 1992, pg 247,

date of its completion. More liberal textual critics (who tend to date documents later) place the compilation in the mid-Second Century. The text of the *Didache* is found in Addendum A.

The Didache consists of two sections. The first, “The Two Ways,” (1:1 – 6:2) consists of a summary of basic instruction about the Christian life to be taught to those preparing for immersion and church membership. This same material is found in writings from the First through the Fifth Centuries: the *Epistle of Barnabas*, the *Didasscalia*, the *Apostolic Church Ordinances*, the *Summary of Doctrine*, the *Apostolic Constitutions*, the *Life of Schnudi*, and *On the Teachings of the Apostles* (or *Doctrina*).

The second section (6:3-16:8) is a manual of church order and practice. It contains instructions about food, immersion, fasting, prayer, the Lord’s Supper, and various roles and positions of leadership. It closes with a brief apocalyptic section which is reminiscent of Mark 13; Matthew 24-25; and Luke 24.

Several things catch our eye in this document. First is the reversal of the pattern commanded in the Great Commission and in *Acts*. In *Acts*, a person is immersed the moment he assents to the Gospel message. In the Great Commission, the pattern is to immerse, then instruct. However, in *The Didache* instruction precedes immersion (7:1). This is a prefiguring of the catechumenate which will be discussed during the examination of later decades. *The Didache* further delays immersion by stating that both the one being immersed and the immerser are to fast – the one being immersed is instructed to fast for two days prior to the event and hopefully other members of the church will do the same (7:4). Another interesting detail is the instruction to duplicate the immersion of Jesus and John as much as possible by immersing in cold, running water. If that is not available then in still water; if cold is not available, then in warm water. Allowance also is made for situations in which there is not sufficient water to immerse (probably because of the impossibility of immersing those in prison). In such instances water is to be poured on the head of the candidate three times, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (7:1-3). This is the first time in any literature that the possibility of something other than immersion is allowed as the initiatory rite. Note that pouring is not offered as a standard substitute for immersion, but only when there is no other possibility of initiating the convert.

Another thing that catches our eye is the view of local church leadership displayed in *The Didache*. The terminology describing local church leaders (15:1ff) is identical to that of Philippians 1:1, i.e., overseers (bishops) and servants (deacons) as reflected in our previous study.

A third thing that stands out is the fact that a liturgy seems to have developed. *The Didache* prescribes when to fast, specific prayers to be offered three times daily, and the wording of the prayer to be offered for the Lord’s Supper (8:1-10:7). Furthermore, only those who have been immersed are to be allowed to participate in the Lord’s Supper. The Greek term for *thanks* is εὐχαριστέω (*eucharisteo*). Therefore, the Lord’s Supper came to be known as the εὐχαριστία (*eucharistia*), which in modern parlance is *the eucharist*. The fact that *The Didache* uses this term is one of the arguments in favor of its having been compiled in the latter years of the First Century, rather than much earlier when this term had not become the customary term for the Lord’s Supper.

A fourth topic on which *The Didache* makes comment is the role of apostles and prophets. It appears that in the earlier section the terms are used as synonyms (11:4-5),

Welcome every apostle on arriving, as if he were the Lord. But he must not stay beyond one day.

In case of necessity, however, the next day too. If he stays three days, he is a false prophet.

Later, (13:1-4) the document seems to allow for a settled prophet, although how this is different from the earlier pronouncement is not clear.

Every genuine prophet who wants to settle with you has a right to his support. Similarly, a genuine teacher himself, just like a workman, has a right to his support. Hence take all the first fruits of vintage and harvest, and of cattle and sheep, and give these first fruits to the prophets, for they are your high priests. If, however, you have no prophet, give them to the poor.

Other topics have to do with orthodoxy and heresy (11:1-2; 16:3-4), faithful attendance at The Meeting (16:2ff), and proper conduct in the Body (15:2-4; 16:1ff).

Thus, from this document we learn a number of things about the Church at the close of the First Century:

- Local church government was the same as during the lifetime of the apostles.
- Immersion was the initiatory rite of admission into the Church, with an exception made when expediency demanded it.
- Apostles and prophets were itinerating
- Orthodox doctrine was recognized and enforced
- A formal liturgy had developed

I Clement

A second document that bridges the First and Second Centuries is known as *I Clement*. This is a very lengthy letter written from the leaders of the Church of Rome to the Church in Corinth. Although the letter is written on behalf of the whole Roman Church,²⁵² and does not name its writer, well-attested ancient tradition identifies its author as *Clement*. Exactly which Clement is the author, is a matter of debate among scholars.

The letter was written to the Corinthian Church because of the continuing factious conditions that had erupted. This, of course, was the underlying problem that prompted Paul's letters to Corinth. Evidently, the virus of schism still was infecting the Corinthian Church Body.

The specific action that caused the Romans to write to Corinth was the deposing of the legitimate leadership of the church. It seems that a group of ambitious young men had arisen and taken over the church. The older men, whom the apostles had installed as elder/overseers, were deposed. Note the letter's reference to those who were ambitious to obtain a title and the letter's confidence in the older properly installed leaders.

Our apostles also knew, through our Lord Jesus Christ, and there would be strife on account of the name [i.e., title], *overseer*.. For this reason, therefore, inasmuch as they had obtained a perfect foreknowledge of this, they appointed those already mentioned, and afterwards gave instructions, that when these should fall asleep, other approved men should succeed them in their ministry. We are of opinion, therefore, that those appointed by them, or afterwards by other eminent men, with the consent of the whole Church, and who have blamelessly served the flock of Christ in a humble, peaceable, and disinterested spirit, and have for a long time possessed the good opinion of all, cannot be justly dismissed from the ministry. For our sin will not be small, if we eject the overseer who has blamelessly and holily offered the gifts. Blessed are those elders who, having finished their course before now, have obtained a fruitful and perfect departure [from this world]; for they have no fear lest any one deprive them of the place now appointed them. But we see that ye have removed some men of excellent behavior from the ministry, which they fulfilled blamelessly and with honor.²⁵³

When the Roman Church received word of this revolt (47:7), the Romans were so distressed by this breach of proper conduct that they wrote this letter, and dispatched mediators in an effort to restore order and preserve the good name of the Church at Corinth.

²⁵² Its subscription reads, *The Church of God which sojourns in Rome to the Church of God which sojourns in Corinth*.

²⁵³ *I Clement* 44

It is disgraceful, beloved, yea, highly disgraceful, and unworthy of your Christian profession, that such a thing should be heard of as that the most steadfast and ancient Church of the Corinthians should, on account of one or two persons, engage in sedition against its elders. And this rumor has reached not only us, but those also who are unconnected with us; so that, through your infatuation, the name of the Lord is blasphemed, while danger is also brought upon yourselves.²⁵⁴

The closing sections of the letter contain a strong exhortation to the young rebels.

Ye therefore, who laid the foundation of this sedition, submit yourselves to the elders, and receive correction so as to repent, bending the knees of your hearts. Learn to be subject, laying aside the proud and arrogant self-confidence of your tongue. For it is better for you that ye should occupy a humble but honorable place in the flock of Christ, than that, being highly exalted, ye should be cast out from the hope of His people. For thus speaketh all-virtuous Wisdom: “Behold, I will bring forth to you the words of My Spirit, and I will teach you My speech. Since I called, and ye did not hear; I held forth My words, and ye regarded not, but set at naught My counsels, and yielded not at My reproofs; therefore I too will laugh at your destruction; yea, I will rejoice when ruin cometh upon you, and when sudden confusion overtakes you, when overturning presents itself like a tempest, or when tribulation and oppression fall upon you. For it shall come to pass, that when ye call upon Me, I will not hear you; the wicked shall seek Me, and they shall not find Me. For they hated wisdom, and did not choose the fear of the Lord; nor would they listen to My counsels, but despised My reproofs. Wherefore they shall eat the fruits of their own way, and they shall be filled with their own ungodliness.”²⁵⁵

The Roman Church displayed its deep concern for the Corinthians by urging them to obey the exhortation and to send back to Rome the messenger/mediators with good news of the Corinthians’ compliance.

Send back speedily to us in peace and with joy these our messengers to you: Claudius Ephebus and Valerius Bito, with Fortunatus: that they may the sooner announce to us the peace and harmony we so earnestly desire and long for [among you], and that we may the more quickly rejoice over the good order re-established among you. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you, and with all everywhere that are the called of God through Him, by whom be to Him glory, honor, power, majesty, and eternal dominion, from everlasting to everlasting. Amen.²⁵⁶

I Clement presents a number of points relating to the Church at the threshold of the Second Century.

- First is the matter of inter-congregational relationships. The two congregations, Rome and Corinth, had a fraternal relationship.
- Rome was not in a superior position over Corinth. The letter is a brother to brother appeal, rather than an edict of an ecclesiastical hierarchy.
- The leaders of the churches were those whom the apostles had installed, or else were the ones that the first and second generation of leaders had installed. Apostle to elder, to elder, to elder, was the origin of recognized leadership.
- Obliquely, at least, the idea of apostolic succession is recognized.
- The terms, *overseer* and *elder*, are used as synonyms, even as they were in the writings and speeches of Paul. At this point, the pattern was unchanged from the New Testament Church pattern of leadership.

²⁵⁴ *I Clement*, 47:6-7

²⁵⁵ *I Clement* 57

²⁵⁶ *I Clement* (in the shorter version of the text) 59

Other documents were written at about the same time as *The Didache* and *I Clement*. The best known of these are *The Epistle of Barnabas* and *An Ancient Christian Sermon* (also known as *II Clement*). Neither of these provide any information within the arena of our study.

The Emergence of *The Bishop*

As long as the apostles and those associated with them were alive and active in the Church, doctrinal and procedural disputes were settled by apostolic authority. The apostles left behind two means of preserving orthodoxy (correct doctrine) and orthopraxy (correct procedure). These were Scripture and leaders whom they had instructed and trained.

The scriptural canon, as we have it today, was slow in developing. It is surprising how extensive and widespread was the distribution of apostolic writings, but it took time for every apostolic document to be present in every geographical region of the Church. This is quite understandable in that every copy of an autograph or manuscript had to be copied by hand. Copying an uncial Greek manuscript was not done in a day, especially a lengthy document, and many of the apostolic writings are lengthy. Thus, distribution was not swift and thorough. To tell someone to “get into the Word,” as we are prone to do today, would have made no sense to early Christians. The only time that most Christians ever heard the reading of Scripture was in the Sunday meeting, and each local church could only read aloud whatever documents that congregation possessed. Because of this, some documents that are in our canon were popular and well-known in some regions but were unknown in others – or known only by reputation. There also was some disagreement as to which writings were apostolic, and thus belonged in the canon, as contrasted with those which were valuable, but not authoritative. For example, some of the documents mentioned in the previous section were promoted as scripture in some quarters.

Because of this lack of thorough distribution of all of the apostolic writings, aberrant teachings arose which could have been squelched if the entire canon had been present in every region.

The second arm of defense against error, as already noted, was the leadership that the apostles trained and installed. As the years progressed and these men became fewer and fewer, the remaining ones became increasingly valuable to the church. When assorted contradictory doctrines began to circulate, the local church looked to the elder who had the strongest apostolic connection. In essence, he began to occupy the role of the apostles, in so far as being the doctrinal arbiter. When various writings appeared, he also was the one who, in the local setting, recognized or rejected a document as scripture. In time, this man came to be elevated in authority over the other elders in the local church and the title of *episcopos* (overseer) increasingly came to be applied to him. Thus, the practice grew of having local church leadership consist of three groups:

- The Overseer (an individual)
- The Elders (a council)
- The Deacons (individuals who served in various leadership capacities).

In modern parlance, the overseer was the bishop and we will use that term from this point onward for the sake of brevity. Very shortly, the bishop became a *magisterial bishop*, (a ruling bishop). Several decades passed before any bishops exercised authority over other bishops. In the early stages, a bishop’s role was only in the local church.

Persecution in the First Half of the Second Century

Because persecution was the backdrop against which the multifaceted drama of the developing Church played out in the Second Century, we briefly summarize the nature and extent of that activity during the years of 100 – 160 AD. Many of the practices, as well as specific events, during this period were the product of persecution.

The Emperors were suspicious of anything that smacked of *superstition*. For example, one Roman officer was executed for carrying a *momento* given to him by a Druid priest.²⁵⁷ As noted earlier in the writing of Tacitus, Christianity was viewed by some as a superstition. The term, *superstition*, conveyed something different to the Roman mind than it does today. Robert Wilken has written,

“To say that a group was ‘superstitious’ meant that its rites and customs set the people apart from the rest of society. The superstitious did not conform their lives to the traditions of most citizens. They were ‘other,’ just like the saffron-robed Hare Krishna monks are to most Americans... In saying that Christians were ‘superstitious,’ the Romans were making a religious judgment about their way of life... For the Romans, religion sustained the life of the State. The new Christian superstition undermined it.”²⁵⁸

The Correspondence between Pliny and Trajan

There is no clear information about persecution or Rome’s efforts to squash Christianity in the first decade of the Second Century. The first information preserved for us is a letter from Pliny to the Emperor, Trajan, in 112 AD (The correspondence is reproduced in Addendum B). The province of Bithynia had gone through difficult times because of maladministration. Trajan sent Pliny to Bithynia to put the province back on its feet. In order to get a handle on the situation, Pliny traveled throughout the province, learning first hand the conditions of his charge. He wrote to Trajan forty-two times in eighteen months, seeking the Emperor’s advice concerning certain conditions. When Pliny came near to the eastern border of the province, near the town of Amastris, he had his first encounter with Christians. He could not understand Christianity’s popularity. He wrote to Trajan that this superstition was spreading rapidly, not only in the cities but in the villages of Asia Minor, captivating people of every age, rank, and sex. The result was that the temples were almost forsaken, the sacrificial victims for the pagan temples had no buyers.

Pliny was an experienced lawyer, but he never had witnessed the trial of Christians and so was uncertain about what he should do about them. The Romans had a legal term, *cognitio extra ordinem*, to describe crimes that did not fit the usual “statutory crimes” that were spelled out in the law. The *cognitio extra ordinem* gave great freedom to the judiciary to be arbitrary about whom and why individuals were convicted under this charge. On that basis, Pliny immediately condemned to death many non-Roman citizens who confessed to being Christians. Others, who were Roman citizens, he sent to the imperial tribunal. Pliny wrote that if for no other reason, Christians merited execution because of their obstinacy and unbending perversity. However, he was uncertain about his actions, wondering if he should have respect to age, etc. He had a special problem in knowing what to do with those who admitted that they had been Christians but no longer were Christians. Does cessation of a practice remove one from punishment for past misdeeds? Pliny wrote to Trajan and told him what he had done, thus far, hoping for advice and approval.

Trajan answered in a somewhat indirect fashion, but in a manner that to a Roman would be considered fair-minded and generous.

- Don’t go looking for Christians
- If an individual is accused of being a Christian, and upon examination is found to be guilty of being a Christian, then he is to be punished.
- Any accused person who proves that he is not a Christian by worshipping Roman Gods is to be acquitted.
- Anonymous accusations are to be ignored.

²⁵⁷ William C. Frend, “Persecution in the Early Church” *Christian History Magazine*, Vol. IX, No. 3 (Carol Stream, IL, Christianity Today) pg. 6

²⁵⁸ Robert L. Wilken, “The Piety of the Persecutors” *Church History Magazine*, Vol. IX, No. 3, pgs. 17-18

Hadrian's Moderate Policy

Anti-Christian riots broke out in the province of Asia (western Asia Minor) in 122-123 AD. The governor wrote to the Emperor Hadrian for instructions on how to deal with the matter. Hadrian's *rescript* (an imperial order) allowed cases against Christians to be brought to trial, but the Christians had to be found guilty of illegal acts before they could be condemned. As Trajan had decreed, Hadrian wrote that slanderous acts against Christians were forbidden (Addendum C is Hadrian's letter to Minucius Fundanus). Hadrian's *rescript* continued to be the Roman's official guide concerning the treatment of Christians until the reign of Marcus Aurelius in 161 AD.

Ignatius: the first record of a magisterial bishop

In spite of persecution's being an ever-constant threat, the Church continued to grow. With its growth came an increasing ecclesiology. As already noted, the first change in ecclesiology was the practice of viewing one particular elder as the overseer, and the other elders as being under his oversight. As long as the motive for this action was to avoid diluting the apostolic traditions, the local church functioned as it had in the past. However, it wasn't long before the overseer's role began to develop into more than just being the *primus interperes* (first among equals). Increasingly the *primus interperes* bishop became the ruling bishop. The first evidence of this development is preserved in the letters of Ignatius.

A few years before the exchange of correspondence between Pliny and Trajan (discussed earlier), persecution of the Church broke out in Syria. Although details of the situation are not clear, Ignatius, Bishop of the Church in Antioch was arrested and taken to Rome to appear before the Emperor. The date was 110 AD, give or take a year.²⁵⁹ Ignatius was escorted by ten Roman soldiers, whom he called, "ten leopards."²⁶⁰ After traveling many long wearing miles overland, the soldiers decided to take a break and rest for a few days in Smyrna. Word of Ignatius' arrest and journey to Rome preceded him and so when the soldiers and their prisoner rested in Smyrna, church leaders from several churches in the region hurried to Smyrna to visit with Ignatius.

Ignatius was one of the older bishops, a man of many years of experience. He also was the bishop of one of the most important pillars in the Church, the Church of Antioch. At one point, Jerusalem and Antioch were the two most important centers of Christianity. After the demise of Jerusalem, Antioch and Alexandria became the poles of influence.

Ignatius also was viewed with great esteem, almost reverence, because he was on the way to martyrdom. This posed a problem for him. He wrote,

I have great knowledge in God, but I restrain myself, lest, I should perish through boasting. For now it is needful for me to be the more fearful; and not give heed to those that puff me up. For they that speak to me [in the way of commendation] scourge me. For I do indeed desire to suffer, but I know not if I be worthy to do so. For this longing, though it is not manifest to many, all the more vehemently assails me. I therefore have need of meekness, by which the prince of this world is brought to nought.²⁶¹

Ignatius clearly expresses a clergy-laity mentality. The clergy in each local church consists of a single bishop, a council of elders (presbyters), and deacons. These are ordained and thus, in a sense, are recreated into a special class of beings. A Roman Catholic scholar, A. E. Welsford, describes the situation:

²⁵⁹ There is virtually unanimous agreement that Ignatius was martyred during the reign of Trajan (98-117 AD), but to fix the exact date is difficult. A very few scholars have adopted Eusebius' date (107-108), while others place it in the second half of Trajan's reign (ca. 110-117). Lightfoot places the date within a few years of 110 AD. He has done so much work on these subjects, that I accept his judgment.

²⁶⁰ *Ignatius' Letter to the Romans*, Section V

²⁶¹ *Ignatius' Letter to the Trallians*, Section IV

Certainly St. Paul had appointed presbyters in the churches which he founded. These had been known indifferently as presbyters and as *episkopoi* or bishops, but they resembled the order of bishops, as St. Ignatius knew it, only in name. He and his fellow bishops had succeeded to the authority, not of the second order, but of the apostles themselves. They were men, like St. Timothy, appointed to the apostolic work of the care and administration of the churches. It was for them to ordain presbyters and deacons and no one had the right to question their bishop.²⁶²

Ignatius was firmly convinced that the ecclesiastical order as he viewed it was the will of Christ.

For even Jesus Christ, our inseparable life, is the [manifested] will of the Father; as also bishops, settled everywhere to the utmost bounds [of the earth], are so by the will of Jesus Christ.²⁶³

In Roman Catholic writings (including Welsford), presbyters are called, *priests*. There is no lexical basis for rendering the word, *presbuteros*, as *priest*. There is another Greek term for *priest* (ἱερεύς - *hiereus*). *Presbuteros* (πρεσβύτερος) simply means, *elder*. The hierarchy that is seen in Roman Catholicism (a ruling bishop – an order of priests – an order of deacons), and to some degree in other churches, exists as an embryo in Ignatius' paradigm. Especially important to Ignatius and other leaders in the church, during this decade, was the principle of apostolic succession. It was important for the churches to be led by men who had been either ordained by apostles, or else ordained by a chain of leaders that originated with the apostles. These leaders, as successors to the apostles, had apostolic authority in the local churches.

The reality of the situation was that among the churches represented by leaders who rushed to meet with Ignatius, some were questioning the leadership of the bishops. The elders didn't always obey the bishop and the laity allowed themselves to be led astray by wandering prophets. Factions even developed in some churches. The bishops who met with Ignatius brought these problems to him and sought his counsel.

After they spent several hours with Ignatius, they urged him to give them something in writing that could be taken back to their churches. Ignatius complied. With the help of Burrhus, a deacon from Ephesus, Ignatius wrote letters to the Ephesians, to the Philadelphians, to the Magnesians, and the Trallians. Later on the journey, as they paused at Troas, he wrote to the Smyrnaeans and to their bishop, Polycarp. Later, while on the road, he wrote a letter to the Church in Rome. Today, we are glad that the bishops urged Ignatius to write these letters. They are the clearest and most reliable currently existing documents that give a clear photograph of the churches as they existed in the first two decades of the Second Century (Ignatius' letters are in Addendum D).

The overriding concerns in the letters are (1) unity of the church; (2) false doctrine; (3) the troubles faced by the Church of Antioch, which he had left behind; (4) his impending martyrdom.

Concerning the unity of the church, at times Ignatius was quite poetic.

Wherefore it is fitting that ye should run together in accordance with the will of your bishop, which thing also ye do. For your justly renowned presbytery, worthy of God, is fitted as exactly to the bishop as the strings are to the harp. Therefore in your concord and harmonious love, Jesus Christ is sung. And do ye, man by man, become a choir, that being harmonious in love, and taking up the song of God in unison, ye may with one voice sing to the Father through Jesus Christ, so that He may both hear you, and perceive by your works that ye are indeed the members of His Son. It is profitable, therefore, that you should live in an unblameable unity, that thus ye may always enjoy communion with God.²⁶⁴

²⁶² Welsford, page 133

²⁶³ to the Ephesians Section III

²⁶⁴ to the Ephesians Section IV

Note that the key to unity is loyalty to the bishop, who is the harp to which the strings are attached, the strings being the elders. In other portions of his letters, Ignatius is quite strong concerning the role of the bishop.

For if I in this brief space of time, have enjoyed such fellowship with your bishop — I mean not of a mere human, but of a spiritual nature — how much more do I reckon you happy who are so joined to him as the Church is to Jesus Christ, and as Jesus Christ is to the Father, that so all things may agree in unity!²⁶⁵

...it is manifest therefore, that we should look upon the bishop even as we would upon the Lord Himself.²⁶⁶

It is therefore fitting that you should, after no hypocritical fashion, obey [your bishop], in honor of Him who has willed us [so to do], since he that does not so deceives not [by such conduct] the bishop that is visible, but seeks to mock Him that is invisible. And all such conduct has reference not to man, but to God, who knows all secrets. It is fitting, then, not only to be called Christians, but to be so in reality: as some indeed give one the title of bishop, but do all things without him. Now such persons seem to me to be not possessed of a good conscience, seeing they are not steadfastly gathered together according to the commandment.²⁶⁷

I exhort you to study to do all things with a divine harmony, while your bishop presides in the place of God, and your presbyters in the place of the assembly of the apostles, along with your deacons, who are most dear to me, and are entrusted with the ministry of Jesus Christ, who was with the Father before the beginning of time, and in the end was revealed.²⁶⁸

As therefore the Lord did nothing without the Father, being united to Him, neither by Himself nor by the apostles, so neither do ye anything without the bishop and presbyters.²⁶⁹

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.²⁷⁰

Many other examples from these letters could be quoted, but to do so becomes redundant. The point is that Ignatius, and evidently those who met with him, viewed the local bishop as the Vicar of Christ in the local setting. To disobey the bishop was to disobey Christ. Furthermore the presence of the bishop was essential for the church to exist as a church.

In Ignatius' writings the Lord's Supper (the Eucharist) is a necessary source of unity. He also expressed the beginnings of the doctrine of transubstantiation.

Take ye heed, then, to have but one Eucharist. For there is one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one cup to [show forth] the unity of His blood; one altar; as there is one bishop, along with the presbytery and deacons, my fellow-servants: that so, whatsoever ye do, ye may do it according to [the will of] God.²⁷¹

Let no man deceive himself. Both the things which are in heaven, and the glorious angels, and rulers, both visible and invisible, if they believe not in the blood of Christ, shall, in consequence, incur condemnation. "He that is able to receive it, let him receive it." Let not [high] place puff any

²⁶⁵ *To the Ephesians* Section V

²⁶⁶ *To the Ephesians* Section VI

²⁶⁷ *Ignatius' Letter to the Magnesians* Sections III & IV

²⁶⁸ *To the Magnesians* Section VI

²⁶⁹ *To the Magnesians* Section VII

²⁷⁰ *Ignatius' Letter to the Trallians* Section III

²⁷¹ *Ignatius' Letter to the Philadelphians* Section IV

one up: for that which is worth all is a faith and love, to which nothing is to be preferred. But consider those who are of a different opinion with respect to the grace of Christ which has come unto us, how opposed they are to the will of God. They have no regard for love; no care for the widow, or the orphan, or the oppressed; of the bond, or of the free; of the hungry, or of the thirsty. They abstain from the Eucharist and from prayer, because they confess not the Eucharist to be the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ, which suffered for our sins, and which the Father, of His goodness, raised up again. Those, therefore, who speak against this gift of God, incur death in the midst of their disputes. But it were better for them to treat it with respect, that they also might rise again. It is fitting, therefore, that ye should keep aloof from such persons, and not to speak of them either in private or in public, but to give heed to the prophets, and above all, to the Gospel, in which the passion [of Christ] has been revealed to us, and the resurrection has been fully proved. But avoid all divisions, as the beginning of evils.

See that ye all follow the bishop, even as Jesus Christ does the Father, and the presbytery as ye would the apostles; and reverence the deacons, as being the institution of God. Let no man do anything connected with the Church without the bishop. Let that be deemed a proper Eucharist, which is [administered] either by the bishop, or by one to whom he has entrusted it. Wherever the bishop shall appear, there let the multitude [of the people] also be; even as, wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church. It is not lawful without the bishop either to baptize or to celebrate a love-feast; but whatsoever he shall approve of, that is also pleasing to God, so that everything that is done may be secure and valid.²⁷²

In this last quote, Ignatius speaks of “the Catholic Church.”²⁷³ This the first time that this term is found in any Christian literature. In later years (c.200 AD) the term became a technical term designating the true church, as opposed to heretical sects. Here it is used in its generic meaning of *universal* or *whole*. The term often is applied to the epistles of James, Peter, John, and Jude, because they seem to be written to all of the churches, rather than addressed to a single church.

Justin Martyr: A glimpse into the middle Second Century Church

Justin was a philosopher who after his conversion did not remove his philosopher’s robe. His writings display originality and great depth of thought. He is the most important Christian apologist of the Second Century. He came to Christianity after an intellectual pilgrimage which he outlines in his *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*. Justin claimed that he had found, in Christ and Christianity, the true philosophy. This attitude is the basis for his two apologies. The object of the apologies is the Roman Emperor – Justin argues and explains why persecution of Christians could not be justified. The apologies contain much interesting material, such as why Christians do not commit suicide, why they do not abandon unwanted babies, etc. Justin lived and defended the faith both in Asia Minor and in Rome.

Of interest to our study is the description of the liturgical aspects of the church of the middle Second Century. We took a passing glance at a small piece of this material, earlier. The relevant portions of Justin’s First Apology are contained in Addendum E.

From Chapters 61, 65-67, the following information is gleaned.

- Fasting and instruction precede immersion and immersion results in regeneration.

“As many as are persuaded and believe that what we teach and say is true, and undertake to be able to live accordingly, are instructed to pray and to entreat God with fasting, for the remission of their sins that are past, we praying and fasting with them. Then they are brought by us where there is water, and are regenerated in the same manner in which we were ourselves regenerated.”

²⁷² Ignatius’ Letter to the Smyrneaens Sections VI, VII, & VIII

²⁷³ Καθολικὴ ἐκκλησία *katholike ekklesia*

- In the *Didache* the method of immersion was emphasized. In Justin's apology, the result rather than the method is discussed.

“Then they are brought by us where there is water, and are regenerated in the same manner in which we were ourselves regenerated.²⁷⁴ For, in the name of God, the Father and Lord of the universe, and of our Savior Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, they then receive the washing with water.”
- An individual must have reached the age of accountability and be able to make a decision, before he is to be immersed.

“Since at our birth we were born without our own knowledge or choice, by our parents coming together, and were brought up in bad habits and wicked training; in order that we may not remain the children of necessity and of ignorance, but may become the children of choice and knowledge, and may obtain in the water the remission of sins formerly committed, there is pronounced over him who chooses to be born again, and has repented of his sins, the name of God the Father and Lord of the universe; he who leads to the washing the person that is to be washed calling him by this name alone.”
- The Great Commission Trinitarian formula is used in immersion

“...there is pronounced over him who chooses to be born again, and has repented of his sins, the name of God the Father and Lord of the universe... And in the name of Jesus Christ, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and in the name of the Holy Ghost, who through the prophets foretold all things about Jesus, he who is illuminated is washed.”
- Immersion is called illumination

“And this washing is called illumination, because they who learn these things are illuminated in their understandings.”
- Prayer and reception of the Eucharist, by both the new Christian and the entire body culminate the event.

“But we, after we have thus washed him who has been convinced and has assented to our teaching, bring him to the place where those who are called brethren are assembled, in order that we may offer hearty prayers in common for ourselves and for the illuminated person, and for all others in every place, that we may be counted worthy, now that we have learned the truth, by our works also to be found good citizens and keepers of the commandments, so that we may be saved with an everlasting salvation. Having ended the prayers, we salute one another with a kiss. There is then brought to the president of the brethren bread and a cup of wine mixed with water; and he taking them, gives praise and glory to the Father of the universe, through the name of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, and offers thanks at considerable length for our being counted worthy to receive these things at His hands.”
- Only those who have been immersed and are living godly lives are permitted to partake of the Eucharist.

“And this food is called among us εὐχαρίστια [the Eucharist], of which 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.”
- The Church met on Sunday

“And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place.... 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

²⁷⁴ Acts 22:6; Titus 3:5; Ephesians 5:26

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, He taught them these things, which we have submitted to you also for your consideration.”

- Transubstantiation is implied but not clearly stated

“For not as common bread and common drink do we receive these; but in like manner as Jesus Christ our Savior, having been made flesh by the Word of God, had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so likewise have we been taught that the food which is blessed by the prayer of His word, and from which our blood and flesh by transmutation are nourished, is the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh.”

- The pattern of the weekly meeting consisted of lengthy reading of Scripture, instruction and exhortation to live as the Scripture has stated, corporate prayer, the Eucharist, followed by a benevolence offering. Some versions of this text indicate that they closed the meeting with a song.

“...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 [the one presiding at the meeting] 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... And they who are well to do, and willing, give what each thinks fit; and what is collected is deposited with the president, who succors the orphans and widows and those who, through sickness or any other cause, are in want, and those who are in bonds and the strangers sojourning among us, and in a word takes care of all who are in need.”

- Every member of the church, both those present and absent, receive the Lord’s Supper on the Lord’s Day.

“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; 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.”

Of significance is the fact that the Churches with which Justin was familiar had access both to the Gospels and Paul’s letters – they read them in the Sunday meeting.

The Challenge of Heresies in the Second Century

The role of the local bishop in combating heresy and false doctrine often was a localized matter. There were significant heresies in the Second Century that threatened the Church at large.

From the standpoint of the Church, heresy is the mother of two evils. The first of these is division in the Body of Christ. The lexical meaning of the Greek word that we translate, *heresy*, is division. Paul warned the Ephesian elders,

I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears. (Acts 20:29-31)

False doctrine put forth by teachers who gain a following is a major cause of separation between brethren.

The second evil birthed by heresy is the loss of salvation that can result from false doctrine.

Paul is very strong in his language concerning such teaching. Note just one example:

I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you, and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed.

For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. (Galatians 1:11-12)

It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery. Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law. You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. (Galatians 5:1-4)

In this passage, Paul decries false salvation doctrine. What one believes is important. Heaven and hell hang in the balance.

Significant Heresies in the Early Church

John 1:1-18

*In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
He was in the beginning with God.*

*All things came into being by Him,
and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.*

*In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.
And the light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness did not comprehend it.*

*There came a man, sent from God, whose name was John.
He came for a witness,
that he might bear witness of the light,
that all might believe through him.*

He was not the light, but came that he might bear witness of the light.

*There was the true light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man.
He was in the world, and the world was made through Him,
and the world did not know Him.*

He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.

*But as many as received Him,
to them He gave the right to become children of God,
even to those who believe in His name,
who were born not of blood,
nor of the will of the flesh,
nor of the will of man,
but of God.*

*And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us,
and we beheld His glory,
glory as of the only begotten from the Father,
full of grace and truth.*

*John bore witness of Him, and cried out, saying,
"This was He of whom I said,*

*'He who comes after me has a higher rank than I,
for He existed before me.'*
*For of His fullness we have all received,
and grace upon grace.
For the Law was given through Moses;
grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ.
No man has seen God at any time;
the only begotten God,
who is in the bosom of the Father,
He has explained Him.*

The propositions in these verses declare truths about God, about relationships within the Godhead, and the incomprehensible truth of the incarnation, “The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us.” These are essential truths that the Church must believe and declare. No compromise can be made concerning them. There are many truths that can be relegated to a secondary level of importance and disagreements on these points can be tolerated. The truths in John’s prologue are not of such a secondary nature. The truths espoused in John 1:1-18 are those for which the Church must draw a line in the sand and say, “this far, but no further.” Throughout history, followers of Jesus Christ have died, rather than deny these truths. The propositions contained in this eighteen verse prologue are non-negotiable; they are not up for debate.

The heresies that plagued the early Church involved the propositions put forth in John 1:1-18.

In the following pages, we will survey the major false teachings that troubled the early Church. We will confine our survey to those that

1. caused division
2. distorted the true picture of God
3. distorted the understanding of Christ
4. could lead to loss of salvation.

THE ORIGIN OF HERESIES

Several motivations and circumstances produced the early heresies:

1. Only portions of Scripture were available in certain regions
2. A common desire to understand the mystery of God
3. An effort to explain the person of Jesus
4. An effort to make Christianity acceptable to society
5. The lust for something new and deeper
6. A desire to gain a following
7. Pride and rebellion against the establishment

Number three in this list, the effort to explain the person of Jesus produced many of the major heresies. Some of the most important were efforts to explain how the Son could be God, or at least called God, and yet not be a second God, alongside the Father. Four of the most prominent were:

1. Adoptionism: The Son and the Holy Spirit are specially endowed agents of the Father who adopted Jesus’ body
2. Neoplatonism: The Son and the Holy Spirit are emanations of the Father, descending into the concrete world.
3. Sabellianism: the Son is the Father, who presents himself in another mode
4. Arianism: The Son and the Holy Spirit are created beings, and are intermediate between the Father and mankind.

The unintended benefit of heresies

1. Heresies were a reaction to the common belief and doctrinal understandings of the Christian community (orthodoxy).
2. Orthodoxy, seeking to preserve the salvation that we find in Christ, defined the common faith by producing various creeds and clear formulations of belief. These would not have been produced had not heresy challenged the common understanding.
3. As subsequent heresies and aberrant teaching began to trouble the Church, subsequent creeds were composed.
4. The creeds are not authoritative as Scripture is authoritative, but they do clarify how the early Christians understood biblical truth.

The two earliest heresies, Judaism and Gnosticism, we already have surveyed. Both of these, as noted in the writings of Clement, Justin, and others continued to plague the church for quite some time. Since we already have looked at these topics we will not give them attention in this section.

Marcionism: The effort to simplify

Marcion was a Christian in Rome in the middle of the Second Century. According to some records, he was excommunicated by a local Roman church for immorality. Not long thereafter, he began teaching his version of True Christianity. He was a great organizer and achieved a sizeable following.

Gnosticism took the relatively simple Gospel and made it incredibly complex. Marcion was a simplifier. He seized a single aspect of the NT, the conflict between faith and law, and made it into a fundamental principle that dominated everything.

Because of his perspective, Marcion rejected the entire Old Testament. He accepted Matthew, Mark, and most of Luke, and most of Paul's writing. What he did accept, he took to be literally true and fully authoritative.

Marcion considered the god of the Jews to be the Demiurge of Gnosticism. Marcion said that this god is our constant evil adversary. He gave us the Old Testament and is responsible for our misery. Christ is not the Messiah of the Old Testament. Instead, Christ came to save us from the God of Wrath, the god of the Jews. Marcion did accept a modified Gnostic view and denied that Jesus came in the flesh – thus there would be no second coming, etc.

According to Marcion, the Church really is not a part of world history. Centuries later, in a more orthodox form, J.N. Darby (1800-1882) and the dispensationalists who followed his teaching also considered the Church to be a sort of parenthesis – not really a part of God's true plan (the Church is Plan B). Marcion based his views on some of Paul's writings, but he gave them his particular twist.

Some accused Marcion of taking the position of rejecting the Old Testament and any law because of his immoral behaviour. That view is open to question.²⁷⁵

If that were his motivation, he was followed in the same action by Henry VIII, who separated the Church of England from Roman Catholicism, when Pope Leo X refused to annul his marriage. The origin of their denomination still causes some Anglicans a bit of embarrassment.

A teacher or a movement follows in the steps of Marcion when his doctrine is built around a particular truth, to the exclusion of other truth. Luther, recovering from the excruciating experience of trying to find peace through Roman Catholic works-salvation, came close to Marcion's error when he wrote in his German Bible the word, *allein* ("alone," or "only") in Romans 3:28

²⁷⁵ Tertullian, one of Marcion's harshest critics, described him as being a "most holy teacher" who imposed "sanctity on the flesh." Tertullian, *On the Prescription of Heretics* 30; see also, *Against Marcion* 1:28

*For we maintain that a man is justified by faith (here, Luther inserted, *allein*, in his version of the Bible) apart from works of the Law.*

Luther called James, “a right strawy epistle” and to some degree questioned whether or not it should be in the Bible. He did not, however, amputate the canon, as did Marcion.

We must realize that even though the Christian faith is simpler than the Gnostics made it, it does have complexities, mysteries, and apparent paradoxes and seeming contradictions.

Two consistent sources of heresies are:

- An effort to make everything fit into one simple truth or doctrinal emphasis
- An effort to explain everything

Montanus: A call to be a Spirit-led Church

Montanus was a contemporary of Marcion. He felt that the church was reverting to Judaism, worldliness, and formalism. He sought to call the church back to being a Spirit-led church. He was a forerunner of the Charismatic movement.

Sometime between 155 and 172 AD, Montanus emerged in Phrygia, demanding a higher standard for the Church and separation from the world. He was concerned about the growth of formalism in the Church and the dependence on human leadership, rather than the guidance of the Holy Spirit. He saw the rising prominence of a single bishop in the local church as an expression of this tendency. If he had gone no further than advocating pure living, holiness, and less formalism in the Church, Montanus would have done nothing but good. However, as is too often the case, he went much further.

Montanus believed that the Church was overly reliant on Scripture. Montanus contended that inspiration was immediate and continuous and that he was the Paraclete through whom the Holy Spirit spoke, even as the Holy Spirit had spoken through Paul and the other apostles. When he did refer to Scripture, it was with a fanatical misinterpretation. He and his two prophetess associates, Prisca and Maximilla, went about prophesying in the name of the Holy Spirit. The Montanists prophesied in a state of ecstasy, as though their personalities were suspended while the Holy Spirit spoke through them. Montanus quoted the Holy Spirit as saying, “Behold, man is like a lyre and I fly over it like the plectrum” (Today, we would call a plectrum a “guitar pick”).

Montanus and his two associates declared that any opposition to their new prophecy was blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

Montanus developed an elaborate eschatology, prophesying the speedy Second Coming of Christ. He taught that the Kingdom of Christ soon would be set up at Pepuza in Phrygia and that he would have a prominent place in that kingdom. In order to be prepared and qualified for this coming kingdom, Montanus and his followers practiced strict asceticism (much fasting, eating only dry foods, and no remarriage for widows or widowers, etc.). His doctrine of a new age of the Spirit suggested that the Christian period, centering on Jesus, had ended. He claimed the right to push Christ and the apostolic message into the background. In the name of the Holy Spirit, Montanus denied that God’s decisive and normative revelation had occurred in Jesus Christ. The movement was strongest around Carthage and the eastern lands. Montanism was regarded as heresy in most churches. Finally, in 381, the Council at Constantinople officially declared that Montanists were pagans.

Once again, Mormonism, Christian Scientists, Jehovah’s Witnesses and many groups that cannot be labeled “Christian,” reflect Montanism’s attitude toward revelation.

Adoptionism: An effort to explain the Incarnation

A movement called, *Monarchianism*, an attempt to understand Christ correctly, arose early on in the Church. Monarchianism refers to movements that sought to express the fundamental truth that God is one

and that He is the sole monarch of the universe. Monarchianism took two forms. The earliest form was *Adoptionism*.

Adoptionism, as a distinct heresy, made its appearance around 190 in Rome. It was a reaction against the Gnostic speculation that made Christ an immaterial *aeon*.

The heresy began with the teaching of a man known as Theodotus the Tanner. Theodotus was a Christian in Byzantium, who renounced Christianity while still in the East. He later moved to Rome and began to declare that Jesus was only *psilos anthropos* (ψίλος ἄνθρωπος), a “mere man,” who received the Spirit of God at his immersion. Although Theodotus professed the *Rule of Faith*, Victor, the bishop of Rome (reigned 189-98) excommunicated him because of his adoptionistic teaching. He was the first person to be branded an heretic while professing the *Rule of Faith*.

Theodotus the Tanner’s doctrine was taken up by a man named Aesclypedotus and a second Theodotus, called, Theodotus the Money-Changer.

The Adoptionists were analytical Aristotelians – cool intellectuals. They used grammatical exegesis, displayed an interest in logic, mathematics, and empirical sciences.

The rise of Adoptionism suggests that neither the *Rule of Faith* (later formulated as the Apostles Creed) nor the words of the New Testament themselves are explicit enough to form an adequate barrier against thinking of Jesus as a supernaturally endowed mere human (although there are significant scriptural hurdles that one must overcome in order to hold such a view). Explicit formulations, such as the creeds of Nicea (325) and Chalcedon (451) were produced to defend the common and traditional understanding of the identity (deity) of Christ.

The initial move of the Adoptionists did not have much effect on the church, because those who held these views did not make good martyrs. Their rationalistic, human, early Unitarian views were not strong enough to keep them steady in the fires of persecution. Christians looked to an eternal life in which they would be like Christ (I John 3:2). The Adoptionists did not present a satisfying view of what that state might be..

One version of Adoptionism declared that God cannot suffer. Therefore, since God could not have suffered on the cross, Jesus was not divine.

Adoptionists were banned from the churches. Churches began to recite mottos describing Christ, such as, “True God and true man.” These mottos on the lips of the common Christians quickly drove the Adoptionists from the stage. Clearly, the early church did not hold to Adoptionism.

Again, this heresy was the result of trying to explain the inexplicable.

Adoptionism has as its heirs certain schools of modern liberal theology. It is common teaching in some Unitarian/Universalist Churches.

It also has heirs many of the Faith Formula teachers who declare that the man, Jesus, received the Holy Spirit at His baptism, then the Holy Spirit left Him to die on the cross, as a man.

Modalism: An effort to preserve the oneness of God

The second form of Monarchianism is known as Modalism. Modalism denies the Trinity and argues that God is one person who manifests Himself in three ways.

- Adoptionism tried to preserve the oneness of God by abandoning the deity of Christ
- Modalism sought the same thing by denying the personhood of Christ and the deity of the Holy Spirit

Modern Modalists often have illustrated their belief by comparing God to a pail of water.

- A pail of water is liquid
- A pail of water heated to a high enough temperature becomes steam.
- A pail of water reduced to a low enough temperature becomes ice.
- A pail of water may be liquid, steam, or ice, but it still is the same pail of water.

This illustration denies the Trinity. A Trinitarian view would be illustrated by three containers of water, one frozen, one liquid, and one steam. There would be three distinct containers, but would share the same elements and essence. However, even this illustration is off the mark because it could result in tri-theism, i.e. three Gods.²⁷⁶

Many statements in Scripture require us to view the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit as three distinct persons.

- The concept of distinct persons in the Godhead is expressed in statements made by Jesus to His disciples in the hours before His arrest.
 John 14:16 *"And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever;*
 John 15:16 *"You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask of the Father in My name, He may give to you.*
 John 15:26 *"When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness of Me,*
 John 17:1 *These things Jesus spoke; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Thy Son, that the Son may glorify Thee,*
 John 17:13 *"But now I come to Thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy made full in themselves.*
- If Modalism were true, then Jesus was a great play-actor (a hypocrite and deceiver). His behaviour on the cross definitely would have been a deceptive drama if the Godhead did not consist of distinct individuals.
 Matthew 27:46 *About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken me?"²⁷⁷*
 Luke 23:46 *And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit." Having said this, He breathed His last.*
- Acts contains several statements that affirm a Trinitarian view of the Godhead. For example, note the language of Peter's sermon on Pentecost.
 Acts 2:33 *"Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear.*
- The concept of distinct persons in the Godhead is expressed in Paul's traditional greeting to the various churches.
 1 Corinthians 1:3 *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*
 2 Corinthians 1:3 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort;*

²⁷⁶ Efforts such as this illustrate the difficulty in finding any analogy for God.

²⁷⁷ Also Mark 15:34

- John assumed the distinctives between the Person of the Father and the Person of the Son.

1 John 2:1 *My little children, I am writing these things to you that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;*

- The marvelous prologue to Hebrews requires us to reject Modalism.

Hebrews 1:1-3 *God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high;*

Modalism had various expressions. Two of the best known are Neoplatonism and Sabellianism.

- Neoplatonism asserts that there is One God, but three emanations – like the rays of the Sun. The emanations are the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. One never sees or experiences the real God, but only the emanations.

Neo-Platonism is a version of Plato's view of knowledge, as taught in his myth of the cave.²⁷⁸

The myth of the cave describes individuals chained deep within the recesses of a cave. Bound so that vision is restricted, they cannot see one another. The only thing visible is the wall of the cave upon which appear shadows cast by models or statues of animals and objects that are passed before a brightly burning fire located outside of the cave, behind these individuals. Breaking free, one of them escapes from the cave into the light of day. With the aid of the sun, that person sees for the first time the real world and returns to the cave with the message that the only things they have seen heretofore are shadows and appearances and that the real world awaits them if they are willing to struggle free of their bonds. The shadowy environment of the cave symbolizes for Plato the physical world of appearances. Escape into the sun-filled setting outside the cave symbolizes the transition to the real world, the world of full and perfect being, the world of Forms, which is the proper object of knowledge.²⁷⁹

Thus, as in Plato's cave, Neo-Platonism states that all that man can experience of God are God's emanations (equivalent to the shadows on the wall of the cave in the *Myth of the Cave*), which are not reality, but only appearances.

- Another form of Modalism was propounded by Praxis, around 190 AD. A few years later, Sabellius put forth the same view. Today, Modalistic theology often is known as *Sabellianism*.

Praxis and Sabellius focused on those passages in John in which Jesus stated that He and the Father are one.

John 10:30 *"I and the Father are one."*

²⁷⁸ Influenced by Socrates, Plato was convinced that knowledge is attainable. He was also convinced of two essential characteristics of knowledge. First, knowledge must be certain and infallible. Second, knowledge must have as its object that which is genuinely real as contrasted with that which is an appearance only. Because that which is fully real must, for Plato, be fixed, permanent, and unchanging, he identified the real with the ideal realm of being, as opposed to the physical world of becoming. One consequence of this view was Plato's rejection of empiricism, the claim that knowledge is derived from sense experience. He thought that propositions derived from sense experience have, at most, a degree of probability. They are not certain. Furthermore, the objects of sense experience are changeable phenomena of the physical world. Hence, objects of sense experience are not proper objects of knowledge.

²⁷⁹ Robert M. Baird, "Plato," Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia, 2002. © 1993-2001 Microsoft Corporation.

The Greek word translated, *one*, in this verse is, *hen* (ἓν), which is neuter gender. Both the word for Father, *pater* (πατήρ), and the word for Son, *huios* (υἱός), are masculine.²⁸⁰ If Jesus meant that He and the Father were the same person, we would expect the Greek word for *one* to be in the masculine, *eis* (εἷς), agreeing in gender with the nouns it describes. Since the Greek word, *hen*, is neuter, we would understand this verse to say that the Father and Son are of the same divine essence and united in purpose, not that they are the same person.

John 14:9 *Jesus said to him, "Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how do you say, 'Show us the Father'?"*

Clearly Jesus was not stating that He and the Father are the same person because often in the passage (John Chapters 13-16) He uses language that speaks of the Father and Son as separate persons (already noted above). What He was stating was that Jesus and the Father are both deity and are in unity.

Today, modalism has its heirs in several groups, the best known being the Oneness Pentecostal Movement. Some churches in other Pentecostal traditions are modalist, stating that Jesus is the Father and the Holy Spirit. Of course, the classic Unitarian churches are Modalists (Modalism was the concept that brought them into being), even though Adoptionism, as noted above might be found in some Unitarian churches. William Branham, whom Pentecostal historians credit with bringing the “healing message” into prominence in the modern Pentecostalism, was a Modalist, teaching that Jesus was the Father and the Son, although he avoided the terms, “Oneness,” and “Jesus Only.”

The production of Polemical Literature

With the wave of heretical teaching that began to plague the Church, various ones began to write treatises to combat the false teaching. Many of their writings have been preserved. The most famous polemicist of this period is Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons, a major city in Gaul (modern France). Irenaeus, along with other young men, had been taught and disciplined by Polycarp. He was sent to Rome with letters of remonstrance against the rising pestilence of heresy in the Roman Church. Upon arriving, he was mortified to learn that the Bishop of Rome, Eleutherus, had given ecclesiastical support to the Montanists. Irenaeus also met an old friend who had been a fellow student from the school of Polycarp – his friend had embraced the Valentinian heresy. This visit seems to be the source of Irenaeus’ life-long struggle to defeat the many heresies that came upon the church like a plague of locusts.²⁸¹ Paul’s *night and day with tears* prophetic warning to the Ephesian elders had come about.

*Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears.*²⁸²

When Irenaeus returned home, he found that the Bishop of Lyons, the godly Pothinus, had been martyred. Shortly thereafter, Irenaeus became the Bishop of Lyons.

²⁸⁰ The Greek term rendered, “I,” in this verse is ἐγώ (*ego*). This word does not have a gender. However it is referring to the Son, hence the statement made concerning the gender of the numeral *one*.

²⁸¹ Of more than passing interest is the role of the Greek churches in this era. Ante-Nicene Christianity, and indeed, the Church itself, essentially was Greek throughout the earliest centuries. Latin Christianity was a later development.

²⁸² Acts 20:28-31

The Roman emissaries of heresy began arriving in Lyons. They began to disseminate their licentious practices and false doctrines by the aid of “silly women,” (Irenaeus’ words), and the great work of Irenaeus’ life began. Although he had great distaste for delving into the study of the heresies, he committed himself to the task. He began to classify them and to write important refutations. Most of his writings have been lost over the centuries, but one of the most important, the five-book, *Against Heresies*, (*Adversus Haereses*) is one of the most informative extant documents concerning the manifestation of Gnosticism that plagued the church in the Second Century. Irenaeus was the first polemicist to use the principle of apostolic succession as an argument against false doctrine. Some of the finest theological treatises ever composed came from the early Church’s refutation of false doctrine. Addendum L is Irenaeus’ preface to *Against Heresies*.

The Easter Controversy Threatens the Unity of the Church

Among the various matters that tested the unity of the Church in the Second Century, none became more serious than the dispute over when Easter should be observed. This controversy began in the middle of the Second Century and became quite intense.

- The churches of the East held that Easter should be celebrated on the fourteenth day of Nisan, the date of the Passover according to the Jewish calendar- no matter what day of the week that might be. Polycarp became the major spokesman for this view.
- On the other side of the debate were the churches of the west, whose champion was the Bishop of Rome, Anicetus. Anicetus argued that Easter should be celebrated on the Sunday following the fourteenth of Nisan.

Polycarp traveled to Rome in an effort to resolve the dispute. Neither of these two leaders was able to convince the other, but they agreed that this difference would be tolerated. The East would not excommunicate the West and the West would not excommunicate the East. In 190 AD, Victor, the Bishop of Rome at that time, rejected the irenic arrangement worked out by Polycarp and Anicetus. He excommunicated the churches of Asia. At that time, Polycrates of Ephesus was the spokesman for the view espoused by Eastern Church. Irenaeus wrote a strong rebuke to Victor, accusing him of pretensions to power. This debate continued, sometimes acrimoniously, until the Council of Nicea, in 325 AD, which came down on the western side of the issue.

Persecution in the Second Half of the Second Century

Marcus Aurelius and Heightened Anti-Christian Hostilities

Most people know Marcus Aurelius as the stoic philosopher who wrote, *Meditations*. However, he was a soldier’s soldier who actively pursued military campaigns nearly his entire reign (161-180). He suddenly died in 180 at his military headquarters. During his reign, numerous measures were taken to soften the harshness of the law against the weak and helpless – with the exception of Christians. Officially, Marcus took the position of his predecessors, Hadrian, Antonius Pius, and Trajan, but his philosophical mentors convinced him that Christianity was a dangerous revolutionary and immoral element in the Empire. One thing that concerned the Roman government was the growing ecclesiastical structure of the Church, causing it to be a potential institutional threat. Another thing that they could not understand was the amazing unity that was produced by the rite of the Eucharist, which united Christians to one another as well as to the Lord.

Because Christianity was viewed as a secret society, all sorts of imaginations developed concerning what went on in the Christians’ meetings. Under Marcus, anti-Christian literature was published for the first time. Celsus’ *The True Doctrine*, is one of the best known of these. Christians were accused of atheism because they did not worship the Roman gods. They were accused of incest, cannibalism, abuse of children, and immoral sexual liaisons in their meetings. A Roman, Lollianus, wrote a fictitious work, in

which he described Christians, roasting the hearts of children and, during the worship service, distributing portions to each church member. Then, while holding the portion in his hands, each communicate “swore and oath by the blood of the heart.”²⁸³ Marcus Cornelius Fronto recounted stories of Christians worshipping the head of an ass (See Addendum I), accompanied by luxurious meals, rites of drunkenness, incestuous orgies, and the drinking of infant blood²⁸⁴. One common tale was that Christians covered a baby with dough and a new convert was told to slice the dough – when he cut into the object he realized that he had cut into a baby. The new communicant then was compelled to join the others in drinking the blood and devouring the child.

To dispel the slanderous rumors, Justin Martyr, whose material we read earlier, described what went on in The Meeting, as well as describing the life style of the Christians. Yet, nothing seemed to quell the rumors. When natural calamities occurred, the population often blamed the tragedy on the presence of the immoral and evil Christians in the community.

In response to the pressure of the population and in response to the pressure from his mentors and advisors, Marcus Aurelius removed some of the restrictions that had been imposed on accusers who brought charges against Christians. This resulted in a season in which more Christian blood was shed than at any previous time in history. Fierce persecutions broke out in various regions. In Lyons, forty-eight Christians died in the amphitheatre in 177 AD, including the local bishop, Pothinus (mentioned above in connection with Irenaeus). Justin, the first Christian philosopher was martyred during reign of Aurelius, and ever since has been known as *Justin Martyr*.

The most famous martyr of the mid-second century was Polycarp, whom we met earlier in connection with Ignatius. Polycarp’s Christian parents were slaves, thus, he was born a slave. As a boy he was taken from Syria to Smyrna and sold to a wealthy Christian lady named, Kallisto. The boy proved to be very diligent and intelligent and as he grew to manhood he became the steward of Kallisto’s household. She also made Polycarp her heir and so when she died, Polycarp became a very wealthy freedman in Smyrna. Being a man of considerable natural talent and intelligence, he soon became a prominent leader in the local church and eventually the Bishop of Smyrna.

Smyrna was but a few miles north of Ephesus, where John the apostle spent his final years. Polycarp was about twenty-five years old when John died in Ephesus. According to Irenaeus (who had been discipled by Polycarp), Polycarp not only was a disciple of the apostles and had associated with many who had seen the Lord, but the apostle had appointed him to the role of overseer of the Church in Smyrna. Irenaeus wrote that when he was a young disciple, sitting at the feet of Polycarp, the bishop would speak of his personal memories of John and the things that John spoke about the Lord.²⁸⁵

To Polycarp and the people whom he led, the authority of the apostles lived on in the living tradition passed on by the bishops as well as the Scriptures. The question always presented when some issue arose was, “Is this decision in accordance with the teaching of the apostles?” In time, Polycarp came to be recognized as an authority in these matters and bishops of various churches sought his advice. This was due, not only to his years of experience, but his demonstrated steadiness and the fact that he had been discipled by John.

Polycarp wrote many letters which were circulated among the churches. Only one of these survives, *The Letter to the Philippians* (Addendum H), which he wrote after the visit of Ignatius (described earlier). The

²⁸³ Lollianus’ fragment, First or Second Century AD. M. Aquilina, *The Mass of the Early Christians*, Our Sunday Visitor Publishing, Huntington, Indiana, 2001, pp 128-129

²⁸⁴ Fronto was consul in 143 and a former tutor of Marcus Aurelius. These accusations are a part of a speech that he delivered in 157 AD.

²⁸⁵ Polycarp was not the only one who could recount such stories. Many humble Christians of his day also had seen and heard one of the apostles. When something was read from the Gospels, they would comment, “Yes, that’s exactly how it happened. I heard it from the lips of John.”

Philippians sought his advice on how to deal with an elder who, abetted by his wife, had embezzled church funds. The church had dealt severely with the couple and wondered what to do next. Polycarp urged the church to bring the couple to repentance and restoration.²⁸⁶ Polycarp seemed to have forbearance and patience with everything except anything that corrupted the faith and doctrines associated with it. Welsford has written, “St. Polycarp could tolerate heresy as little as a doctor can tolerate cancer, and for the same reason: the disease would destroy the body whose health was his care.”²⁸⁷

Polycarp’s illustrious career lasted until his martyrdom, which took place when he was almost ninety years of age. Because he was such an important leader in the Second Century Church, his martyrdom greatly impacted the entire Church. The Church at Smyrna wrote a rather detailed account of the event and sent it to the Church at Philomelium. This document was copied many times and became well known throughout the Christian world (the document is Addendum J).

Persecution Under The Severan Dynasty

A new dynasty, the Severan Dynasty, seized power in Rome in 193 AD. The Severan Emperors were Septimus Severus (193-211), Caracalla (211-217), Elagabalus (218-222), and Alexander Severus (222-235). These emperors did not seem to have been personally ill-disposed toward Christians, but the wave of anti-Christian riots in major cities made this dynasty a period in which great numbers of Christians were slain. Significant public attacks on Christians took place in Carthage, Alexandria, Rome and Corinth, from about 202 to 210 AD.

One of the main causes was the growing presence of the Church. Although still illegal, the Church had become numerically stronger. Christians were consolidated around urban centers, led by bishops who were in frequent contact with one another. Local churches had begun to acquire property for cemeteries in some areas. In Rome, the church began building catacombs (the earliest catacombs date to c.200AD). The earliest known church building was built during this period in Dura-Europos, on the River Euphrates (see Addendum K). The Church also had recovered its missionary vision, which seemed to have been diminished throughout much of the Second Century. Lyons had become a major missionary center. This renewed evangelistic fervor caused tensions to rise between the Christians and the pagans. Thus, for many reasons, the Church no longer could be ignored as just an aberration manifested in remote areas of the Empire.

Most of the records that identify the victims of persecution in this period indicate that they were converts. It seems that the bishops and other clergy were not affected. One of the most publicized martyrdoms was that of Perpetua and Felicitas in Carthage. The account of this martyrdom was written not long after the event and the document had wide distribution among the churches (ADDENDUM M).

The end of the Severan Dynasty in 235 AD brought another brief period of persecution under Maximinus Thrax (225-238). Maximinus aimed his attacks against the leaders of the Church.

This period was followed by twelve years of calm in which the Church expanded, enlarged its catacombs in Rome and through the highly intellectual Origen (186-254), for the first time established an intellectual superiority over its pagan contemporaries. Origen realized that the calm was the calm before the storm. He said that the next persecution would be on a world-wide scale and very firmly enforced. He was right.

NOTE: The next several pages – 102 through most of page 105 – are a reprint of an article in *Christian History Magazine*. The article summarizes so well and so succinctly the account of the persecutions for the balance of the Third Century and the beginning of the Fourth that it behooved me to reproduce these pages rather than write a summary myself - JWG

²⁸⁶ Galatians 6:1

²⁸⁷ Welsford, page 151

Empire-Wide Persecution

Under the emperor Decius (249–251) the church experienced what, in retrospect, was its most severe test. Decius had come to power at a moment of grave military threat from the Goths, and economic and social decline in the cities. He blamed his predecessor, Philip, for military incompetence and the Christians, whom he believed Philip had favored, for the breakdown of morale in the Empire. His remedy was an explicit return to former Republican virtues (Roman mores) and the association of all inhabitants of the Empire with the emperor's yearly sacrifice to the gods of Rome on the Capitol. Decius combined this move, evidently, with an order (probably in December 249) to seize leading Christians. By January 20, 250, Roman Bishop Fabian had been tried before the emperor himself and sentenced to be executed.

The authorities went to great lengths to ensure compliance. In major cities, such as Carthage, commissions saw that individuals did perform sacrifice and punished those who refused. In Egypt, at least, there were commissioners in the country areas, and 44 of the certificates (*libelli*) have survived. They follow a set pattern. One reads, "To those appointed to see the sacrifices: From Aurelia Charis of the Egyptian village of Theadelphia. I have always continued to sacrifice and show reverence to the gods, and now, in your presence, I have poured a libation and sacrificed and eaten some of the sacrificial meat. I request you to certify this for me below." The date and official signatures follow, occupying several lines of papyrus. Charis retained one certificate for herself, and the other was deposited in the official archives, so one can imagine the bureaucratic nightmare the order caused.

Contemporaries, both pagan and Christian, and Christian historians of the next century indicate that Decius's measures were initially very successful. "All cowered with fear," as one contemporary writer said of the Christians in Alexandria. Many fled; few wished to defy the emperor openly. Alexandria and Carthage saw massive apostasies. In Smyrna, the bishop himself performed sacrifice. Those who defied the authorities, like the presbyter Pionius of Smyrna, were often regarded as simpletons or fanatics eager to throw away their lives. The edict caused deep divisions among Christians, moreover, that brought merriment to pagan authorities. Decius's main aim had been to secure universal support by a sacrifice to the gods to "restore Roman liberty." Once that had been achieved, by the early months of 251, the persecution was over. Decius died in June 251 on a campaign against the Goths, and Bishop Cyprian, who had fled, returned to Carthage to aid demoralized and disorganized congregations.

The church recovered its adherents rapidly but faced problems: what to do about the multitudes who had lapsed, and how to treat the Novatianist schism in Rome and North Africa, which had repercussions throughout much of the church. The Novatianists, according to Eusebius, called themselves "the pure." They would not allow those who had given in during the persecution to return to the church. Their movement foreshadowed more permanent division in the Christian church between those who put its integrity above all other values, and those who regarded universality (the *Katholike*) as all important. "

Sacrilegious Instigators

The new emperor, Valerian (253–60), at first tolerated the Christians but in the summer of 257 suddenly altered his attitude. The emperor's policy was not to destroy the Christian church but to bring it into conformity with public rites (aimed at safeguarding the empire in time of peril). In July-August he sent orders to deport Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, and Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria. Other bishops were sent to the mines. In addition, Christian places of worship and cemeteries were closed, and anyone entering did so at risk of execution.

For nearly a year there was an uneasy calm. The Christians, however, were not cowed as they were a few years before. We learn of numbers of visitors to Curubis, where Cyprian was living; of forbidden Christian assemblies in a suburb of Alexandria; and of proselytizing by Dionysius where he had been exiled.

The emperor's patience broke. Around July 258, Valerian ordered that bishops, priests, and deacons be executed, that church property be confiscated, that socially superior (honorati) laity lose their privileges and imperial civil servants (Caesariani) be reduced to slavery (a status from which many had emerged).

In some parts of the Empire this persecution of 258-259 was the bloodiest the church endured. On August 6 Roman Bishop Sixtus II was discovered conducting a service in the Catacomb of Praetextatus and was martyred, as were all seven of his deacons. Next month, Cyprian was brought from his place of exile to face the ailing governor, Galerius Maximus. Once again Cyprian refused to perform sacrifice. In words that summed up the authorities' case against the Christians, the proconsul said, "You have lived a sacrilegious life, and you have gathered around yourself many vicious men in a conspiracy. You have set yourself up as an enemy of the Roman gods and of their sacred rites. And the pious and most religious emperors Valerian and Gallienus Augusti, and Valerian, the most noble Caesar, have been unable to bring you back to the observance of their own sacred rituals. Therefore, having been apprehended as the instigator and ringleader of a criminal conspiracy ... you will be executed." Conspiracy, illegal association, enmity toward the gods of Rome—these charges formed the basis for the persecutions during the first three centuries.

Lull Before the Storm

Valerian's death brought more than 40 years of peace (260–303). Christians could still be arrested, however. For example, a Christian soldier, Marinus, lost his life when a jealous fellow soldier found that Marinus was to be promoted to the rank of centurion and denounced him as a Christian. Yet bishoprics multiplied, and church building seems to have gone on unhindered. In the imperial capital at Nicomedia (on the opposite side of the Bosphorus to Constantinople), the Christian church stood in full view of the imperial palace. More important, the church now became a movement of the countryside as well as of the towns. In his Ecclesiastical History, Eusebius quoted Dionysius of Alexandria, who hailed Gallienus as an emperor under whom "the monarchy, as it were, put aside its old age and cleansed itself from its former wickedness and now blossoms forth in fuller bloom...."

Final, "Great Persecution"

In 303, however, came 10 years of persecution, the "Great Persecution" as it became known. How and why, after 43 years of peace, did this happen?

First, while the church appeared to be accepted, opposition to it was never far below the surface. Since 270 the pagans, inspired by the Neo-Platonist philosopher, Porphyry, had begun to mount a serious intellectual assault on Christianity. "The evangelists," Porphyry wrote in 15 books *Against the Christians* (c. 280–290) "were the inventors, not the historians, of those things they record about Jesus." This propaganda war between Christian and pagan champions intensified in the 290s.

Second, in 284 Diocletian seized power by a coup d'état and survived to become one of the greatest conservative reformers of all time. In March 286 he appointed a comrade-in-arms, Maximian, as co-emperor (Augustus) in the West; and on March 1, 293, the two Augusti appointed two other military men, Constantius and Galerius, as their assistants, or Caesars. The emperors' ideal was to return to the traditional values of Rome. They imposed a uniform system of administration, currency and, in 301, prices throughout the Empire. Uniformity and discipline were the watchwords of the age, yet Christianity remained a standing challenge to the unifying and conservative ideals of the emperors.

Persecutions might not have occurred, however, but for the fortunes of war. In 296 Caesar Galerius, who was strongly anti-Christian, won a decisive victory over the Persians. With his victory his influence over Diocletian increased. Diocletian's family contained some who were pro-Christian, and he was unwilling to act against the Christians. But his hand was forced, partly by Galerius's steady pressure and partly by anti-Christian propaganda from some provincial governors. Between 298 and 302 the civil service and army were gradually purged of Christians. Late in 302 the emperors visited the shrine of Apollo at Didyma and

the oracle complained of the baneful influence of the Christians (“the just on earth”) in its pronouncements. The die was now cast. On February 23, 303, the Feast of Terminalia, repression would start.

Churches were destroyed, Christian services banned, and the Scriptures seized and burned. Christians in high places lost civil rights, and “those in households” (perhaps meaning, “private citizens”) were deprived of their liberty. One concession Diocletian secured: no bloodshed.

A second edict imposed an obligation on all clergy to sacrifice, but the prisons became too full, and in the autumn of 303 this was modified and most of those imprisoned for refusing were released.

So far the persecution had not been as severe as under Valerian. Scriptures were seized, but among Christians there was often consternation and grudging compliance. Only a minority of determined souls held out. Years later, the “day of handing over” was remembered as a day of disaster by the North African Christians.

In 304, with Diocletian ill in Rome, Galerius seized his chance and imposed a universal obligation to sacrifice on pain of death. Up to then only the clergy had been involved directly; now the pressure was on every Christian. The number of martyrs increased, as did the defiance of the Christians. One inscription from a North African church lists 34 men and women who “suffered under the laws of the divine emperors Diocletian and Maximian.” In Phrygia a whole community was wiped out, and Egypt saw eight years of ruthless repression, which among the Coptic Christians earned the reign of Diocletian the title “The era of the martyrs.”

A Grudging Concession

This phase ended on May 1, 305, when Diocletian and his western colleague, Maximian, formally abdicated, to be succeeded by Galerius and Constantius respectively. In the West, Constantius took no further action, and on his death, his son Constantine was proclaimed emperor by his troops. In the next five years Constantine gradually increased his authority, and though an adherent of Apollo, followed his father’s policy of toleration toward Christians.

In the East, however, Galerius renewed persecution, accompanied by anti-Christian propaganda and a great effort to reorganize paganism along Christian hierarchical structures. It was too late. Steam gradually ran out of the enforcement of the edicts, and no martyrs are recorded in this phase after 310. In April 311, Galerius, realizing that he was dying, decided that enough was enough and revoked the edicts of persecution. In the spirit of Diocletian’s reform, he wrote, “We wished previously, always acting for the good of the commonwealth, to correct all things according to the ancient laws and public discipline of the Romans.” However, too many

Christians had failed to conform, and rather than they should not worship any god, “they might henceforth exist again. Their meeting houses were to be restored,” and their prayers “for our good estate” were asked. This last request was in vain, for Galerius died six days later. Galerius’ concession of failure was grudging but decisive. The Empire could not be preserved by the “immortal gods” with the Christian God possessing a veto over their powers.

In the spring of 312, Constantine entered on a final bid for supremacy in the West. Campaigning against his rival, Maxentius, through north and central Italy, he reached within five miles of Rome on October 27. That night he had a vision or dream that convinced him that his own destiny lay with Christianity. Next day he defeated Maxentius’s superior forces and entered Rome in triumph. In February 313 Constantine met Licinius (who had succeeded to Galerius’ European dominions), and in a document that has become known as the Edict of Milan formally ended the persecution. All individuals were to be free to follow their own consciences. In fact, the Edict proved to be the deathknell of the immortal gods. Eleven years later (in 324), Constantine defeated Licinius and proclaimed his adherence to Christianity and his aim that Christianity should become the religion of the Empire now united under his sole rule. The church had triumphed.

Why the Christians Triumphed

Why had the Christians won? First, they had become too strong to be defeated. In some provinces, such as Bithynia and Cyrenaica [today, northern Egypt and Libya], they may already have formed a majority, and they were well organized.

Further, Christians attracted people, as a Neo-Platonist philosopher explained c. 300, by their religion's "simplicity," its direct moral teaching and promise uncomplicated by its rivals' mythology.

More than that, Christianity had never lost its martyr spirit. As one contemporary (Lactantius) explained, "There is another cause why God permits persecutions to be carried out against us, that the people of God may be increased." People rejected the old gods because of the cruelties perpetrated in their names. People inquired what was so good that it seemed preferable to life itself, "so that neither loss of goods, nor of the light, nor bodily pain or tortures deter them." In Egypt in 311–312, Eusebius of Caesarea was an eyewitness of the final horrors of Maximinus's persecution. He writes that "we ourselves beheld, when we were at these places, many [Copts] all at once in a single day, some of whom suffered beheading, others punishment by fire, so that the murderous axe was dulled, and worn out, was broken in pieces, and the executioners grew utterly weary.... It was then that we observed a most marvelous eagerness and a truly divine power and zeal in those who placed their faith in the Christ of God. Thus, as soon as sentence was given against the first, some from one quarter and others from another would leap up to the tribunal before the judge and confess themselves Christians...."

Popular opinion had been changing in favor of Christianity in the previous 30 years. Against such spirit the pagan authorities were powerless. They might sometimes win intellectual combats, proving Plato was a cleverer man than St. Paul, but those who regarded death as liberation had the last word.

William H.C. Frend, *Christian History Magazine*, Issue 27, 1990, pgs 8-11

The Catacombs²⁸⁸

The city of the dead lay outside of ancient Rome. No burials were allowed within the walls of the city, but lines of tombs stood along the Appian Way, the Via Labicana, the Nomentan Way, and the other great roads leading to the city. The tombs consisted of a variety of graves: the elaborately adorned burial sites of Roman nobility; the columbaria where trade guilds placed the ashes of their dead; burial chapels; and other private monuments.

Some of the epitaphs on the tombs begged the attention of the passer-by.

- *Stop, traveler, who passes by on the Flaminian Way; pause and read and read again!*
- *Mix, drink and give to me (an obvious pleading for a libation for the dead)*
- *Traveler, curse me not as you pass, for I am in darkness and cannot answer.*

Some offered cynical advice:

- *Fortune makes many promises but keeps none of them*
- *Live for the present hour, since nothing else is really yours*

Some appealed to the reader's pity

²⁸⁸ The early Christians did not call these caverns, *catacombs*. They were *cemeteries* a term coming from the Greek term meaning, *resting place*. The term, *catacomb*, was applied at a later time. Not everyone agrees on the origin of the term. The Latin, *cata tumbas* (at the tombs) probably is the origin. Before the Christians excavated the catacombs, the area between the 2nd & 3rd mile of the "Appian Way" was called, *catacumbae*. Probably because of the tombs located in this region. Interestingly, the Latin, *cata*, is derived from the Greek term, *κατά*, meaning, *down*, which is appropriate for the underground burial chambers beneath Rome.

- *Our hope was in our boy; now all is mourning*
- *Here I lie unhappy girl in darkness*

Of a far different nature was the vast labyrinth of underground passages where Roman Christians laid to rest their dead. The catacombs, as they are called today, were constructed during the centuries when persecuted Christians were not eager to call attention to themselves. The oldest catacombs were begun before the close of the First Century. They were not secret hiding places, as sometimes is stated. All burial sites had to be registered with the government. The presence of the catacombs was not hidden from the authorities. Once the government had granted the right to use a site for burial and the site had been duly registered, either by an individual or a corporate body, that piece of land was viewed as sacred. Any outsiders who attempted to interfere with such a designated site were charged with sacrilege and were punished severely. Because no burials could take place within the walls of Rome, the catacombs are in regions near, but outside of, the city walls (Addendum N is a map showing the location of the many catacombs). More than sixty catacombs surround Rome.

By cutting out passages through the soft rock, Christians created a network which became an underground city. The full extent of all of the catacombs has not been explored, but they are quite sizeable. The Callistus Catacomb, alone is estimated to contain 587 miles of passages. Some catacombs are like mines with galleries cut one below the other, four or five tiers deep. The lower levels are the newer levels.

Prudentius, a Christian poet, writing in Latin in the Fourth Century when the Church no longer was persecuted, described the catacombs in his day.

“Among the orchards, hard by the city walls, there is a deep crypt, with dark recesses. A steep path with winding stairs leads down through dim turnings and the daylight from the mouth of the cavern somewhat illuminates the first part of the way. As you advance the darkness grows more intense until you meet openings, cut in the roof above, which bring the bright rays of the sun into the crypt. Although the galleries twisting this way and that form narrow chambers, with recesses in deep gloom, yet some light finds its way through the pierced vaulting into the crypts below.”²⁸⁹

The light-shafts described by Prudentius were not a part of the original design and were not installed until Constantine ended the persecution of Christians. Until that time, the caverns were lighted by lamps resting on wall-sconces. Many of the sconces remain even today.

The most common burial plan consisted of a room (a gallery) with rows of rectangular niches cut into the walls of the gallery. The niches, called, *loculi*, were the repositories for single bodies – however, they often did contain the remains of more than one person – possibly a husband and a wife. In imitation of Christ’s burial, the corpses were wrapped in a sheet or shroud and placed in the loculi without any coffin. The loculi were closed with a slab of marble or in some cases, tiles held in place by mortar. The name of the deceased usually was inscribed on the slab. Oil lamps and small vases of perfume sometimes were placed beside the loculi.²⁹⁰

²⁸⁹ Welsford, pp. 161-162

²⁹⁰ When the Goths and Longobards invaded Italy (410 AD), they systematically destroyed many ancient monuments in Rome and sacked many important sites, including the catacombs. These pillagers opened many of the graves and destroyed some of the slabs covering the loculi. Powerless in the face of increased pillages, in the late Eighth and early Ninth Century, the relics of the martyrs and other important personages were removed from the catacombs and stored in Rome’s church buildings. When this happened, the catacombs no longer were visited and were totally abandoned, with the exception of three: Sabastian, Lawrence, and Pancratius. In the course of time, landslides and vegetation obstructed and hid the entrances so that the very traces of their existence were lost. In the Middle Ages, no one even knew where the catacombs were located. In 1578, a catacomb on the Via Salaria was discovered accidentally. The exploration and scientific study of the catacombs began with Antonio Bosio (1575-1629), who was nicknamed, “Columbus of Subterranean Rome.” From 1593 until his death, Bosio devoted himself to finding and

There were other types of tombs in the catacombs:

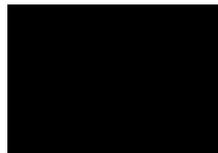
- *The arcosolium*: a tomb typical of the Third and Fourth Centuries. It is a much larger niche with an arch above it. The marble tomb covering was placed horizontally; the arcosolium usually served as the burial chamber for an entire family.
- *The sarcophagus*: a stone or marble coffin usually adorned with sculptured reliefs or inscriptions.
- *The cubicula*: The term means, *bedrooms*. These were small rooms for family burial, larger than the normal size, and capable of accommodating several loculi. They frequently were adorned with scenes of immersion, eucharist, and the resurrection, symbolized by the story of Jonah and the whale.
- *The crypt*: An even bigger room. In later years, after the legalization of Christianity, some crypts were converted into underground chapels and were decorated with paintings, mosaics, or other decorations.
- *The forma*: A tomb dug into the floor of a crypt or of a cubiculum, or a gallery. They are very numerous near the tombs of martyrs.

The catacombs were the exclusive work of a specialized guild of workers called, *fossores* (gravediggers). They dug gallery after gallery by the faint light of lamps and used baskets or bags to carry away the debris.

Elaborate paintings, rudely cut epitaphs (often spelled incorrectly and grammatically flawed), symbols drawn by men who could not write, as well as carved sarcophagi - all of these tell a story which even the early Fathers left untold. Here are some examples:

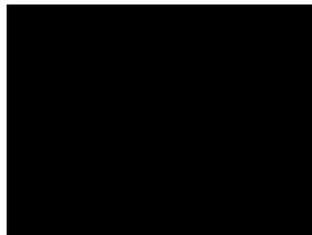
On one grave-slab, a carpenter drew his set of tools, and a mason was employed afterwards to add the inscription.

BAVTO ET MAXIMA SE VIVI FECERVNT



“To Bautus and Maxima.
They made this during their lifetime”

On another there is a picture of a vine-dresser with his wine cask beside him and an inscription put up by his brothers.



“To Guadentius. His brothers made this.
He lived twenty-eight years, eight months, seventeen days.”

exploring the early Christian cemeteries. The most significant study of the catacombs began with Giovanni Battista de Rossi who began the systematic exploration of the catacombs in 1845 and continued the work until his death in 1893. De Rossi's labors and publications led to a wide diffusion of knowledge, archeological technique, and veneration of the catacombs.

A pathetic drawing is of a little pig, accompanied by the words,

PORCELLA HIC DORMIT IN P.
Q. VIXIT ANN. III. M. X. D. XIII



“Here sleeps Porcella in peace.
She lived three years ten months, and thirteen days.”

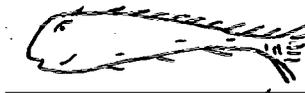
Sad as the parents of Porcella must have been to lose their “piglet,” there is no hint here or elsewhere in the catacombs of the despair and bitter unavailing grief which inspired so many of the pagan epitaphs.

A common symbol in the catacombs is the anchor, reflecting the truth of Hebrews 6:19,

This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil,

The Roman Christians carved the symbol on their tombs as a symbol of their sure hope in Christ. Interestingly, the cross never was used in the catacombs. Their sign for the Christ was not the emblem of his passion, which is our custom today, but rather the fish. The fish is an anagram of his name in Greek.

I Jesus (*Hiesus* - Ἰησοῦς)
X Christ (*Christos* - Χριστός)
Θ God (*Theos* - Θεοῦ)
Υ Son (*Hios* - Υἱός)
Σ Saviour (*soter* - Σωτήρ)



SYMBOLIC FISH FROM THE CATACOMBS²⁹¹

The thought that the departed soul is happy with the blessed saints in paradise also is expressed in picture form. The soul is represented as a dove with a spray of palm leaf in her beak to symbolize joy and the triumph of heaven.



The names carved on the slabs tell an interesting story. None of the names are from the Old Testament. Most of them are of Christian origin. Early on, it became the custom to give a new name to a convert at the time of his or her immersion. Here are some examples of names found upon the slabs:

Elpis and *Spes*, the Greek and Latin forms of Hope
Philumena – Beloved
Felicitas – Happiness
Urania – Heavenly
Agape – Love
Anastasia – Resurrection
Peregrinus – Pilgrim
Gaudiosa – Rejoicing
Eirene – Peace

Innocentia – Innocence
Benignus – Kind
Ingenua – Sincere

Sometimes, a comment is added:

- *Simplicia who was rightly so-called*
- *Here lies Verus, who always spoke truthfully*

The oldest catacombs contain frescoed walls and ceilings. The earliest vaults are bright with festoons and garlands, cupids, doves, and flowers. There is little that is specifically Christian about these decorations, with the exception of several portrayals of The Good Shepherd, Daniel in the Lion's Den, and Noah in his ark. For the most part, it seems that Christians must have employed Roman painters to paint something from their stock designs – selecting from the painter's stock something that did not savor of idolatry. As the years went by, the art became more obviously Christian.

Photographs of the interior of catacombs and some of the frescoes and other art are in Addendum N.

These vaults and their décor are proof that before the end of the First Century Romans of wealth and high position had secretly joined the Church. Freedmen and slaves could not have financed the catacombs nor paid for their elaborate decorations. One such vault sheds light on the trial of Flavia Domitilla and her husband in 95 AD (we mentioned this in the section relating to Domitian). Flavia Domitilla was a great lady in the days of Domitian. Her husband Flavius Clemens, was a relative of the Emperor. Their two sons, Vespasianus and Domitianus had been named as the Emperor's heirs. In the last year before his death, Domitian, in a fit of sudden suspicion, had Flavius and his wife tried on a charge of atheism and Jewish practices. Clemens was executed and Domitilla was exiled to a lonely island. One of the oldest First Century catacombs was constructed under the estate that belonged to the Flavians. The catacomb contains the tombs of Domitilla's relatives and dependents. The existence of this catacomb gives credence to the suspicion that Domitilla was a Christian. Her husband at least sympathized with the new faith.

In Domitilla's catacomb is a slab with the single word, *Ampliatius*. This is one of the earliest tombs and it may be that of Amplias, whom Paul greeted in his letter to Rome.²⁹² Judging by the number of graves clustered around this tomb, some have concluded that it must have been considered an honor to be buried near *Ampliatius*.

The epitaphs in the catacombs rarely make any mention of the rank or social status of those interred. They display Paul's statement

*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*²⁹³

The odor of decay, and the pestilential air in the summer made the lives of the *fossores*, an act of great self-sacrifice. Visiting the graves of the departed became much more difficult for the surviving members of the families of the deceased. Therefore, after Constantine granted freedom to the Church, shafts for ventilation and light were opened up and broader stairways were constructed, making it easier for visitation to the catacombs. In the Fourth Century, following the Edict of Toleration, the veneration of martyrs, especially at their gravesites and on the anniversaries of their deaths, became widespread. This prompted people to want to be buried in the vicinity of a martyr's tomb – often in a catacomb.

²⁹² Romans 16:8

²⁹³ Galatians 3:28

The Development of the Canon

The Christians of the Second, Third, and Fourth Centuries increasingly were pressed to clarify, define, and organize both doctrine and liturgy. As already noted, the various heresies and doctrinal departures from what the apostles had taught produced the creeds that began to be written in the Fourth Century.

Irenaeus seems to express the view that prevailed in the Universal Church during the later quarter of the Second Century. He cites four sources of authority, all of which we have mentioned earlier:

1. Scripture
2. Tradition
3. The chain of personal acquaintance with the apostles
4. The succession of bishops

No study of the Early Church could be complete without at least a passing glance at the development of the Canon. Second and Third Century Christians believed that Scripture not only was exempt from error, but also that Scripture contained nothing superfluous. The challenge, however, was determining which early writings should be designated as *Scripture*.

Not long after the close of the New Testament age, it is apparent that the writings of the Apostles were being read in the Sunday services, along with the Old Testament. For example, Justin Martyr, writing around 140 A.D., describes the typical Sunday service. He states that the “memoirs of the Apostles,” were read along with the “writings of the prophets,” before the church participated in weekly communion.²⁹⁴ The memoirs were the Four Gospels.

The available evidence would indicate that Paul’s letters were first gathered into a single collection, next were collected the Four Gospels, then the other New Testament documents. When a church received a letter from Paul, the church often made a copy that was circulated among surrounding churches. Note that Paul gave the Colossians instructions to send a copy of his Colossian letter to Laodicea and that the Laodiceans would send them a copy of the one that he wrote to Laodicea (Colossians 4:16). Some of Paul’s letters were not written to a particular city, but to the churches of a geographical area (Galatians, for example), so they would have been distributed throughout the region.

Marcion’s Canon

Earlier we commented on Marcion, but we pay notice to him at this point because he seems to have been the first person to attempt to define the canon. Marcion was the son of an overseer in Sinope of Pontus. Early on, probably because of his heretical opinions and contempt of authority, he was excommunicated by his father. Marcion quickly drifted into a relationship with the Syrian Gnostic, Cerdo. In time, Marcion developed his own form of Gnosticism and formed his own canon of Scripture (c. 160 AD)

Marcion rejected many of the New Testament books. He abridged and mutilated the Gospel of Luke, then included ten of Paul’s epistles as his canon. Thus, his canon contained a total of eleven books. He rejected the pastoral epistles because they condemned the forerunners of Gnosticism. He also condemned the Epistle to Hebrews, Matthew, Mark, John, Acts, and Revelation. Much of this rejection was because he rejected the supernatural and sought to demonstrate that there was conflict between Paul and the other apostles.

Marcion is valuable in the study of the canon because his argument against certain books is evidence that they were classed as Scripture by some sections of the Church.

Early lists of New Testament Scriptures.

Somewhat complete lists of the New Testament Scriptures did not appear until the last half of the Second Century. One of the earliest is *The Muratorian Fragment* (also called, *The Muratorian Canon*), so called

²⁹⁴ Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, Sections 66 and 67; see also James Garrett, *The Meeting*, 1999 Conclave paper, page 27

because it was discovered by L.A. Muratori in 1740. This is the oldest known original manuscript from the Roman Church.²⁹⁵ Scholars are universally agreed that this list is from the late Second Century. It is in Latin and seems to be a translation of an older Greek document. The age of the original document is not known, although the translation into Latin was around 170 AD. The list is damaged at the first, with pieces of the document missing. It also appears to be mutilated at the end. Because it is but a fragment of a document, we cannot know how much of the list is missing. The list begins with Mark, passes to Luke, which it lists as *the third Gospel*, then to John, which it lists as the *fourth Gospel*. Obviously, then, Matthew was in the mutilated section. After the Gospels, follow Acts, thirteen letters of Paul, Jude, two letters of John, and Revelation. The only books of our New Testament not found in the list are Hebrews, James, I & 2 Peter, and possibly 3 John. The way that the list is composed, it is possible that 3 John is included in the two letters of John, already noted. Even with these omissions, the Muratorian Fragment provides a list very close to our New Testament. The fragment does include as Scripture one book that we do not have in our Bibles, *The Wisdom of Solomon*. It also includes *The Apocalypse of Peter* in its list, but notes that “some of our people” do not accept it as being authentic Scripture, even though “some in our body will have it read in the church.”

The Muratorian Fragment mentions other writings, some of which are acceptable for private reading, but not to be read in the worship service because they are not Scripture. Others are approved for reading, but not while reading Scripture. Some are listed as being popular among Christians, but they are to be outright rejected because of dubious origin.

Origen’s List

Two lists composed by Origen (ca 185-254) are extant. Origen is reputed to have composed 6000 scrolls on biblical themes. In one of these he lists all of the books that we have in our New Testament, but expresses hesitation about some. He quotes from Hebrews several times, but says that some churches do not accept it. He says that Second Peter is possibly from Peter but that some dispute this. He says that John may have composed a second and third epistle, but that not everyone considers them genuine. In another of his works, *Homilies on Joshua*, Origen lists the same twenty-seven books that we have in our New Testament.

Athanasius’ Easter Letter

The list included in an Easter letter from Athanasius of Alexandria, written in 367 A.D., is identical to the twenty-seven books that we acknowledge today. It was written as an authoritative list.

It is important for us to remember that the lists, prior to that of Athanasius, were not authoritative. They were not setting down a precept for the churches. They were lists that recorded the general consensus of the churches in the area where the author lived.

Quotations from the Early Church that Reflect the Existence of a Canon

In the New Testament itself, there is evidence of an embryonic canon. Peter’s applying the designation, “Scripture,” to the Epistles of Paul, presumes that Paul’s epistles already were distributed to some degree, perhaps even collected, and given authority in the First Century Church (II Peter 3:15-16). The obvious implication of this conclusion is that at least some of Paul’s epistles were acknowledged as Scripture before the death of all of the apostles.

Another piece of evidence is I Timothy 5:18, in which Paul quotes both Deuteronomy 25:4, *You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing*; AND Matthew 10:10 and Luke 10:7, *for the laborer is worthy of his wages*

²⁹⁵ Other documents from Rome are older, but they are not original manuscripts

Paul called both quotations, the one from Deuteronomy and the one from the Gospels, "Scripture." Paul wrote I Timothy between 64 and 67 AD. Matthew and Luke were written around 60 AD. So, between 4 and 7 years after their being written, these Gospel accounts were regarded as Scripture.

It seems that as soon as the document left the pen of an apostle, the Church received it as Scripture.

There are many instances in the writings of the early Church that either quote or mention New Testament Scripture. In some documents, even though Scripture is not cited or overtly quoted, the language is so similar to scriptural language that it is obvious that Scripture is in the mind of the writer. The Ante-Nicene Church considered the apostolic documents to be more than the product of spiritually superior individuals. To define something as, *Scripture*, was to declare it to be a product of the Mind of God, and thus authoritative in the Church. The following are examples of such incidences in the writings of the Ante-Nicene Church Fathers.

Clement of Rome to the Corinthians (95-96 AD)

CHAPTER 47

Take up the epistle of the blessed Apostle Paul. What did he write to you at the time when the Gospel first began to be preached? Truly, under the inspiration of the Spirit, he wrote to you concerning himself, and Cephas, and Apollos, because even then parties had been formed among you.

This is a clear reference to I Corinthians

Polycarp to the Philippians (c. 125 AD)

CHAPTER 3

For neither I, nor any other such one, can come up to the wisdom of the blessed and glorified Paul. He, when among you, accurately and steadfastly taught the word of truth in the presence of those who were then alive. And when absent from you, he wrote you a letter, which, if you carefully study, you will find to be the means of building you up in that faith which has been given you...

This is a reference to Paul's letter to the Philippians.

Ignatius to the Ephesians (c. 110 AD)

CHAPTER 12

I know both who I am, and to whom I write. I am a condemned man, ye have been the objects of mercy; I am subject to danger, ye are established in safety. Ye are the persons through whom those pass that are cut off for the sake of God. Ye are initiated into the mysteries of the Gospel with Paul, the holy, the martyred, the deservedly most happy, at whose feet may I be found, when I shall attain to God; who in all his Epistles makes mention of you in Christ Jesus.

In five of Paul's epistles, Ephesus is mentioned.

Ignatius to the Philadelphians (c. 110 AD)

CHAPTER 4

Wives, be ye subject to your husbands in the fear of God; and ye virgins, to Christ in purity, not counting marriage an abomination, but desiring that which is better, not for the reproach of wedlock, but for the sake of meditating on the law. Children, obey your parents, and have an affection for them, as workers together with God for your birth [into the world]. Servants, be subject to your masters in God, that ye may be the freed-men of Christ. Husbands, love your wives, as fellow-servants of God, as your own body, as the partners of your life, and your companion in the procreation of children.

These lines are a summary of Ephesians 5-6.

Fathers, "bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord;"

This is a quote of Ephesians 6:4.

For “in Christ there is neither bond nor free.”

This is a quote of Galatians 3:28.

Let not the widows be wanderers about, nor fond of dainties, nor gadders from house to house;

This references I Timothy 5:11-13.

Justin Martyr (c. 150 AD)

Justin was a prolific writer and defender of the faith who was executed for his faith in 165 AD. His extensive writings provide us with many evidences of the mid-Second Century Church’s view of Scripture. The following quotations are examples of such quotations and references to Scripture.

First Apology

CHAPTER 61

For Christ also said, “Except ye be born again, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Now, that it is impossible for those who have once been born to enter into their mothers’ wombs, is manifest to all...”

This is a quote of John 3:5.

Justin Martyr Dialogue with Trypho the Jew

CHAPTER 63

The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek,’

This is a quote of Hebrews 5:6; 7:17; Psalm 110:4.

CHAPTER 81

For as Adam was told that in the day he ate of the tree he would die, we know that he did not complete a thousand years. We have perceived, moreover, that the expression, ‘The day of the Lord is as a thousand years,’ is connected with this subject. And further, there was a certain man with us, whose name was John, one of the apostles of Christ, who prophesied, by a revelation that was made to him, that those who believed in our Christ would dwell a thousand years in Jerusalem; and that thereafter the general, and, in short, the eternal resurrection and judgment of all men would likewise take place.

This is a reference to the Book of Revelation (John’s authorship), as well as I Peter 3:8 .

CHAPTER 100

But the Virgin Mary received faith and joy, when the angel Gabriel announced the good tidings to her that the Spirit of the Lord would come upon her, and the power of the Highest would overshadow her: wherefore also the Holy Thing begotten of her is the Son of God; and she replied, ‘Be it unto me according to thy word.’”

This is a reference to Luke 1.

CHAPTER 103

And the expression, ‘They opened their mouth upon me like a roaring lion,’ designates him who was then king of the Jews, and was called Herod, a successor of the Herod who, when Christ was born, slew all the infants in Bethlehem born about the same time, because he imagined that amongst them He would assuredly be of whom the Magi from Arabia had spoken; for he was ignorant of the will of Him that is stronger than all, how He had commanded Joseph and Mary to take the Child and depart into Egypt, and there to remain until a revelation should again be made to them to return into their own country. And there

they did remain until Herod, who slew the infants in Bethlehem, was dead, and Archelaus had succeeded him.

This references Matthew Chapter 1.

For this devil, when [Jesus] went up from the river Jordan, at the time when the voice spake to Him, ‘Thou art my Son: this day have I begotten Thee,’ is recorded in the memoirs of the apostles to have come to Him and tempted Him, even so far as to say to Him, ‘Worship me;’ and Christ answered him, ‘Get thee behind me, Satan: thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.’

This refers to Matthew 4; Mark 1; Luke 4.

For in the memoirs which I say were drawn up by His apostles and those who followed them, [it is recorded] that His sweat fell down like drops of blood while He was praying, and saying, ‘If it be possible, let this cup pass:’

This refers to Matthew 26:36ff; Mark 14:32ff; Luke 22:40ff.

JUSTIN MARTYR’S FREQUENT REFERENCE TO THE MEMOIRS OF THE APOSTLES

Although in one instance Justin used the term, *Gospels*, to refer to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, his usual term for these four documents was the *Memoirs of the Apostles*. Other early writers (Papias and Eusebius, for example) used this term in the same manner. The following are instances in which Justin uses these terms.

Dialogue with Trypho the Jew

CHAPTER 100

but also **in the Gospel it is written** that He said: ‘All things are delivered unto me by My Father;’ and, ‘No man knoweth the Father but the Son; nor the Son but the Father, and they to whom the Son will reveal Him.’

For [Christ] called one of His disciples — previously known by the name of Simon — Peter; since he recognized Him to be Christ the Son of God, by the revelation of His Father: and since we find it recorded **in the memoirs of His apostles** that He is the Son of God, and since we call Him the Son, we have understood that He proceeded before all creatures from the Father by His power and will

CHAPTER 101

For they that saw Him crucified shook their heads each one of them, and distorted their lips, and twisting their noses to each other, they spake in mockery the words which are recorded in the **memoirs of His apostles**: ‘He said he was the Son of God: let him come down; let God save him.’

CHAPTER 102

in short, all your nation’s teachers that questioned Him, had a cessation like a plentiful and strong spring, the waters of which have been turned off, when He kept silence, and chose to return no answer to any one in the presence of Pilate; as has been declared in the **memoirs of His apostles**, in order that what is recorded by Isaiah might have efficacious fruit,

CHAPTER 103

For this devil, when [Jesus] went up from the river Jordan, at the time when the voice spake to Him, ‘Thou art my Son: this day have I begotten Thee,’ is recorded in the **memoirs of the apostles** to have come to Him and tempted Him, even so far as to say to Him, ‘Worship me;’ and Christ answered him, ‘Get thee behind me, Satan: thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.’

For in the memoirs which I say were drawn up by His apostles and those who followed them, [it is recorded] that His sweat fell down like drops of blood while He was praying, and saying, ‘If it be possible, let this cup pass:’

CHAPTER 104

And this is recorded to have happened in the **memoirs of His apostles**. And I have shown that, after His crucifixion, they who crucified Him parted His garments among them.

CHAPTER 105

For I have already proved that He was the only-begotten of the Father of all things, being begotten in a peculiar manner Word and Power by Him, and having afterwards become man through the Virgin, as we have learned from **the memoirs**.

For when Christ was giving up His spirit on the cross, He said, ‘Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit,’ as I have learned also **from the memoirs**. For He exhorted His disciples to surpass the pharisaic way of living, with the warning, that if they did not, they might be sure they could not be saved; and these words are recorded in the memoirs: ‘Unless your righteousness exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.’

CHAPTER 106

He had mentioned to them that He must suffer these things, and that they were announced beforehand by the prophets), and when living with them sang praises to God, as is made evident in the **memoirs of the apostles**.

And when it is said that He changed the name of one of the apostles to Peter; and when it is written in the **memoirs of Him** that this so happened, as well as that He changed the names of other two brothers, the sons of Zebedee, to Boanerges, which means sons of thunder;

Accordingly, when a star rose in heaven at the time of His birth, as is recorded in the **memoirs of His apostles**, the Magi from Arabia, recognizing the sign by this, came and worshipped Him.

CHAPTER 107

“And that He would rise again on the third day after the crucifixion, it is written in the **memoirs** that some of your nation, questioning Him, said, ‘Show us a sign;’ and He replied to them, ‘An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and no sign shall be given them, save the sign of Jonah.’

Justin’s first apology

CHAPTER 66

For the **apostles, in the memoirs composed by them, which are called Gospels**, have thus delivered unto us what was enjoined upon them; that Jesus took bread, and when He had given thanks, said, “This do ye in remembrance of Me, this is My body;” and that, after the same manner, having taken the cup and given thanks, He said, “This is My blood;” and gave it to them alone.

CHAPTER 67

And on the day called Sunday, 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,

Papias' Testimony As To The Origin Of New Testament Scripture (died c. 130 AD)

Papias was a young contemporary of John the Apostle. He was born about 70 AD and probably knew not only John but also Philip the evangelist and other early disciples who survived the destruction of Jerusalem. Papias' writings were extant as late as the Thirteenth Century, but they were lost shortly thereafter. We know his writings only from extensive quotes, chiefly from Irenaeus and Eusebius.

Eusebius was leader in the Palestinian Church from 315 until his death in 340 AD. His *Ecclesiastical History* was the first history of the church to be written. It is valuable for many reasons, one of which is the light that it sheds on the canon. The following are Eusebius' quotes from the writing of Papias that relate to the canon.

Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History, Chapter 39 THE WRITINGS OF PAPIAS

...This shows that the statement of those is true, who say that there were two persons in Asia that bore the same name, and that there were two tombs in Ephesus, each of which, even to the present day is called John's. It is important to notice this. For it is probable that it was the second, if one is not willing to admit that it was the first that saw the **Revelation, which is ascribed by name to John.**

...**The Book of Acts** records that the holy apostles after the ascension of the Savior, put forward this Justus, together with Matthias, and prayed that one might be chosen in place of the traitor Judas, to fill up their number. The account is as follows: "And they put forward two, Joseph, called Barsabbas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias..."

But now we must add to the words of his which we have already quoted the tradition which he gives in regard to **Mark, the author of the Gospel.** It is in the following words: "This also the presbyter said: Mark, having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately, though not indeed in order, whatsoever he remembered of the things done or said by Christ. For he neither heard the Lord nor followed him, but afterward, as I said, he followed Peter, who adapted his teaching to the needs of his hearers, but with no intention of giving a connected account of the Lord's discourses, so that Mark committed no error while he thus wrote some things as he remembered them. For he was careful of one thing, not to omit any of the things which he had heard, and not to state any of them falsely." These things are related by Papias concerning Mark.

But concerning Matthew he writes as follows: "So then Matthew wrote the oracles in the Hebrew language, and every one interpreted them as he was able." And the same writer uses testimonies from the first Epistle of John and from that of Peter likewise.

EUSEBIUS' COMMENTS ON THE CANON

Eusebius himself made extensive comment on the canon as was viewed in the early Church. Note that Eusebius lists four classes of literature that was abroad in the early Church:

- Writings clearly accepted as Scripture
- Writings that were accepted by some but not by others
- Writings that were valuable, but rejected as Scripture
- Absurd and impious writing, chiefly the product of heretics

Ecclesiastical History, Chapter 25
**THE DIVINE SCRIPTURES THAT ARE
 ACCEPTED AND THOSE THAT ARE NOT.**

Since we are dealing with this subject it is proper to sum up the writings of the New Testament which have been already mentioned. First then must be put the holy quaternion of the Gospels; following them the Acts of the Apostles. After this must be reckoned the epistles of Paul; next in order the extant former epistle of John, and likewise the epistle of Peter, must be maintained. After them is to be placed, if it really seem proper, the Apocalypse of John, concerning which we shall give the different opinions at the proper time. These then belong among the accepted writings.

Among the disputed writings, which are nevertheless recognized by many, are extant the so-called epistle of James and that of Jude, also the second epistle of Peter, and those that are called the second and third of John, whether they belong to the evangelist or to another person of the same name.

Among the rejected writings must be reckoned also the Acts of Paul, and the so-called Shepherd, and the Apocalypse of Peter, and in addition to these the extant epistle of Barnabas, and the so-called Teachings of the Apostles; and besides, as I said, the Apocalypse of John, if it seem proper, which some, as I said, reject, but which others class with the accepted books. And among these some have placed also the Gospel according to the Hebrews, with which those of the Hebrews that have accepted Christ are especially delighted. And all these may be reckoned among the disputed books.

But we have nevertheless felt compelled to give a catalogue of these also, distinguishing those works which according to ecclesiastical tradition are true and genuine and commonly accepted, from those others which, although not canonical but disputed, are yet at the same time known to most ecclesiastical writers — we have felt compelled to give this catalogue in order that we might be able to know both these works and those that are cited by the heretics under the name of the apostles, including, for instance, such books as the Gospels of Peter, of Thomas, of Matthias, or of any others besides them, and the Acts of Andrew and John and the other apostles, which no one belonging to the succession of ecclesiastical writers has deemed worthy of mention in his writings. And further, the character of the style is at variance with apostolic usage, and both the thoughts and the purpose of the things that are related in them are so completely out of accord with true orthodoxy that they clearly show themselves to be the fictions of heretics. Wherefore they are not to be placed even among the rejected writings, but are all of them to be cast aside as absurd and impious. Let us now proceed with our history.

MANUSCRIPTS

The two oldest manuscripts of the Greek New Testament both date to the time of Eusebius and Constantine, c. 350 AD. Of these, Sinaiticus, contains all of the twenty-seven books of our present New Testament. The other, Vaticanus, in all probability contained the same twenty-seven books, but the final portions of this manuscript are lost. Thus, Vaticanus lacks the last chapters from Hebrews (11:15 – 13:25 are missing), the Pastoral Epistles (First & Second Timothy and Titus), Philemon, and Revelation.

Constantine and Nicea

As we begin the study of the Church in the Fourth Century, we early-on encounter the first of the two major watershed events in Church History – Emperor Constantine’s embracing of Christianity (the second such event was the 16th Century Reformation which is beyond the confines of the period which we are studying). When Constantine became the sole Emperor of Rome, and at the same time embraced Christianity, the

Church was changed forever. One even could argue that the 16th Century Reformation, was a reaction to the outcome of Constantine's Christianity.

Background

Before entering into the study of the Church under Constantine's Emperorship, we must spend a short time with a cursory look at the events that preceded his ascension. When Diocletian became Emperor of the Roman Empire (284 AD), he was faced with many problems. The army had become a power unto itself and the troops in far-flung places had become more like the barbarians among whom they lived rather than the austere disciplined troops of Roman history. The source of most of the problems was economic and the problem had been growing for almost a century. Emmanuel A. Kampouris describes the situation:

Although Roman rule was never popular among her subjects, it initially brought them the benefits of peace and order, the rule of law, and freedom of movement throughout the empire. What Rome lacked, however, was an effective culture of technical innovation and wealth-creation. Instead, the empire relied on the plunder and looting of newly conquered territories and the enslavement of their people. The muscle-power of forced labor was never in short supply for mining, manufacturing, agriculture, and construction. But by stigmatizing the work ethic and undermining the competitive position of free peasant-farmers and artisans, slavery prevented the emergence of a large and vigorous, wealth-creating middle class.

Real problems began when the limits of imperial expansion were reached in the second century. With no new territories to loot, the Roman treasury became seriously overstretched, and the emperors resorted to a policy of debauching the currency to fill the gap between falling revenues and rising expenditures. By A.D. 210, the silver content of the previously pure Roman denarius was only 50% of what it had originally been; 60 years later it was a mere 5%. The inevitable inflation that followed raised the price of a bushel of wheat from ten denarii in A.D. 200 to two million denarii in A.D. 344. As the official Roman currency became increasingly worthless, soldiers refused to be paid in it, and tax collectors refused to accept it in payment of taxes.

This collapse of the financial system led to the adoption of totalitarian solutions by a succession of Roman emperors during the third and fourth centuries.²⁹⁶

Diocletian's most immediate concern was to bring the mutinous and increasingly barbarized Roman armies back under control and to make the frontiers once again secure from invasion. His long-term goals were to restore effective government and economic prosperity to the empire. One problem that Diocletian faced with the army was the soldiers' refusal to accept Roman coinage as their pay. This resulted in barbaric behaviour in which the troops barracked in outlying districts plundered in the manner of the barbarous tribes.

Diocletian's solution was a drastic re-ordering of society, government, and taxation. Under Diocletian, Roman citizens living in Italy lost their traditional immunity from direct taxation (taxation formerly had been imposed only on conquered lands). An exhaustive census was undertaken and a new system of taxation was introduced based on payment in kind – wheat, barley, meat, wine, oil, and clothing – rather than worthless coinage. To police this new system, a vast and ever growing central bureaucracy was created, which itself necessitated more taxes. More taxes also were required to finance the military forces that Diocletian needed to bring under control.

Harsh tax avoidance measures were introduced. Laws were passed that tied farmers and their descendants to the land in perpetuity – they could not abandon their work. Similarly artisans and merchants living and working in the towns (who had to pay their direct taxes in gold and silver) were herded into state-controlled

²⁹⁶ Emmanuel A. Kampouris, "How Taxes Helped to Destroy the Roman Empire", *Kairos Weekly Journal*, February 25, 2010 (Kairosjournal.org)

guilds and also tied to their occupations and localities forever. Non-payment of taxes was severely punished. Tax collectors also faced the death penalty if they failed to collect sufficient revenue.²⁹⁷

Diocletian totally reorganized the political and administrative divisions within the Empire. He divided the empire into “dioceses.”²⁹⁸ He also elevated the role of Emperor. Following the precedent of Aurelian (A.D.270-275), Diocletian transformed the emperorship into an out-and-out oriental monarchy.

- Access to him became restricted;
- he no longer allowed himself to be addressed by the traditional, *First Citizen (Princeps)* or the soldierly *general (Imperator)*, but as *Lord and Master (Dominus Noster)*;
- those who came for an audience before the Emperor were required to prostrate themselves on the ground before him.

Diocletian moved the capital of the Empire from Rome to a more eastern location. Trier, Milan, Thessalonica and finally Nicomedia had served as imperial residences. When Nicomedia finally became the center of imperial government, the influence of Rome was greatly reduced. One reason for Diocletian’s relocating the capital to an eastern city was to give him more control over the eastern half of the empire.

Diocletian also concluded that the empire was too large and complex to be ruled by only a single Emperor. Therefore, in order to provide an imperial presence throughout the empire, he introduced the "Tetrarchy," or "Rule by Four." In 285, he gave the title, “Caesar,” to Maximianus, who was the highest ranking general in the Roman army. Diocletian assigned to Maximianus the western half of the empire (this decision began the process which would culminate with the *de facto* split of the empire in 395). With this action, two levels of hierarchy were created: Emperor and just below Emperor, Caesar. In 286, Diocletian promoted Maximianus to the rank of Augustus and both Diocletian and Maximianus declared themselves to be divine: Diocletian was identified with Jupiter and Maximianus with Hercules. In 293, Diocletian appointed two new Caesars,

- Constantius, who was given Gaul and Britain in the west;
- Galerius, who was assigned the Balkans in the east. Throughout his career, Galerius persecuted Christians. Only on his death bed did he change his policy.

By instituting his Tetrarchy, Diocletian also hoped to solve another problem. There was no constitutional method for choosing new Emperors (*Augusti*). According to Diocletian's plan, the successor of each Augustus would be the Caesar under him. The new Augustus then would name his successor – a new Caesar. Initially, the Tetrarchy operated smoothly and effectively.

Diocletian attempted to use the state religion as a unifying element. In 303 AD, in response to urgings from Caesar Galerius, Diocletian issued four increasingly harsh decrees designed to compel Christians to take part in the imperial cult - the traditional means by which allegiance was pledged to the empire. As noted in an earlier section, this began the so-called "Great Persecution."

On May 1, 305, wearied by his twenty years in office, and determined to implement his method for the imperial succession, Diocletian abdicated. He compelled his co-regent Maximianus to do the same. Thus, in accordance with Diocletian’s plan, Constantius and Galerius became the new *Augusti*, and two new Caesars were selected. Maximianus became the Caesar in the east and Severus the Caesar in the west. Diocletian then retired to his palace at Split on the Croatian coast where he died on December 3, 316.

Constantius originally was married to Helena, a woman of humble origin (some argue that they were not married but that the couple lived together in concubinage, rather than in a legally recognized marriage).

²⁹⁷ Charles Adams, *For Good and Evil: The Impact of Taxes on the Course of Civilization*, 2nd ed. (New York, Madison Pub.) 2001, 111-128.

²⁹⁸ This designation of regions was adopted by the church in later centuries.

Helena gave birth to a son, who was named, Constantine. When Constantius was made Caesar, he was required to put aside Helena and marry Augustus Maximianus' daughter, Theodora.

As a youth, Constantine was a part of Diocletian's retinue, and later, when he grew to manhood, Constantine distinguished himself in the army of Galerius, fighting on the Danube. When Constantius was made Augustus – the Emperor of the West – he asked Galerius, the Eastern Emperor, to let Constantine leave Galerius' army and to join his father in Britain. Grudgingly, Galerius assented. Constantine was a soldier's soldier. He quickly distinguished himself in battle and gained the loyalty of his father's troops. When Constantius died, July 25, 306 AD, the army of the West immediately declared Constantine to be Caesar. Augustus Galerius hesitatingly acknowledged him as such. This was the first break in Diocletian's scheme of a tetrarchy and organized succession of Augusti and Caesars.

According to Diocletian's scheme, the following scenario should have played out (each Augustus would be succeeded by his Caesar and the Caesar that had just become an Augustus would appoint a new Caesar as his successor):

Eastern Empire Augustus	Eastern Empire Caesar	Western Empire Caesar	Western Empire Augustus
Diocletian	Galerius	Constantius	Maximianus
Galerius	Maximinus	Severus	Constantius
Galerius	Maximinus	Constantine	Severus

The Senate and the Praetorian Guard had allied themselves with Maxentius, the son of Maximianus. On October 28, 306, even though the western army had declared Constantine to be the *Caesar of the West*, the Senate and Praetorian Guard declared Maxentius as *Caesar of the West*. Thus, two individuals occupied a role designed for only one successor.

Maxentius was both a tyrant and a profligate. A bit later, Maxentius declared himself to be not merely a Caesar, but an Augustus. It was not long before he was at war with Galerius and Severus, the two legitimate Augusti. In the confusion, the retired Emperors, Diocletian and Maximianus tried to restore order but failed – the result of their failed efforts was the naming of Licinius to the position of Augustus. Now there were three Augusti.

In April, 308, Maxentius claimed to be the sole Augustus. Galerius, the Augustus of the East, then declared Constantine to be Augustus of the West. Now there were four Augusti. One reason for Galerius' action was Constantine's efficient army. Galerius needed Constantine's army to join him in his battle with Maximinus Daia, another claimant who had entered the fray.

In 311, Galerius was stricken with a terrible disease. While confined in Nicomedia, he began to reflect on the state of affairs and his part in them. He realized that all of his efforts to squash the Christians had failed. He then did a very remarkable thing. In the presence of Constantine, he issued an edict of toleration. In the document he stated that he would grant the Christians permission to hold their religious services, provided they did not disrupt the order of state. He concluded with a significant instruction to the Christians to pray to their God for the welfare of the Emperors, of the state, and of themselves, that the state might prosper in every respect and that the Christians might live quietly in their homes.²⁹⁹

When Galerius died in 311, Maxentius threw down the gauntlet, declaring that Constantine was a tyrant. Up to this point, Constantine had stayed out of the quarrels of the claimants, even though Galerius had tried to get him involved. Constantine now realized that war was inevitable. Even though Constantine's troops were greatly outnumbered, probably four to one, Constantine did not hesitate to march rapidly into Italy. In one battle after another, Constantine's army defeated Maxentius' superior forces.

²⁹⁹ Schaff, Volume II, page 71

As he confidentially marched toward Rome, Constantine had a life-changing experience. There are two versions of the experience.

- The first, reported by Lactantius, whom Constantine had appointed tutor of his son, Crispus, states that the night before the battle of the Milvian Bridge, Constantine was commanded in a dream to place the sign of Christ on the shields of his soldiers.
- Twenty-five years after the event, Eusebius, in his *Life of Constantine*, gave a far different and more elaborate account (let it be noted that Eusebius always promoted Constantine's reputation). According to Eusebius, when Constantine and his army were marching toward Rome (neither the time or location is specified), they observed in broad daylight a strange phenomenon: in the sky, a cross of light and the words, *by this sign you will be victor* (ἐν τούτῳ - if in Greek; *hoc signo victor eris* – if in Latin). During the night following, according to Eusebius, Christ appeared to Constantine and instructed him to place the heavenly sign on the battle flags of his army. The new battle standard became known as the *labarum*.

Whatever the vision may have been, when the two opposing armies met near the Melvian Bridge, which spanned the Tiber River, Constantine's army had the Chi-Rho symbol (Χ ρ) on its battle standards³⁰⁰ – (there is evidence that this symbol had been used by Christians for some time – there are examples of the symbol in the catacombs). Maxentius' troops suffered a complete defeat and Maxentius himself lost his life in the Tiber River (October 28, 312). Significantly, Constantine did not undertake the usually bloody executions that usually followed such a victory. From that time onward, Constantine committed himself to the Christian faith, even though he had little understanding of what that might be. Some have argued that Constantine's profession of Christianity was only a matter of political expediency, but that view is difficult to sustain, given that Christians were a minority in the Empire, plus all that Constantine went through to preserve and sustain the Church. Also, even though he was capable of brutality, his faith did suppress that tendency – most of the time.

Licinius continued as the other Augustus. Licinius and Constantine met in Milan in February 313, to work out some agreement about governing the Empire. In that meeting, Constantine married his half-sister, Constantia to Licinius. Based on subsequent events, it seems that Constantia came to love her husband deeply. She tried to do what she could to ease the strain between her husband and her half-brother. The government that was formed at Milan was one of necessity, not of mutual good will. Neither of the two Augusti trusted each other and the goal of each one was to become the sole Emperor.

A significant outcome of the February 313 meeting was the Edict of Milan which spelled out a common religious policy: religious liberty was to be honored in all of the Empire. This edict often is called, *The Edict of Toleration*. This edict went far beyond that which Galerius had issued. It was a decisive step from hostile neutrality to friendly neutrality, and even protection. It ordered the full restoration of all confiscated Church property to the *Corpus Christianorum*, at the expense of the imperial treasury. The edict directed the provincial magistrates to execute this order at once, with all energy, so that peace might fully be established and the confidence of Divine favor be secured to the Emperors and their subjects.

Even though Licinius issued the edict, he did not commit himself to Christianity and in time his commitment to toleration gave way and he returned to religious persecution.

Hostilities erupted between Licinius and Constantine in 316. Two battles were fought. Constantine won the first, inflicting heavy losses on Licinius' army. The second battle was inconclusive. As a result of these battles, Licinius was required to cede to Constantine all of the European provinces other than Thrace. The *Concordia Augustorum* that was worked out was fragile. On March 1, 317, Constantine announced the appointment of three new Caesars: his twelve year-old son, Crispus; his less than seven-month old son, Constantine; and Licinius twenty month-old son, also named Licinius.

³⁰⁰ This battle standard came to be known as the *labarum*

War erupted again in 323/324. After some give and take, Constantine soundly defeated Licinius. Initially, Constantine yielded to Constantia's pleas to spare her husband. However, when Licinius renewed his treacherous practices, the Roman Senate convicted him and sentenced him to death. In spite of Constantia's impassioned plea, Constantine ordered Licinius' execution. Before too long, the son Licinius, whom Constantine earlier had made a Caesar, also was executed. Constantine now was the sole and undisputed master of the Roman Empire.

Sometime in 326, Constantine ordered the execution of his son, Crispus, who had served well in several government posts and had proven himself in battle in the conflicts with Licinius. Not long afterwards, Constantine ordered the execution of his wife, Fausta, the mother of his other three sons. Zosimus reports that Crispus had come under suspicion of "being involved" with his step-mother Fausta. Another report states that Constantine had Fausta killed when his mother, Helena, rebuked him for the death of Crispus. There is no means of determining the truth of the matter. Shortly after this, Helena made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and some interpret her pilgrimage as a sort of penance for her role in the death of Fausta. Helena impressed Eusebius and others with her piety, humility, and charity. She was instrumental in building the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, and the Church of Eleona on the Mount of Olives.

One of the most significant moves of Constantine was to move the capital to the ancient Greek city of Byzantium on the Bosphorus (see Addendum O)

In 337, the Persian King, Shapur, came against the Empire and Constantine again felt summoned to the field. When he was about to lead his troops against the enemy, he was seized by an illness. To the bishops who were with him at the time, he said that he had desired to receive the "saving seal" in the Jordan River, but that God had ordained otherwise. He was immersed and then, laying aside the purple robe of royalty, he donned the white robe of a neophyte and peacefully, some say, joyously, awaited the end. He died in May, 337.

Constantine as the Christian Emperor

To his dismay, Augustus Constantine soon found that his newly accepted religion had problems. Various sources of division were present and Constantine sought to bring about a resolution to the problems. One of the areas of difficulty was in Africa, where those who on the one hand took a rigorist position towards the *lapsi* (those who had given in during earlier persecutions) and those who on the other hand took a forgiving position. The rigorists in Africa became known as the *Donatists*, because that was the name of Donatus, whom the rigorists had elected as their bishop. Constantine was forced to become involved in the controversy when the rigorists presented to him charges against Caecilian, the bishop of Carthage. Uncertain about what he should do about all of this (after all, ecclesiastical matters were new to him), Constantine convened a synod of bishops to hear the matter. This event is called, *The Synod of Rome*. The synod ruled in favor of Caecilian. The Donatists made another appeal to Constantine and so Constantine convened a larger council of thirty-three bishops. This council met at Arles, in southern Gaul on August 1, 314 and it also ruled against the Donatists. Again, the Donatists refused to submit. As a result of their refusal to submit to the ruling of two councils, Constantine attempted unsuccessfully to suppress the Donatists. A separatist and numerically strong Donatist church existed in North Africa for the next two centuries.

Then, another controversy of even greater import developed – this one threatening to split the Empire. In 318, in Baucalis, a suburb of Alexandria, a well-liked elder named Arius began teaching doctrines in opposition to that held by the bishop, Alexander. Alexander taught that Jesus, the Son of God, had existed eternally, being "generated" eternally by the Father. Arius insisted that "there was a time when the Son was not." He taught that Christ must be numbered among the created beings – highly exalted but a creation, nonetheless.

Arius had been a student of Lucian in Antioch, before becoming an Egyptian monk. Lucian and Arius were influenced by the Adoptionists, but they took a more intermediate view. The Adoptionists taught that

Jesus was a mere man, supernaturally endowed with the Holy Spirit. Lucian and Arius taught that only the Father is fully and truly God. The Logos was a created spiritual being, intermediate between God and man. The Son, therefore, is a semi-divine being, not begotten, but created by the Father, before the creation of the material world.³⁰¹

Arius contended that “begotten” is a synonym for “created.” The Logos took upon Himself a human body, but not a human soul. Thus, the Logos was neither fully God nor fully man.

In response to Arius’ propagating these views, Alexander, the Bishop of Alexandria, convened a council of 100 Egyptian and Libyan bishops to deal with the controversy. This council excommunicated Arius in 321 AD. In spite of this, Arius continued to hold religious assemblies and when he was driven from Alexandria, he moved to Palestine and continued to proclaim his doctrine in the Holy Land, as well as in Nicomedia. He created an entertaining work that was half poetry and half prose *The Banquet* (Θάλασσα) with which he propagated his doctrine. Arius had politically powerful friends, especially Eusebius of Nicomedia and Eusebius of Caesarea. Alexander issued a number of circular letters warning the bishops against the apostates and Exukontians.³⁰²

Arius, in the meantime, began a vigorous campaign of letter writing and stirred up a major controversy in the church. Constantine now was faced with a controversy that had transformed the whole Christian east into a theological battlefield. At first, Constantine tried to settle the issue diplomatically. Constantine wrote to Alexander and Arius, pleading, “Give me back my quiet days and carefree nights. Do not let me spend the rest of my days joylessly.” Alexander and Arius were unmoved by Constantine’s letter. Constantine sent the aged and respected Spanish bishop, Hosius, to meet with the two parties, but his mission failed.

As a result of his failed efforts to reconcile the two parties, in 325 Constantine summoned church leaders from throughout his empire to come together to work out the problem. Eusebius reports that 318 bishops accepted the invitation, but some think that this figure is a bit high.³⁰³ If one counts the bishops, their elders, the deacons and other attendants, the number of those present would be around 1500, possibly 2000. Most of the bishops who attended were from the Eastern Church. Only seven bishops from the Latin Church attended. A Persian bishop John and a Gothic bishop, Theophilus, attended. This was the second Ecumenical Council of the Church, the first being the one recorded in Acts 15. Each bishop was asked to bring two elders and three deacons. They traveled on public carriages, horses, mules, and partly on foot. Constantine liberally defrayed from the public treasury the expenses that the bishops incurred in this trip. As with all Ecumenical Councils, this one was called to determine the position that the entire Church would take on a number of issues. Matters other than Arianism to be considered were policies of Church discipline, the proper time to observe Easter, and the Meletian schism in Egypt.

The council was divided into three groups:

³⁰¹ The source of Arius’ teaching can be traced partly to the contradictory elements in the teaching of Origen. Origen, on the one hand, attributed eternity to Christ and all of the Divine attributes, which logically led to the orthodox view that Father and Son are of the same substance. On the other hand, in his zeal to protect the truth that the members of the Trinity are separate persons, he taught that the Father and Son were not of the same essence and that the Son was a secondary God beneath the Father. To Origen, the eternal generation of the Son from the will of the Father was the communication of a Divine, but secondary substance.

³⁰² Οἱ ἐξ οὐ ὄντων (*hoi eks ou onton*). The term means, “the out of nothing.” Alexander applied this term to the Arians because they contended that the Father had created the Son out of nothing – which was an element of the Arian doctrine.

³⁰³ Church historians estimate that at this time there were 1000 bishops in the Greek Church and 800 bishops in the Latin Church. Schaff, Volume 3, page 624

- Arius along with a few supporters, which included two Egyptian bishops, Theonas and Secundus, as well as Eusebius of Nicomedia. This group argued that Christ was of a different substance from the Father, hence they declared that Jesus was *heteroousias*.
- The “orthodox” group, led primarily by Hosius of Cordova and Alexander of Alexandria. Alexander was accompanied by his brilliant young deacon, Athanasius who would become the champion of orthodoxy following Nicea. This group contended that Jesus was *homoousios*, of the same substance (essence) as the Father.
- Eusebius of Caesarea led a middle party, hence, this group often has been called, “the Eusebian party.” This group distrusted the term, *homoousios*, because it had been used in the previous century by the Modalist Sabellius and others who argued that the Father and the Son were one person. This middle group agreed with the position of the orthodox group, but disagreed with the use of the term, *homoousios*. They therefore argued that the Son was of a similar substance, *homoiousios*. By the use of this term, they hoped to avoid both the error of the Modalists and the Arians.

When the bishops first assembled, they engaged in discussions and disputations in various places. The formal opening of the council took place with the arrival of the Emperor on June 14. We are dependent to a large degree on the words of Eusebius of Caesarea for our information concerning the events of the council. This is unfortunate because Eusebius, the “first historian of the Church,” was a partisan participant. It also is clear, from his other writings, that Eusebius was influenced by his desire to win the favor of the Emperor in order to achieve his own personal goals and positions.³⁰⁴ Here is Eusebius’ description of the opening of the council.

After all the bishops had entered the central building of the royal palace, each took his place with becoming modesty, and silently awaited the arrival of the emperor. The court officers entered one after another, though only such as professed faith in Christ. The moment the approach of the emperor was announced by a given signal, they all rose from their seats, and the emperor appeared like a heavenly messenger of God, covered with gold and gems, a glorious presence, very tall and slender, full of beauty, strength, and majesty. With this external adornment he united the spiritual ornament of the fear of God, modesty, and humility, which could be seen in his downcast eyes, his blushing face, the motion of his body, and his walk. When he reached the golden throne prepared for him, he stopped, and sat not down till the bishops gave him the sign. And after him they all resumed their seats.³⁰⁵

After a brief salutary address by the bishop on the Emperor’s right, the Emperor delivered in a gentle voice, in Latin, the opening address, which immediately was translated into Greek.

It was my highest wish, my friends, that I might be permitted to enjoy your assembly. I must thank God that, in addition to all other blessings, he has shown me this highest one of all: to see you all gathered here in harmony and one mind. May no malicious enemy rob us of this happiness and after the tyranny of the enemy of Christ [Licinius and his army] is conquered by the help of the Redeemer, the wicked demon shall not persecute the divine law with new blasphemies. Discord in the Church I consider more fearful and painful than any other war. As soon as I by the help of God had overcome my enemies, I believed that nothing more was now necessary than to give thanks to God in common joy with those whom I had liberated. But when I heard of your division, I was convinced that this matter should by no means be neglected, and in the desire to assist by my service, I have summoned you with out delay. I shall, however, feel my desire fulfilled only when I see the minds of all united in that peaceful harmony which you, as the

³⁰⁴ Schaff speaks of Eusebius’ “panegyric flattery.” Volume 3, page 624

³⁰⁵ Schaff, page 625

anointed of God, must preach to others. Delay not therefore, my friends, delay not, servants of God; put away all causes of strife, and loose all knots of discord by the laws of peace. Thus shall you accomplish the work most pleasing God, and confer upon me your fellow servant, an exceeding great joy.”³⁰⁶

Several bishops presented to the Emperor petitions concerning divisive matters in their regions. Constantine received these, rolled them up and had them burned. Constantine then surrendered the floor to Hosias and other esteemed bishops who led the discussions.

The meeting was intense. Athanasius reported that the bishops truly desired to express their faith primarily in scriptural language, but every time they came up with a statement that was limited solely to biblical terms, the Arians would find a way of “reading” the statement so that they could agree. The orthodox realized that they had to use a term that could not be misunderstood, a term that would clearly differentiate between a belief in the full deity of Christ and all other positions that would compromise that belief. They chose the term, *homoousios* as being completely antithetical to the Arian position and at the same time to reflect the scriptural truth that Jesus Christ is not a creature but is fully God, incarnate deity.

The Orthodox had to express clearly to the middle group that by the use of this term they were not compromising the existence of three Persons, but were safeguarding the full deity of all of the Persons, and in particular, the Son. The council did not create some new belief, but sought a way to express, explicitly, biblical truth in a manner that it could not be misunderstood. The resulting creed was signed by all but Arius and his two bishops. The orthodox had won. The creed is quite clear in its position (for the full creed, see Addendum P).

We believe ...in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten from the Father, only-begotten, that is, from the substance of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one substance (*homoousios*) with the Father, through Whom all things were made....

Arius, who was not a bishop but a presbyter (elder) and the two bishops who sided with him, were deposed of their positions and excommunicated (the most prominent of these was Eusebius of Nicomedia). Arius was forbidden to return to Alexandria, where he still had many supporters. Constantine ordered the burning of Arius’ writings and immediately began to take suppressive measures against Arius’ supporters. It was the Emperor, not the orthodox bishops who ordered the repression of the Arian party, but the orthodox did welcome the Emperor’s action. The mutual persecution of Christians, using the power of the state, had begun, only to be repeated in future centuries.

Not long after the bishops had returned to their homes, Alexander died and Constantine appointed Athanasius to be Alexander’s successor in Alexandria. Athanasius now was a bishop. This act was the first in what became the pattern thereafter for many centuries. After Nicea, both theology and church government were under the authority of the Emperor. Sadly, the succeeding chapters of church history often are stories of political intrigue and infighting among various interest groups. Much of the conflict was the result of genuine concern for truth and the desire for the suppression of heresy, but some of the conflicts display suspicious motives. Even though an obvious blending of church and state was evident, Christianity still was only functionally the official religion in the Empire. It did not become legally so for another fifty-six years.

In the years following the council, through political skill, the Arians surprisingly gained the upper hand. Arius would not quit. Initially, he had only modest success in recruiting supporters among Christians, and so, in order to achieve his ends, he sought the political help of pagans and Jews. In 328, Constantine began to listen to various Church politicians who were friendly to Arius. He reinstated Eusebius of Nicomedia, and in time, Eusebius became the bishop of Antioch.

³⁰⁶ Schaff, pages 625-626

As the political tide turned in favor of Arius, Athanasius increasingly found himself isolated. In 335, Constantine gave in to political pressure (chiefly from Eusebius of Caesarea – the leader of the middle view) and deposed Athanasius – not for dogmatic error but because it was claimed that he treated his subordinates harshly. Athanasius appealed to the old Emperor, but instead of ruling favorably to Athanasius' plea, in 336 Constantine exiled Athanasius to Trier. Constantine did not appoint anyone to succeed Athanasius in Alexandria.

When the Emperor died in 337, the Nicene Creed was official, Arius was dead of natural causes at a very advanced age, and the chief advocates of the Nicene creed (Athanasius, Eustathius of Antioch, and Marcellus of Ancyra) were in exile. The Arians, even though they had gained the upper hand, faced a problem. The Church had embraced the principle of apostolic succession. The bishops who were successors of the apostles had produced, in an ecumenical council, the Nicene Creed. How could such an authoritative, and supposedly Holy Spirit directed document be rescinded? Among other things, they began looking for ways to re-interpret the language, but chiefly, they continued to rely on politics.

Constantine's three sons succeeded him. Initially they shared the Empire, but ultimately, the youngest son, Constantius, who outlived his brothers, ruled as the sole Emperor.

- Constantine II ruled 337-340
- Constans ruled 337-350
- Constantius ruled 337-361

Constantine II, who outlived his father by just over two years had little influence on church-state affairs. The case was otherwise with Constans and Constantius.

- Constans was strongly orthodox and pro-Nicene.
- Constantius, on the other hand, was greatly influenced by the Arians and Semi-Arians and became a strong supporter of their party.

One thing that became a new source of confusion between the eastern and western bishops was language. Constans convened a general council in Sardica (modern Sofia) on the border between the eastern and western empires in 343. The Arians from the east demanded that before the council began meeting that the group reaffirm the expulsion of Athanasius from Alexandria and the expulsion of Marcellus from Ancyra. When this demand was rejected, the eastern bishops walked out. With their leaving, the council no longer was a "general council, but one consisting of only western bishops, presided over by Hosius from Cordova, in Spain. The council reaffirmed the Nicene Creed, but a new problem arose. The problem was language – Greek and Latin. The confusion developed over the Greek expression, *hypostasis*, which is equivalent to the Latin, *subsistentia*. Unfortunately, the Latins confused *hypostasis* with *substantia*. When the Latins, tried to communicate the Latin, *una substantia* (one substance or essence) in Greek terms, they improperly rendered as *mia hypostasis*. To the Greeks, this term meant one person – pure modalism. So, Constans' efforts to help resolve issues, instead caused a new problem – all the result of the difficulties inherent in translation.

In 346, Constantius was under severe military pressure in the east and so he sought harmony with the western portion of the empire, at all costs. He gave in to Constans' pressure to allow Athanasius to return to Alexandria. However, as soon as Constans died, and Constantius became the sole ruler, Athanasius was exiled once again. Athanasius refused to leave until he was physically attacked in a church building in 356. Athanasius fled to the Egyptian desert. Bishops who had supported him were sent to the mines and it seemed that the Arians had achieved a total victory.

The downfall of the Arians began with the death of Constantius and the ascension of Julian who in future years would be known as "Julian the Apostate." Julian ruled 361-363. He was the son of Constantine's half-brother who had been murdered. Julian was brought up in obscurity, first being under the care of Eusebius of Nicomedia and then in schools in Italy and Greece. He was well educated and preferred the

Roman pagan heritage. He professed religious tolerance and he revoked all declarations of exile that had taken place for religious reasons. This permitted Athanasius and all of the other banished orthodox leaders to return to their former roles. This brought about great conflict and confusion, which is just what the Emperor had hoped would happen. In the long run, Justin's short reign allowed orthodoxy to gain strength; the Arians no longer had an Emperor that they could manipulate and use to achieve their goals.

The years immediately following Justin's ascension were years in which the orthodox really got their act together. After Justin's death, the next Emperor, Jovian, was a supporter of the orthodox bishops. Jovian also had brief reign. He was succeeded by Valens in the east and Valentinian in the west. Valens was an Arian and he began to persecute the orthodox in the east. He died in a battle with the Goths in 378, who ironically were Arians. Valens' death deprived the Arians of a political ally, which they needed in order to keep their cause alive.

Valentinian died in 375; his successor was Gratian, who was orthodox, and from his youngest years had been under the influence of the great orthodox Latin speaking church father, Ambrose of Milan. When Valens was killed, Gratian appointed Theodosius to be his fellow Emperor in the east. Both of the Emperors now were devoted to orthodoxy and moved together to make orthodox Christianity the religion of the Empire. In 380, Theodosius was baptized and in that year issued an edict making Christianity the state religion of the Roman Empire. His decree refers to the faith of the Bishops of Damascus, of Rome, and of Peter of Alexandria – in other words, orthodoxy.

The Nicene Creed had placed emphasis on the incarnation, passion, resurrection, and second coming of Christ. It was historical rather than theological. In contrast, the decree of Theodosius emphasized the Deity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and the doctrine of the Trinity.. In 381 Theodosius prohibited all heretical worship services in every town of the Empire. At the same time, following the example of Constantine, he summoned a general council to meet in the eastern capital that same year. This council marks the true beginning of ecumenical orthodoxy. Unlike Nicaea, it represented the conclusion of the Arian controversy, whereas, Nicaea was the beginning of the conflict. Theodosius also took all churches out of the hands of Arian leaders and turned them over to orthodox bishops and presbyters.

The creed that came out of the 381 ecumenical council in Constantinople was a strong affirmation of the Trinity. In essence the Constantinopolitan Creed is a refinement and an adjustment of the Nicene Creed (see Addendum P).

CONCLUSION

By the close of the Fourth Century, the Church had a far different appearance than it did during the lifetime of the apostles. Here are some of the differences:

- The apostles were the defining authority in the First Century. In the Fourth Century, bishops claimed authority by the right of apostolic succession. When the Emperor made someone a bishop without the previous bishop's involvement, the question of apostolic succession became a problem.
- Councils of bishops settled doctrinal issues, by consensus, often producing a creed in an effort to clarify and codify scriptural truth.
- Rather than local churches being led by a council of elders, assisted by deacons, each local church had a bishop, assisted by presbyters, and deacons. These were viewed as clergy and only they were qualified to fulfill certain functions in the church
- The title of *Pope* was being used. In the west, only the Bishop of Rome was called by this name, but in the eastern church every local presbyter was called, *Pope*. The term means, *Father*.
- Church and State were entwined and the Emperors appointed and discharged church leaders.
- The New Testament Canon had been defined.
- The local churches had erected buildings as places of worship.
- Christianity had reached every corner of the Empire, even to Ireland.

- Separation between the churches of the east (Greek cultures and language) and those of the west (Latin culture and language) was a growing reality.
- Converts to Christianity were subjected to a lengthy period as a catechumen – some as long as a year, before they could be immersed.
- Creeds had been composed in an effort to clarify scriptural doctrines.
- The Church began to prosper materially.

Many other changes could be cited, but it is clear that the church had evolved, grown, and in many ways had become an institution far different from the Church of the New Testament.

ADDENDUM A

*The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, Commonly Called the Didache*³⁰⁷

The Lord's Teaching to the Heathen by the Twelve Apostles:

1 There are two ways, one of life and one of death; and between the two ways there is a great difference.

²Now, this is the way of life: First, you must love God who made you, and second, your neighbor as yourself. And whatever you want people to refrain from doing to you, you must not do to them.

³What these maxims teach is this: "Bless those who curse you," and "pray for your enemies." Moreover, fast "for those who persecute you." For what credit is it to you if you love those who love you? Is that not the way the heathen act? But you must love those who hate you," and then you will make no enemies.

⁴Abstain from carnal passions. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other too, and you will be perfect. If someone forces you to go one mile with him, go along with him for two; if someone robs you of your cloak, give him your tunic as well. If someone deprives you of your property, do not ask for it back. (You could not get it back anyway!)

⁵Give to everybody who begs from you, and ask for no return. For the Father wants his own gifts to be universally shared. Happy is the man who gives as the commandment bids him, for he is guiltless! But alas for the man who receives! If he receives because he is in need, he will be guiltless. But if he is not in need he will have to stand trial why he received and for what purpose. He will be thrown into prison and have his action investigated; and he will not get out until he has paid back the last cent.

⁶Indeed, there is a further saying that relates to this: "Let your donation sweat in your hands until you know to whom to give it."

2 The second commandment of the Teaching:

²"Do not murder; do not commit adultery; do not corrupt boys; do not fornicate; do not steal; do not practice magic; do not go in for sorcery; do not murder a child by abortion or kill a new-born infant. Do not covet your neighbor's property;

³do not commit perjury; do not bear false witness; do not slander; do not bear grudges.

⁴Do not be double-minded or double-tongued, for a double tongue is "a deadly snare."

⁵Your words shall not be dishonest or hollow, but substantiated by action.

⁶Do not be greedy or extortionate or hypocritical or malicious or arrogant. Do not plot against your neighbor.

⁷Do not hate anybody; but reprove some, pray for others, and still others love more than your own life.

3 My child, flee from all wickedness and from everything of that sort.

²Do not be irritable, for anger leads to murder. Do not be jealous or contentious or impetuous, for all this breeds murder.

³My child, do not be lustful, for lust leads to fornication. Do not use foul language or leer, for all this breeds adultery.

⁴My child, do not be a diviner, for that leads to idolatry. Do not be an enchanter or an astrologer or a magician. Moreover, have no wish to observe or heed such practices, for all this breeds idolatry.

⁵My child, do not be a liar, for lying leads to theft. Do not be avaricious or vain, for all this breeds thievery.

⁶My child, do not be a grumbler, for grumbling leads to blasphemy. Do not be stubborn or evil-minded, for all this breeds blasphemy.

⁷But be humble since the humble will inherit the earth.

³⁰⁷ This translation is found at <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/richardson/fathers.viii.i.iii.html> (I did adjust some of the wording to a more literal rendering of the Greek- JWG)

⁸ Be patient, merciful, harmless, quiet, and good; and always "have respect for the teaching" you have been given. Do not put on airs or give yourself up to presumptuousness. Do not associate with the high and mighty; but be with the upright and humble. Accept whatever happens to you as good, in the realization that nothing occurs apart from God.

4 My child, day and night you should remember him who preaches God's word to you, and honor him as you would the Lord. For where the Lord's nature is discussed, there the Lord is.

²Every day you should seek the company of saints to enjoy their refreshing conversation.

³You must not start a schism, but reconcile those at strife. Your judgments must be fair. You must not play favorites when reproofing transgressions.

⁴You must not be of two minds about your decision.

⁵Do not be one who holds his hand out to take, but shuts it when it comes to giving.

⁶If your labor has brought you earnings, pay a ransom for your sins.

⁷Do not hesitate to give and do not give with a bad grace; for you will discover who He is that pays you back a reward with a good grace.

⁸Do not turn your back on the needy, but share everything with your brother and call nothing your own. For if you have what is eternal in common, how much more should you have what is transient!

⁹Do not withhold your hand from your son or your daughter, but from their youth you shall teach them to revere God.

¹⁰Do not be harsh in giving orders to your slaves and slave girls. They hope in the same God as you, and the result may be that they cease to revere the God over you both. For when he comes to call us, he will not respect our station, but will call those whom the Spirit has made ready.

¹¹You slaves, for your part, must obey your masters with reverence and fear, as if they represented God.

¹²You must hate all hypocrisy and everything which fails to please the Lord.

¹³You must not forsake the Lord's commandments, but observe the ones you have been given, neither adding nor subtracting anything.

¹⁴At the church meeting you must confess your sins, and not approach prayer with a bad conscience. That is the way of life.

5 But the way of death is this: First of all, it is wicked and thoroughly blasphemous: murders, adulteries, lusts, fornications, thefts, idolatries, magic arts, sorceries, robberies, false witness, hypocrisies, duplicity, deceit, arrogance, malice, stubbornness, greediness, filthy talk, jealousy, audacity, haughtiness, boastfulness.

²Those who persecute good people, who hate truth, who love lies, who are ignorant of the reward of uprightness, who do not abide by goodness or justice, and are on the alert not for goodness but for evil: gentleness and patience are remote from them. They love vanity, have no pity for the poor, do not exert themselves for the oppressed, ignore their Maker, murder children, corrupt God's image, turn their backs on the needy, oppress the afflicted, defend the rich, unjustly condemn the poor, and are thoroughly wicked. My children, may you be saved from all this!

6 See that no one leads you astray from this way of the teaching, since such a one's teaching is godless.

²If you can bear the Lord's full yoke, you will be perfect. But if you cannot, then do what you can.

³Now about food: undertake what you can. But keep strictly away from what is offered to idols, for that implies worshipping dead gods.

7 Now about immersion: this is how to immerse. Give public instruction on all these points [those presented in the first section], and then immerse in running water, "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

²If you do not have running water, immerse in some other.

³If you cannot in cold, then in warm. If you have neither, then pour water on the head three times "in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."

⁴Before the immersion, moreover, the one who immerses and the one being immersed must fast, and any others who can. And you must tell the one being immersed to fast for one or two days beforehand.

8 Your fasts must not be identical with those of the hypocrites. They fast on Mondays and Thursdays; but you should fast on Wednesdays and Fridays.

²You must not pray like the hypocrites, but pray as follows as the Lord bid us in his gospel:

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name;
your Kingdom come; your will be done on earth as it is in heaven;
give us today our bread for the morrow;
and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.
And do not lead us into temptation, but save us from the evil one,
for yours is the power and the glory forever."

³You should pray in this way three times a day.

9 Now about the Eucharist: This is how to give thanks:

²First in connection with the cup:

"We thank you, our Father, for the holy vine of David, your child,
which you have revealed through Jesus, your child.
To you be glory forever."

³Then in connection with the piece [broken off the loaf]:

"We thank you, our Father, for the life and knowledge
which you have revealed through Jesus, your child.
To you be glory forever."

⁴As this piece [of bread] was scattered over the hills [as growing wheat] and then was brought together and made one, so let your Church be brought together from the ends of the earth into your Kingdom. For yours is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ forever.

⁵You must not let anyone eat or drink of your Eucharist except those immersed in the Lord's name. For in reference to this the Lord said, "Do not give what is sacred to dogs."

10 After you have finished your meal, say grace in this way:

²We thank you, Holy Father, for your sacred name which you have lodged in our hearts,
and for the knowledge and faith and immortality
which you have revealed through Jesus, your child.
To you be glory forever.

³Almighty Master, you have created everything for the sake of your name,
and have given men food and drink to enjoy that they may thank you.
But to us you have given spiritual food and drink and eternal life
through Jesus, your child.

⁴Above all, we thank you that you are mighty. To you be glory forever.

⁵Remember, Lord, your Church, to save it from all evil and to make it perfect by your love.
Make it holy, and gather it together from the four winds into your Kingdom
which you have made ready for it.

For yours is the power and the glory forever.

⁶Let Grace come and let this world pass away.

Hosanna to the God of David!

If anyone is holy, let him come. If not, let him repent.

Our Lord, come!

Amen.

⁷In the case of prophets, however, you should let them give thanks in their own way.

11 Now, you should welcome anyone who comes your way and teaches you all we have been saying.

² But if the teacher proves himself a renegade and by teaching otherwise contradicts all this, pay no attention to him. But if his teaching furthers the Lord's righteousness and knowledge, welcome him as the Lord.

³ Now about the apostles and prophets: Act in line with the gospel precept.

⁴ Welcome every apostle on arriving, as if he were the Lord.

⁵ But he must not stay beyond one day. In case of necessity, however, the next day too. If he stays three days, he is a false prophet.

⁶ On departing, an apostle must not accept anything save sufficient food to carry him till his next lodging. If he asks for money, he is a false prophet.

⁷ While a prophet is speaking in a spirit, you must not test or examine him. For every sin will be forgiven, but this sin will not be forgiven.

⁸ However, not everybody making speaking in a spirit is a prophet, but only if he behaves like the Lord. It is by their conduct that the false prophet and the [true] prophet can be distinguished.

⁹ For instance, if a prophet orders a meal in the Spirit, he must not eat from it. If he does, he is a false prophet.

¹⁰ Again, every prophet who teaches the truth but fails to practice what he preaches is a false prophet.

¹¹ But every attested and genuine prophet who acts with a view to symbolizing the mystery of the Church, and does not teach you to do all he does, must not be judged by you. His judgment rests with God. For the ancient prophets too acted in this way.

¹² But if someone says in the Spirit, "Give me money, or something else," you must not heed him. However, if he tells you to give for others in need, no one must condemn him.

12 Everyone who comes to you in the name of the Lord must be welcomed. Afterward, when you have tested him, you will find out about him, for you have insight into right and wrong.

² If it is a traveler who arrives, help him all you can. But he must not stay with you more than two days, or, if necessary, three.

³ If he wants to settle with you and is an artisan, he must work for his living.

⁴ If, however, he has no trade, use your judgment in taking steps for him to live with you as a Christian without being idle.

⁵ If he refuses to do this, he is trading on Christ. You must be on your guard against such people.

13 Every genuine prophet who wants to settle with you has a right to his support.

² Similarly, a genuine teacher himself, just like a "workman, has a right to his support.

³ Hence take all the first fruits of vintage and harvest, and of cattle and sheep, and give these first fruits to the prophets. For they are your high priests.

⁴ If, however, you have no prophet, give them to the poor.

⁵ If you make bread, take the first fruits and give in accordance with the precept.

⁶ Similarly, when you open a jar of wine or oil, take the first fruits and give them to the prophets.

⁷ Indeed, of money, clothes, and of all your possessions, take such first fruits as you think right, and give in accordance with the precept.

14 On every Lord's Day come together and break bread and give thanks, first confessing your sins so that your sacrifice may be pure.

² Anyone at variance with his neighbor must not join you, until they are reconciled, lest your sacrifice be defiled.

³ For it was of this sacrifice that the Lord said, "Always and everywhere offer me a pure sacrifice; for I am a great King, says the Lord, and my name is marveled at by the nations."

15 You must, then, elect for yourselves bishops and deacons who are a credit to the Lord, men who are gentle, generous, faithful, and well tried. For their ministry to you is identical with that of the prophets and teachers.

²You must not, therefore, despise them, for along with the prophets and teachers they enjoy a place of honor among you.

³Furthermore, do not reprove each other angrily, but quietly, as you find it in the gospel. Moreover, if anyone has wronged his neighbor, nobody must speak to him, and he must not hear a word from you, until he repents.

⁴Say your prayers, give your charity, and do everything just as you find it in the gospel of our Lord.

16 Watch over your life: do not let your lamps go out, and do not keep your loins ungirded; but be ready, for you do not know the hour when our Lord is coming.

²Meet together frequently in your search for what is good for your souls, since a lifetime of faith will be of no advantage to you unless you prove perfect at the very last.

³For in the final days multitudes of false prophets and seducers will appear.

⁴Sheep will turn into wolves, and love into hatred. For with the increase of iniquity men will hate, persecute, and betray each other. And then the world deceiver will appear in the guise of God's Son. He will work signs and wonders and the earth will fall into his hands and he will commit outrages such as have never occurred before.

⁵Then mankind will come to the fiery trial and many will fall away and perish, but those who persevere in their faith will be saved by the Curse himself.

⁶Then there will appear the signs of the Truth: first the sign of stretched-out [hands] in heaven, then the sign of "a trumpet's blast," and thirdly the resurrection of the dead, though not of all the dead,

⁷but as it has been said: "The Lord will come and all his saints with him. Then the world will see the Lord coming on the clouds of the sky."

ADDENDUM B
***Correspondence between Pliny the Younger
and Trajan Concerning Treatment of Christians***
C. 112 AD

Pliny the Younger was governor of Pontus and Bithynia from 111-113 CE. He was a prolific letter writer, corresponding with a host of individuals. Because letters were very important in Pliny's era, He collected his many letters into books. These two letters, concerning the treatment of Christians are the most famous.

Pliny the Younger to the Emperor Trajan

It is my practice, my lord, to refer to you all matters concerning which I am in doubt. For who can better give guidance to my hesitation or inform my ignorance? I have never participated in trials of Christians. I therefore do not know what offenses it is the practice to punish or investigate, and to what extent. And I have been not a little hesitant as to whether there should be any distinction on account of age or no difference between the very young and the more mature; whether pardon is to be granted for repentance, or, if a man has once been a Christian, it does him no good to have ceased to be one; whether the name itself, even without offenses, or only the offenses associated with the name are to be punished.

Meanwhile, in the case of those who were denounced to me as Christians, I have observed the following procedure: I interrogated these as to whether they were Christians; those who confessed I interrogated a second and a third time, threatening them with punishment; those who persisted I ordered executed. For I had no doubt that, whatever the nature of their creed, stubbornness and inflexible obstinacy surely deserve to be punished. There were others possessed of the same folly; but because they were Roman citizens, I signed an order for them to be transferred to Rome.

Soon accusations spread, as usually happens, because of the proceedings going on, and several incidents occurred. An anonymous document was published containing the names of many persons. Those who denied that they were or had been Christians, when they invoked the gods in words dictated by me, offered prayer with incense and wine to your image, which I had ordered to be brought for this purpose together with statues of the gods, and moreover cursed Christ--none of which those who are really Christians, it is said, can be forced to do--these I thought should be discharged. Others named by the informer declared that they were Christians, but then denied it, asserting that they had been but had ceased to be, some three years before, others many years, some as much as twenty-five years. They all worshipped your image and the statues of the gods, and cursed Christ.

They asserted, however, that the sum and substance of their fault or error had been that they were accustomed to meet on a fixed day before dawn and sing responsively a hymn to Christ as to a god, and to bind themselves by oath, not to some crime, but not to commit fraud, theft, or adultery, not falsify their trust, nor to refuse to return a trust when called upon to do so. When this was over, it was their custom to depart and to assemble again to partake of food--but ordinary and innocent food. Even this, they affirmed, they had ceased to do after my edict by which, in accordance with your instructions, I had forbidden political associations. Accordingly, I judged it all the more necessary to find out what the truth was by torturing two female slaves who were called deaconesses. But I discovered nothing else but depraved, excessive superstition.

I therefore postponed the investigation and hastened to consult you. For the matter seemed to me to warrant consulting you, especially because of the number involved. For many persons of every age, every rank, and also of both sexes are and will be endangered. For the contagion of this superstition has spread not only to the cities but also to the villages and farms. But it seems possible to check and cure it. It is certainly quite clear that the temples, which had been almost deserted, have begun to be frequented, that the established religious rites, long neglected, are being resumed, and that from everywhere sacrificial animals are coming,

for which until now very few purchasers could be found. Hence it is easy to imagine what a multitude of people can be reformed if an opportunity for repentance is afforded.

Trajan to Pliny the Younger

You observed proper procedure, my dear Pliny, in sifting the cases of those who had been denounced to you as Christians. For it is not possible to lay down any general rule to serve as a kind of fixed standard. They are not to be sought out; if they are denounced and proved guilty, they are to be punished, with this reservation, that whoever denies that he is a Christian and really proves it--that is, by worshiping our gods--even though he was under suspicion in the past, shall obtain pardon through repentance. But anonymously posted accusations ought to have no place in any prosecution. For this is both a dangerous kind of precedent and out of keeping with the spirit of our age.

This translation found at: earlychristianwritings.com/text/pliny

ADDENDUM C

Rescript of Hadrian Regarding Treatment of Christians

(A rescript has the force of law)

Eusebius, in his *Ecclesiastical History* (Book IV, Chapter IX)³⁰⁸ has preserved the following letter from Hadrian to Minucius Fundanus, procounsel of Asia. Eusebius provides a Greek translation of a Latin original that he found appended to Justin Martyr's *First Apology*. The following is a translation of Eusebius' text

To Minucius Fundanus. I have received an epistle, written to me by your predecessor Serennius Granianus, a most illustrious man. It does not seem right to me that the matter should be passed over without examination, lest the people be harassed and opportunity be given to the informers for practicing villainy.

If, therefore, the inhabitants of the province can clearly sustain this petition against the Christians so as to give answer in a court of law, let them pursue this course alone, and not be influenced by mere entreaties and outcries. For it is far more proper, if any one wishes to make an accusation, that you should examine it.

If any one therefore accuses them and shows that they are doing anything contrary to the laws, do pass judgment according to the seriousness of the crime. But, by Hercules, investigate seriously, and if any one should bring an accusation through mere calumny, inflict penalties in proportion to their wickedness."

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³⁰⁸ Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* was written around 325 AD. Although Eusebius does put a particular spin on some of the events, by and large it is one of the most valuable documents written during the first centuries of Christianity. It purports to be a history of the first three centuries of the Church. (Grand Rapids, Baker Book House) reprinted 1994, pgs 136-137

ADDENDUM D

The Letters of Ignatius

Ignatius' letters to the churches achieved a very high status in the early Church, so much so that they were copied over and over and read in churches throughout most of the Roman Empire. As a result, copyists added something here and another thing there, for the purpose of clarification. Today, we are in possession of a variety of versions of these letters. One version is a Syriac Version, which linguistically is somewhat different from the other versions.

Competent scholars, among them J. B. Lightfoot have gone to great lengths to study these versions and to arrive at a recension³⁰⁹ that most are agreed is close to the original. The accepted text does exist in two versions, a shorter and a longer version. The following text is the shorter version. The longer version does not add anything substantive to the material being studied in this course. Usually, the longer version is just more "wordy."³¹⁰

THE EPISTLE OF IGNATIUS TO THE EPHESIANS

Ignatius, who is also called Theophorus, to the Church which is at Ephesus, in Asia, deservedly most happy, being blessed in the greatness and fullness of God the Father, and predestinated before the beginning of time, that it should be always for an enduring and unchangeable glory, being united and elected through the true passion by the will of the Father, and Jesus Christ, our God: Abundant happiness through Jesus Christ, and His undefiled grace.

I. I have become acquainted with your name, much-beloved in God, which ye have acquired by the habit of righteousness, according to the faith and love in Jesus Christ our Savior. Being the followers of God, and stirring up yourselves by the blood of God, ye have perfectly accomplished the work which was befitting to you. For, on hearing that I came bound from Syria for the common name and hope, trusting through your prayers to be permitted to fight with beasts at Rome, that so by martyrdom I may indeed become the disciple of Him "who gave Himself for us, an offering and sacrifice to God," [ye hastened to see me]. I received, therefore, your whole multitude in the name of God, through Onesimus, a man of inexpressible love, and your bishop in the flesh, whom I pray you by Jesus Christ to love, and that you would all seek to be like him. And blessed be He who has granted unto you, being worthy, to obtain such an excellent bishop.

II. As to my fellow-servant Burrhus, your deacon in regard to God and blessed in all things, I beg that he may continue longer, both for your honor and that of your bishop. And Crocus also, worthy both of God and you, whom I have received as the manifestation of your love, hath in all things refreshed me, as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ shall also refresh him; together with Onesimus, and Burrhus, and Euplus, and Fronto, by means of whom, I have, as to love, beheld all of you. May I always have joy of you, if indeed I be worthy of it. It is therefore befitting that you should in every way glorify Jesus Christ, who hath glorified you, that by a unanimous obedience "ye may be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in

³⁰⁹ A recension is a revision of a text, based upon a critical examination of sources. The term then is applied to the result.

³¹⁰ The text herewith presented is Lightfoot's English translation of the Greek text. Since Lightfoot was a Bishop in the Anglican Church and since this rendering was accomplished in 1891, some of the language reflects Anglican Church terms and archaic language. I have chosen to leave the text as it is, rather than indicate the literal meaning of the Greek terms so rendered.

the same judgment, and may all speak the same thing concerning the same thing,” and that, being subject to the bishop and the presbytery, ye may in all respects be sanctified.

III. I do not issue orders to you, as if I were some great person. For though I am bound for the name [of Christ], I am not yet perfect in Jesus Christ. For now I begin to be a disciple, and I speak to you as fellow-disciples with me. For it was needful for me to have been stirred up by you in faith, exhortation, patience, and long-suffering. But inasmuch as love suffers me not to be silent in regard to you, I have therefore taken upon me first to exhort you that ye would all run together in accordance with the will of God. For even Jesus Christ, our inseparable life, is the [manifested] will of the Father; as also bishops, settled everywhere to the utmost bounds [of the earth], are so by the will of Jesus Christ.

IV. Wherefore it is fitting that ye should run together in accordance with the will of your bishop, which thing also ye do. For your justly renowned presbytery, worthy of God, is fitted as exactly to the bishop as the strings are to the harp. Therefore in your concord and harmonious love, Jesus Christ is sung. And do ye, man by man, become a choir, that being harmonious in love, and taking up the song of God in unison, ye may with one voice sing to the Father through Jesus Christ, so that He may both hear you, and perceive by your works that ye are indeed the members of His Son. It is profitable, therefore, that you should live in an unblameable unity, that thus ye may always enjoy communion with God.

V. For if I in this brief space of time, have enjoyed such fellowship with your bishop — I mean not of a mere human, but of a spiritual nature — how much more do I reckon you happy who are so joined to him as the Church is to Jesus Christ, and as Jesus Christ is to the Father, that so all things may agree in unity! Let no man deceive himself: if any one be not within the altar, he is deprived of the bread of God. For if the prayer of one or two possesses such power, how much more that of the bishop and the whole Church! He, therefore, that does not assemble with the Church, has even by this manifested his pride, and condemned himself. For it is written, “God resisteth the proud.” Let us be careful, then, not to set ourselves in opposition to the bishop, in order that we may be subject to God.

VI. Now the more any one sees the bishop keeping silence, the more ought he to revere him. For we ought to receive every one whom the Master of the house sends to be over His household, as we would do Him that sent him. It is manifest, therefore, that we should look upon the bishop even as we would upon the Lord Himself. And indeed Onesimus himself greatly commends your good order in God, that ye all live according to the truth and that no sect has any dwelling-place among you. Nor, indeed, do ye hearken to any one rather than to Jesus Christ speaking in truth.

VII. For some are in the habit of carrying about the name [of Jesus Christ] in wicked guile, while yet they practice things unworthy of God, whom ye must flee as ye would wild beasts. For they are ravening dogs, who bite secretly, against whom ye must be on your guard, inasmuch as they are men who can scarcely be cured. There is one Physician who is possessed both of flesh and spirit; both made and not made; God existing in flesh; true life in death; both of Mary and of God; first possible and then impossible, even Jesus Christ our Lord.

VIII. Let not then any one deceive you, as indeed ye are not deceived, inasmuch as ye are wholly devoted to God. For since there is no strife raging among you which might distress you, ye are certainly living in accordance with God’s will. I am far inferior to you, and require to be sanctified by your Church of Ephesus, so renowned throughout the world. They that are carnal cannot do those things which are spiritual, nor they that are spiritual the things which are carnal; even as faith cannot do the works of unbelief, nor unbelief the works of faith. But even those things which ye do according to the flesh are spiritual; for ye do all things in Jesus Christ.

IX. Nevertheless, I have heard of some who have passed on from this to you, having false doctrine, whom ye did not suffer to sow among you, but stopped your ears, that ye might not receive those things which were sown by them, as being stones of the temple of the Father, prepared for the building of God the Father, and drawn up on high by the instrument of Jesus Christ, which is the cross, making use of the Holy

Spirit as a rope, while your faith was the means by which you ascended, and your love the way which led up to God. Ye, therefore, as well as all your fellow-travelers, are God-bearers, temple-bearers, Christ-bearers, bearers of holiness, adorned in all respects with the commandments of Jesus Christ, in whom also I exult that I have been thought worthy, by means of this Epistle, to converse and rejoice with you, because with respect to your Christian life ye love nothing but God only.

X. And pray ye without ceasing in behalf of other men. For there is in them hope of repentance that they may attain to God. See, then, that they be instructed by your works, if in no other way. Be ye meek in response to their wrath, humble in opposition to their boasting: to their blasphemies return your prayers; in contrast to their error, be ye steadfast in the faith; and for their cruelty, manifest your gentleness. While we take care not to imitate their conduct, let us be found their brethren in all true kindness; and let us seek to be followers of the Lord (who ever more unjustly treated, more destitute, more condemned?), that so no plant of the devil may be found in you, but ye may remain in all holiness and sobriety in Jesus Christ, both with respect to the flesh and spirit.

XI. The last times are come upon us. Let us therefore be of a reverent spirit, and fear the long-suffering of God, that it tend not to our condemnation. For let us either stand in awe of the wrath to come, or show regard for the grace which is at present displayed — one of two things. Only [in one way or another] let us be found in Christ Jesus unto the true life. Apart from Him, let nothing attract you, for whom I bear about these bonds, these spiritual jewels, by which may I arise through your prayers, of which I entreat I may always be a partaker, that I may be found in the lot of the Christians of Ephesus, who have always been of the same mind with the apostles through the power of Jesus Christ.

XII. I know both who I am, and to whom I write. I am a condemned man, ye have been the objects of mercy; I am subject to danger, ye are established in safety. Ye are the persons through whom those pass that are cut off for the sake of God. Ye are initiated into the mysteries of the Gospel with Paul, the holy, the martyred, the deservedly most happy, at whose feet may I be found, when I shall attain to God; who in all his Epistles makes mention of you in Christ Jesus.

XIII. Take heed, then, often to come together to give thanks to God, and show forth His praise. For when ye assemble frequently in the same place, the powers of Satan are destroyed, and the destruction at which he aims is prevented by the unity of your faith. Nothing is more precious than peace, by which all war, both in heaven and earth, is brought to an end.

XIV. None of these things is hid from you, if ye perfectly possess that faith and love towards Christ Jesus which are the beginning and the end of life. For the beginning is faith, and the end is love. Now these two being inseparably connected together, are of God, while all other things which are requisite for a holy life follow after them. No man [truly] making a profession of faith sinneth; nor does he that possesses love hate any one. The tree is made manifest by its fruit; so those that profess themselves to be Christians shall be recognized by their conduct. For there is not now a demand for mere profession, but that a man be found continuing in the power of faith to the end.

XV. It is better for a man to be silent and be [a Christian], than to talk and not to be one. It is good to teach, if he who speaks also acts. There is then one Teacher, who spake and it was done; while even those things which He did in silence are worthy of the Father. He who possesses the word of Jesus, is truly able to hear even His very silence, that he may be perfect, and may both act as he speaks, and be recognized by his silence. There is nothing which is hid from God, but our very secrets are near to Him. Let us therefore do all things as those who have Him dwelling in us, that we may be His temples, and He may be in us as our God, which indeed He is, and will manifest Himself before our faces. Wherefore we justly love Him.

XVI. Do not err, my brethren. Those that corrupt families shall not inherit the kingdom of God. If, then, those who do this as respects the flesh have suffered death, how much more shall this be the case with any one who corrupts by wicked doctrine the faith of God, for which Jesus Christ was crucified! Such an one

becoming defiled [in this way], shall go away into everlasting fire, and so shall every one that hearkens unto him.

XVII. For this end did the Lord suffer the ointment to be poured upon His head, that He might breathe immortality into His Church. Be not ye anointed with the bad odor of the doctrine of the prince of this world; let him not lead you away captive from the life which is set before you. And why are we not all prudent, since we have received the knowledge of God, which is Jesus Christ? Why do we foolishly perish, not recognizing the gift which the Lord has of a truth sent to us?

XVIII. Let my spirit be counted as nothing for the sake of the cross, which is a stumbling-block to those that do not believe, but to us salvation and life eternal. "Where is the wise man? Where the disputer?" Where is the boasting of those who are styled prudent? For our God, Jesus Christ, was, according to the appointment of God, conceived in the womb by Mary, of the seed of David, but by the Holy Ghost. He was born and baptized, that by His passion He might purify the water.

XIX. Now the virginity of Mary was hidden from the prince of this world, as was also her offspring, and the death of the Lord; three mysteries of renown, which were wrought in silence by God. How, then, was He manifested to the world? A star shone forth in heaven above all the other stars, the light of which was inexpressible, while its novelty struck men with astonishment. And all the rest of the stars, with the sun and moon, formed a chorus to this star, and its light was exceedingly great above them all. And there was agitation felt as to whence this new spectacle came, so unlike to everything else [in the heavens]. Hence every kind of magic was destroyed, and every bond of wickedness disappeared; ignorance was removed, and the old kingdom abolished, God Himself being manifested in human form for the renewal of eternal life. And now that took a beginning which had been prepared by God. Henceforth all things were in a state of tumult, because He meditated the abolition of death.

XX. If Jesus Christ shall graciously permit me through your prayers, and if it be His will, I shall, in a second little work which I will write to you, make further manifest to you [the nature of] the dispensation of which I have begun [to treat], with respect to the new man, Jesus Christ, in His faith and in His love, in His suffering and in His resurrection. Especially [will I do this] if the Lord make known to me that ye come together man by man in common through grace, individually, in one faith, and in Jesus Christ, who was of the seed of David according to the flesh, being both the Son of man and the Son of God, so that ye obey the bishop and the presbytery with an undivided mind, breaking one and the same bread, which is the medicine of immortality, and the antidote to prevent us from dying, but [which causes] that we should live for ever in Jesus Christ

XXI. Stand fast, brethren, in the faith of Jesus Christ, and in His love, in His passion, and in His resurrection. Do ye all come together in common, and individually, through grace, in one faith of God the Father, and of Jesus Christ His only-begotten Son, and "the first-born of every creature," but of the seed of David according to the flesh, being under the guidance of the Comforter, in obedience to the bishop and the presbytery with an undivided mind, breaking one and the same bread, which is the medicine of immortality, and the antidote which prevents us from dying, but a cleansing remedy driving away evil, [which causes] that we should live in God through Jesus Christ.

XXII. My soul be for yours and theirs whom, for the honor of God, ye have sent to Smyrna; whence also I write to you, giving thanks unto the Lord, and loving Polycarp even as I do you. Remember me, as Jesus Christ also remembered you. Pray ye for the Church which is in Syria, whence I am led bound to Rome, being the last of the faithful who are there, even as I have been thought worthy to be chosen to show forth the honor of God. Farewell in God the Father, and in Jesus Christ, our common hope.

THE EPISTLE OF IGNATIUS TO THE MAGNESIANS

Ignatius, who is also called Theophorus, to the [Church] blessed in the grace of God the Father, in Jesus Christ our Savior, in whom I salute the Church which is at Magnesia, near the Maeander, and wish it abundance of happiness in God the father, and in Jesus Christ.

I. Having been informed of your godly love, so well-ordered, I rejoiced greatly, and determined to commune with you in the faith of Jesus Christ. For as one who has been thought worthy of the most honorable of all names, in those bonds which I bear about, I commend the Churches, in which I pray for a union both of the flesh and spirit of Jesus Christ, the constant source of our life, and of faith and love, to which nothing is to be preferred, but especially of Jesus and the Father, in whom, if we endure all the assaults of the prince of this world, and escape them, we shall enjoy God.

II. Since, then, I have had the privilege of seeing you, through Damas your most worthy bishop, and through your worthy presbyters Bassus and Apollonius, and through my fellow-servant the deacon Sotio, whose friendship may I ever enjoy, inasmuch as he is subject to the bishop as to the grace of God, and to the presbytery as to the law of Jesus Christ, [I now write to you].

III. Now it becomes you also not to treat your bishop too familiarly on account of his youth, but to yield him all reverence, having respect to the power of God the Father, as I have known even holy presbyters do, not judging rashly, from the manifest youthful appearance [of their bishop], but as being themselves prudent in God, submitting to him, or rather not to him, but to the Father of Jesus Christ, the bishop of us all. It is therefore fitting that you should, after no hypocritical fashion, obey [your bishop], in honor of Him who has willed us [so to do], since he that does not so deceives not [by such conduct] the bishop that is visible, but seeks to mock Him that is invisible. And all such conduct has reference not to man, but to God, who knows all secrets.

IV. It is fitting, then, not only to be called Christians, but to be so in reality: as some indeed give one the title of bishop, but do all things without him. Now such persons seem to me to be not possessed of a good conscience, seeing they are not steadfastly gathered together according to the commandment.

V. Seeing, then, all things have an end, these two things are simultaneously set before us — death and life; and every one shall go unto his own place. For as there are two kinds of coins, the one of God, the other of the world, and each of these has its special character stamped upon it, [so is it also here.] The unbelieving are of this world; but the believing have, in love, the character of God the Father by Jesus Christ, by whom, if we are not in readiness to die into His passion, His life is not in us.

VI. Since therefore I have, in the persons before mentioned, beheld the whole multitude of you in faith and love, I exhort you to study to do all things with a divine harmony, while your bishop presides in the place of God, and your presbyters in the place of the assembly of the apostles, along with your deacons, who are most dear to me, and are entrusted with the ministry of Jesus Christ, who was with the Father before the beginning of time, and in the end was revealed. Do ye all then, imitating the same divine conduct, pay respect to one another, and let no one look upon his neighbor after the flesh, but do ye continually love each other in Jesus Christ. Let nothing exist among you that may divide you; but be ye united with your bishop, and those that preside over you, as a type and evidence of your immortality.

VII. As therefore the Lord did nothing without the Father, being united to Him, neither by Himself nor by the apostles, so neither do ye anything without the bishop and presbyters. Neither endeavor that anything appear reasonable and proper to yourselves apart; but being come together into the same place, let there be one prayer, one supplication, one mind, one hope, in love and in joy undefiled. There is one Jesus Christ, than whom nothing is more excellent. Do ye therefore all run together as into one temple of God, as to one altar, as to one Jesus Christ, who came forth from one Father, and is with and has gone to one.

VIII. Be not deceived with strange doctrines, nor with old fables, which are unprofitable. For if we still live according to the Jewish law, we acknowledge that we have not received grace. For the divinest prophets lived according to Christ Jesus. On this account also they were persecuted, being inspired by His

grace to fully convince the unbelieving that there is one God, who has manifested Himself by Jesus Christ His Son, who is His eternal Word, not proceeding forth from silence, and who in all things pleased Him that sent Him.

IX. If, therefore, those who were brought up in the ancient order of things have come to the possession of a new hope, no longer observing the Sabbath, but living in the observance of the Lord's Day, on which also our life has sprung up again by Him and by His death — whom some deny, by which mystery we have obtained faith, and therefore endure, that we may be found the disciples of Jesus Christ, our only Master — how shall we be able to live apart from Him, whose disciples the prophets themselves in the Spirit did wait for Him as their Teacher? And therefore He whom they rightly waited for, being come, raised them from the dead.

X. Let us not, therefore, be insensible to His kindness. For were He to reward us according to our works, we should cease to be. Therefore, having become His disciples, let us learn to live according to the principles of Christianity. For whosoever is called by any other name besides this, is not of God. Lay aside, therefore, the evil, the old, the sour leaven, and be ye changed into the new leaven, which is Jesus Christ. Be ye salted in Him, lest any one among you should be corrupted, since by your savor ye shall be convicted. It is absurd to profess Christ Jesus, and to Judaize. For Christianity did not embrace Judaism, but Judaism Christianity, that so every tongue which believeth might be gathered together to God.

XI. These things [I address to you], my beloved, not that I know any of you to be in such a state; but, as less than any of you, I desire to guard you beforehand, that ye fall not upon the hooks of vain doctrine, but that ye attain to full assurance in regard to the birth, and passion, and resurrection which took place in the time of the government of Pontius Pilate, being truly and certainly accomplished by Jesus Christ, who is our hope, from which may no one of you ever be turned aside.

XII. May I enjoy you in all respects, if indeed I be worthy! For though I am bound, I am not worthy to be compared to any of you that are at liberty. I know that ye are not puffed up, for ye have Jesus Christ in yourselves. And all the more when I commend you, I know that ye cherish modesty of spirit; as it is written, "The righteous man is his own accuser."

XIII. Study, therefore, to be established in the doctrines of the Lord and the apostles, that so all things, whatsoever ye do, may prosper both in the flesh and spirit; in faith and love; in the Son, and in the Father, and in the Spirit; in the beginning and in the end; with your most admirable bishop, and the well-compacted spiritual crown of your presbytery, and the deacons who are according to God. Be ye subject to the bishop, and to one another, as Jesus Christ to the Father, according to the flesh, and the apostles to Christ, and to the Father, and to the Spirit; that so there may be a union both fleshly and spiritual.

XIV. Knowing as I do that ye are full of God, I have but briefly exhorted you. Be mindful of me in your prayers, that I may attain to God; and of the Church which is in Syria, whence I am not worthy to derive my name: for I stand in need of your united prayer in God, and your love, that the Church which is in Syria may be deemed worthy of being refreshed by your Church.

XV. The Ephesians from Smyrna (whence I also write to you), who are here for the glory of God, as ye also are, who have in all things refreshed me, salute you, along with Polycarp, the bishop of the Smyrnaeans. The rest of the Churches, in honor of Jesus Christ, also salute you. Fare ye well in the harmony of God, ye who have obtained the inseparable Spirit, who is Jesus Christ.

THE EPISTLE OF IGNATIUS TO THE TRALLIANS

Ignatius, who is also called Theophorus, to the holy Church which is at Tralles, in Asia, beloved of God, the Father of Jesus Christ, elect, and worthy of God, possessing peace through the flesh, and blood, and passion of Jesus Christ, who is our hope, through our rising again to Him, which also I salute in its fullness, and in the apostolical character, and wish abundance of happiness.

I. I know that ye possess an unblameable and sincere mind in patience, and that not only in present practice, but according to inherent nature, as Polybius your bishop has shown me, who has come to Smyrna by the will of God and Jesus Christ, and so sympathized in the joy which I, who am bound in Christ Jesus, possess, that I beheld your whole multitude in him. Having therefore received through him the testimony of your good-will, according to God, I gloried to find you, as I knew you were, the followers of God.

II. For, since ye are subject to the bishop 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, who is our hope, in whom, if we live, we shall [at last] be found. It is fitting also that the deacons, as being [the ministers] of the mysteries of Jesus Christ, should in every respect be pleasing to all. For they are not ministers of meat and drink, but servants of the Church of

God. They are bound, therefore, to avoid all grounds of accusation [against them], as they would do fire.

III. 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. Concerning all this, I am persuaded that ye are of the same opinion. For I have received the manifestations of your love, and still have it with me, in your bishop, whose very appearance is highly instructive, and his meekness of itself a power; whom I imagine even the ungodly must reverence, seeing they are also pleased that I do not spare myself. But shall I, when permitted to write on this point, reach such a height of self-esteem, that though being a condemned man, I should issue commands to you as if I were an apostle?

IV. I have great knowledge in God, but I restrain myself, lest, I should perish through boasting. For now it is needful for me to be the more fearful; and not give heed to those that puff me up. For they that speak to me [in the way of commendation] scourge me. For I do indeed desire to suffer, but I know not if I be worthy to do so. For this longing, though it is not manifest to many, all the more vehemently assails me. I therefore have need of meekness, by which the prince of this world is brought to nought.

V. Am I not able to write to you of heavenly things? But I fear to do so, lest I should inflict injury on you who are but babes [in Christ]. Pardon me in this respect, lest, as not being able to receive [such doctrines], ye should be strangled by them. For even I, though I am bound [for Christ], yet am not on that account able to understand heavenly things, and the places of the angels, and their gatherings under their respective princes, things visible and invisible. Without reference to such abstruse subjects, I am still but a learner [in other respects]; for many things are wanting to us, that we come not short of God.

VI. I therefore, yet not I, but the love of Jesus Christ, entreat you that ye use Christian nourishment only, and abstain from herbage of a different kind; I mean heresy. For those [that are given to this] mix up Jesus Christ with their own poison, speaking things which are unworthy of credit, like those who administer a deadly drug in sweet wine, which he who is ignorant of does greedily take, with a fatal pleasure leading to his own death.

VII. Be on your guard, therefore, against such persons. And this will be the case with you if you are not puffed up, and continue in intimate union with Jesus Christ our God, and the bishop, and the enactments of the apostles. He that is within the altar is pure, but he that is without is not pure; that is, he who does anything apart from the bishop, and presbytery, and deacons, such a man is not pure in his conscience.

VIII. Not that I know there is anything of this kind among you; but I put you on your guard, inasmuch as I love you greatly, and foresee the snares of the devil. Wherefore, clothing yourselves with meekness, be ye renewed in faith, that is the flesh of the Lord, and in love, that is the blood of Jesus Christ. Let no one of you cherish any grudge against his neighbor. Give no occasion to the Gentiles, lest by means of a few foolish men the whole multitude [of those that believe] in God be evil spoken of. For, "Woe to him by whose vanity my name is blasphemed among any."

IX. Stop your ears, therefore, when any one speaks to you at variance with Jesus Christ, who was descended from David, and was also of Mary; who was truly born, and did eat and drink. He was truly persecuted under Pontius Pilate; He was truly crucified, and [truly] died, in the sight of beings in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth. He was also truly raised from the dead, His Father quickening Him, even as after the same manner His Father will so raise up us who believe in Him by Christ Jesus, apart from whom we do not possess the true life.

X. But if, as some that are without God, that is, the unbelieving, say, that He only seemed to suffer (they themselves only seeming to exist), then why am I in bonds? Why do I long to be exposed to the wild beasts? Do I therefore die in vain? Am I not then guilty of falsehood against [the cross of] the Lord?

XI. Flee, therefore, those evil offshoots [of Satan], which produce death- bearing fruit, whereof if any one tastes, he instantly dies. For these men are not the planting of the Father. For if they were, they would appear as branches of the cross, and their fruit would be incorruptible. By it He calls you through His passion, as being His members. The head, therefore, cannot be born by itself, without its members; God, who is [the Savior] Himself, having promised their union.

XII. I salute you from Smyrna, together with the Churches of God which are with me, who have refreshed me in all things, both in the flesh and in the spirit. My bonds, which I carry about with me for the sake of Jesus Christ (praying that I may attain to God), exhort you. Continue in harmony among yourselves, and in prayer with one another; for it becomes every one of you, and especially the presbyters, to refresh the bishop, to the honor of the Father, of Jesus Christ, and of the apostles. I entreat you in love to hear me, that I may not, by having written, be a testimony against you. And do ye also pray for me, who have need of your love, along with the mercy of God, that I may be worthy of the lot for which I am destined, and that I may not be found reprobate.

XIII. The love of the Smyrnaeans and Ephesians salutes you. Remember in your prayers the Church which is in Syria, from which also I am not worthy to receive my appellation, being the last of them. Fare ye well in Jesus Christ, while ye continue subject to the bishop, as to the command [of God], and in like manner to the presbytery. And do ye, every man, love one another with an undivided heart. Let my spirit be sanctified by yours, not only now, but also when I shall attain to God. For I am as yet exposed to danger. But the Father is faithful in Jesus Christ to fulfill both mine and your petitions: in whom may ye be found unblameable.

THE EPISTLE OF IGNATIUS TO THE ROMANS

Ignatius, who is also called Theophorus, to the Church which has obtained mercy, through the majesty of the Most High Father, and Jesus Christ, His only-begotten Son; the Church which is beloved and enlightened by the will of Him that willeth all things which are according to the love of Jesus Christ our God, which also presides in the place of the region of the Romans, worthy of God, worthy of honor, worthy of the highest happiness, worthy of praise, worthy of obtaining her every desire, worthy of being deemed holy, and which presides over love, is named from Christ, and from the Father, which I also salute in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father: to those who are united, both according to the flesh and spirit, to every one of His commandments; who are filled inseparably with the grace of God, and are purified from every strange taint, [I wish] abundance of happiness unblameably, in Jesus Christ our God.

I. Through prayer to God I have obtained the privilege of seeing your most worthy faces, and have even been granted more than I requested; for I hope as a prisoner in Christ Jesus to salute you, if indeed it be the will of God that I be thought worthy of attaining unto the end. For the beginning has been well ordered, if I may obtain grace to cling to my lot without hindrance unto the end. For I am afraid of your love, lest it should do me an injury. For it is easy for you to accomplish what you please; but it is difficult for me to attain to God, if ye spare me.

II. For it is not my desire to act towards you as a man-pleaser, but as pleasing God, even as also ye please Him. For neither shall I ever have such [another] opportunity of attaining to God; nor will ye, if ye shall now be silent, ever be entitled to the honor of a better work. For if ye are silent concerning me, I shall become God's; but if you show your love to my flesh, I shall again have to run my race. Pray, then, do not seek to confer any greater favor upon me than that I be sacrificed to God while the altar is still prepared; that, being gathered together in love, ye may sing praise to the Father, through Christ Jesus, that God has deemed me, the bishop of Syria, worthy to be sent for from the east unto the west. It is good to set from the world unto God, that I may rise again to Him.

III. Ye have never envied any one; ye have taught others. Now I desire that those things may be confirmed [by your conduct], which in your instructions ye enjoin [on others]. Only request in my behalf both inward and outward strength, that I may not only speak, but [truly] will; and that I may not merely be called a Christian, but really be found to be one. For if I be truly found [a Christian], I may also be called one, and be then deemed faithful, when I shall no longer appear to the world. Nothing visible is eternal. "For the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." For our God, Jesus Christ, Now that He is with the Father, is all the more revealed [in His glory]. Christianity is not a thing of silence only, but also of [manifest] greatness.

IV. I write to the Churches, and impress on them all, that I shall willingly die for God, unless ye hinder me. I beseech of you not to show an unseasonable good-will towards me. Suffer me to become food for the wild beasts, through whose instrumentality it will be granted me to attain to God. I am the wheat of God, and let me be ground by the teeth of the wild beasts, that I may be found the pure bread of Christ. Rather entice the wild beasts, that they may become my tomb, and may leave nothing of my body; so that when I have fallen asleep [in death], I may be no trouble to any one. Then shall I truly be a disciple of Christ, when the world shall not see so much as my body. Entreat Christ for me, that by these instruments I may be found a sacrifice [to God]. I do not, as Peter and Paul, issue commandments unto you. They were apostles; I am but a condemned man: they were free, while I am, even until now, a servant. But when I suffer, I shall be the freedman of Jesus, and shall rise again emancipated in Him. And now, being a prisoner, I learn not to desire anything worldly or vain.

V. From Syria even unto Rome I fight with beasts, both by land and sea, both by night and day, being bound to ten leopards, I mean a band of soldiers, who, even when they receive benefits, show themselves all the worse. But I am the more instructed by their injuries [to act as a disciple of Christ]; "yet am I not thereby justified." May I enjoy the wild beasts that are prepared for me; and I pray they may be found eager to rush upon me, which also I will entice to devour me speedily, and not deal with me as with some, whom, out of fear, they have not touched. But if they be unwilling to assail me, I will compel them to do so. Pardon me [in this]: I know what is for my benefit. Now I begin to be a disciple. And let no one, of things visible or invisible, envy me that I should attain to Jesus Christ. Let fire and the cross; let the crowds of wild beasts; let tearings, breakings, and dislocations of bones; let cutting off of members; let shatterings of the whole body; and let all the dreadful torments of the devil come upon me: only let me attain to Jesus Christ.

VI. All the pleasures of the world, and all the kingdoms of this earth, shall profit me nothing. It is better for me to die in behalf of Jesus Christ, than to reign over all the ends of the earth. "For what shall a man be profited, if he gain the whole world, but lose his own soul?" Him I seek, who died for us: Him I desire, who rose again for our sake. This is the gain which is laid up for me. Pardon me, brethren: do not hinder me from living, do not wish to keep me in a state of death; and while I desire to belong to God, do not ye give me over to the world. Suffer me to obtain pure light: when I have gone thither, I shall indeed be a man of God. Permit me to be an imitator of the passion of my God. If any one has Him within himself, let him consider what I desire, and let him have sympathy with me, as knowing how I am straitened.

VII. The prince of this world would fain carry me away, and corrupt my disposition towards God. Let none of you, therefore, who are [in Rome] help him; rather be ye on my side, that is, on the side of God. Do not speak of Jesus Christ, and yet set your desires on the world. Let not envy find a dwelling-place among you; nor even should I, when present with you, exhort you to it, be ye persuaded to listen to me, but rather give credit to those things which I now write to you. For though I am alive while I write to you, yet I am eager to die. My love has been crucified, and there is no fire in me desiring to be fed; but there is within me a water that liveth and speaketh, saying to me inwardly, Come to the Father. I have no delight in corruptible food, nor in the pleasures of this life. I desire the bread of God, the heavenly bread, the bread of life, which is the flesh of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who became afterwards of the seed of David and Abraham; and I desire the drink of God, namely His blood, which is incorruptible love and eternal life.

VIII. I no longer wish to live after the manner of men, and my desire shall be fulfilled if ye consent. Be ye willing, then, that ye also may have your desires fulfilled. I entreat you in this brief letter; do ye give credit to me. Jesus Christ will reveal these things to you, [so that ye shall know] that I speak truly. He is the mouth altogether free from falsehood, by which the Father has truly spoken. Pray ye for me, that I may attain [the object of my desire]. I have not written to you according to the flesh, but according to the will of God. If I shall suffer, ye have wished [well] to me; but if I am rejected, ye have hated me.

IX. Remember in your prayers the Church in Syria, which now has God for its shepherd, instead of me. Jesus Christ alone will oversee it, and your love [will also regard it]. But as for me, I am ashamed to be counted one of them; for indeed I am not worthy, as being the very last of them, and one born out of due time. But I have obtained mercy to be somebody, if I shall attain to God. My spirit salutes you, and the love of the Churches that have received me in the name of Jesus Christ, and not as a mere passer-by. For even those Churches which were not near to me in the way, I mean according to the flesh, have gone before me, city by city, [to meet me.]

X. Now I write these things to you from Smyrna by the Ephesians, who are deservedly most happy. There is also with me, along with many others, Crocus, one dearly beloved by me. As to those who have gone before me from Syria to Rome for the glory of God, I believe that you are acquainted with them; to whom, [then,] do ye make known that I am at hand. For they are all worthy, both of God and of you; and it is becoming that you should refresh them in all things. I have written these things unto you, on the day before the ninth of the Kalends of September (that is, on the twenty-third day of August). Fare ye well to the end, in the patience of Jesus Christ. Amen.

THE EPISTLE OF IGNATIUS TO THE PHILADELPHIANS

Ignatius, who is also called Theophorus, to the Church of God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, which is at Philadelphia, in Asia, which has obtained mercy, and is established in the harmony of God, and rejoiceth unceasingly in the passion of our Lord, and is filled with all mercy through his resurrection; which I salute in the blood of Jesus Christ, who is our eternal and enduring joy, especially if [men] are in unity with the bishop, the presbyters, and the deacons, who have been appointed according to the mind of Jesus Christ, whom He has established in security, after His own will, and by His Holy Spirit.

I. Which bishop, I know, obtained the ministry which pertains to the common [weal], not of himself, neither by men, nor through vainglory, but by the love of God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ; at whose meekness I am struck with admiration, and who by his silence is able to accomplish more than those who vainly talk. For he is in harmony with the commandments [of God], even as the harp is with its strings. Wherefore my soul declares his mind towards God a happy one, knowing it to be virtuous and perfect, and that his stability as well as freedom from all anger is after the example of the infinite meekness of the living God.

II. Wherefore, as children of light and truth, flee from division and wicked doctrines; but where the shepherd is, there do ye as sheep follow. there are many wolves that appear worthy of credit, who, by

means of a pernicious pleasure, carry captive those that are running towards God; but in your unity they shall have no place.

III. Keep yourselves from those evil plants which Jesus Christ does not tend, because they are not the planting of the Father. Not that I have found any division among you, but exceeding purity. For as many as are of God and of Jesus Christ are also with the bishop. And as many as shall, in the exercise of repentance, return into the unity of the Church, these, too, shall belong to God, that they may live according to Jesus Christ. Do not err, my brethren. If any man follows him that makes a schism in the Church, he shall not inherit the kingdom of God. If any one walks according to a strange opinion, he agrees not with the passion [of Christ.].

IV. Take ye heed, then, to have but one Eucharist. For there is one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one cup to [show forth] the unity of His blood; one altar; as there is one bishop, along with the presbytery and deacons, my fellow-servants: that so, whatsoever ye do, ye may do it according to [the will of] God.

V. My brethren, I am greatly enlarged in loving you; and rejoicing exceedingly [over you], I seek to secure your safety. Yet it is not I, but Jesus Christ, for whose sake being bound I fear the more, inasmuch as I am not yet perfect. But your prayer to God shall make me perfect, that I may attain to that portion which through mercy has been allotted me, while I flee to the Gospel as to the flesh of Jesus, and to the apostles as to the presbytery of the Church. And let us also love the prophets, because they too have proclaimed the Gospel, and placed their hope in Him, and waited for Him; in whom also believing, they were saved, through union to Jesus Christ, being holy men, worthy of love and admiration, having had witness borne to them by Jesus Christ, and being reckoned along with in the Gospel of the common hope.

VI. But if any one preach the Jewish law unto you, listen not to him. For it is better to hearken to Christian doctrine from a man who has been circumcised, than to Judaism from one uncircumcised. But if either of such persons do not speak concerning Jesus Christ, they are in my judgment but as monuments and sepulchers of the dead, upon which are written only the names of men. Flee therefore the wicked devices and snares of the prince of this world, lest at any time being conquered by his artifices, ye grow weak in your love. But be ye all joined together with an undivided heart. And I thank my God that I have a good conscience in respect to you, and that no one has it in his power to boast, either privately or publicly, that I have burdened any one either in much or in little. And I wish for all among whom I have spoken, that they may not possess that for a testimony against them.

VII. For though some would have deceived me according to the flesh, yet the Spirit, as being from God, is not deceived. For it knows both whence it comes and whither it goes, and detects the secrets [of the heart]. For, when I was among you, I cried, I spoke with a loud voice: Give heed to the bishop, and to the presbytery and deacons. Now, some suspected me of having spoken thus, as knowing beforehand the division caused by some among you. But He is my witness, for whose sake I am in bonds, that I got no intelligence from any man. But the Spirit proclaimed these words: Do nothing without the bishop; keep your bodies as the temples of God; love unity; avoid divisions; be the followers of Jesus Christ, even as He is of His Father.

VIII. I therefore did what belonged to me, as a man devoted to unity. For where there is division and wrath, God doth not dwell. To all them that repent, the Lord grants forgiveness, if they turn in penitence to the unity of God, and to communion with the bishop. I trust [as to you] in the grace of Jesus Christ, who shall free you from every bond. And I exhort you to do nothing out of strife, but according to the doctrine of Christ. When I heard some saying, If I do not find it in the ancient Scriptures, I will not believe the Gospel; on my saying to them, It is written, they answered me, That remains to be proved. But to me Jesus Christ is in the place of all that is ancient: His cross, and death, and resurrection, and the faith which is by Him, are undefiled monuments of antiquity; by which I desire, through your prayers, to be justified.

IX. The priests indeed are good, but the High Priest is better; to whom the holy of holies has been committed, and who alone has been trusted with the secrets of God. He is the door of the Father, by which enter in Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and the prophets, and the apostles, and the Church. All these have for their object the attaining to the unity of God. But the Gospel possesses something transcendent [above the former dispensation], viz., the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ, His passion and resurrection. For the beloved prophets announced Him, but the Gospel is the perfection of immortality. All these things are good together, if ye believe in love.

X. Since, according to your prayers, and the compassion which ye feel in Christ Jesus, it is reported to me that the Church which is at Antioch in Syria possesses peace, it will become you, as a Church of God, to elect a deacon to act as the ambassador of God [for you] to [the brethren there], that he may rejoice along with them when they are met together, and glorify the name [of God], Blessed is he in Jesus Christ, who shall be deemed worthy of such a ministry; and ye too shall be glorified. And if ye are willing, it is not beyond your power to do this, for the sake of God; as also the nearest Churches have sent, in some cases bishops, and in others presbyters and deacons.

XI. Now, as to Philo the deacon, of Cilicia, a man of reputation, who still ministers to me in the word of God, along with Rheus Agathopus, an elect man, who has followed me from Syria, not regarding his life, — these bear witness in your behalf; and I myself give thanks to God for you, that ye have received them, even as the Lord you. But may those that dishonored them be forgiven through the grace of Jesus Christ! The love of the brethren at Troas salutes you; whence also I write to you by Burrhus, who was sent along with me by the Ephesians and Smyrnaeans, to show their respect. May the Lord Jesus Christ honor them, in whom they hope, in flesh, and soul, and faith, and love, and concord! Fare ye well in Christ Jesus, our common hope.

THE EPISTLE OF IGNATIUS TO THE SMYRNAEANS

Ignatius, who is also called Theophorus, to the Church of God the Father, and of the beloved Jesus Christ, which has through mercy obtained every kind of gift, which is filled with faith and love, and is deficient in no gift, most worthy of God, and adorned with holiness: the Church which is at Smyrna, in Asia, wishes abundance of happiness, through the immaculate Spirit and word of God.

I. I glorify God, even Jesus Christ, who has given you such wisdom. For I have observed that ye are perfected in an immoveable faith, as if ye were nailed to the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, both in the flesh and in the spirit, and are established in love through the blood of Christ, being fully persuaded with respect to our Lord, that He was truly of the seed of David according to the flesh, and the Son of God according to the will and power of God; that He was truly born of a virgin, was baptized by John, in order that all righteousness might be fulfilled by Him; and was truly, under Pontius Pilate and Herod the tetrarch, nailed [to the cross] for us in His flesh. Of this fruit we are by His divinely-blessed passion, that He might set up a standard for all ages, through His resurrection, to all His holy and faithful [followers], whether among Jews or Gentiles, in the one body of His Church.

II. Now, He suffered all these things for our sakes, that we might be saved. And He suffered truly, even as also He truly raised up Himself, not, as certain unbelievers maintain, that He only seemed to suffer, as they themselves only seem to be [Christians]. And as they believe, so shall it happen unto them, when they shall be divested of their bodies, and be mere evil spirits.

III. For I know that after His resurrection also He was still possessed of flesh, and I believe that He is so now. When, for instance, He came to those who were with Peter, He said to them, “Lay hold, handle Me, and see that I am not an incorporeal spirit.” And immediately they touched Him, and believed, being convinced both by His flesh and spirit. For this cause also they despised death, and were found its conquerors. And after his resurrection He did eat and drink with them, as being possessed of flesh, although spiritually He was united to the Father.

IV. I give you these instructions, beloved, assured that ye also hold the same opinions [as I do]. But I guard you beforehand from those beasts in the shape of men, whom you must not only not receive, but, if it be possible, not even meet with; only you must pray to God for them, if by any means they may be brought to repentance, which, however, will be very difficult. Yet Jesus Christ, who is our true life, has the power of [effecting] this. But if these things were done by our Lord only in appearance, then am I also only in appearance bound. And why have I also surrendered myself to death, to fire, to the sword, to the wild beasts? But, [in fact,] he who is near to the sword is near to God; he that is among the wild beasts is in company with God; provided only he be so in the name of Jesus Christ. undergo all these things that I may suffer together with Him, He who became a perfect man inwardly strengthening me.

V. Some ignorantly deny Him, or rather have been denied by Him, being the advocates of death rather than of the truth. These persons neither have the prophets persuaded, nor the law of Moses, nor the Gospel even to this day, nor the sufferings we have individually endured. For they think also the same thing regarding us. For what does any one profit me, if he commends me, but blasphemes my Lord, not confessing that He was [truly] possessed of a body? But he who does not acknowledge this, has in fact altogether denied Him, being enveloped in death. I have not, however, thought good to write the names of such persons, inasmuch as they are unbelievers. Yea, far be it from me to make any mention of them, until they repent and return to [a true belief in] Christ's passion, which is our resurrection.

VI. Let no man deceive himself. Both the things which are in heaven, and the glorious angels, and rulers, both visible and invisible, if they believe not in the blood of Christ, shall, in consequence, incur condemnation. "He that is able to receive it, let him receive it." Let not [high] place puff any one up: for that which is worth all is a faith and love, to which nothing is to be preferred. But consider those who are of a different opinion with respect to the grace of Christ which has come unto us, how opposed they are to the will of God. They have no regard for love; no care for the widow, or the orphan, or the oppressed; of the bond, or of the free; of the hungry, or of the thirsty.

VII. They abstain from the Eucharist and from prayer, because they confess not the Eucharist to be the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ, which suffered for our sins, and which the Father, of His goodness, raised up again. Those, therefore, who speak against this gift of God, incur death in the midst of their disputes. But it were better for them to treat it with respect, that they also might rise again. It is fitting, therefore, that ye should keep aloof from such persons, and not to speak of them either in private or in public, but to give heed to the prophets, and above all, to the Gospel, in which the passion [of Christ] has been revealed to us, and the resurrection has been fully proved. But avoid all divisions, as the beginning of evils.

VIII. See that ye all follow the bishop, even as Jesus Christ does the Father, and the presbytery as ye would the apostles; and reverence the deacons, as being the institution of God. Let no man do anything connected with the Church without the bishop. Let that be deemed a proper Eucharist, which is [administered] either by the bishop, or by one to whom he has entrusted it. Wherever the bishop shall appear, there let the multitude [of the people] also be; even as, wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church. It is not lawful without the bishop either to baptize or to celebrate a love-feast; but whatsoever he shall approve of, that is also pleasing to God, so that everything that is done may be secure and valid.

IX. Moreover, it is in accordance with reason that we should return to soberness [of conduct], and, while yet we have opportunity, exercise repentance towards God. It is well to reverence both God and the bishop. He who honors the bishop has been honored by God; he who does anything without the knowledge of the bishop, does [in reality] serve the devil. Let all things, then, abound to you through grace, for ye are worthy. Ye have refreshed me in all things, and Jesus Christ [shall refresh] you. Ye have loved me when absent as well as when present. May God recompense you, for whose sake, while ye endure all things, ye shall attain unto Him.

X. Ye have done well in receiving Philo and Rheus Agathopus as servants of Christ our God, who have followed me for the sake of God, and who give thanks to the Lord in your behalf, because ye have in every

way refreshed them. None of these things shall be lost to you. May my spirit be for you, and my bonds, which ye have not despised or been ashamed of; nor shall Jesus Christ, our perfect hope, be ashamed of you.

XI. Your prayer has reached to the Church which is at Antioch in Syria. Coming from that place bound with chains, most acceptable to God, I salute all; I who am not worthy to be styled from thence, inasmuch as I am the least of them. Nevertheless, according to the will of God, I have been thought worthy [of this honor], not that I have any sense [of having deserved it], but by the grace of God, which I wish may be perfectly given to me, that through your prayers I may attain to God. In order, therefore, that your work may be complete both on earth and in heaven, it is fitting that, for the honor of God, your Church should elect some worthy delegate; so that he, journeying into Syria, may congratulate them that they are [now] at peace, and are restored to their proper greatness, and that their proper constitution has been re-established among them. It seems then to me a becoming thing, that you should send some one of your number with an epistle, so that, in company with them, he may rejoice over the tranquillity which, according to the will of God, they have obtained, and because that, through your prayers, they have now reached the harbor. As persons who are perfect, ye should also aim at those things which are perfect. For when ye are desirous to do well, God is also ready to assist you.

XII. The love of the brethren at Troas salutes you; whence also I write to you by Burrhus, whom ye sent with me, together with the Ephesians, your brethren, and who has in all things refreshed me. And I would that all may imitate him, as being a pattern of a minister of God. Grace will reward him in all things. I salute your most worthy bishop, and your very venerable presbytery, and your deacons, my fellow-servants, and all of you individually, as well as generally, in the name of Jesus Christ, and in His flesh and blood, in His passion and resurrection, both corporeal and spiritual, in union with God and you. Grace, mercy, peace, and patience, be with you for evermore!

XIII. I salute the families of my brethren, with their wives and children, and the virgins who are called widows. Be ye strong, I pray, in the power of the Holy Ghost. Philo, who is with me, greets you. I salute the house of Tavianus, and pray that it may be confirmed in faith and love, both corporeal and spiritual. I salute Alce, my well-beloved, and the incomparable Daphnus, and Eutecnus, and all by name. Fare ye well in the grace of God.

THE EPISTLE OF IGNATIUS TO POLYCARP

Ignatius, who is also called Theophorus, to Polycarp, Bishop of the Church of the Smyrnaeans, or rather, who has, as his own bishop, God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ: [wishes] abundance of happiness.

I. HAVING obtained good proof that thy mind is fixed in God as upon an immovable rock, I loudly glorify [His name] that I have been thought worthy [to behold] thy blameless face, which may I ever enjoy in God! I entreat thee, by the grace with which thou art clothed, to press forward in the course, and to exhort all that they may be saved. Maintain thy position with all care, both in the flesh and spirit. Have a regard to preserve unity, than which nothing is better. Bear with all, even as the Lord does with thee. Support all in love, as also thou doest. Give thyself to prayer without ceasing. Implore additional understanding to what thou already hast. Be watchful, possessing a sleepless spirit. Speak to every man separately, as God enables thee. Bear the infirmities of all, as being a perfect athlete [in the Christian life]: where the labor is great, the gain is all the more.

II. If thou lovest the good disciples, no thanks are due to thee on that account; but rather seek by meekness to subdue the more troublesome. Every kind of wound is not healed with the same plaster. Mitigate violent attacks [of disease] by gentle applications. Be in all things “wise as a serpent, and harmless as a dove.” For this purpose thou art composed of both flesh and spirit, that thou mayest deal tenderly with those [evils] that present themselves visibly before thee. And as respects those that are not seen, pray that [God] would reveal them unto thee, in order that thou mayest be wanting in nothing, but mayest abound in every gift.

The times call for thee, as pilots³¹¹ do for the winds, and as one tossed with tempest seeks for the haven, so that both thou [and those under thy care] may attain to God. Be sober as an athlete of God: the prize set before thee is immortality and eternal life, of which thou art also persuaded. In all things may my soul be for thine, and my bonds also, which thou hast loved.

III. Let not those who seem worthy of credit, but teach strange doctrines, fill thee with apprehension. Stand firm, as does an anvil which is beaten. It is the part of a noble athlete to be wounded, and yet to conquer. And especially, we ought to bear all things for the sake of God, that He also may bear with us. Be ever becoming more zealous than what thou art. Weigh carefully the times. Look for Him who is above all time, eternal and invisible, yet who became visible for our sakes; impalpable and impassible, yet who became passable on our account; and who in every kind of way suffered for our sakes.

IV. Let not widows be neglected. Be thou, after the Lord, their protector and friend. Let nothing be done without thy consent; neither do thou anything without the approval of God, which indeed thou dost not, inasmuch as thou art steadfast. Let your assembling together be of frequent occurrence: seek after all by name. Do not despise either male or female slaves, yet neither let them be puffed up with conceit, but rather let them submit themselves the more, for the glory of God, that they may obtain from God a better liberty. Let them not long to be set free [from slavery] at the public expense, that they be not found slaves to their own desires.

V. Flee evil arts; but all the more discourse in public regarding them. Speak to my sisters, that they love the Lord, and be satisfied with their husbands both in the flesh and spirit. In like manner also, exhort my brethren, in the name of Jesus Christ, that they love their wives, even as the Lord the Church. If any one can continue in a state of purity, to the honor of Him who is Lord of the flesh, let him so remain without boasting. If he begins to boast, he is undone; and if he reckon himself greater than the bishop, he is ruined. But it becomes both men and women who marry, to form their union with the approval of the bishop, that their marriage may be according to God, and not after their own lust. Let all things be done to the honor of God.

VI. Give ye heed to the bishop, that God also may give heed to you. My soul be for theirs that are submissive to the bishop, to the presbyters, and to the deacons, and may my portion be along with them in God! Labor together with one another; strive in company together; run together; suffer together; sleep together; and awake together, as the stewards, and associates, and servants of God. Please ye Him under whom ye fight, and from whom ye receive your wages. Let none of you be found a deserter. Let your baptism endure as your arms; your faith as your helmet; your love as your spear; your patience as a complete panoply. Let your works be the charge assigned to you, that ye may receive a worthy recompense. Be long-suffering-, therefore, with one another, in meekness, as God is towards you. May I have joy of you for ever!

VII. Seeing that the Church which is at Antioch in Syria is, as report has informed me, at peace, through your prayers, I also am the more encouraged, resting without anxiety in God, if indeed by means of suffering I may attain to God, so that, through your prayers, I may be found a disciple [of Christ]. It is fitting, O Polycarp, most blessed in God, to assemble a very solemn council, and to elect one whom you greatly love, and know to be a man of activity, who may be designated the messenger of God; and to bestow on him this honor that he may go into Syria, and glorify your ever active love to the praise of Christ. A Christian has not power over himself, but must always be ready for the service of God. Now, this work is both God's and yours, when ye shall have completed it to His glory. For I trust that, through grace, ye are prepared for every good work pertaining to God. Knowing, therefore, your energetic love of the truth, I have exhorted you by this brief Epistle.

³¹¹ The term refers to those who guide sailing vessels – the wind is essential for the movement of the ship

VIII. Inasmuch as I have not been able to write to all the Churches, because I must suddenly sail from Troas to Neapolis, as the will [of the emperor] enjoins, [I beg that] thou, as being acquainted with the purpose of God, wilt write to the adjacent Churches, that they also may act in like manner, such as are able to do so sending messengers, and the others transmitting letters through those persons who are sent by thee, that thou mayest be glorified by a work which shall be remembered for ever, as indeed thou art worthy to be. I salute all by name, and in particular the wife of Epitropus, with all her house and children. I salute Attalus, my beloved. I salute him

who shall be deemed worthy to go [from you] into Syria. Grace shall be with him for ever, and with Polycarp that sends him. I pray for your happiness for ever in our God, Jesus Christ, by whom continue ye in the unity and under the protection of God, I salute Alce, my dearly beloved. Fare ye well in the Lord.

ADDENDUM E

Excerpts From Justin's First Apology

CHAPTER 61 CHRISTIAN IMMERSION

I will also relate the manner in which we dedicated ourselves to God when we had been made new through Christ; lest, if we omit this, we seem to be unfair in the explanation we are making. As many as are persuaded and believe that what we teach and say is true, and undertake to be able to live accordingly, are instructed to pray and to entreat God with fasting, for the remission of their sins that are past, we praying and fasting with them. Then they are brought by us where there is water, and are regenerated in the same manner in which we were ourselves regenerated.³¹² For, in the name of God, the Father and Lord of the universe, and of our Savior Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, they then receive the washing with water. For Christ also said, "Except ye be born again, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Now, that it is impossible for those who have once been born to enter into their mothers' wombs, is manifest to all."³¹³ And how those who have sinned and repent shall escape their sins, is declared by Esaias the prophet, as I wrote above; he thus speaks: "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from your souls; learn to do well; judge the fatherless, and plead for the widow: and come and let us reason together, saith the Lord. And though your sins be as scarlet, I will make them white like wool; and though they be as crimson, I will make them white as snow. But if ye refuse and rebel, the sword shall devour you: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."³¹⁴

And for this [rite] we have learned from the apostles this reason. Since at our birth we were born without our own knowledge or choice, by our parents coming together, and were brought up in bad habits and wicked training; in order that we may not remain the children of necessity and of ignorance, but may become the children of choice and knowledge, and may obtain in the water the remission of sins formerly committed, there is pronounced over him who chooses to be born again, and has repented of his sins, the name of God the Father and Lord of the universe; he who leads to the washing the person that is to be washed calling him by this name alone. For no one can utter the name of the ineffable God; and if any one dare to say that there is a name, he raves with a hopeless madness. And this washing is called illumination, because they who learn these things are illuminated in their understandings. And in the name of Jesus Christ, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and in the name of the Holy Ghost, who through the prophets foretold all things about Jesus, he who is illuminated is washed.

CHAPTER 65 ADMINISTRATION OF THE EUCHARIST

But we, after we have thus washed him who has been convinced and has assented to our teaching, bring him to the place where those who are called brethren are assembled, in order that we may offer hearty prayers in common for ourselves and for the illuminated person, and for all others in every place, that we may be counted worthy, now that we have learned the truth, by our works also to be found good citizens and keepers of the commandments, so that we may be saved with an everlasting salvation. Having ended the prayers, we salute one another with a kiss. There is then brought to the president of the brethren bread and a cup of wine mixed with water; and he taking them, gives praise and glory to the Father of the universe, through the name of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, and offers thanks at considerable length for our being counted worthy to receive these things at His hands. And when he has concluded the prayers and thanksgivings, all the people present express their assent by saying Amen. This word, "Amen" in the

³¹² Acts 22:6; Titus 3:5; Ephesians 5:26

³¹³ John 3:4

³¹⁴ Isaiah 1:16ff

Hebrew language is the same as the Greek, γένοιτο [so be it]. And when the president has given thanks, and all the people have expressed their assent, those who are called by us deacons give to each of those present to partake of the bread and wine mixed with water over which the thanksgiving was pronounced, and to those who are absent they carry away a portion.

CHAPTER 66 OF THE EUCHARIST

And this food is called among us εὐχαρίστια [the Eucharist], of which 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. For not as common bread and common drink do we receive these; but in like manner as Jesus Christ our Savior, having been made flesh by the Word of God, had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so likewise have we been taught that the food which is blessed by the prayer of His word, and from which our blood and flesh by transmutation are nourished, is the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh. For the apostles, in the memoirs composed by them, which are called Gospels, have thus delivered unto us what was enjoined upon them; that Jesus took bread, and when He had given thanks, said, "This do ye in remembrance of Me, this is My body;" and that, after the same manner, having taken the cup and given thanks, He said, "This is My blood;" and gave it to them alone. Which the wicked devils have imitated in the mysteries of Mithras, commanding the same thing to be done. For, that bread and a cup of water are placed with certain incantations in the mystic rites of one who is being initiated, you either know or can learn.

CHAPTER 67 WEEKLY WORSHIP OF THE CHRISTIANS

And we afterwards continually remind each other of these things. And the wealthy among us help the needy; and we always keep together; and for all things wherewith we are supplied, we bless the Maker of all through His Son Jesus Christ, and through the Holy Ghost. And on the day called Sunday, 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 [the one presiding at the meeting] 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; 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. And they who are well to do, and willing, give what each thinks fit; and what is collected is deposited with the president, who succors the orphans and widows and those who, through sickness or any other cause, are in want, and those who are in bonds and the strangers sojourning among us, and in a word takes care of all who are in need. But 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, He taught them these things, which we have submitted to you also for your consideration.

ADDENDUM F

The Faith Once For All Delivered To The Saints

Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.⁴ For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.³¹⁵

Implications of “once for all.”

Jude had planned to write a treatise or an epistle on the subject of salvation, something of highest interest to all Christians, when news reached him of a new danger threatening the Church. He was so alarmed by the report that he felt compelled to abandon his first project in order to warn his readers of an imminent danger. The demise of Gospel truth was being threatened by the presence of individuals who had taken the doctrine of grace and turned it into justification for unbridled behaviour. These libertines were able to embark upon their course because they had adjusted apostolic doctrine. As a result, they defiled the flesh, rejected authority, and reviled angelic majesties. Jude exhorted the Church to *contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all³¹⁶ delivered to the saints.*

Two important points come to us from Jude’s exhortation:

1. There is a fixed body of doctrine that was given once for all time and it is not subject to adjustment.
2. Behaviour and conduct are determined by what one believes.

The second of these points is illustrated by Carlton Pearson, well known leader in the Charismatic Movement. Pearson’s “inclusive” theology, a form of Ultimate Reconciliation, shocked many in the Charismatic camp when he first began to reveal his doctrine. Having adjusted the apostolic teaching on eternal damnation, Pearson now has a different view concerning homosexual behaviour. Editor J. Lee Grady, in his April 2004, FIRST WORD, column in *Charisma & Christian Life*, wrote,

“Last fall I was shocked to learn that a group of charismatic church leaders were convening in Tampa, Florida, to discuss ways they could promote a homosexual agenda....They met in a ‘gay affirming’ church led by a former Assemblies of God minister. Attendees included Oklahoma-based Carleton Pearson, who made headlines last year when he announced that he had adopted a more ‘inclusive’ theology.... Pearson said he hoped gay leaders would “build silent bridges” by joining the staffs of “heterosexual churches” and gradually convincing them to accept the gay lifestyle...”³¹⁷

I cannot avoid remembering another high-profile leader in the Charismatic Movement who advocated the doctrine of Universalism or Ultimate Reconciliation. This particular teacher was one of the most influential itinerant teachers in the early days of the movement. In August 1980, he was exposed as a practicing homosexual. He even was discovered to have been seducing young men who attended church-sponsored men’s retreats.

³¹⁵ Jude 1-4 NAS All scriptural quotes in this paper are New American Standard Version, unless noted otherwise.

³¹⁶ The Greek term, ἄπαξ (*apakz*), is used here in its classical sense, “once for all,” as it is in verse 5, and in Hebrews 6:4; 9:26,27; 10:2; I Peter 3:18. See J.B. Mayor, “The General Epistle of Jude,” *The Expositors Greek New Testament*, Robertson Nicoll, ed.; (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1976 printing) Vol. V, page 255

³¹⁷ J. Lee Grady, “Heretics Among Us,” *Charisma & Christian Life*, April 2004, Volume 29, Number 9, page 6

These two well known UR advocates are illustrative of Jude's point that doctored doctrines can result in aberrant moral standards. It was but a short step for each of these men to move from adjusting the doctrine of eternal damnation to adjusting one's view of morality.

Graham Cooke has written,

“We need a firm grip on theology before we can experience any success at practical Christianity. Part of the problem is the failure to marry teaching to discipleship and the way that Scripture is used in the church. People base their spiritual growth and maturity on the practical sections of Scripture without internalizing the doctrinal elements. The apostle Paul's letters are in halves: one-half doctrinal and one-half practical.

For example, Romans chapters 1-8, Ephesians chapters 1-3, and Colossians chapters 1-2 reveal what we need to know doctrinally about God, ourselves, sin, and salvation... The practical sections of Romans chapters 12-15, Ephesians chapters 4-6, and Colossians chapters 3-4 describe what we need to do to live out our faith in daily experience.

Leaders try to correct people's behavior by jumping to the practical sections of the Bible. We get speakers to come, who may be mainly preachers with a blessing ministry, to minister to the church. We want a “quick fix,” or we are looking for something to happen... We don't have time for theology and thought. We want a practical solution and we want it *now!*³¹⁸

What one believes about God Himself (theology), influences almost all other beliefs. How one views the creation, how one views the gender debate, how one views church leadership, how one views marriage, how one understands salvation, these and a host of present day debates reflect different concepts of God. It is important for us to be concerned about the truth. Every believer should seek a true knowledge of God, both conceptually and experientially. His life will be a reflection of the Divinity whom he serves.

³¹⁸ Emphasis in the original. Graham Cooke, *A Divine Confrontation* (Shippensburg, PA, Destiny Image Publishers, Inc. 1999) page 10

ADDENDUM G

The Pillar and Foundation Of The Truth

Although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing you these instructions so that, if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth. (I Timothy 3:14-15 NIV)

Pilate asked Our Lord, "So You are a king?"

Jesus replied, "You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice. "

Pilate responded, "What is truth?"³¹⁹

Pilate was a pragmatist. His attitude was, *the truth is what works*. When the Romans conquered a people, they usually did not interfere with the indigenous religion. By allowing a people to continue with their religion, the Romans had one less problem with which to deal. They interfered with a conquered people's religion only when that religion interrupted the collecting of taxes or fomented rebellion. What a people believed was truth for that people. What another group believed was truth for that group.

Pilate, the Roman politician, spoke in a pre-Christian era. Most Twenty-First Century western nations live in a post-Christian era; the attitude is the same as Pilate's pre-Christian attitude.

- You have your truth, and I have my truth
- Neither of us will impose our truth on anybody else.
- There are no inherent absolutes.
- Society can pass laws that become absolutes for that society.

In such a world, the Church is called upon to be the *pillar and foundation of the truth*.

True Christianity stands in contrast to such Post-Christian, Post-Modernist ambiguity.

- In the New Testament, the Greek term for "truth, *aletheia* (ἀλήθεια), is used 110 times in the sense of absolute truth.
- Christianity declares that its statements or beliefs are true because they agree with reality; A proposition is not true because it is in the Bible; it is in the Bible because it is true.
- Scripture affirms that the truth that God reveals is knowable and should be defended rationally.

In What Way is the Church, "the Pillar and foundation of the truth"?

The Greek term translated, "Pillar," is *stulos* (στῦλος), meaning, *column, Pillar, support, prop*. In the familiar picture of the Greek temple on Mt. Acropolis, the massive columns holding up the roof of the temple are *stuloi*.

The word translated, "foundation," is *edraïoma* (ἐδραΐωμα), meaning, *that which makes something immovable or steadfast*.

Thus, the *stulos* supports or upholds while the *edraïoma* does not allow movement or deviation. One might equate these to the tent pole that holds up the tent, and the tent peg that does not allow the pole to move.

The Truth Of Which The Church Is The Pillar And Ground

First, we note that the Church is not the pillar and ground of *truth*, but of *The Truth*. The truth that the Church supports and anchors is a particular truth..

³¹⁹ John 18:37

The arch over the entrance to Harvard, quoting John 8:32, reads, *know the truth and the truth shall make you free*

The quote should have included the entire statement of Jesus,

Jesus therefore was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."³²⁰

The truth that the Church upholds and anchors first of all is the truth revealed in Jesus Christ,

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me."³²¹

The truth that the Church upholds and anchors also is the truth of the apostles' doctrine, which explains and fleshes out the truth revealed in Jesus Christ.

And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching³²²

The Church is not concerned with the teaching of philosophers, psychologists, or great thinkers, except as they relate to *the truth*, of which the Church is called to be the pillar and ground. There is much truth concerning many fields of knowledge that the Bible does not address.

Some time ago, I cut down a tree. One of my grandsons, watching me wield the axe, wanted to try it. I had to teach him how. He could have read the Bible eight hours a day and never would he have learned how to use an axe.

When I dug ditches for Muskogee County, as a teenager, the first few hours were very difficult, until a man named, Dick Biggs, said, "here boy, let me show you how to use your legs to push that shovel." As a teenager, I prayed daily and read the Sermon on the Mount over and over, but that did not teach me how to use a shovel.

One could read the Bible from morning to night and never have an understanding of the valences of chemical elements, or algebra, or computer science. The Church has no business making pronouncements in matters that lie beyond its biblical mandate. There have been sad episodes in Church History when ecclesiastical authorities made dogma their pronouncements in matters in which the Bible is silent or open to interpretation. Only when experts in practical and theoretical disciplines begin to use their expertise as a platform to oppose *the truth*, should the Church get involved in those disciplines. When that happens, it becomes the business of the Church.

Another important consideration is that the Greek states that the Church is *A pillar*, not *THE pillar*. There are other pillars. God has left Himself many witnesses. Some rather absurd things have taken place from time to time in Church History when institutions or individuals other than the church began to put forth truth that contradicted some error that the institutional Church had accepted. The institutional Church insisted that it was THE Pillar, much like the Pharisees, because its position and authority were threatened.

As the pillar and anchor, the church is

- the repository of revealed truth
- the advocate of revealed truth
- the uncompromising anchor of revealed truth.

³²⁰ John 8:31-32

³²¹ John 14:6

³²² Acts 2:42

How Is The Church The Pillar Of Truth?

Newport J.D. White wrote,

“The Church... is the divinely constituted human Society by which the support and maintenance in the world of revealed truth is conditioned. Truth if revealed to isolated individuals, no matter how numerous, would be dissipated in the world. But the Divine Society in which it is given an objective existence, at once compels the world to take knowledge of it, and assures those who receive the revelation that it is independent of, and external to, themselves, and not a mere fancy of their own.”³²³

The existence of the Church is a pillar of the truth

The existence of Judaism, today, is testimony to the fact that a man named Moses lived in the Fifteenth Century BC. He is an historical figure, not just a myth or a legend.

The existence of Buddhism today is testimony to the fact that a man named Sakyamuni lived in the Sixth Century BC. He is an historical figure, not just a myth or a legend.

The existence of Islam is testimony to the fact that a man named Muhammed lived in the Sixth Century AD. He is an historical figure, not just a myth or a legend.

The existence of the Church is testimony to the fact that a man named, Jesus, lived in the First Century AD. He is a historical figure, not just a myth or a legend. The Church is a column, holding up that truth.

The message of the Church is a pillar of truth

The message that the Church faithfully proclaims is a “pillar of truth.” The Church declares to every nation under heaven that on the cross Jesus paid the price for our sins; He came forth from the grave, even as we someday shall do by the power of God; He ascended to the throne in heaven, at the right hand of the Father; He poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit upon the Church; He is coming again to judge the living and the dead; and that there is no other name under heaven whereby men might be saved.

The Church’s preservation and distribution of the Bible is a pillar of truth

The Bible, which is a gift of the Holy Spirit, exists today because the Church has been a steward of the Holy Spirit inspired writings, and has distributed the Bible to the nations.

In his discussion of the blessings and responsibilities that Israel had enjoyed, Paul wrote,

Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision? Great in every respect. First of all, that they were entrusted with the oracles of God. (Romans 3:1-2)

The same thing could be written about the Church. We have been entrusted with the Oracles of God.

How Is The Church The Ground Of Truth?

As we already have seen, the Church from its very first days has *contend(ed) earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.*

³²³ Newport J.D. White, “The First and Second Epistles to Timothy and the Epistle to Titus,” *The Expositors Greek Testament*, Volume Four, (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, reprinted 1976) p 118]

The Church declares that any revelation received after the death of the revelatory apostles, and apostolic men, is to be rejected.³²⁴

Mormonism, for example, is immediately disqualified as a form of Christianity because of its origin. In 1827, Joseph Smith claimed that an angel named Moroni revealed to him where to find gold plates that told about Messianic visitations to America. They were inscribed in *reformed Egyptian*. No one else ever saw the plates, except in a vision. Joe Smith translated the plates, by sitting on one side of a table with a copyist on the other side of the table. There was a sheet suspended from the ceiling so that the copyist could not see the plates. The work was completed in 1829 and the plates vanished. The Book of Mormon was printed and distributed in 1830.

The beliefs of Mormonism do not need to be examined to see whether or not they pass scrutiny. The fact that this religion was birthed in 1827 is sufficient to demand its rejection.

The same thing is true of Islam, which claims a post-New Testament origin.

In response to Paul's frequent exhortation, the Church holds firm on doctrinal matters.

If we do no more than survey Paul's letters to his younger associates, Timothy and Titus, we cannot fail to reach the conclusion that the Church can brook no compromise in its doctrine.

As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus, in order that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines, nor to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies, which give rise to mere speculation rather than furthering the administration of God which is by faith. ...For some men, straying from these things, have turned aside to fruitless discussion, wanting to be teachers of the Law, even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions. (I Timothy 1:3-4, 6-7)

realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous man, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted. (I Timothy 1:9-11) NOTE: Behaviour is a part of the glorious gospel of the blessed God.

But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, (I Timothy 4:1)

In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following. But have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women. On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness; (I Timothy 4:6-7)

Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching... Take pains with these things; be absorbed in them, so that your progress may be evident to all. Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things; for as you do this you will insure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you. (I Timothy 4:13,15-16)

If anyone advocates a different doctrine, and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, he is conceited and understands nothing; but he has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions, and constant friction between men of

³²⁴ The term, "apostolic men," refers to those who were associated with the apostles and in conjunction with them produced the documents that are classed as Scripture. Luke and Mark are the two men so designated.

depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. (I Timothy 6:3-5)

I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate, that you keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, (I Timothy 6:13-14)

O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you, avoiding worldly and empty chatter and the opposing arguments of what is falsely called "knowledge"-- which some have professed and thus gone astray from the faith. Grace be with you. (I Timothy 6:20-21)

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth. (II Timothy 2:15)

I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths. (II Timothy 4:1-4)

... holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict. For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, 11 who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not teach, for the sake of sordid gain.(Titus 1:9-11)

But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine. (Titus 2:1)

But shun foolish controversies and genealogies and strife and disputes about the Law; for they are unprofitable and worthless. 10 Reject a factious man after a first and second warning, 11 knowing that such a man is perverted and is sinning, being self-condemned. (Titus 3:9-11)

These exhortations to church leaders make it clear that in matters of doctrine, leaders have a responsibility to be firm, steadfast, and unmovable. However, the entire church has an equal responsibility. Paul wrote to the Ephesian Church that we are not to be moved about from one doctrine to another and that we are to speak correct doctrine in a loving manner.

As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ, (Ephesians 4:14-15)

Paul did not always name the purveyors of falsehood, but at other times he named names

Among these are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have delivered over to Satan, so that they may be taught not to blaspheme. (I Timothy 1:20)

No Christian, especially one in leadership, has the liberty to come up with new and innovative beliefs and ideas. The Faith was delivered to the saints, once for all.

CONCLUSION

The Church has two primary commissions:

- The commission to preach the Gospel and make disciples in every nation (Matthew 28:18-20, etc.)
- To be a pillar and anchor of the Truth.

Neither of these can be neglected.

ADDENDUM H

THE EPISTLE OF POLYCARP

Translated by J.B. Lightfoot.

Prologue:

Polycarp and the presbyters that are with him unto the Church of God which sojourns at Philippi; mercy unto you and peace from God Almighty and Jesus Christ our Savior be multiplied.

1 I rejoiced with you greatly in our Lord Jesus Christ, for that ye received the followers of the true Love and escorted them on their way, as befitted you--those men encircled in saintly bonds which are the diadems of them that be truly chosen of God and our Lord; [2] and that the steadfast root of your faith which was famed from primitive times abided until now and bears fruit unto our Lord Jesus Christ, who endured to face even death for our sins, *whom God raised, having loosed the pangs of Hades; on whom, [3] though ye saw Him not, ye believe with joy unutterable and full of glory;* unto which joy many desire to enter in; forasmuch as ye know that it is *by grace ye are saved, not of works,* but by the will of God through Jesus Christ.

2 *Wherefore gird up your loins and serve God in fear and truth, forsaking the vain and empty talking and the error of the many, for that ye have believed on Him that raised our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead and gave unto him glory and a throne on His right hand; unto whom all things were made subject that are in heaven and that are on the earth; to whom every creature that hath breath doeth service; who cometh as judge of quick and dead; whose blood God will require of them that are disobedient unto Him. [2] Now He that raised Him from the dead will raise us also; if we do His will and walk in His commandments and love the things which He loved, abstaining from all unrighteousness, covetousness, love of money, evil speaking, false witness; not rendering evil for evil or railing for railing or blow for blow or cursing for cursing; [3] but remembering the words which the Lord spake, as He taught; Judge not that ye be not judged. Forgive, and it shall be forgiven to you. Have mercy that ye may receive mercy. With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again; and again Blessed are the poor and they that are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of God.*

3 These things, brethren, I write unto you concerning righteousness, not because I laid this charge upon myself, but because ye invited me. [2] For neither am I, nor is any other like unto me, able to follow the wisdom of the blessed and glorious Paul, who when he came among you taught face to face with the men of that day the word which concerns truth carefully and surely; who also, when he was absent, wrote a letter unto you, into the which if ye look diligently, ye shall be able to be builder up unto the faith given to you, [3] *which is the mother of us all,* while hope follows after and love goes before--love toward God and Christ and toward our neighbor. For if any man be occupied with these, he hath fulfilled the commandment of righteousness; for he that hath love is far from all sin.

4 *But the love of money is the beginning of all troubles.* Knowing therefore that *we brought nothing into the world neither can we carry anything out,* let us arm ourselves with the armor of righteousness, and let us teach ourselves first to walk in the commandment of the Lord; [2] and then our wives also, to walk in the faith that hath been given unto them and in love and purity, cherishing their own husbands in all truth and loving all men equally in all chastity, and to train their children in the training of the fear of God. [3] Our widows must be sober-minded as touching the faith of the Lord, making intercession without ceasing for all men, abstaining from all calumny, evil speaking, false witness, love of money, and every evil thing, knowing that they are God's altar, and that all sacrifices are carefully inspected, and nothing escapes Him either of their thoughts or intents or any of the secret things of the heart.

5 Knowing then that *God is not mocked,* we ought to walk worthily of His commandment and His glory. [2] In like manner deacons should be blameless in the presence of His righteousness, as deacons of God

and Christ and not of men; not calumniators, not double-tongued, not lovers of money, temperate in all things, compassionate, diligent, walking according to the truth of the Lord who became a *minister (deacon) of all*. For if we be well pleasing unto Him in this present world, we shall receive the future world also, according as He promised us to raise us from the dead, and that if we conduct ourselves worthily of Him *we shall also reign with Him*, if indeed we have faith. [3] In like manner also the younger men must be blameless in all things, caring for purity before everything and curbing themselves from every evil. For it is a good thing to refrain from lusts in the world, for every *lust wars against the Spirit*, and *neither whoremongers nor effeminate persons nor defilers of themselves with men shall inherit the kingdom of God*, neither they that do untoward things. Wherefore it is right to abstain from all these things, submitting yourselves to the presbyters and deacons as to God and Christ. The virgins must walk in a blameless and pure conscience.

6 And the presbyters also must be compassionate, merciful towards all men, *turning back the sheep that are gone astray, visiting all the infirm, not neglecting a widow or an orphan or a poor man: but providing always for that which is honorable in the sight of God and of men*, abstaining from all anger, respect of persons, unrighteous judgment, being far from all love of money, not quick to believe anything against any man, not hasty in judgment, knowing that we all are debtors of sin. [2] If then we entreat the Lord that He would forgive us, we also ought to forgive: for we are before the eyes of our Lord and God, and we must *all stand at the judgment-seat of Christ*, and *each man must give an account of himself*. [3] Let us therefore so serve Him with fear and all reverence, as He himself gave commandment and the Apostles who preached the Gospel to us and the prophets who proclaimed beforehand the coming of our Lord; being zealous as touching that which is good, abstaining from offenses and from the false brethren and from them that bear the name of the Lord in hypocrisy, who lead foolish men astray.

7 For every one *who shall not confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is antichrist*: and whosoever shall not confess the testimony of the Cross, is of the devil; and whosoever shall pervert the oracles of the Lord to his own lusts and say that there is neither resurrection nor judgment, that man is the firstborn of Satan. [2] Wherefore let us forsake the vain doing of the many and their false teachings, and turn unto the word which was delivered unto us from the beginning, *being sober unto prayer* and constant in fastings, entreating the all-seeing God with supplications that *He bring us not into temptation*, according as the Lord said, *The Spirit is indeed willing, but the flesh is weak*.

8 Let us therefore without ceasing hold fast by our hope and by the earnest of our righteousness, which is Jesus Christ who *took up our sins in His own body upon the tree, who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth*, but for our sakes He endured all things, that we might live in Him. [2] Let us therefore become imitators of His endurance; and if we should suffer for His name's sake, let us glorify Him. For He gave this example to us in His own person, and we believed this.

9 I exhort you all therefore to be obedient unto the word of righteousness and to practice all endurance, which also ye saw with your own eyes in the blessed Ignatius and Zosimus and Rufus, yea and in others also who came from among yourselves, as well as in Paul himself and the rest of the Apostles; [2] being persuaded that all these *ran not in vain* but in faith and righteousness, and that they are in their due place in the presence of the Lord, with whom also they suffered. For they *loved not the present world*, but Him that died for our sakes and was raised by God for us.

10 Stand fast therefore in these things and follow the example of the Lord, *being firm in the faith and immovable, in love of the brotherhood kindly affectioned one to another*, partners with the truth, *forestalling one another* in the gentleness of the Lord, despising no man. [2]

When ye are able to do good, defer it not, for Pitifulness delivers from death. Be ye all subject one to another, having your conversation unblamable among the gentiles, that your good works both ye may receive praise and the Lord may not be blasphemed in you. [3] But *woe to him through whom the name of the Lord be blasphemed*. Therefore teach all men soberness, in which ye yourselves also walk.

11 I was exceedingly grieved for Valens, who aforesaid was a presbyter among you, because he is so ignorant of the office which was given unto him. I warn you therefore that ye refrain from covetousness, and that ye be pure and truthful. Refrain from all evil. [2] But he who cannot govern himself in these things, how doth he enjoin this upon another? If a man refrain not from covetousness, he shall be defiled by idolatry, and shall be judged as one of the Gentiles who *know not the judgment of the Lord, Nay, know we not, that the saints shall judge the world*, as Paul teacheth? [3] But I have not found any such thing in you, neither have heard thereof, among whom the blessed Paul labored, who were his *letters* in the beginning. For *he boasts of you* in all those *churches* which alone at that time knew God; for we knew Him not as yet. [4] Therefore I am exceedingly grieved for him and for his wife, unto whom may the Lord grant true repentance. Be ye therefore yourselves also sober herein, and *hold not such as enemies* but restore them as frail and erring members, that ye may save the whole body of you. For so doing, ye do edify one another.

12 For I am persuaded that ye are well trained in the sacred writings, and nothing is hidden from you. But to myself this is not granted. Only, as it is said in these scriptures, *Be ye angry and sin not*, and *Let not the sun set on your wrath*. Blessed is he that remembers this; and I trust that this is in you. [2] Now may the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the eternal High-priest Himself the [Son of God Jesus Christ, build you up in faith and truth, and in all gentleness and in all avoidance of wrath and in forbearance and long suffering and in patient endurance and in purity; and may He grant unto you a lot and portion among His saints, and to us with you, and to all that are under heaven, who shall believe on our Lord and God Jesus Christ and on His Father *that raised him from the dead*. [3] *Pray for all the saints*. Pray also *for kings* and powers and princes and *for them that persecute* and hate you and for *the enemies of the cross*, that your fruit may be *manifest among all men*, that ye may be perfect in Him.

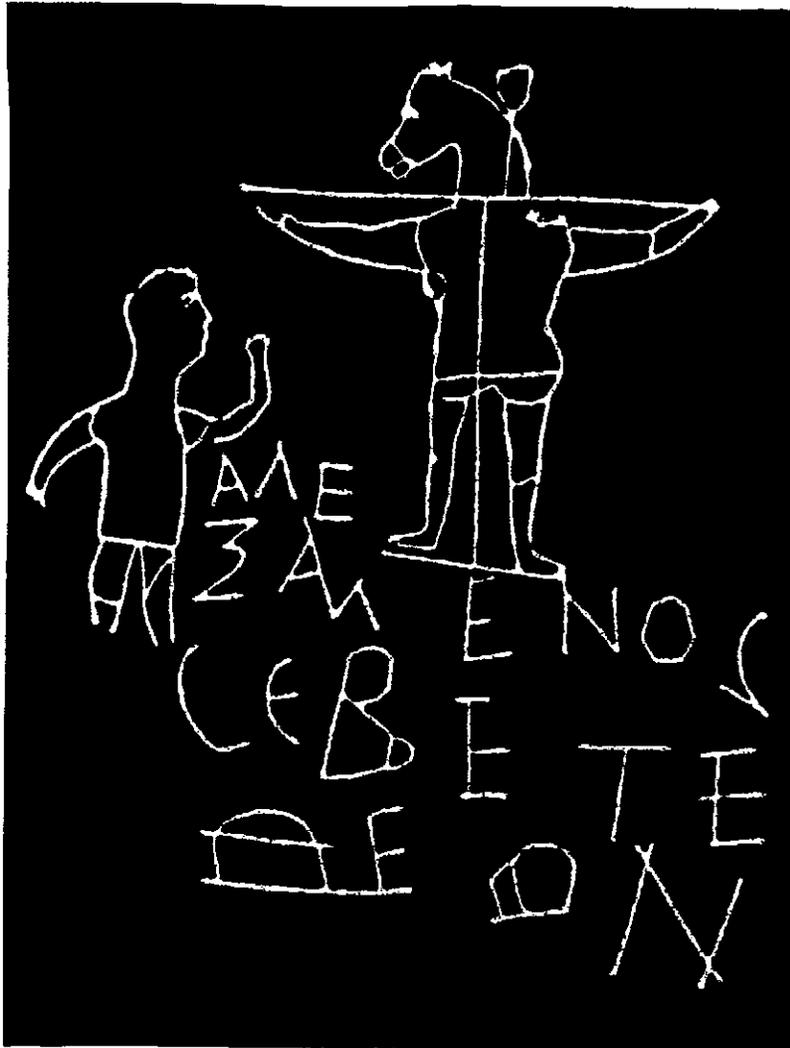
13 Ye wrote to me, both ye yourselves and Ignatius, asking that if any one should go to Syria he might carry thither the letters from you. And this I will do, if I get a fit opportunity, either I myself, or he whom I shall send to be ambassador on your behalf also. [2] The letters of Ignatius which were sent to us by him, and others as many as we had by us, we send unto you, according as ye gave charge; the which are subjoined to this letter; from which ye will be able to gain great advantage. For they comprise faith and endurance and every kind of edification, which pertains unto our Lord. Moreover concerning Ignatius himself and those that were with him, if ye have any sure tidings, certify us.

14 I write these things to you by Crescens, whom I commended to you recently and now commend unto you: for he hath walked blamelessly with us; and I believe also with you in like manner. But ye shall have his sister commended, when she shall come to you. Fare ye well in the Lord Jesus Christ in grace, ye and all yours. Amen³²⁵

³²⁵ Translation by J.B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, Edited & Revised by Michael W. Holmes. (Grand Rapids, Baker Book House) 1992 ppg 202-221 (I adjusted some of the archaic language – JWG)

ADDENDUM I

This crude drawing, dating from the end of the Second Century or the beginning of the Third Century, is the earliest extant representation of the crucifixion of Jesus. This anti-Christian graffito was found scratched into a wall on the Palatine Hill, the chief hill of Rome's seven hills. Note that the figure on the cross has the head of an ass. The caption reads, "Alexamenos worships his God."



ADDENDUM J

The Martyrdom of Polycarp

Polycarp was one of the most respected leaders of the Church in the Second Century. He was the forty-year old Bishop of Smyrna at the time that Ignatius wrote his seven letters, one of them being addressed to Polycarp. As a young man, he had met many who had known the apostles. According to tradition, his knowledge of apostle, John, was first-hand knowledge and the facts of the case fit that tradition.

Polycarp was martyred in February, but the year is uncertain. He did make a trip to Rome to meet with the Roman bishop, Anicetus, in an effort to resolve the Easter controversy – probably in 162 AD. February is certain because of the information in Chapter 21. After his death, the Church at Smyrna wrote an encyclical epistle describing his martyrdom.

The following letter was written by the Church at Smyrna to the Church at Philomelium, sometime in the middle of the Second Century and through that Church to the whole Christian world, in order to give a succinct account of the circumstances attending the martyrdom of Polycarp. It is the earliest of all the Martyria, and has generally been accounted both the most interesting and authentic. A number of scholars consider it to have been interpolated in several passages. This suspicion is based, in a degree on Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* (4. 15); which contains the encyclical without some of the most startling miraculous phenomena recorded in the text as it now stands.

CONCERNING THE MARTYRDOM OF THE HOLY POLYCARP

The Church of God which sojourns at Smyrna, to the Church of God sojourning in Philomelium, and to all the congregations of the Holy and Catholic Church in every place: Mercy, peace, and love from God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, be multiplied.

CHAPTER 1 SUBJECT OF WHICH WE WRITE

We have written to you, brethren, as to what relates to the martyrs, and especially to the blessed Polycarp, who put an end to the persecution, having, as it were, set a seal upon it by his martyrdom. For almost all the events that happened previously [to this one], took place that the Lord might show us from above a martyrdom becoming the Gospel. For he waited to be delivered up, even as the Lord had done, that we also might become his followers, while we look not merely at what concerns ourselves but have regard also to our neighbors. For it is the part of a true and well-founded love, not only to wish one's self to be saved, but also all the brethren.

CHAPTER 2 THE WONDERFUL CONSTANCY OF THE MARTYRS

All the martyrdoms, then, were blessed and noble which took place according to the will of God. For it becomes us who profess greater piety than others, to ascribe the authority over all things to God. And truly, who can fail to admire their nobleness of mind, and their patience, with that love towards their Lord which they displayed? — who, when they were so torn with scourges, that the frame of their bodies, even to the very inward veins and arteries, was laid open, still patiently endured, while even those that stood by pitied and bewailed them. But they reached such a pitch of magnanimity, that not one of them let a sigh or a groan escape them; thus proving to us all that those holy martyrs of Christ, at the very time when they suffered such torments, were absent from the body, or rather, that the Lord then stood by them, and communed with them. And, looking to the grace of Christ, they despised all the torments of this world, redeeming themselves from eternal punishment by [the suffering of] a single hour. For this reason the fire of their savage executioners appeared cool to them. For they kept before their view escape from that fire which is eternal and never shall be quenched, and looked forward with the eyes of their heart to those good things which are laid up for such as

endure; things "which ear hath not heard, nor eye seen, neither have entered into the heart of man," but were revealed by the Lord to them, inasmuch as they were no longer men, but had already become angels. And, in like manner, those who were condemned to the wild beasts endured dreadful tortures, being stretched out upon beds full of spikes, and subjected to various other kinds of torments, in order that, if it were possible, the tyrant might, by their lingering tortures, lead them to a denial [of Christ].

CHAPTER 3
THE CONSTANCY OF GERMANICUS.
THE DEATH OF POLYCARP IS DEMANDED

For the devil did indeed invent many things against them; but thanks be to God, he could not prevail over all. For the most noble Germanicus strengthened the timidity of others by his own patience, and fought heroically with the wild beasts. For, when the proconsul sought to persuade him, and urged him to take pity upon his age, he attracted the wild beast towards himself, and provoked it, being desirous to escape all the more quickly from an unrighteous and impious world. But upon this the whole multitude, marveling at the nobility of mind displayed by the devout and godly race of Christians, cried out, "Away with the Atheists; let Polycarp be sought out!"

CHAPTER 4
QUINTUS THE APOSTATE

Now one named Quintus, a Phrygian, who was but lately come from Phrygia, when he saw the wild beasts, became afraid. This was the man who forced himself and some others to come forward voluntarily [for trial]. He the proconsul, after many entreaties, persuaded to swear and to offer sacrifice. Wherefore, brethren, we do not commend those who give themselves up [to suffering], seeing the Gospel does not teach so to do.

CHAPTER 5
THE DEPARTURE AND VISION OF POLYCARP

But the most admirable Polycarp, when he first heard [that he was sought for], was in no measure disturbed, but resolved to continue in the city. However, in deference to the wish of many, he was persuaded to leave it. He departed, therefore, to a country house not far distant from the city. There he stayed with a few [friends], engaged in nothing else night and day than praying for all men, and for the Churches throughout the world, according to his usual custom. And while he was praying, a vision presented itself to him three days before he was taken; and, behold, the pillow under his head seemed to him on fire. Upon this, turning to those that were with him, he said to them prophetically, "I must be burnt alive."

CHAPTER 6
POLYCARP IS BETRAYED BY A SERVANT

And when those who sought for him were at hand, he departed to another dwelling, whither his pursuers immediately came after him. And when they found him not, they seized upon two youths [that were there], one of whom, being subjected to torture, confessed. It was thus impossible that he should continue hid, since those that betrayed him were of his own household. The Irenarch then (whose office is the same as that of the Cleronomus), by name Herod, hastened to bring him into the stadium. [This all happened] that he might fulfill his special lot, being made a partaker of Christ, and that they who betrayed him might undergo the punishment of Judas himself.

CHAPTER 7
POLYCARP IS FOUND BY HIS PURSUERS

His pursuers then, along with horsemen, and taking the youth with them, went forth at supper-time on the day of the preparation, with their usual weapons, as if going out against a robber. And being come about evening [to the place where he was], they found him lying down in the upper room of a certain little house, from which he might have escaped into another place; but he refused, saying, "The will of God be done." So when he heard that they were come, he went down and spake with them. And as those that were present marveled at his age

and constancy, some of them said. "Was so much effort made to capture such a venerable man? Immediately then, in that very hour, he ordered that something to eat and drink should be set before them, as much indeed as they cared for, while he besought them to allow him an hour to pray without disturbance. And on their giving him leave, he stood and prayed, being full of the grace of God, so that he could not cease for two full hours, to the astonishment of them that heard him, insomuch that many began to repent that they had come forth against so godly and venerable an old man.

CHAPTER 8 POLYCARP IS BROUGHT INTO THE CITY

Now, as soon as he had ceased praying, having made mention of all that had at any time come in contact with him, both small and great, illustrious and obscure, as well as the whole Catholic Church throughout the world, the time of his departure having arrived, they set him upon an ass, and conducted him into the city, the day being that of the great Sabbath. And the Irenarch Herod, accompanied by his father Nicetes (both riding in a chariot), met him, and taking him up into the chariot, they seated themselves beside him, and endeavored to persuade him, saying, "What harm is there in saying, Lord Caesar, and in sacrificing, with the other ceremonies observed on such occasions, and so make sure of safety?" But he at first gave them no answer; and when they continued to urge him, he said, "I shall not do as you advise me." So they, having no hope of persuading him, began to speak bitter words unto him, and cast him with violence out of the chariot, insomuch that, in getting down from the carriage, he dislocated his leg [by the fall]. But without being disturbed, and as if suffering nothing, he went eagerly forward with all haste, and was conducted to the stadium, where the tumult was so great, that there was no possibility of being heard.

CHAPTER 9 POLYCARP REFUSES TO REVILE CHRIST

Now, as Polycarp was entering into the stadium, there came to him a voice from heaven, saying, "Be strong, and show thyself a man, oh Polycarp!" No one saw who it was that spoke to him; but those of our brethren who were present heard the voice. And as he was brought forward, the tumult became great when they heard that Polycarp was taken. And when he came near, the proconsul asked him whether he was Polycarp. On his confessing that he was, [the proconsul] sought to persuade him to deny [Christ], saying, "Have respect to thy old age," and other similar things, according to their custom, [such as]," Swear by the fortune of Caesar; repent, and say, Away with the Atheists." But Polycarp, gazing with a stern countenance on all the multitude of the wicked heathen then in the stadium, and waving his hand towards them, while with groans he looked up to heaven, said, "Away with the Atheists." Then, the proconsul urging him, and saying, "Swear, and I will set thee at liberty, reproach Christ;" Polycarp declared, "Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He never did me any injury: how then can I blaspheme my King and my Savior?"

CHAPTER 10 POLYCARP CONFESSES HIMSELF A CHRISTIAN

And when the proconsul yet again pressed him, and said, "Swear by the fortune of Caesar," he answered, "Since thou art vainly urgent that, as thou sayest, I should swear by the fortune of Caesar, and pretend not to know who and what I am, hear me declare with boldness, I am a Christian. And if you wish to learn what the doctrines of Christianity are, appoint me a day, and thou shall hear them." The proconsul replied, "Persuade the people." But Polycarp said, "To thee I have thought it right to offer an account [of my faith]; for we are taught to give all due honor (which entails no injury upon ourselves) to the powers and authorities which are ordained of God. But as for these, I do not deem them worthy of receiving any account from me."

CHAPTER 11 NO THREATS HAVE ANY EFFECT ON POLYCARP

The proconsul then said to him, "I have wild beasts at hand; to these will I cast thee, except thou repent." But he answered, "Call them then, for we are not accustomed to repent of what is good in order to adopt

that which is evil; and it is well for me to be changed from what is evil to what is righteous." But again the proconsul said to him, "I will cause thee to be consumed by fire, seeing thou despisest the wild beasts, if thou wilt not repent." But Polycarp said, "Thou threatenest me with fire which burneth for an hour, and after a little is extinguished, but art ignorant of the fire of the coming judgment and of eternal punishment, reserved for the ungodly. But why tarriest thou? Bring forth what thou wilt."

CHAPTER 12 POLYCARP IS SENTENCED TO BE BURNED

While he spoke these and many other like things, he was filled with confidence and joy, and his countenance was full of grace, so that not merely did it not fall as if troubled by the things said to him, but, on the contrary, the proconsul was astonished, and sent his herald to proclaim in the midst of the stadium thrice, "Polycarp has confessed that he is a Christian." This proclamation having been made by the herald, the whole multitude both of the heathen and Jews, who dwelt at Smyrna, cried out with uncontrollable fury, and in a loud voice, "This is the teacher of Asia, the father of the Christians, and the overthrower of our gods, he who has been teaching many not to sacrifice, or to worship the gods." Speaking thus, they cried out, and besought Philip the Asiarch to let loose a lion upon Polycarp. But Philip answered that it was not lawful for him to do so, seeing the shows of wild beasts were already finished. Then it seemed good to them to cry out with one consent, that Polycarp should be burnt alive. For thus it behooved the vision which was revealed to him in regard to his pillow to be fulfilled, when, seeing it on fire as he was praying, he turned about and said prophetically to the faithful that were with him, "I must be burnt alive."

CHAPTER 13 THE FUNERAL PILE IS ERECTED,

This, then, was carried into effect with greater speed than it was spoken, the multitudes immediately gathering together wood and fagots out of the shops and baths; the Jews especially, according to custom, eagerly assisting them in it. And when the funeral pile was ready, Polycarp, laying aside all his garments, and loosing his girdle, sought also to take off his sandals, — a thing he was not accustomed to do, inasmuch as every one of the faithful was always eager who should first touch his skin. For, on account of his holy life, he was, even before his martyrdom, adorned with every kind of good. Immediately then they surrounded him with those substances which had been prepared for the funeral pile. But when they were about also to fix him with nails, he said, "Leave me as I am; for He that gives me strength to endure the fire, will also enable me, without your securing me by nails, to remain without moving in the pile."

CHAPTER 14 THE PRAYER OF POLYCARP

They did not nail him then, but simply bound him. And he, placing his hands behind him, and being bound like a distinguished ram [taken] out of a great flock for sacrifice, and prepared to be an acceptable burnt-offering unto God, looked up to heaven, and said, "O Lord God Almighty, the Father of thy beloved and blessed Son Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the knowledge of Thee, the God of angels and powers, and of every creature, and of the whole race of the righteous who live before thee, I give Thee thanks that Thou hast counted me, worthy of this day and this hour, that I should have a part in the number of Thy martyrs, in the cup of thy Christ, to the resurrection of eternal life, both of soul and body, through the incorruption [imparted] by the Holy Ghost. Among whom may I be accepted this day before Thee as a fat and acceptable sacrifice, according as Thou, the ever-truthful God, hast fore-ordained, hast revealed beforehand to me, and now hast fulfilled. Wherefore also I praise Thee for all things, I bless Thee; I glorify Thee, along with the everlasting and heavenly Jesus Christ, Thy beloved Son, with whom, to Thee, and the Holy Ghost, be glory both now and to all coming ages. Amen."

CHAPTER 15 POLYCARP IS NOT INJURED BY THE FIRE

When he had pronounced this amen, and so finished his prayer, those who were appointed for the purpose

kindled the fire. And as the flame blazed forth in great fury, we, to whom it was given to witness it, beheld a great miracle, and have been preserved that we might report to others what then took place. For the fire, shaping itself into the form of an arch, like the sail of a ship when filled with the wind, encompassed as by a circle the body of the martyr. And he appeared within not like flesh which is burnt, but as bread that is baked, or as gold and silver glowing in a furnace. Moreover, we perceived such a sweet odor [coming from the pile], as if frankincense or some such precious spices had been smoking there.

CHAPTER 16 POLYCARP IS PIERCED BY A DAGGER

At length, when those wicked men perceived that his body could not be consumed by the fire, they commanded an executioner to go near and pierce him through with a dagger. And on his doing this, there came forth a dove, and a great quantity of blood, so that the fire was extinguished; and all the people wondered that there should be such a difference between the unbelievers and the elect, of whom this most admirable Polycarp was one, having in our own times been an apostolic and prophetic teacher, and bishop of the Catholic Church which is in Smyrna. For every word that went out of his mouth either has been or shall yet be accomplished.

CHAPTER 17 THE CHRISTIANS ARE REFUSED POLYCARP'S BODY

But when the adversary of the race of the righteous, the envious, malicious, and wicked one, perceived the impressive nature of his martyrdom, and [considered] the blameless life he had led from the beginning, and how he was now crowned with the wreath of immortality, having beyond dispute received his reward, he did his utmost that not the least memorial of him should be taken away by us, although many desired to do this, and to become possessors of his holy flesh. For this end he suggested it to Nicetes, the father of Herod and brother of Alce, to go and entreat the governor not to give up his body to be buried, "lest," said he, "forsaking Him that was crucified, they begin to worship this one." This he said at the suggestion and urgent persuasion of the Jews, who also watched us, as we sought to take him out of the fire, being ignorant of this, that it is neither possible for us ever to forsake Christ, who suffered for the salvation of such as shall be saved throughout the whole world (the blameless one for sinners), nor to worship any other. For Him indeed, as being the Son of God, we adore; but the martyrs, as disciples and followers of the Lord, we worthily love on account of their extraordinary affection towards their own King and Master, of whom may we also be made companions and fellow-disciples!

CHAPTER 18 THE BODY OF POLYCARP IS BURNED

The centurion then, seeing the strife excited by the Jews, placed the body in the midst of the fire, and consumed it. Accordingly, we afterwards took up his bones, as being more precious than the most exquisite jewels, and more purified than gold, and deposited them in a fitting place, whither, being gathered together, as opportunity is allowed us, with joy and rejoicing, the Lord shall grant us to celebrate the anniversary of his martyrdom, both in memory of those who have already finished their course, and for the exercising and preparation of those yet to walk in their steps.

CHAPTER 19 PRAISE OF THE MARTYR POLYCARP

This, then, is the account of the blessed Polycarp, who, being the twelfth that was martyred in Smyrna (reckoning those also of Philadelphia), yet occupies a place of his own in the memory of all men, insomuch that he is everywhere spoken of by the heathen themselves. He was not merely an illustrious teacher, but also a pre-eminent martyr, whose martyrdom all desire to imitate, as having been altogether consistent with the Gospel of Christ. For, having through patience overcome the unjust governor, and thus acquired the crown of immortality, he now, with the apostles and all the righteous [in heaven], rejoicing glorifies God, even the Father, and blesses our Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior of our souls, the Governor of our bodies, and the Shepherd of

the Catholic Church throughout the world.

CHAPTER 20
THIS EPISTLE IS TO BE TRANSMITTED TO THE BRETHREN

Since, then, ye requested that we would at large make you acquainted with what really took place, we have for the present sent you this summary account through our brother Marcus. When, therefore, ye have yourselves read this Epistle, be pleased to send it to the brethren at a greater distance, that they also may glorify the Lord, who makes such choice of His own servants. To Him who is able to bring us all by His grace and goodness into his everlasting kingdom, through His only-begotten Son Jesus Christ, to Him be glory, and honor, and power, and majesty, for ever. Amen. Salute all the saints. They that are with us salute you, and Evarestus, who wrote this Epistle, with all his house.

CHAPTER 21
THE DATE OF THE MARTYRDOM

Now, the blessed Polycarp suffered martyrdom on the second day of the month Xanthicus just begun, the seventh day before the Kalends of May, on the great Sabbath, at the eighth hour. He was taken by Herod, Philip the Trallian being high priest, Statius Quadrates being proconsul, but Jesus Christ being King for ever, to whom be glory, honor, majesty, and an everlasting throne, from generation to generation. Amen.

CHAPTER 22
SALUTATION

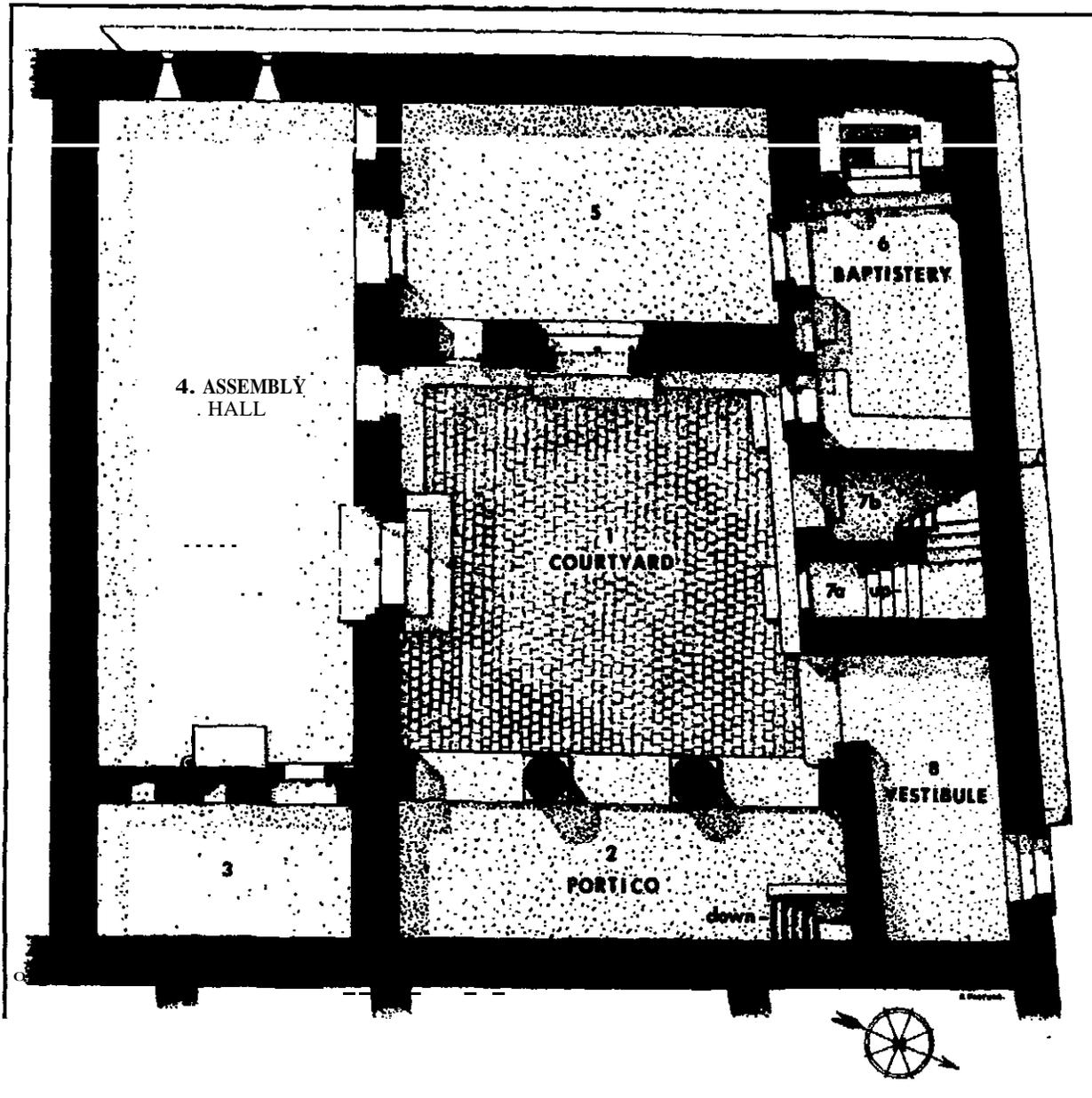
We wish you, brethren, all happiness, while you walk according to the doctrine of the Gospel of Jesus Christ; with whom be glory to God the Father and the Holy Spirit, for the salvation of His holy elect, after whose example the blessed Polycarp suffered, following in whose steps may we too be found in the kingdom of Jesus Christ!

These things Caius transcribed from the copy of Irenaeus (who was a disciple of Polycarp), having himself been intimate with Irenaeus. And I Socrates transcribed them at Corinth from the copy of Caius. Grace be with you all.

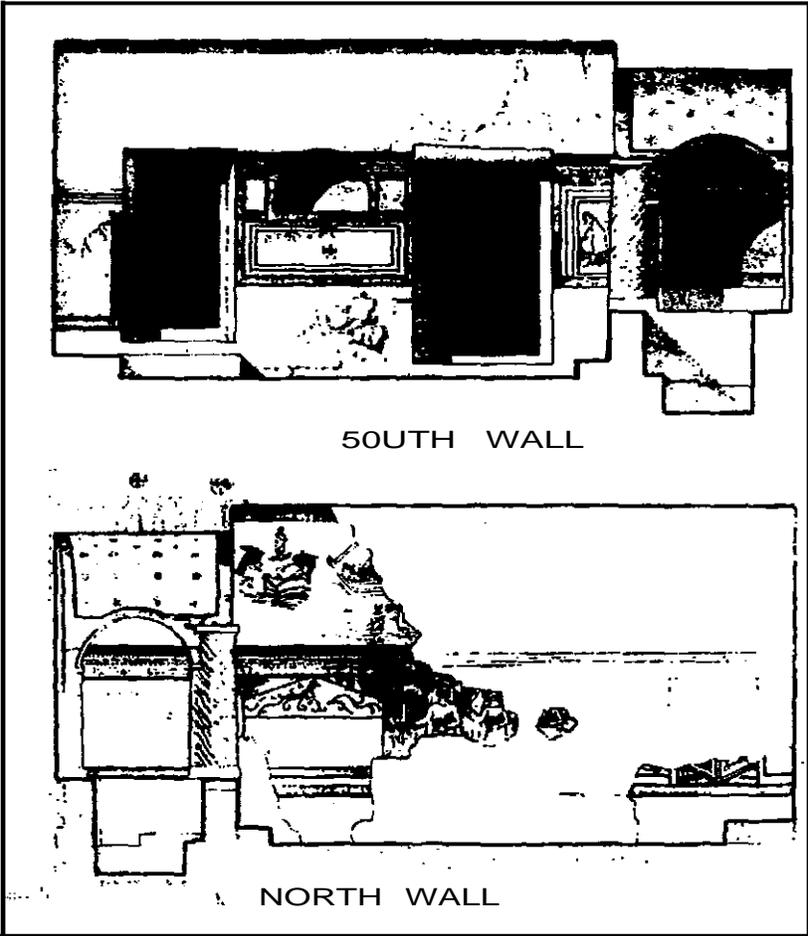
And I again, Pionius, wrote them from the previously written copy, having carefully searched into them, and the blessed Polycarp having manifested them to me through a revelation, even as I shall show in what follows. I have collected these things, when they had almost faded away through the lapse of time, that the Lord Jesus Christ may also gather me along with His elect into His heavenly kingdom, to whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

ADDENDUM K

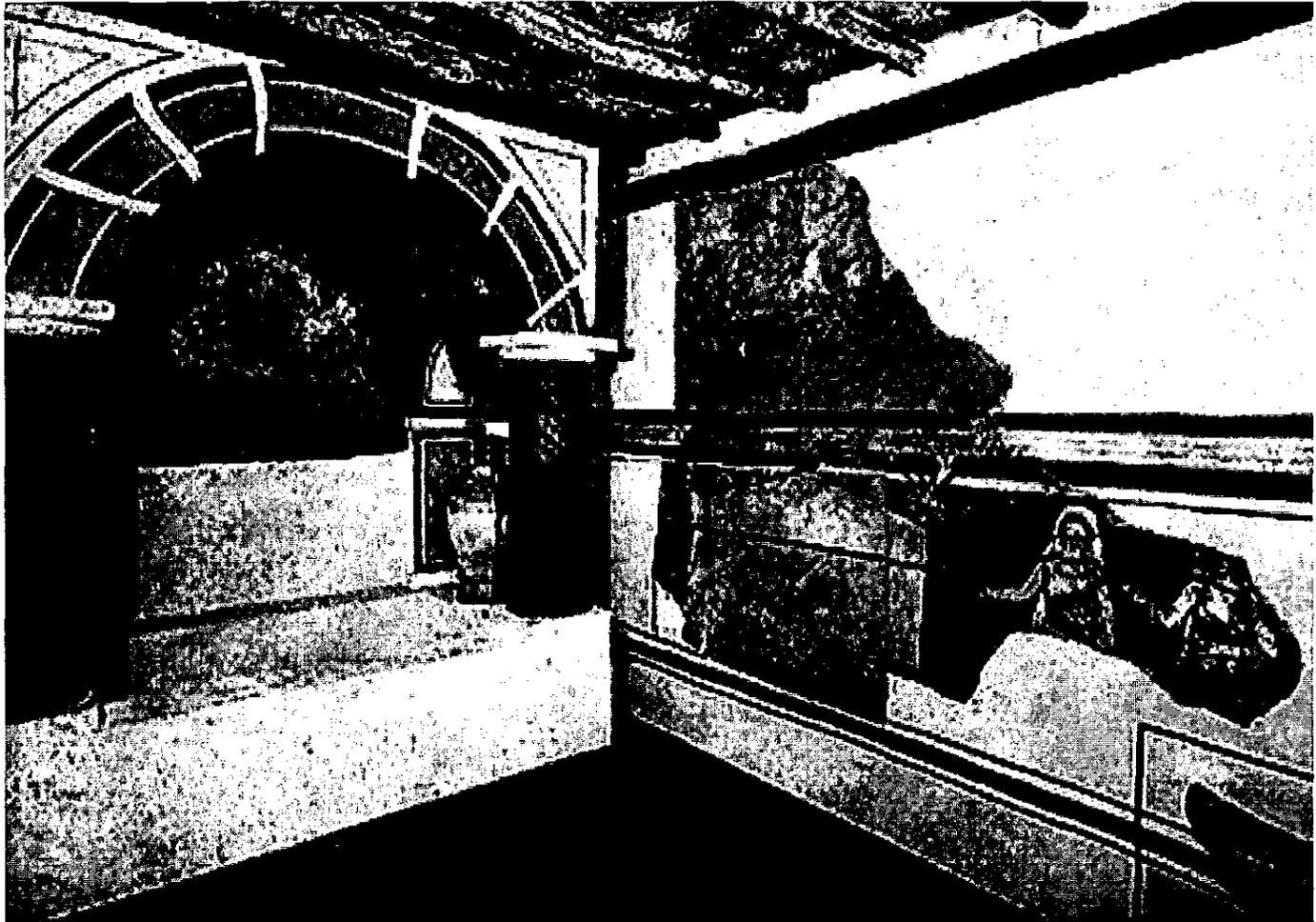
In 256, the city of Dura-Europos, in modern day Syria, was attacked by Sassanians. In order to prepare for the expected onslaught, the Roman garrison shored up the western city wall. They widened the wall by filling with dirt and debris the street that ran along the inside of the wall. The buildings adjacent to Wall Street were covered to form a wider wall and the remaining buildings were leveled so that the garrison could defend the area more effectively. In 1928, Dura-Europos was excavated by a team of French and American archaeologists. In the process of their excavation, the team uncovered the oldest church building ever discovered. Three stages of development were found on the site: (1) a very early dwelling (2) a later house (3) the adaptation of the house to be used as a church building. The house had been adapted into a church building sometime between 232 and 256 (the year of the Sassanian onslaught). The following drawings display the church building as it was uncovered by the excavators. The courtyard was tiled, covering the former latrine and cesspool. Benches were installed around the walls of the courtyard. The assembly hall was large enough to accommodate 65-75 people. A platform to accommodate a speaker had been erected at the east end of the hall. Of special interest is the baptistery. The baptistery consisted of a pool and a canopy that was supported by two columns made of rubble and plaster. The ceiling of the baptistery had been lowered for esthetic purposes. The canopy and the ceiling of the baptistery were painted dark blue with stars formed by rays and dots. The canopy wall contained paintings of the God Shepherd, Adam and Eve, the Woman at the Well, David & Goliath, The Healing of the Paralytic, Peter & Jesus walking on water, and several women approaching an empty tomb.



Sketch of the Baptistry of the Dura-Europos House-Church



This is a photograph of the north wall of the baptistry as it has been reconstructed in a museum in Syria. Note that the candidate being immersed had to step over a two/three foot wall to get into the basin where the immersion took place.



ADDENDUM L

Preface to Irenaeus *Adversus Haereses*

1. INASMUCH as certain men have set the truth aside, and bring in lying words and vain genealogies, which, as the apostle says, "minister questions rather than godly edifying which is in faith," and by means of their craftily-constructed plausibilities draw away the minds of the inexperienced and take them captive, [I have felt constrained, my dear friend, to compose the following treatise in order to expose and counteract their machinations.] These men falsify the oracles of God, and prove themselves evil interpreters of the good word of revelation. They also overthrow the faith of many, by drawing them away, under a pretense of [superior] knowledge, from Him who founded and adorned the universe; as if, forsooth, they had something more excellent and sublime to reveal, than that God who created the heaven and the earth, and all things that are therein. By means of specious and plausible words, they cunningly allure the simple-minded to inquire into their system; but they nevertheless clumsily destroy them, while they initiate them into their blasphemous and impious opinions respecting the Demiurge; and these simple ones are unable, even in such a matter, to distinguish falsehood from truth.

2. Error, indeed, is never set forth in its naked deformity, lest, being thus exposed, it should at once be detected. But it is craftily decked out in an attractive dress, so as, by its outward form, to make it appear to the inexperienced (ridiculous as the expression may seem) more true than the truth itself. One far superior to me has well said, in reference to this point, "A clever imitation in glass casts contempt, as it were, on that precious jewel the emerald (which is most highly esteemed by some), unless it come under the eye of one able to test and expose the counterfeit. Or, again, what inexperienced person can with ease detect the presence of brass when it has been mixed up with silver?" Lest, therefore, through my neglect, some should be carried off, even as sheep are by wolves, while they perceive not the true character of these men, — because they outwardly are covered with sheep's clothing (against whom the Lord has enjoined us to be on our guard), and because their language resembles ours, while their sentiments are very different, — I have deemed it my duty (after reading some of the *Commentaries*, as they call them, of the disciples of Valentinus, and after making myself acquainted with their tenets through personal intercourse with some of them) to unfold to thee, my friend, these portentous and profound mysteries, which do not fall within the range of every intellect, because all have not sufficiently purged their brains. I do this, in order that thou, obtaining an acquaintance with these things, mayest in turn explain them to all those with whom thou art connected, and exhort them to avoid such an abyss of madness and of blasphemy against Christ. I intend, then, to the best of my ability, with brevity and clearness to set forth the opinions of those who are now promulgating heresy. I refer especially to the disciples of Ptolemaeus, whose school may be described as a bud from that of Valentinus. I shall also endeavor, according to my moderate ability, to furnish the means of overthrowing them, by showing how absurd and inconsistent with the truth are their statements. Not that I am practiced either in composition or eloquence; but my feeling of affection prompts me to make known to thee and all thy companions those doctrines which have been kept in concealment until now, but which are at last, through the goodness of God, brought to light. "For there is nothing hidden which shall not be revealed, nor secret that shall not be made known."

3. Thou wilt not expect from me, who am resident among the Keltae, and am accustomed for the most part to use a barbarous dialect, any display of rhetoric, which I have never learned, or any excellence of composition, which I have never practiced, or any beauty and persuasiveness of

style, to which I make no pretensions. But thou wilt accept in a kindly spirit what I in a like spirit write to thee simply, truthfully, and in my own homely way; whilst thou thyself (as being more capable than I am) wilt expand those ideas of which I send thee, as it were, only the seminal principles; and in the comprehensiveness of thy understanding, wilt develop to their full extent the points on which I briefly touch, so as to set with power before thy companions those things which I have uttered in weakness. In fine, as I (to gratify thy long-cherished desire for information regarding the tenets of these persons) have spared no pains, not only to make these doctrines known to thee, but also to furnish the means of showing their falsity; so shalt thou, according to the grace given to thee by the Lord, prove an earnest and efficient minister to others, that men may no longer be drawn away by the plausible system of these heretics, which I now proceed to describe.

ADDENDUM M

THE ACTS OF MARTYRDOM OF PERPETUA AND FELICITY

The *Acts of Martyrdom of Felicity and Perpetua*, written in the earliest years of the Third Century, describe the March 7, 203 martyrdom of two Christian women. This document became one of the most inspirational documents in the early Church. It is significant for us in that it gives us an approximate idea of the demands of being a Christian in public, social, and family life at the close of the Second Century. The example of Perpetua is a moving demonstration of placing the faith above family ties. Interestingly, the director of the amphitheatre prepared an unusual animal, a mad heifer, to be the beast who would attack the women – matching their sex with that of the beast.

Carthage, 7 March, 203 AD

There were apprehended the young catechumens, Revocatus and Felicity his fellow servant, Saturninus and Secundulus. With them also was Vibia Perpetua, nobly born reared in a liberal manner, wedded honorably; having a father and mother and two brothers, one of them a catechumen likewise, and a son, a recently-born child; and she herself was about twenty-two years of age.

What follows here shall she tell herself; the whole order of her martyrdom as she left it written with her own hand and in her own words.

When, she said, we were still under legal surveillance and my father was liked to vex me with his words and continually strove to hurt my faith because of his love:

- Father, said I, Do you see (for examples) this vessel lying, a pitcher or whatsoever it may be?

And he said,

- I see it.

- Can it be called by any other name than that which it is?

- No.

- So can I call myself nought other than that which I am, a Christian.

A few days after, the report went abroad that we were to be tried. Also my father returned from the city spent with weariness; and he came up to me to cast down my faith saying:

- Have pity, daughter, on my grey hairs; have pity on your father, if I am worthy to be, called father by you; if with these hands I have brought you unto this flower of youth and I have preferred you before all your brothers; give me not over to the reproach of men. Look upon your brothers; look upon your mother and mother's sister; look upon your son, who will not endure to live after you. Give up your resolution; do not destroy us all together; for none of us will speak openly against men again if you suffer aught.

This he said fatherly in his love, kissing my hands and grovelling at my feet; and with tears he named me, not daughter, but lady. And I was grieved for my father's case because he would not rejoice at my passion out of all my kin; and I comforted him, saying:

- That shall be done at this tribunal, whatsoever God shall please; for know that we are not established in our own power, but in God's.

And he went from me very sorrowful.

Another day as we were at meal we were suddenly snatched away to be tried; and we came to the forum. Therewith a report spread abroad through the parts near to the forum, and a very great multitude gathered together. We went up to the tribunal. The others being asked, confessed. So they came to me. And my father appeared there also, with my son, and would draw me from the step, saying:

- Have mercy on the child.

And Hilarian the procurator - he that after the death of Minucius Timinian the proconsul had received in his room the right and power of the sword - said:

- Spare your father's grey hairs; spare the infancy of the boy. Make sacrifice for the Emperors' prosperity.

And I answered:

- I won't perform the sacrifice. - You are a Christian, then?

- Yes, I am a Christian.

And when my father stood by me yet to cast down my faith, he was bidden by Hilarian to be cast down and was smitten with a rod. And I sorrowed for my father's harm as though I had been smitten myself; so sorrowed I for his unhappy old age.

Then a few days after, Pudens the adjutant, in whose charge the prison was, who also began to magnify us because he understood that there was much grace in us, let in many to us that both we and they in turn might be comforted.

Now when the day of the games drew near, there came in my father to me, spent with weariness, and began to pluck out his beard and throw it on the ground and to fall on his face cursing his years and saying such words as might move all creation. I was grieved for his unhappy old age.

As for Felicity, she too received this grace of the Lord. For because she was now gone eight months (being indeed with child when she was taken) she was very sorrowful as the day of the games drew near, fearing lest for this cause she should be kept back (for it is not lawful for women that are with child to be brought forth for torment) and lest she should shed her holy and innocent blood after the rest, among strangers and malefactors. Also her fellow martyrs were much afflicted lest they should leave behind them so good a friend and as it were their fellow-traveller on the road of the same hope. Wherefore with joint and united groaning they poured out their prayer to the Lord, three days before the games. Incontinently after their prayer her pains came upon her. And when by reason of the natural difficulty of the eighth month she was oppressed with her travail and made complaint, there said to her one of the servants of the keepers of the door:

- You that thus make complaint now, what wilt you do when you are thrown to the beasts, which you didst condemn when you would not sacrifice?



Tunisia, luogo del martirio di Ss. Perpetua e Felicità

Tunisia, place of martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicity

noble, namely Caesar's, and on his feast day we are to fight? Or is it not your glory that we should be taken out thither fatter of flesh?

The tribune trembled and blushed, and gave order that they should be more gently handled, granting that her brothers and the rest should come in and rest with them. Also the adjutant of the prison, Pudens, now believed.

But for the women the devil had made ready a most savage cow, prepared for this purpose against all custom; for even in this beast he would mock their gender. They were stripped therefore and made to put on nets; and so they were brought forth. The people shuddered, seeing one a tender girl, and the other, recently gave birth. So they were called back and clothed in loose robes.

Perpetua was first thrown, and fell upon her loins. And when she had sat upright, her robe being rent at the side, she drew it over to cover her thigh, mindful rather of modesty than of pain. Next, looking for a pin, she likewise pinned up her dishevelled hair; for it was not meet that a martyr should suffer with hair dishevelled, lest she should seem to grieve in her glory.

So she stood up; and when she saw Felicity smitten down, she went up and gave her her hand and raised her up.. And both of them stood up together and the (hardness of the people being now subdued) were called back to the Gate of Life. There Perpetua being received by one named Rusticus, then a catechumen, who stood close at her side, and as now awakening from sleep (so much was she in the Spirit and in ecstasy) began first to look about her; and then (which amazed all there), she asked:

- When are we to be thrown to the cow?

And when she heard that this had been done already, she would not believe till she perceived some marks of mauling on her body and on her dress. Thereupon she called her brother to her, and that catechumen, and spoke to them, saying.

- Stand fast in the faith, and love you all one another; and be not offended because of our passion.

And she answered,

I myself now suffer that which I suffer, but there another shall be in me who shall suffer for me, because I am to suffer for him.

So she was delivered of a daughter, whom a sister reared up to be her own daughter.

When they were being more cruelly handled by the tribune because through advice of certain most despicable men he feared lest by magic charms they might be withdrawn secretly from the prison house, Perpetua answered him to his face:

- Why do you not allow us to take some comfort, seeing we are victims most

And when the people besought that they should be brought forward, that when the sword pierced through their bodies their eyes might be joined thereto as witnesses to the slaughter, they rose of themselves and moved, whither the people willed them, first kissing one another, that they might accomplish their martyrdom with the rites of peace.

The rest not moving and in silence received the sword; Saturus (the one who introduced Felicity, Perpetua and the others to the faith and who voluntarily presented himself as a Christian before the tribunal so as to share the fate of his Christian friends) much earlier gave up the ghost; for he had gone up earlier also, and now he waited for Perpetua likewise.

But Perpetua, that she might have some taste of pain, was pierced between the bones and shrieked out; and when the swordsman's hand wandered still (for he was a novice), herself set it upon her own neck. Perchance so great a woman could not else have been slain (being feared of the unclean spirit) had she not herself so willed it.

O most valiant and blessed martyrs! O truly called and elected unto the glory of Our Lord Jesus Christ! Which glory he that magnifies, honors and adores, ought to read these witnesses likewise, as being no less than the old, unto the Church's edification; that these new wonders also may testify that one and the same Holy Spirit works ever until now, and with Him God the Father Almighty, and His Son Jesus Christ Our Lord, to Whom is glory and power unending for ever and ever. Amen.

From W.H. Shewring, *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity*, (London: 1931).
Earlychristians.org, documents of interest

ADDENDUM O

Constantinople

Constantinople was founded by Constantine I on the site of Byzantium, an ancient city that was settled in the early days of Greek colonial expansion, around 671-662 BC. The site lay astride the land route from Europe to Asia and the seaway from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean, and had in the Golden Horn an excellent and spacious harbour.



Coin struck by Constantine to commemorate the founding of Constantinople

Constantine was well aware that Rome was an unsatisfactory capital because it was too far from the frontiers, and hence from the armies and the Imperial courts. Rome also offered an undesirable playground for disaffected politicians. Constantine decided that the site of Byzantium was the right location for the new capital: a place where an emperor could sit, readily defended, with easy access to the Danube or the Euphrates frontiers, his court supplied from the rich gardens and sophisticated workshops of Roman Asia, his treasuries filled by the wealthiest provinces of the Empire.

Constantinople was built over six years, and consecrated on 11 May 330. Constantine divided the city, like Rome, into 14 regions, and ornamented it with public works worthy of an imperial metropolis. Initially Constantine's new Rome did not have all the dignities of old Rome. It possessed a proconsul, rather than an urban prefect. It had no praetors, tribunes or quaestors. Although it did have senators, they held the title *clarus*, not *clarissimus*, like those of Rome. It also lacked the panoply of other administrative offices regulating the food supply, police, statues, temples, sewers, aqueducts or other public works. The building was carried out in great haste: columns, marbles, doors and tiles were taken wholesale from the temples of the Empire and moved to the new city. Many of the greatest works of Greek and Roman art were soon to be seen in its squares and streets. The Emperor stimulated private building by promising householders gifts of land from the Imperial estates in Asiana and Pontica, and on 18 May 332 he announced that, as in Rome, free distributions of food would be made to the citizens. At the time the amount is said to have been 80,000 rations a day, doled out from 117 distribution points around the city.

Constantine laid out a new square at the centre of old Byzantium, naming it the Augustaeum. The new senate-house (or Curia) was housed in a basilica on the east side. On the south side of the great square was erected the Great Palace of the emperor with its imposing entrance, the Chalke, and its ceremonial suite known as the Palace of Daphne. Nearby was the vast Hippodrome for chariot-races, seating over 80,000 spectators, and the famed Baths of Zeuxippus. At the western entrance to the Augustaeum was the Milion, a vaulted monument from which distances were measured across the Eastern Roman Empire.

From the Augustaeum led the Mese (Greek: Μέση [Ὀδός] lit. "Middle [Street]"), a great street lined with colonnades. As it descended the First Hill of the city and climbed the Second Hill, it passed on the left the Praetorium or law-court. Then it passed through the oval Forum of Constantine where there was a second Senate-house and a high column with a statue of Constantine himself in the guise of Helios, crowned with a halo of seven rays and looking

towards the rising sun. From there the Mese passed on and through the Forum of Taurus and then the Forum of Bous, and finally up the Seventh Hill (or Xerolophus) and through to the Golden Gate in the Constantinian Wall.

ADDENDUM P

The Nicene Creed

Nicene Creed 325 A.D.

We believe in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, begotten of the Father, the only-begotten; that is, of the essence of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father by whom all things were made both in heaven and on earth; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down and was incarnate and was made man; he suffered and the third day he rose again, ascended into heaven; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

And in the Holy Spirit.

But those who say, “There was a time when he was not;” and “He was not before he was made;” and “He was made out of nothing,” or “He is of another substance” or “essence,” or “The Son of God is created” or changeable,” or “alterable” – they are condemned by the holy catholic and apostolic Church.

Constantinopolitan Creed 381 A.D. (refinement and adjustment of the Nicene Creed)

We believe in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, *the only-begotten* Son of God, begotten of the Father *before all worlds*, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father by whom all things were made; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down *from heaven*, and was incarnate *by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary*, and was made man, and *was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate*. He suffered *and was buried*, and the third day he rose again *according to the Scriptures*, and ascended into heaven, *and sitteth on the right hand of the Father*. And he shall come again *with glory* to judge both the quick and the dead, *whose kingdom shall have no end*.

And we believe in the Holy Spirit, *the Lord and Giver of Life, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets*.

And we believe one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins. And we look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

NOTE: This creed omits the condemnation of the Arians with which the 325 creed **ended**

MODERN WORDING OF THE NICENE CREED

(The Interdenominational Committee on Liturgical Texts)

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father [and the Son]. With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. AMEN.