

# Teachings & Practices After A. D. 100

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## Introduction

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

### NOTE:

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

Everyone is encouraged to be vigilant in questioning what they read or hear. They should not take anyone's word, not mine, some scholarly commentator, a trusted friend, church leader or one of the "church fathers" as the basis for his or her salvation. All must work out their own salvation from the Bible.

### Contents

First Century  
Church Fathers  
Church Hierarchy  
Middle Ages  
Reformation  
Restoration



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# Teachings and Practices After A. D. 100

## First Centuries

God created man in His likeness, His nature - love, truth, kindness, merciful, peaceful, meek, humble, just, holy and forgiving. Following his creation man lived in a paradise created for him, and among God's other creations in a harmonious and loving relationship with God.

We are all too familiar with their sin of disobedience and its consequences. They were driven out of the paradise and separated from their righteous relationship with God (Genesis 1-3).

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

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

However, "Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation; Noah walked with God." (Genesis 6:9-10 RSV) A few years after Noah's death, Abraham was born. The Hebrew writer states "By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. ... For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God." (Hebrews 11:8-10 ESV)

While in Canaan, the area his descendants would eventually receive as an inheritance, "The angel of the Lord {some translations have Jehovah} called to Abraham from heaven a second time and said, "I swear by myself, declares the Lord, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring [offspring is singular meaning one (rd)] all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me." (Genesis 22:15-18) The apostle Paul referring back to this promise stated "Consider Abraham: 'He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.' Understand, then, that those who believe [put trust in God and obey (rd)] are children of Abraham. The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith [in the gospel (rd)], and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: 'All nations will be blessed through you [by the gospel of Christ (rd)].' So those who have faith [action based upon one's belief (rd)] are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith." (Galatians 3:6-9)

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

**Comment:** Forgiveness - what an enormous difference between the two covenants.

## Christ's Church

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

Peter answered "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." ... Jesus stated "on this rock I will build my church." (Matthew 16:16-18)

**Comment:** The rock is Jesus was the Son of the living God.

**Comment:** My church is an assembly, body or group of obedient, trusting and faithful followers that Jesus gathers unto Himself.

After His betrayal and either during or following His last Passover, Jesus, as a testator, put His apostles into His kingdom. "You are those who have stood by me in my trials. And I **confer on you a kingdom** [*diatitheemi*: Strong's NT: #1303 to place

separately, dispose, arrange, appoint, dispose of, one's own affairs or, of something that belongs to one by testator], just as my Father conferred one on me, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." (Luke 22:28-30)

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

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

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

**Comment:** Jesus name is discussed in <https://www.thebiblewayonline.com/HTML/JesusNamePowerAuthority.html>

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

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

The Jews seized Christians, threw them into prisons, and killed them. The first one to suffer at the hands of the Jews in Jerusalem was Stephen. He was the first among all tortured for preaching about the Savior. The Jews cast him outside the city and began to stone him to death. He prayed saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," and then with the words, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them," he died.

**Comment:** The body, soul and spirit of man is discussed in [thebiblewayonline.com/HTML/BodySoulSpirit.html](https://www.thebiblewayonline.com/HTML/BodySoulSpirit.html).

By killing Stephen and many others of the faithful, the Jews were still not able to weaken faith in Christ. On the contrary, by doing this, they greatly kindled its spread among the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Because of the persecution, Christians dispersed into Samaria and other countries; and everywhere they went, they preached about the Lord Savior and His teaching. No power in the world could stop the victorious spread of Christianity, for faith in Christ is the true faith. The teaching of Christ is divine teaching. Life according to the faith and teaching of Christ is a true holy life, the Kingdom of God. The Heavenly Father strengthened the faithful, the Savior was with them, and they were comforted by the Holy Spirit, the Comforter. (Acts 6- 8:1-2, 4)

[orthodoxphotos.com/readings/LG/persecution.shtml](https://orthodoxphotos.com/readings/LG/persecution.shtml)

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

"It was about this time that King Herod arrested some who belonged to the church, intending to persecute them. He had James, the brother of John, put to death with the sword. When he saw that this pleased the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also. This happened during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. After arresting him, he put him in prison, handing him over to

be guarded by four squads of four soldiers each. Herod intended to bring him out for public trial after the Passover.” (Acts 12:1-4)

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

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

In Thessalonica “some of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and not a few prominent women. But the Jews were jealous; so, they rounded up some bad characters from the marketplace, formed a mob and started a riot in the city. They rushed to Jason's house in search of Paul and Silas in order to bring them out to the crowd. But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some other brothers before the city officials, shouting: ‘These men who have caused trouble all over the world have now come here, and Jason has welcomed them into his house. They are all defying Caesar's decrees, saying that there is another king, one called Jesus.’ When they heard this, the crowd and the city officials were thrown into turmoil. Then they made Jason and the others post bond and let them go.” (Acts 17:4-9)

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

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

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

“The crowd listened to Paul until he said this. Then they raised their voices and shouted, “Rid the earth of him! He's not fit to live! As they were shouting and throwing off their cloaks and flinging dust into the air, the commander ordered Paul to be taken into the barracks. He directed that he be flogged and questioned in order to find out why the people were shouting at him like this. As they stretched him out to flog him, Paul said to the centurion standing there, ‘Is it legal for you to flog a Roman citizen who hasn't even been found guilty?’” (Acts 22:22-25)

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

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

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

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

**Comment:** A form is not the real thing only an appearance of the real – hypocrite.

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

**Comment:** Myths are things devised by man; i.e., not from God.

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

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

“The first Roman persecution of the Church appears to have taken place in the year 67 A.D., [1 year following the Jews of Judea rebellion against Rome] under Nero, the sixth emperor of Rome. This monarch reigned for the space of five years, with tolerable credit to himself, but then gave way to the greatest extravagancy of temper, and to the most atrocious barbarities. Among other diabolical whims, he ordered that the city of Rome should be set on fire, which order was executed by his officers, guards, and servants. While the imperial city was in flames, he went up to the tower of Macaenas, played upon his harp, sung the song of the burning of Troy, and openly declared that 'he wished the ruin of all things before his death.' Besides the noble pile, called the Circus, many other palaces and houses were consumed; several thousand perished in the flames, were smothered in the smoke, or buried beneath the ruins.” [jesus-is-savior.com/Books, Tracts & Preaching/Printed Books/FBOM/fbom-chap\\_02.htm](http://jesus-is-savior.com/Books, Tracts & Preaching/Printed Books/FBOM/fbom-chap_02.htm) [From *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, Chapter 2]

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

## Temple destroyed

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

## Christ through John warns congregations in Asia Minor

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

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

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

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

**Comment:** You have people in Pergamum who are "Christians" in name only.

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

### Teaching and practices of the Nicolaitans

Apparently, this differed little in principle from the teaching of Balaam, though seemingly presented by a different heretical group. Some would connect the Nicolaitans with Balaamites because of similar etymology of the Greek name Nicolaus and the Semitic name Balaam. That seems fanciful, however, since the two seem to be differentiated in vs. 14-15. (Revelation 2)

**Comment:** Teaching and Practices of the Nicolaitans is discussed in [thebiblewayonline.com/revelation](http://thebiblewayonline.com/revelation), by Cecil N. Wright

### Teaching and practices of Balaam

The ancient prophet Balaam advised the pagan king Balak how he could cause God to curse the Israelites, of whom Balak was afraid but whom Balaam was unable to curse for him. Reference is made to such by Moses in Numbers 31:15-16, speaking of the occasion described in Chapter 25, as a result of which the Lord sent a plague that caused the death of 24,000 persons. The Jewish historian Josephus, in his Antiquities of the Jews, Book IV, Chapter VI, Sections 6-12, elaborates upon the details as they had come down to his day, which correspond with the summary description given by Christ in his letter to Pergamum. It was a compromise with paganism in worship and morals. (Revelation 2:14) <http://thebiblewayonline.com/Library/InstructionsToTranslators>

**Comment:** Teaching and practices of Balaam is discussed in [thebiblewayonline.com/revelation](http://thebiblewayonline.com/revelation), by Cecil N. Wright

### The woman Jezebel

Most manuscripts have "the" woman, but a few have "thy" woman. Some have supposed her to be the wife of the one addressed as the "angel" of the church, since *sou* (thy) is singular. But the consensus of textual scholars favors *ten* (the)

as having been the original reading. Here Jezebel is evidently a symbolic name for some prominent woman in the church at Thyatira, somewhat like the wicked wife of King Ahab who was guilty of "whoredom" and "witchcraft" (1 Kings 16:31; 2 Kings 9:22), promoting the worship of Baal and seeking to drive worshippers of God out of Israel. The Jezebel of Thyatira promoted both idolatrous and licentious practices among Christians. (Revelation 2:20)

**Comment:** The woman Jezebel is discussed in

[thebiblewayonline.com/revelation](http://thebiblewayonline.com/revelation), by Cecil N. Wright

When the Greek and Jew mind is examined later these teachings and practices may be more clearly understood.

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

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

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

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

**Comment:** Faithful Christians were still assembling in these cities the midst of persecution.

### Trajan Persecution AD 108

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

### Timeline of the Church Christ established

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

The apostolic age ended with Christ's message of redemption having been spread throughout the Roman Empire.

### Early Christianity

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

During the third century [200-300 AD], Christianity further increased in numbers (Robin Lane Fox suggests that Christians composed about 2% of the Empire by 250). Teachers of this period, including Origen in Alexandria and Tertullian in North Africa, expressed in their writings doctrines such as that of The Trinity. Anthony the Great and others established Christian monasticism [pertaining to monasteries (rd)] and Gregory the Illuminator was responsible for Armenia becoming the first

officially Christian country. Following the conversion of Constantine the Great (just prior to the Battle of the Milvian Bridge in 312), the Roman Empire tolerated Christianity with the Edict of Milan in 313, leading later to the adoption of Christianity as the state religion by law not by conversion in 380 by Theodosius I and the rise of Christendom in the Byzantine empire.

**Comment:** Constantine establishes a Roman Empire church which became the Roman Catholic after 476 A.D. when the Western Roman Empire fell. [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Early\\_Christianity](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Early_Christianity)

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

### Diocletian A.D. 302

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

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

Later, in AD 325, Constantine called together the Council of Nicea, in an attempt to unify the empire by a state religion. Constantine envisioned Christianity as a state religion that could unite the Roman Empire, which at that time was beginning to fragment and divide. Constantine refused to fully embrace the Christian faith and continued many of his pagan beliefs and practices, so the church that Constantine promoted was a mixture of Christianity and Roman paganism. "He (Constantine) kept his position as chief priest of the pagan state religion." *The Eternal Kingdom, F.W. Mattox, p. 127*

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

Constantine found that with the Roman Empire being so vast, expansive, and diverse – not everyone would agree to forsake their religious beliefs and instead embrace Christianity. So, Constantine allowed, and even promoted, the "Christianization" of pagan beliefs. Completely pagan and utterly unbiblical beliefs were given new "Christian" identities while being mixed with the altered church's teachings and practices. Some clear examples of this are as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

Mithraism was a religion in the Roman Empire in the 1st through 5th centuries AD. It was very popular among the Romans, especially among Roman soldiers, and was possibly the religion of several Roman emperors. While Mithraism was never

given “official” status in the Roman Empire, it was the de-facto official religion until Constantine and succeeding Roman emperors replaced Mithraism with Christianity. One of the key features of Mithraism was a sacrificial meal, which involved eating the flesh and drinking the blood of a bull. Mithras, the god of Mithraism, was “present” in the flesh and blood of the bull, and when consumed, granted salvation to those who partook of the sacrificial meal (theophagy, the eating of one’s god). Mithraism also had seven “sacraments,” making the similarities between Mithraism and Roman Catholicism too many to ignore. Constantine and his successors found an easy substitute for the sacrificial meal of Mithraism in concept of the Lord’s Supper / Christian Communion. Sadly, some early Christians had already begun to attach mysticism to the Lord’s Supper, rejecting the Biblical concept of a simple and worshipful remembrance of Christ’s death and shed blood. The Romanization of the Lord’s Supper made the transition to a sacrificial consumption of Jesus Christ [transubstantiation], now known as the Catholic Mass / Eucharist, complete.

#### (4) Supreme Religious Leader

The supremacy of the Roman bishop was created with the support of the Roman emperors. With the city of Rome being the center of government for the Roman Empire, and with the Roman emperors living in Rome, the city of Rome rose to prominence in all facets of life. Constantine, and his successors, gave their support to the bishop of Rome as the supreme ruler of his state church believing it is best for the unity of the Roman Empire that the government and state religion be centered in the same location. While most other bishops [including the Bishop of Constantinople] and Christians resisted the idea of the Roman bishop being supreme, the Roman bishop eventually rose to supremacy, due to the power and influence of the Roman emperors. When the Roman Empire collapsed, the Roman Bishop took on the title that had previously belonged to the Roman emperor Constantine – Pontificus Maximus.

**Comment:** Pontificus Maximus, High Priest – Originally was the highest office in the polytheistic ancient Roman religion during the time before Christ. [ccel.org/s/schaff/history/3\\_ch01.htm](http://ccel.org/s/schaff/history/3_ch01.htm)

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

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

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

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

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

**Comment:** The western Roman Empire fell in 476 A.D. from Germanic invasions. [ccel.org/s/schaff/history/4\\_ch01.htm](http://ccel.org/s/schaff/history/4_ch01.htm)

Gregory the Great served just before and after 600 A.D. (590-604). Gregory may be considered the first pope. ... as he was the first to be 1) a Bishop of Rome, 2) a Metropolitan (over Roman territory) and 3) a Patriarch (of Italy, for all the West). Ankerberg Theological Research Institute Page 5 [ankerberg.com/Articles/\\_PDFArchives/roman-catholicism/RC3W1104.pdf](http://ankerberg.com/Articles/_PDFArchives/roman-catholicism/RC3W1104.pdf)

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

The Hellenists, Greek thinking, world had many gods.

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

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

**Comment:** Gnosticism is discussed in <https://www.thebiblewayonline.com/HTML/Gnosticism.html>  
The Hellenists Gnostics taught that the psyche, or soul, was holy whereas the body, or flesh, was inherently evil. To the Gnostics salvation was not of faith or works, as they were evil, but knowledge or Logos (ultimate knowledge) which had no interest in the body which was all evil.

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

But worship was at the heart of the Greek culture. Colosseums were built for the multitudes to gather to idolize and revere their gods in an attempt to garner favor from them. [I give this to you so you will give to me – *quid pro quo* (rd)] Singing, playing and nude dancing to the gods was worship and it unified the people. With regard to the Greek concept of soul, worship, salvation or eternity were a state of the mind with knowledge and intellect being important. Good works were unnecessary as whatever occurred with the body was irrelevant.

**Comment:** The “go to worship” concept exists today when people gather on Sunday to worship ignoring their actions of the past week. Christians are to assemble, come together to encourage and edify. But they are to worship constantly.

**Comment:** The body, soul and spirit are discussed in <https://www.thebiblewayonline.com/HTML/BodySoulSpirit.html>  
This Greek dual concept of soul and body was foreign to the Jews who looked upon man as a whole where the body and soul were bound together. Their worship, when they had not departed from God, was a continuous act not limited to set times except for special days. Service to God was not seen as secular and worship as religious. They were the same act. Everything was theological to the Jew. God was not part-time; e.g., not separated between one’s job and his religion.

With this background in the difference in the Greek (Gentile) and Hebrew (Jew) thinking and the fact that many gentiles were turning to Christ and many Jews were returning to Judaism [which could possibly explain the purpose of the book of Hebrews (rd)], it should be easier to see how the Greek thinking influenced the writing of the “church fathers.”

Adapted from Hebrew mind Vs Greek Mind by Brad Scott [wildbranch.org/Gkhebc1a/index.html](http://wildbranch.org/Gkhebc1a/index.html) --2-10-2007

## Church Fathers

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

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

## Apostolic Fathers

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

### **Clement of Rome (35 – 101)**

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

### **Teachings of Clement of Rome**

1st Clement does **not**, as some claim, establish the "orders" of the church. He refers only to elders and deacons, and he does not distinguish between clergy and laity. He does, however, suggest that seeking power or prestige within the church is wholly inappropriate, and that each person should be how lowly it may be. [peculiarpress.com/ekklesia/archive/Ekklesia70.htm](http://peculiarpress.com/ekklesia/archive/Ekklesia70.htm)

**Comment:** Clement's references strongly show that he did not recognize he was a pope.

### **Ignatius of Antioch**

Ignatius of Antioch (also known as Theophorus) (*c* 35-110)<sup>[3]</sup> was a student of the Apostle John. in route to his martyrdom in Rome, Ignatius wrote a series of letters which have been preserved as an example of the theology of the times. Important topics addressed in these letters include ecclesiology, the sacraments the role of bishops, and Biblical Sabbath. He is the second after Clement to mention Paul's epistles. [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ignatius\\_of\\_Antioch](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ignatius_of_Antioch)

**Comment:** Neither ecclesiology, the study of the church as a thing in itself, nor sacraments, a visible sign of an invisible reality have any Biblical origin.

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

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

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

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

### Teachings of Ignatius

- A. In Like Manner let all reverence the deacons as an appointment of Jesus Christ, and the bishop as Jesus Christ, who is the Son of the Father, and the presbyters as the Sanhedrin of God, and assembly of the apostles. Apart from these, there is no Church" (*Ignatius to the Thrallians* III). Ignatius also claims that no Christian activity is valid without the participation or approval of the bishop: "For, since ye are subject to the bishop (Polybius in this case) as to Jesus Christ, ye appear to me to live not after the manner of men, but according to Jesus Christ, who died for us, in order, by believing in His death, ye may escape from death. It is therefore necessary that, as ye indeed do, so **without the bishop ye should do nothing**, but should also be subject to the presbytery, as to the apostle of Jesus Christ" (*Ignatius to the Thrallians* II).

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

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

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

### **Polycarp of Smyrna**

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

### Teachings of Polycarp

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

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

### **Justin Martyr 100 - 165**

Justin was a Gentile, but born in Samaria, near Jacob's well. He must have been well educated: he had travelled extensively, and he seems to have been a person enjoying at least a competence. After trying all other systems, his elevated tastes and refined perceptions made him a disciple of Socrates and Plato.  
[ccl.org/ccl/schaff/anf01.viii.i.html](http://ccl.org/ccl/schaff/anf01.viii.i.html)

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

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

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

[christianitytoday.com/ch/131christians/evangelistsandapologists/martyr.html](http://christianitytoday.com/ch/131christians/evangelistsandapologists/martyr.html)

**Comment:** The president is assumed to be one of the shepherds designated to preside over the assembly.

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

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

**Comment:** All their giving was for others none for self.

#### His Death

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

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

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

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

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

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

The prefect Rusticus pronounced sentence, saying: "Let those who have refused to sacrifice to the gods and to obey the command of the emperor be scourged and led away to suffer capital punishment according to the ruling of the laws."

Glorifying God, the holy martyrs went out to the accustomed place. They were beheaded, and so fulfilled their witness of martyrdom in confessing their faith in their Savior.

[catholicradiodramas.com/Saints\\_Works\\_H\\_thru\\_J\\_justine\\_martyr\\_i\\_have\\_accepted\\_the\\_true\\_doctrines.htm](http://catholicradiodramas.com/Saints_Works_H_thru_J_justine_martyr_i_have_accepted_the_true_doctrines.htm)

## **Hippolytus of Rome**

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

### Teachings of Hippolytus

And they shall baptize the little children first. And if they can answer for themselves, let them answer. But if they cannot, let their parents answer or someone from their family. And next they shall baptism the grown men; and last the women. (Apostolic Tradition 21.3-5) <http://www.orthodox.org/html/baptev.html>

**Comment:** By requiring an answer, even if by someone else in cases where they were too young or mentally unable, requires some degree of knowledge or belief of sin, its consequences and the need for forgiveness unless infant baptism was just a ritual.

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

Hippolytus strongly opposed the growing hierarchy of the church.

[The Eternal Kingdom, F.W. Mattox p. 203](#)

## **Greek Fathers**

### **Irenaeus of Lyons**

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

His best-known book, *Against Heresies* (c 180) enumerated heresies and attacked them. Irenaeus wrote that the only way for Christians to retain unity was to humbly accept one doctrinal authority--episcopal councils. Irenaeus was the first to propose that all four gospels be accepted as canonical.

**Comment:** Accepting doctrine by authority is unity by force not unity in Christ.

### Teaching of Irenaeus of Lyons

For he came to save all by means of himself -- all, I say, who by him are born again to God -- infants, children, adolescents, young men, and old men. (Against Heresies II.22.4) [orthodox.org/html/baptev.html](http://orthodox.org/html/baptev.html)

### **Clement of Alexandria**

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

**Comment:** Gnosticism is discussed in

<https://www.thebiblewayonline.com/HTML/Gnosticism.html>

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

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

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

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

The Gnostic branch of Christianity that emerged in the second century practiced its own elitist brand of **onlyism**, claiming that Jesus passed "secret" Knowledge along to certain disciples, most notably Mary Magdalene and Thomas. Salvation, they claimed, came only through initiation—sometimes involving bizarre rites. [peculiarpress.com/ekklesia/archive/Ekklesia67.htm](http://peculiarpress.com/ekklesia/archive/Ekklesia67.htm)

### **Origen of Alexandria**

Origen, or Origen Adamantius (c185 - c254) was an early Christian scholar and theologian. According to tradition, he was an Egyptian who taught in Alexandria, reviving the Catechetical School, where Clement had taught. The patriarch of Alexandria at first supported Origen but later expelled him for being ordained without the patriarch's permission. He relocated to Caesarea Maritima and died there<sup>1</sup> after being tortured during a persecution.

Using his knowledge of Hebrew, he produced a corrected Septuagint. He wrote commentaries on all the books of the Bible. In *Peri Archon* (First Principles), he articulated the first philosophical exposition of Christian doctrine. He interpreted scripture allegorically and showed himself to be a Stoic, a Neo-Pythagorean, and a Platonic. Like Plotinus, he wrote that the soul passes through successive stages before incarnation as a human and after death, eventually reaching God. He imagined even demons being reunited with God. For Origen, God was not Yahweh but the First Principle, and Christ, the Logos, was subordinate to him. His views of a hierarchical structure in the Trinity, the temporality of matter, "the fabulous preexistence of souls," and "the monstrous restoration which follows from it" were declared anathema in the 6th century.

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

### Teaching of Origen

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

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

### **Anthony the Great**

Anthony (c 251 – 356 also known as **Father of All Monks**) was from Egypt, a prominent leader among the Desert Fathers. He is celebrated in many churches on his feast days: 17 January in the Eastern Orthodox Church and Western churches; and Tobi 22, (January 30) in the Coptic Orthodox Church and the Coptic Catholic Church.

[wikipedia.org/wiki/Anthony\\_the\\_Great](http://wikipedia.org/wiki/Anthony_the_Great)

**Comment:** Coptic - A northern Afro-Asiatic language spoken in Egypt until at least the seventeenth century.

### Latin Fathers

#### **Tertullian**

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

[wikipedia.org/wiki/Tertullian#cite\\_note-2](http://wikipedia.org/wiki/Tertullian#cite_note-2) (Economou, 2007, p. 22)

Tertullian denounced Christian doctrines he considered heretical, but later in life adopted views that themselves came to be regarded as heretical. He wrote three books in Greek and was the first great writer of Latin Christianity, thus sometimes known as the "Father of the Latin Church."<sup>1</sup> He was evidently a lawyer in Rome. He is said to have introduced the Latin term "*trinitas*" with regard to the Divine (Trinity) to the Christian vocabulary<sup>1</sup> (but Theophilus of Antioch (c115 - c183) already wrote of "the Trinity, of God, and His Word, and His wisdom", which is similar but not identical to the Trinitarian wording), and also probably the formula "three Persons, one Substance" as the Latin "*tres Personae, una Substantia*" (itself from the Koine Greek "*treis Hypostases, Homoousios*"), and also the terms "*vetus testamentum*" (Old Testament) and "*novum testamentum*" (New Testament).

In his *Apologeticus*, he was the first Latin author who qualified Christianity as the "*vera religio*" [true religion], and systematically relegated the classical Roman Empire religion and other accepted cults to the position of mere "superstitions."

His use of the “rule of faith” seems to be applied by Tertullian to some distinct formula of doctrine [(*De praescriptione*, xiii).] With the rise of formalism and sacramentalism, regulated ritual came to be viewed as highly relevant to one's approach to God. What was said, and how it was said; what was done, and how it was done ... and when and where and by whom ... all took on tremendous importance, with any deviation whatsoever bringing an almost instant rebuke from the "church powers that be."  
Wikipedia.org/wiki/Tertullian      en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church\_Fathers

**Comment:** The phrase “in Jesus name” used at the end of many prayers appears to have come into use several centuries after the church was established with the advent of regulated rituals.

**Comment:** In Jesus Name is discussed in      [thebiblewayonline.com/HTML/JesusNamePowerAuthority.html](http://thebiblewayonline.com/HTML/JesusNamePowerAuthority.html)

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

Later in life, Tertullian joined the Montanists, [direct revelations from the Holy Spirit, to speak as the passive mouthpieces of the divine and spoke in ecstatic visions a heretical sect that appealed to his rigorism.  
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church\_Fathers

Tertullian took the view [about the scripture] that "what has not been freely allowed is forbidden." In other words, if the Holy Scriptures are *genuinely silent* about something, then that about which they are truly, utterly and absolutely silent is forever *forbidden*. Others of his day, however, declared just as confidently, "the thing which is not forbidden is freely permitted." The opposing view, therefore, was: if God said nothing *about* it, then He must have nothing *against* it. Thus, it should be *permitted* to His people. ... [Over a thousand years later] **Luther** and **Zwingli** also weighed in on this matter. The latter maintained that *anything* "not enjoined or taught in the New Testament should be unconditionally *rejected*," whereas Luther espoused the opposing view -- "What is not *against* Scripture is *for* Scripture and Scripture for *it*." ... But genuine biblical silence (where God has truly *said absolutely NOTHING* one way or the other about something) is **neither prohibits nor permits**. REFLECTIONS by Al Maxey Issue #401, June 30, 2009 from [wikisource.org/wiki/AnteNicene\\_Fathers/Volume\\_III/Apologetic/The\\_Chaplet\\_or\\_De\\_Corona/Chapter\\_II](http://wikisource.org/wiki/AnteNicene_Fathers/Volume_III/Apologetic/The_Chaplet_or_De_Corona/Chapter_II)

**Comment:** Silence of the Scriptures is discussed in [.thebiblewayonline.com/HTML/SilenceScriptures.html](http://thebiblewayonline.com/HTML/SilenceScriptures.html)

### Some teachings and Practices of Tertullian

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

Some 1200 to 1300 years later due to the reformation the Council of Trent (1545 – 1563) called by Pope Paul III decided that “traditions set forth by the councils and the church fathers constituted authority equal to that of the Scripture.” The Eternal Kingdom, F.W. Mattox, p. 291

Fornicators and Murderers should never be admitted into the church under any circumstances. In *de pudicitia*, Tertullian condemns Pope Callixtus I for allowing such people in when they show repentance. [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tertullian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tertullian)

### **Cyprian of Carthage**

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

### Teachings of Cyprian

**Ass to what** pertains to the case of infants: You [Fidus] said that they ought not to be baptized within the second or third day after their birth, that the old law of circumcision must be taken into consideration, and that you did not think that one should be baptized and sanctified within the eighth day after his birth. In our council it seemed to us far otherwise. No one agreed to the course which you thought should be taken. Rather, we all judge that the mercy and grace of God ought to be denied to no man born. (Letters 64:2 [A.D. 253])      [ricklobs.blogspot.com/2009/03/church-fathers-on-infant-baptism.html](http://ricklobs.blogspot.com/2009/03/church-fathers-on-infant-baptism.html)

### **Ambrose**

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

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

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

### **Augustine**

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

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

After some eight years he broke from the group moving to Neo-platonism. At about 27 years of age he became a "Christian" but not necessarily from a study of the Bible. However, the older he became the more he moved in the direction of the Bible and away from philosophy. Often, they were mixed bringing inconsistencies. "Ism's" Calvinism, REW

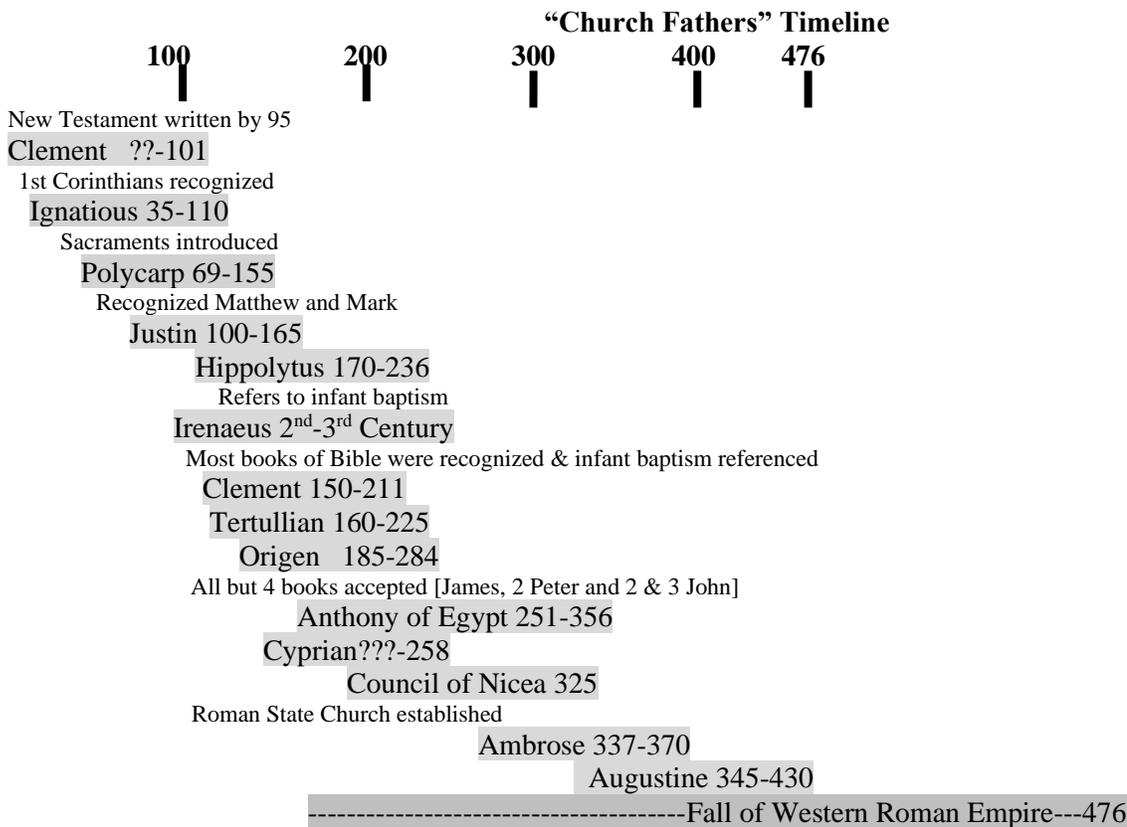
**Comment:** Neo-platonism is the absence of good being the source of evil (*privatio boni*), and that this absence of good comes from human sin.

### Some Beliefs of Augustine

1. Definition of evil  
God is eternal and cannot change. He is the ultimate good. Any movement from God is evil. Only God's grace can keep men from sin. The choice of self instead of God is the essence of sin.
2. Origin of Evil  
"Why should there be evil in a universe created out of nothing by a Being who is both good and all-powerful?" (McGiffert, A History of Christian Thought, 1933, p.89). Evil is the tendency of all created things to lapse again into the nothingness from which they came. God was not responsible for sin but permitted it.
3. Origin of Sin (Total Hereditary Depravity)  
Although Augustine did not believe God was responsible for sin, he accepted the Catholic traditions and doctrine of Original sin.
4. Free Will  
Man inherited from Adam a corrupt nature and this became the incentive to sin. Men are endowed with free will but he could not choose God and live for him without divine help or grace.
5. First Work of Grace  
Faith is a divine gift and no one can believe in God unless moved thereto by His grace. These gifts are bestowed without regard to human merit either actual or foreseen.
6. Irresistible Grace  
Those whom God wills to save cannot prevent Him from doing so even if he wished to.
7. Sovereignty of God  
God is absolutely supreme. His will is the only real will.  
Predestination  
Some people are foreordained to salvation and some to damnation, which is due wholly to God's unfathomable secret will.
8. Preservation of Saints  
God gives to the chosen the gift of preservation so they can endure to the end. Therefore, none of the elect can fall away and be lost.
9. Number of the elect fixed

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

“isms” Calvinism, REW, pages 4 – 7



## Church Hierarchy

### The Church Foundation

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

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

### Purchased by Christ

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

### Christ is the Head

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

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

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

### Organization

“It was he [Christ] who gave some to be **apostles**, some to be **prophets**, some to be **evangelists**, and some to be **pastors and teachers**, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:11-13).

**Comment:** Some translate this to be teaching pastors as ‘some to be’ is not in the Greek text.

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

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

They were:

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

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

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

**Comment:** Until the persecution by the leaders of the Jews began, the Christian Jews gathered in familiar Jew assembly places such as Solomon’s colonnade.

**Comment:** Functions of Christ’s church are discussed in

[thebiblewayonline.com/HTML/FunctionsEldersDeacons.html](http://thebiblewayonline.com/HTML/FunctionsEldersDeacons.html)

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

From Miletus Paul continued on his journey to Jerusalem. When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and elders, to whom they reported everything God had done through them. Then some of the believers who

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

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

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

**Comment:** One doctrinal (episcopate) authority, monarchical authority, is clearly different New Testament writers.

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

### **Middle (Dark) Ages** 476 – 1517 AD

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

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

#### Waldensians (around 1179)

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

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

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

#### Albigenses or Cathars (around 1200)

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

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

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

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

At Minerve, 14,000 Christians were put to death in the flames, and ears, noses, and lips of the "heretics" were cut off by the "faithful-Catholics." <sup>A</sup>

**Comment:** According to Webster's II New Riverside University Dictionary, a heretic: is "One who holds or advocates controversial opinions, **esp. one who publicly opposes the officially accepted dogma of the Roman Catholic Church.**"

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>D</sup> J.H. Ignaz von Dollinger; The Pope and the Council (London, 1869); as cited in Dave Hunt, A Woman Rides the Beast

<sup>E</sup> Peter S. Ruckman, Ph.D.; op cit.

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

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

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

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

- a. The Pope was not the head of the church, Christ was!
- b. The Pope was the Anti-Christ!
- c. There were only two orders of officers in the church: elders and deacons.
- d. The Bible, not the church, was the sole authority for man.

- e. The church should re-model itself after the pattern of the New Testament.

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

### **Chaucer (c. 1343 – 1400)**

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

### **Jan Hus (1372 – 1415)**

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

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

Other Catholic practices also existed such as:

- a. Simony - Church offices were sold to the highest bidder allowing the most unsuitable persons to become bishops and abbots **Comment:** An Abbot was the head of a monastery with less authority than a bishop. [Mediaeval and Modern History](#), Myers, p.115-116
- b. Indulgencies – the purchase of forgiveness, both now and after death. John Tetzel's sale of Indulgences was the occasion for Martin Luther's break with Rome – 1517. According to Roman teaching, purgatory is very much the same as hell, only it does not last as long, but all have to pass through it. The pope claimed to have the authority and power to lessen or remit these sufferings. It began with Popes Pascal I (817-824) and John VIII (872-882) and became very profitable. This became a way of “selling the privilege to sin.”

[Halley's Bible Handbook, p.787 therestorationmovement.com/lessons/chlesson03.htm](http://Halley's Bible Handbook, p.787 therestorationmovement.com/lessons/chlesson03.htm)

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

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

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

Chelčický's teachings included ideas later adopted by the Moravians, Anabaptists, Quakers, and Baptists. He was the first pacifist writer of the Renaissance, predating Erasmus and Menno Simons by nearly 100 years. [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anabaptist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anabaptist)

### **Erasmus (1466 – 1536)**

Erasmus was a “Dutch [humanists] scholar and an unusually brilliant student. He edited a series of studies on the Church Fathers which made available the early history of the departure from the New Testament pattern. He also edited the first printed Greek New Testament and exposed the inadequacy of the Latin Vulgate which had been used as the text of Scripture in the Catholic churches since the time of Jerome. Although Erasmus used ridicule extensively in his criticism of the Catholic

church he did not launch out into an energetic program of reformation. He did, however, supply much of the material that other men used. It has been said that Erasmus laid the egg that Luther hatched.” The Eternal Kingdom, F.W. Mattox, p 229

### Machiavelli (1469 – 1527)

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

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

In this he set forth the principle of totalitarianism. ... Mussolini wrote the dissertation for his doctorate on the ‘Military Ideas of Machiavelli’.”

The Eternal Kingdom, F.W. Mattox, p. 236

### **Humanism and/or Humanists**

Humanists roots were centuries before the Renaissance.

#### Greek humanism

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

#### Ancient Asian humanism

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

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

#### Dante (c.1265 – 1321)

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

**Comment:** Normally literary works were written in classical Latin rather than the Italian.

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

**Comment:** Apparently the belief that a “providential will that orders all things to an ultimate good” was the prevailing belief of the Catholic teachings of the day.

#### Renaissance Humanism

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

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

(wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman\_Catholicism\_in\_Germany)

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

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

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

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

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

### **Consequences of the Renaissance humanist movement**

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

The re-discovery of ancient manuscripts brought a more profound and accurate knowledge of ancient philosophical schools such as Epicureanism, and Neoplatonism, whose Pagan wisdom the humanists, like the Church fathers of old, tended, at least initially, to consider as deriving from divine revelation and thus adaptable to a life of Christian virtue. (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humanism) By refocusing on those literary, historical, oratorical, and theological texts, Renaissance humanism profoundly changed the cultural and intellectual direction of Europe. In philosophy Renaissance humanists tended to focus more attention on Plato's dialogues and less on the Aristotelian texts.  
[wikipedia.org/wiki/Renaissance\\_humanism](http://wikipedia.org/wiki/Renaissance_humanism)

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

### Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

The phrase the "religion of humanity" is sometimes attributed to American Founding Father, Thomas Paine, though as yet unattested in his surviving writings. Thomas Paine called himself a *theophilanthropist*, a word combining the Greek for "God", "love," and "man", and indicating that while he believed in the existence of a creating intelligence in the universe, he entirely rejected the claims made by and for all existing religious doctrines, especially their miraculous, transcendental

and salvationist pretensions. The Parisian Society of Theophilanthropy used Paine's book, the *Age of Reason* (1793), to pour scorn on scripture combined with Voltairean mockery "to expose the absurdity of a theology built on a collection of incoherent Levantine folktales." In the 19<sup>th</sup> century Ludwig Feuerbach of the Hegelians wrote ("Man is a god to man" or "god is nothing [other than] man to himself").

The original signers of the Humanist Manifesto I of 1933, declared themselves to be religious humanists. Because of the failure of traditional *religions to meet the needs of their day, the signers of 1933 declared it a major necessity to establish a religion that was a dynamic force to meet the needs of the day.* Since then two additional Manifestos were written to replace the first.

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

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

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

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

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

## Reformation Movement

### The Renaissance 1517 – 1648 AD

Between 1118 and 1518 the Catholics and the German Emperor took turns (depending on who was in power) martyring Christians as they were discovered. About 4,000 (all throughout Central Europe [including Alsace-Lorraine in central Germany]) died as a result of persecution during these four centuries. Thus, these churches in Alsace-Lorraine are partially responsible for the influence that led Martin Luther to break from Catholicism. Luther likely never heard of their teachings, however he objected to the way the Christians were murdered by the Catholic Church. In fact, Luther was even suspected by Catholicism of being "in close connection with the heretical churches in Alsatia, (a region of Alsace)." Nevertheless, the Anabaptists churches in Europe faced persecution from both Catholics and Protestants.

The Renaissance popes were notoriously worldly. Abuses such as simony, nepotism, and financial excesses increased. The Catholic Church was riddled with venality and immorality. The sale of Indulgences was a particularly unfortunate practice because it impinged upon true spiritual repentance and improvement of life. At the same time a genuine upsurge of popular religiosity manifested itself and increased the disparity between the people's expectations and their ability to satisfy spiritual needs.

**Comment:** Venality means openness to bribery or corruption such as a position capable of being obtained for a price.

**Martin Luther** (1483- 1546)

Martin Luther's spiritual predecessors included men such as John Wycliffe (1328-1384) and Johannes Hus (1369-1415), who had attempted to reform the [Catholic] church along similar lines. In 1517 Luther nailed his *Ninety-Five Theses* to the door of the All Saints' Church, in Wittenberg which served as a notice board for university-related announcements. These were points for debate that criticized the Church and the Pope. The most controversial points centered on the practice of selling indulgences and the Church's policy on purgatory.

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protestant\_Reformation

In 1520, Luther published three pamphlets that

- a. Described Rome's abuses
- b. Demanded reforms in morals and in dogma
- c. Attacked some of the sacraments, transubstantiation, and worship of the saints
- c. Insisted that the Bible alone constituted the final authority for a Christian.

therestorationmovement.com/lessons/chlesson03.htm

Luther espoused - "What is not *against* Scripture is *for* Scripture, and Scripture for *it*."

REFLECTIONS by Al Maxey Issue #401, June 30, 2009 from wikisource.org/wiki/AnteNicene\_Fathers/Volume\_III/Apologetic/The\_Chaplet,\_or\_De\_Corona/Chapter\_II

**Comment:** Silence of the Scriptures is discussed in <https://www.thebiblewayonline.com/HTML/SilenceScriptures.html>

Luther was a threat [at least in Germany]. When he founded his "church" in 1520, Catholics knew they had a problem. The Anabaptist churches were mistakenly lumped together with them. Catholics were running scared, and killing everyone (Christian and protestant alike). Catholics were no longer satisfied with killing Christians as they were accidentally found; now they were actually hunted. In Alsace-Lorraine alone, out of nearly 100,000 members, about 42,000 were burned for not renouncing Christianity in favor of Catholicism. This massacre occurred from about 1525 to 1536. Circumstances were similar everywhere. By 1595, The Christians in Alsace-Lorraine numbered merely 1,000. Most congregations had been extinguished. Congregations in Moravia, though severely depleted in membership, managed to flee to Hungary, Poland, Ukraine, and Crimea. By 1799, Eulogius Schneider (a catholic priest) beheaded the last three martyrs for not participating with Napoleon in the French Revolution.

(adapted from [allexperts.com/q/Critics-Catholicism-3337/Questions-1.htm](http://allexperts.com/q/Critics-Catholicism-3337/Questions-1.htm) Marvin Howard)

**Comment:** The Anabaptist's believe baptism by immersion is based on the faith of adults, believer's baptism. Therefore, infant baptism is not a valid immersion.

**Comment:** The result was the near extermination of the church in Europe.

**Ulrich Zwingli** (1484 –1531)

The Reformation in Switzerland initially developed in Zurich under the leadership of the priest Ulrich Zwingli. Zwingli had been influenced by Erasmus and by Christian humanism. He arrived at an evangelical understanding of Christianity from his study of the Bible and from contacts with Lutherans. On Jan. 1, 1519, he began a 6-year series of sermons on the New Testament that moved the city council and the people of Zurich toward reform. The favorable response to The Sixty-Seven Articles, which he prepared for public disputation with a papal representative in 1523, proved the popularity of his program. He called for the abolition of the Mass (and its replacement by a symbolic Lord's Supper), independence from episcopal control, and a reform of the city-state in which both priests and Christian magistrates would conform to the will of God.

[mb-soft.com/believe/txn/reformat.htm](http://mb-soft.com/believe/txn/reformat.htm)

He attacked the custom of fasting during Lent, corruption in the ecclesiastical hierarchy, promoted clerical marriage, and attacked the use of images in places of worship.

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Huldrych\_Zwingli

Zwingli maintained that *anything* "not enjoined or taught in the New Testament should be unconditionally *rejected*."

REFLECTIONS by Al Maxey Issue #401, June 30, 2009 taken from [http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/AnteNicene\\_Fathers/Volume\\_III/Apologetic/The\\_Chaplet,\\_or\\_De\\_Corona/Chapter\\_II](http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/AnteNicene_Fathers/Volume_III/Apologetic/The_Chaplet,_or_De_Corona/Chapter_II)

**Comment:** Silence of the scriptures is discussed in [thebiblewayonline.com/HTML/SilenceScriptures.html](https://www.thebiblewayonline.com/HTML/SilenceScriptures.html)

## Radical Reformation

Beginning in Switzerland and Germany, the Radical Reformation birthed many Anabaptist groups throughout Europe. Historically, the radical reformers operated under several names.

Brethren or Swiss Brethren – were a group of radical evangelical reformers who initially followed Ulrich Zwingli of Zürich, but later started the movement now known as Anabaptism. In 1525, Felix Manz, Conrad Grebel, George Blaurock and others formed a new group, which rejected infant baptism and preached what the Brethren claimed was true Christianity. Based on Sola Scriptura [scripture alone], the Swiss Brethren declared that since the Bible does not mention infant baptism, it should not be practiced by the church. This was subsequently refuted by Ulrich Zwingli. Consequently, there was a public dispute, in which the council affirmed Zwingli's position. This crystallized the Swiss Brethren and resulted in their persecution by all other reformers as well as the Catholic Church.

It is important to note that the Anabaptists were first persecuted by the Protestants under Zwingli. They had arisen on his watch, in his town, and were his former disciples. Perhaps he was afraid that the existence of several rival versions of Protestant would irreparably harm his chances of accomplishing any reform. Perhaps... but nothing can justify his actions. He had the magistrate's ear; he was in charge of Reform. The council declared that rebaptizing was a capital crime, so let's enforce it.

Felix Manz became the first Anabaptist martyr in 1527, ten short years after Luther had nailed up his theses. He was drowned in the river right in the middle of Zurich. Other Anabaptists were beaten or banished. These became standard practices in Protestant territories.

Because of persecution by the authorities, many of these Anabaptists moved from Switzerland to neighboring countries. Some of the Swiss Brethren became known as Mennonites after the division of 1693, a disagreement between the Jacob Amman and Hans Reist groups.

[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Swiss\\_Brethren](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Swiss_Brethren)

Mennonites - an Anabaptist denomination named after the Frisian, Menno Simons (1496–1561). The teachings of the Mennonites were founded on their belief in both the mission and ministry of Jesus Christ, which they held to with great conviction despite persecution by the various Roman Catholic and Protestant states. Rather than fight, the majority survived by fleeing to neighboring states where ruling families were tolerant of their radical belief in adult baptism.

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

Hutterites – share a common ancestry with the Anabaptists, along with the Mennonites and Amish and as would logically follow, share many of the same beliefs and doctrine. Hutterites differ in one major aspect: they believe in sharing their possessions in common as demonstrated by Christ and His Apostles and as later further refined and described in the Book of Acts.

[hutterites.org/HutteriteHistory/index.htm](http://hutterites.org/HutteriteHistory/index.htm)

Amish - The Amish movement descends from the 16th century fellowship known as the Swiss Brethren or Anabaptists, and part of the Radical Reformation. Anabaptist means "one who baptizes again"; a reference to those who had been baptized as infants, but later adopted a belief in "believer's baptism" and therefore were baptized as believing adults. The Amish movement takes its name from Jakob Ammann (c1656 —c1730), who believed Mennonites were drifting away from the teachings of Menno Simons and the 1632 Mennonite Dordrecht Confession of Faith. The Amish like the Swiss Anabaptists were scattered by persecution throughout Alsace.

[wikipedia.org/wiki/Amish#History](http://wikipedia.org/wiki/Amish#History)

But these Radical Reformers or Anabaptists referred to themselves as: Brethren and Believers and Christians.

In 1524, when the disputations at Zurich were still very recent, Balthasar Hubmaier (living in Catholic territory) published several articles representative of his theology. Those below are taken from Estep:

1. Faith alone makes us holy before God.
2. This faith is the acknowledgment of the mercy of God which he has shown us in the offering of his only begotten son. This excludes all sham Christians, who have nothing more than an historical faith.
3. Such faith cannot remain passive but must break out to God in thanksgiving and to mankind in all kinds of works of brotherly love. Hence all vain religious acts, such as candles, palm branches, and holy water will be rejected.
4. Those works alone are good which God has commanded us and those alone are evil which he has forbidden.
5. The mass is not a sacrifice but a remembrance of the death of Christ. Therefore, it is not an offering for the dead or for the living.
6. As often as the memorial is observed should the death of the Lord be preached in the language of the people. . .

7. As every Christian believes for himself and is baptized, so each individual should see and judge by the Scriptures if he is rightly provided food and drink by his pastor. [ritchies.net/p4wk4.htm](http://ritchies.net/p4wk4.htm).

In February 1527 Michael Sattler, a Swiss Anabaptist, and others put forth the Schleitheim Confession. Its main points were:

1. Baptism was to be administered to believers only. Infant baptism, "the greatest and first abomination of the pope," is not to be practiced.
2. The "ban" [excommunication or withdrawal] should be observed by local churches against those who fall into sin, after a first and second private warning.
3. The bread and wine should only be broken with baptized believers, and no others.
4. True Christians should be separated from the world system, including its "church attendance", oaths, the sword, etc.
5. There should be shepherds among the flock, who will preach, etc., and will be supported by the church. If a pastor is taken from the flock, another should be ordained in his place.
6. The "sword;" i.e., the magistracy or rulership, is outside of Christ's perfection and is to be left to the world to exercise. Christians should not exercise self-defense nor become magistrates, nor use the secular sword against spiritual offenses **Comment:** The magistracy or rulership government "sword" is persecuted for being in the wrong religion.
7. Christians should not make an oath, but let their yes be yes and their no be no. [ritchies.net/p4wk4.htm](http://ritchies.net/p4wk4.htm)

On May 20, 1527, Michael Sattler, the author of the Anabaptist *Schleitheim Confession*, was executed by Catholic authorities. Even though the Catholic King Ferdinand had declared drowning (the "third baptism") the best antidote to Anabaptism. Sattler had been sentenced to have his tongue cut out, his flesh cut with hot irons, and then to be burned at the stake. Others were burned or drowned by Catholic authorities. Burning seems to have been favored by Catholics, less by Protestants.

In addition to the above, Protestant and Catholic nations alike resorted to torture and other forms of abuse. Estep estimates that thousands died in Europe in the sixteenth century, but hard numbers will never be available. [ritchies.net/p4wk4.htm](http://ritchies.net/p4wk4.htm)

For over 400 years a few people scattered over Europe had a desire to use scripture alone and return to God; i.e.:

- a. Waldensians – around 1179
- b. Albigenses – around 1200
- c. Wycliffe – 1328 - 1384
- d. Hus – 1372 - 1415
- e. Chelčický – 1374 - 1460
- f. Luther – 1483 - 1546
- g. Zwingli – 1484 - 1531
- h. Radical Reformers – 1525

Another thing in common was that they were all persecuted. But that should not be any surprise for Jesus told his disciples:

“This is my command: Love each other. If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember the words I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the One who sent me.” (John 15:17-21)

Another reformer appears. One who did not use scripture alone for his doctrine but adopted those of the Augustine.

### **John Calvin** (1509-1564)

Calvin was known at the University of Paris as “The Accusative Case” because of his critical, fault finding attitude. He changed from the study of law to theology at his father’s wish. Influenced by the humanists Erasmus and Lefevre, he began to study the Bible and Luther’s writing. Sometime later, probably 1533, he had a “conversion experience” and began his religious career. In 1534 he left France due to persecution.

In 1541 he returned to Geneva where he became very powerful. "Virtually every breath and every heartbeat of its citizens was controlled by Calvin. Calvin was guilty of inflicting horrible tortures on those who opposed him. The most notorious case of this was Servetus, against whom Calvin served as prosecutor.

Servetus was condemned to death by slow burning. Calvin claimed to have sought to change the form of execution, but there is not a shred of evidence to show this, either in the minutes of the trial or elsewhere. He also accused a number of opponents of treason and put them on the rack to obtain proof of his accusations. To be fair, it should be pointed out that the Protestants were only following the age-old example of the Catholic Church in using civil power to enforce spiritual principles. Calvin ruled with an iron hand until his death." "Ism's" Calvinism, REW, pages 9-12

Comment: Rack is an engine of torture, consisting of a large frame, upon which the body was gradually stretched until, sometimes, the joints were dislocated. (dictionary.die.net/to put to the rack)

Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion reveals his theology. They did not originate with Calvin but merely systematized, arranged and developed by him. He borrowed frequently from Augustine, and Augustine had borrowed from Ambrose and other church Fathers. No doubt the Fathers were influenced by the Gnostic heresy and even by the old Persian concepts of matter being inherently evil within itself. Calvin built his system upon the foundation laid by the earlier reformers, especially Luther and Bucer, and others but his peculiar gifts of learning, of logic, and style made him pre-eminently the outstanding theologian of the Reformed movement. Underlying the whole system was the dominant thought of the infinite and transcendent sovereignty of God, to know whom man's supreme end is.

But not like prior reformers who desired to rely only on the Bible Calvin wrote his own doctrines in Institutes of the Christian Religion which are summarized below and are discussed individually later.

**Sovereignty** - God is ultimate; therefore, His will is ultimate and final.

**Unconditional election** - According to His sovereign will He foreordained all things. He foreordained sin itself. He did this for His own glory. To further enhance His own glory, He predetermined that of sinners, He would save some and condemn others. He did this according to His own will so that it has nothing to do with anything men do.

**Limited Atonement** - For His elect, God has provided atonement and salvation through the blood of His Son Jesus Christ.

**Total hereditary depravity** - The problem is that through Adam's sin, his nature was corrupted, and this nature has been passed down to his descendants.

**Irresistible grace** - Having this corrupt nature, men cannot come to the knowledge of God by themselves. Even the elect cannot respond to God, cannot have faith, until the Holy Spirit opens their hearts to believe and understand. The grace of God, exerted in behalf of His elect, and, according to His sovereign will, cannot be thwarted.

**Perseverance of the saints** - The elect will be saved. His grace will sustain the elect and will not be removed so that they cannot be lost. Their salvation is sure.

### **Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609)**

England had to some extent held Arminianism views. But Arminianism was started by Jacobus Arminius who was taught by Calvin's son-in-law. Unable to defend the Calvinistic beliefs he rejected his Calvinistic background and sought to modify Calvinism so that "God might not be considered the author of sin, nor man an automation in the hands of God." His modified beliefs caused much controversy among the Calvinist in Holland.

"His followers faced persecution from Calvinists; 200 pastors losing their posts, statesman John van Olden Barneveldt beheaded, Hugo Grotius imprisoned for life but escaping two years later. By 1635 the persecution had waned and followers began to return to Holland once again. They spread a principle of toleration throughout the churches in Holland so that there was much more religious toleration." Adapted from "selected quotes taken from The Moody Handbook of Theology by Paul Enns".

The *Reformation* sought, at least in some measure, to redirect the focus away from such legalistic ritualism, reintroducing the people to the joy of relationship with the Father by grace through faith, apart from such restrictive regulation. In 1647, for example, the Westminster Assembly completed and adopted the Westminster Larger Catechism, which was a rather lengthy list of 196 questions and responses helping to define the significant aspects of one's faith and practice. Question #180 "What is it to pray in the name of Christ?" In the response it is noted that our Lord's injunction is NOT complied

with "by bare mentioning of His name, but by drawing our encouragement to pray, and our boldness, strength, and hope of acceptance in prayer, from Christ and His mediation." (Adapted from REFLECTIONS by Al Maxey Issue #405- July 27, 09)

**Comment:** Praying in Jesus Name is discussed in  
<https://www.thebiblewayonline.com/HTML/JesusNamePowerAuthority.html>

## Restoration Movement

1648 – 1849 AD

The Reformation Movement ended and the Restoration Movement began with a series of religious wars that culminated in the Thirty Years' War. From 1618 to 1648 the Catholic House of Habsburg and its allies fought against the Protestant princes of Germany, supported at various times by Denmark, Sweden and France. The Habsburgs, who ruled Spain, Austria, the Spanish Netherlands and much of Germany and Italy, were staunch defenders of the Catholic Church. Some historians believe that the era of the Reformation came to a close when Catholic France allied itself, first in secret and later on the battlefields, with Protestant states against the Habsburg dynasty.<sup>[1]</sup> For the first time since the days of Luther, political and national convictions again outweighed religious convictions in Europe.

The movement began as an attempt to reform the Catholic Church. Many western Catholics were troubled by what they saw as false doctrines and malpractices within the [Catholic] Church, particularly involving the teaching and sale of indulgences. Another major contention was the practice of buying and selling church positions (simony) and what was seen at the time as considerable corruption within the Church's hierarchy. This corruption was seen by many as systemic, even reaching the position of the Pope.

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protestant\_Reformation#Conclusion\_and\_legacy

While the Middle Ages saw some calls for a restoration of a primitive form of Christianity, such as John Wycliffe and John Hus, these groups were driven underground. As a result, it is difficult to find any direct links between the restoration movement and these earlier dissenters.

**For in 1229 Council of Toulouse** in Canon 14 stated "We prohibit also that the laity should be permitted to have the books of the Old or New Testament; unless anyone from motive of devotion should wish to have the Psalter or the Breviary for divine offices or the hours of the blessed Virgin; but we most strictly forbid their having any translation of these books.  
hol.com/~mikesch/banned.htm

Beginning with the Renaissance period [15<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> centuries] intellectual roots become easier to discern. At the heart of the Reformation there was an emphasis on the principle of "scripture alone" [one of Luther's points] This, along with the related anti-traditionalism and insistence on the right of individuals to read and interpret the Bible for themselves, formed part of the intellectual background of early Restoration Movement leaders. Persecution did not end with the Reformation as clearly evidenced in Foxe's Book of Martyrs.

In 1532, Thomas Harding, who with his wife, had been accused of heresy, was brought before the bishop of Lincoln, England and condemned for denying the real presence in the Eucharist Sacrament. He was then chained to a stake, erected for the purpose, at Chesham in the Pell, near Botely; and when they had set fire to the fagots one of the spectators dashed out his brains with a billet. The priests told the people that whoever brought fagots to burn heretics would have an indulgence to commit sins for forty days.

**Comment:** Fagot is a bundle of sticks bound together for fuel.

Also, John Tewkesbury, a plain, simple man, who had been guilty of no other offence against what was called the holy Mother Church, than that of reading Tyndale's translation of the New Testament. At first he was weak enough to adjure, but afterward repented, and acknowledged the truth. For this he was brought before the bishop of London, who condemned him as an obstinate heretic. He suffered greatly during the time of his imprisonment, so that when they brought him out for execution, he was almost dead. He was conducted to the stake in Smithfield, where he was burned, declaring his utter abhorrence of popery, and professing a firm belief that his cause was just in the sight of God.

Thus, were Christ's people betrayed every way, and their lives bought and sold. For, in the said parliament, the king made this most blasphemous and cruel act, to be a law forever: that whatsoever they were that should read the Scriptures in the mother-tongue (which was then called "Wickliffe's learning"), they should forfeit land, cattle, body, life, and goods, from their heirs forever, and so be condemned for heretics to God, enemies to the crown, and most arrant traitors to the land.

There are countless examples of unspeakable and unimaginable torture during this period of English history. Many people fled England for the New World to escape poverty and persecution.

Adapted from Foxe's Book of Martyrs

This policy of prohibiting the reading of the Bible other than by the priest was reaffirmed by the Council of Trent (1545-64) which placed the Bible on its list of prohibited books, and forbade any person to read the Bible without a license from a Roman Catholic bishop or inquisitor.

jesus-is-lord.com/nobible.htm

### **John Locke (1632 – 1704)**

John Locke sought a way to address religious division and persecution without abandoning scripture. To do this, Locke argued against the right of government to enforce religious orthodoxy and turned to the Bible to supply a set of beliefs that all Christians could agree upon, that is to "reduce religion to a set of essentials upon which all reasonable persons might agree." The **core teachings** that he viewed as essential were:

- a. The messiahship of Jesus
- b. Jesus' direct commands.

Christians could be devoutly committed to other Biblical teachings but, in Locke's view, they were non-essentials over which Christians should never fight or try to coerce each other. Unlike the Puritans and the later Restoration Movement, Locke did not call for a systematic restoration of the early church.

### **John Wesley (1703 – 1791)**

Wesley's contribution as a theologian was to propose a system of opposing theological stances. His greatest theological achievement was his promotion of what he termed "Christian Perfection", or holiness of heart and life. Wesley held that, in this life, Christians could come to a state in which the love of God, or perfect love, reigned supreme in their hearts. His evangelical theology, especially his understanding of Christian perfection, was firmly grounded in his sacramental theology. He continually insisted on the general use of the means of grace (prayer, scripture, meditation, Holy Communion, etc.) as the means by which God sanctifies and transforms the believer.

To be made perfect in love meant that a Christian could live with a primary guiding regard for others and their welfare. He based this on Christ's quote that the second great command is "to love your neighbor as you love yourself." In his view, this orientation would cause a person to avoid any number of sins against his neighbor. This love, plus the love for God that could be the central focus of a person's faith, would be what Wesley referred to as "a fulfillment of the law of Christ."

Wesley believed that the living core of the Christian faith was revealed in Scripture; and the Bible was the sole foundational source of theological or doctrinal development. ... However, he believed that doctrine had to be in keeping with Christian orthodox tradition.

The doctrines which Wesley emphasized were prevenient grace, personal salvation by faith, witness of the Spirit and sanctification. Prevenient grace is divine grace which precedes human decision. It exists prior to and without reference to anything humans may have done. As humans are corrupted by the effects of sin, prevenient grace allows persons to engage their God-given free will to choose the salvation offered by God in Jesus Christ or to reject that salvific offer.

wikipedia.org/wiki/Prevenient\_Grace]

These views and beliefs were modified again and championed by John Wesley. These beliefs as stated in The Moody Handbook of Theology by Paul Enns are shown in the following:

- Election based on (fore) knowledge - God elected those whom He knew would of their own free will believe in Christ and preserve in the faith.
- Unlimited Atonement - In His atonement, Christ provided redemption for all mankind, making all mankind savable. Christ's atonement becomes effective only to those who believe.
- Natural Ability - Man cannot save himself; the Holy Spirit must affect the new birth.
- Prevenient Grace - Preparatory work of the Holy Spirit enables the believer to respond to the gospel and cooperate with God's salvation.
- Conditional Preservation- Believers have been empowered to live a victorious life. But they are capable of turning from grace and losing their salvation.

Prevenient grace was the theological underpinning of his belief that all persons were capable of being saved by faith in Christ. Unlike the Calvinists of his day, Wesley did not believe in pre-destination. He understood that Christian orthodoxy insisted that salvation was only possible by the sovereign grace of God. He expressed his understanding of humanity's

relationship to God as utter dependence upon God's grace. God was at work to enable all people to be capable of coming to faith by empowering humans to have actual existential freedom of response to God.

Wesley contended that a part of the theological method would involve experiential faith. In other words, truth would be vivified in personal experience of Christians (overall, not individually), if it were really truth. And every doctrine must be able to be defended rationally. He did not divorce faith from reason. Tradition, experience and reason, however, were subject always to Scripture, Wesley argued, because only there is the Word of God revealed "so far as it is necessary for our salvation."

In 1770 he wrote "There are many doctrines of a less essential nature ... In these we may think and let think; we may 'agree to disagree.' But, meantime, let us hold fast the essentials..."

Comment: Doctrines of a less essential nature sure sounds like Locke's core essentials 50 to 70 years earlier.

Wesley promoted many social justice issues of the day, including the prison reform and abolitionism movement. He helped to organize and form societies of Christians throughout England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland as small groups that developed intensive, personal accountability, discipleship and religious instruction among members. His great contribution was to appoint itinerant, un-ordained preachers who travelled widely to evangelize and care for people in the societies. Young men who acted as their assistants were called "exhorters" who functioned in a similar fashion to the twelve apostles after the ascension of Jesus.

Adapted from wikipedia.org/wiki/John\_Wesley

### **Puritans – 16<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries**

One of the basic goals of the English Puritans was to restore a pure, "primitive" church that would be a true apostolic community." This mindset was a critical influence in the development of the Puritans in Colonial America.

### **Separate Baptists (1730 – 1740)**

During the First Great Awakening a movement developed among the Baptists known as Separate Baptists. Two themes of this movement were the rejection of creeds and freedom in the Spirit. The Separate Baptists saw scripture as the "perfect rule" for the church. However, while they turned to the Bible for a **structural pattern** for the church, they did not insist on complete agreement on the details of that pattern. This group originated in New England, but was especially strong in the South where the emphasis on a biblical pattern for the church grew stronger. In the last half of the 18th century it spread to the western frontier of Kentucky and Tennessee, where the Stone and Campbell movements would later take root. The development of the Separate Baptists in the southern frontier helped prepare the ground for the Restoration Movement, as the membership of both the Stone and Campbell groups drew heavily from among the ranks of the Separate Baptists.

**Comment:** The Bible as the only rule for proper church order to be followed carefully while avoiding precise details of biblical form which leads to legalist Biblicism. Therefore, no need for a creed.

Separate Baptist restorationism also contributed to the development of the Landmark Baptists in the same area at about the same time as the Stone-Campbell Restoration Movement. Under the leadership of James Robinson Graves, this group looked for a **precise blueprint** for the primitive church, believing that any deviation from that blueprint would keep one from being part of the true church.

wikipedia.org/wiki/Restoration\_Movement

**Comment:** Two opposing views a perfect rule, freedom in spirit, where complete agreement was not insisted on and Blueprint with its precise details. Can they both be right, is either one right or are they both wrong?

### **James O'Kelly (1732 -1826)**

O'Kelly was an early advocate of seeking unity through a return to New Testament Christianity. In 1792, dissatisfied with the role of bishops in the Methodist Episcopal Church, he separated from that body. O'Kelly's movement, centering in Virginia and North Carolina, was originally called Republican Methodists. In 1794 they adopted the name Christian Church.

O'Kelly, Rice Haggard and others defined five cardinal principles of the Christian Church

1. Christ is the only head of the church
2. The name Christian is the only acceptable name
3. The Bible is the only rule of faith
4. Christian character is the only test of church fellowship
5. The right of private judgment is the privilege of all.

**Elias Smith (1764 – 1846) and Abner Jones (1767 – 1840)**

Abner Jones a doctor left the Baptist church and formed a church he called the Christian Church in Lyndon, Vermont with the Bible as its only creed. The Eternal Kingdom, F.W. Mattox, p.313

Elias Smith of Vermont joined Dr. Jones in a movement espousing views similar to those of O'Kelly. They believed that members could, by looking to scripture alone, simply be Christians without being bound to human traditions and the denominations that had been brought over from Europe.

**Barton W. Stone (1772 – 1844)**

While attending Guilford Academy in North Carolina in 1790, Stone heard James McGready (a Presbyterian minister) speak. A few years later he became a Presbyterian minister himself. As Stone looked more deeply into the beliefs of the Presbyterians, especially the Westminster Confession of Faith, he doubted that some of the church beliefs were truly Bible-based. He was unable to accept the Calvinistic doctrines of total depravity, unconditional election and predestination.

**Cane Ridge Revival**

In 1801, the Cane Ridge Revival in Kentucky would plant the seed for a movement in Kentucky and the Ohio River valley to disassociate from denominationalism and to become just Christians only - neither Catholic, Protestant nor Jew. In 1803 Stone and others withdrew from the Kentucky Presbytery and formed the Springfield Presbytery. The defining event of the Stone wing of the movement was the publication of *Last Will and Testament of The Springfield Presbytery*, at Cane Ridge, Kentucky, in 1804. The Last Will is a brief document in which Stone and five others announced their withdrawal from Presbyterianism and their intention to be solely part of the body of Christ. The writers appealed for the unity of all who follow Jesus, suggested the value of congregational self-governance and lifted the Bible as the source for understanding the will of God.

Christian Connection

Elias Smith had heard of the Stone movement by 1804, and the O'Kelly movement by 1808. The three groups merged by 1810. At that time the combined movement had a membership of approximately 20,000. This loose fellowship of churches was called by the names "Christian Connection/Connexion" or "Christian Church."

Characteristics of the Stone movement

The cornerstone for the Stone movement was Christian freedom, which led them to a rejection of all the historical creeds, traditions and theological systems that had developed over time and a focus on a primitive Christianity based on the Bible.

While restoring primitive Christianity was central to the Stone movement, they saw restoring the lifestyle of the early church as essential, and during the early years "focused more ... on holy and righteous living than on the forms and structures of the early church. The group did also seek to restore the primitive church. However, due to concern that emphasizing particular practices could undermine Christian freedom, this effort tended to take the form of rejecting tradition rather than an explicit program of reconstructing New Testament practices. The emphasis on freedom was strong enough that the movement avoided developing any ecclesiastical traditions, resulting in a movement that was "largely without dogma, form, or structure." What held "the movement together was a commitment to primitive Christianity?"

Another theme was that of hastening the millennium. Many Americans of the period believed that the millennium was near and based their hopes for the millennium on their new nation, the United States. Members of the Stone movement believed that only a unified Christianity based on the apostolic church, rather than a country or any of the existing denominations, could lead to the coming of the millennium. Stone's millennialism has been described as more "apocalyptic" than that of Alexander Campbell, in that he believed people were too flawed to usher in a millennial age through human progress. Rather, he believed that it depended on the power of God, and that while waiting for God to establish His kingdom, one should live as if the rule of God were already fully established.

**Comment:** The millennium is discussed in [thebiblewayonline.com/HTML/Millennium.html](http://thebiblewayonline.com/HTML/Millennium.html)

For the Stone movement, this had less to do with eschatological theories and more about a commitment to live as if the kingdom of God were already established on earth. This apocalyptic perspective or world view led many in the Stone

movement to adopt pacifism, avoid participating in civil government, and reject violence, militarism, greed, materialism and slavery.

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Restoration\_Movement

**Comment:** Eschatological theories is the study of theology and philosophy concerned with the final or the ultimate destiny of [humanity](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eschatology), commonly referred to as the end of the world. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eschatology>

### **Thomas Campbell (1763 – 1854)**

Another restoration movement was launched when Thomas Campbell published the *Declaration and Address of the Christian Association of Washington* in 1809. In which he set forth some of his convictions about the church of Jesus Christ, as he organized the Christian Association of Washington, in Washington County, Pennsylvania, not as a church but as an association of persons seeking to grow in faith. On May 4, 1811, the Christian Association constituted itself as a congregationally governed church and became known as Brush Run Church. When their study of the New Testament led the reformers to begin to practice baptism by immersion, the nearby Redstone Baptist Association invited Brush Run Church to join with them for the purpose of fellowship. They agreed provided that they would be "allowed to preach and to teach whatever they learned from the Scriptures."

### **Alexander Campbell (1788 – 1866)**

Thomas' son Alexander joined him in the U.S. in 1809, and before long assumed the leading role in the movement. The Campbells worked within the Redstone Baptist Association during the period 1815 through 1824. While both the Campbells and the Baptists shared baptism by immersion and congregational polity, it was soon clear that he and his associates were not traditional Baptists. Within the Redstone Association, the differences became intolerable to some of the Baptist leaders when Alexander Campbell began publishing a journal, *The Christian Baptist*, promoting reform. Campbell anticipated the conflict and moved his membership to a congregation of the Mahoning Baptist Association in 1824.

**Comment:** Congregational polity often known as **congregationalism**, a system of church governance in which every local church congregation is independent, ecclesiastically sovereign, or autonomous - [wikipedia.org/wiki /Congregationalist\\_polity](http://wikipedia.org/wiki/Congregationalist_polity)

Alexander used *The Christian Baptist* to address what he saw as the key issue of reconstructing the apostolic Christian community in a systematic and rational manner. Part of this should be clearly distinguishing between essential and non-essential aspects of primitive Christianity.

Things he identified as essential to apostolic Christianity were:

- a. congregational autonomy; therefore, no hierarchy
- b. a plurality of elders in each congregation
- c. weekly communion and
- d. immersion of believers for the remission of sins."

Among those things he rejected as non-essential were:

- a. the holy kiss
- b. deaconesses
- c. communal living
- d. foot washing
- e. charismatic exercises."

### **Walter Scott (1796-1861)**

In 1827, the Mahoning Association appointed Walter Scott as an evangelist. Through Scott's efforts, the Mahoning Association grew rapidly. In 1828, Thomas Campbell visited several of the congregations formed by Scott and heard him preach. Campbell believed that Scott was bringing an important new dimension to the movement with his approach to evangelism. In 1830, The Mahoning Baptist Association disbanded. Alexander ceased publication of the *Christian Baptist*, and in January 1831, he began publication of the *Millennial Harbinger*.

[wikipedia.org/wiki/Restoration\\_Movement](http://wikipedia.org/wiki/Restoration_Movement)

### **Influence of the Enlightenment**

Thomas Campbell was a student of the Enlightenment philosopher John Locke [1632-1674]. Remember Locke had two core principles a) The messiahship of Jesus and b) Jesus' direct commands. Campbell proposed the same solution to religious division as had been advanced earlier by Herbert and Locke: "reduce religion to a set of essentials upon which all reasonable persons might agree." The essentials he identified were those things for which the Bible provided:

- a. Thus, saith the Lord

## b. Approved precedent

He also argued for "a complete restoration of apostolic Christianity." Thomas believed that creeds served to divide Christians. He also believed that the Bible was clear enough that anyone could understand it and, as a result, that creeds were unnecessary.

Alexander Campbell was also deeply influenced by Enlightenment thinking, in particular the Scottish School of Common Sense of Thomas Reid and Dugald Stewart. This group saw the Bible as providing concrete facts rather than abstract truths, and advocated a scientific or Baconian approach to interpreting the Bible that would begin with those facts, arrange the ones applicable to a given topic, and then use them to draw conclusions.<sup>[3]:84</sup> Alexander reflected this approach arguing repeatedly that "the Bible is a book of facts, not of opinions, theories, abstract generalities, nor of verbal definitions." He believed that if Christians would limit themselves to the facts found in the Bible, they would necessarily come to agreement, and he saw those facts as providing a blueprint or constitution for the church. [wiki/Restoration\\_Movement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Restoration_Movement)

### **Characteristics of the movement**

Thomas Campbell's approach combined the Enlightenment approach to unity with the Reformed and Puritan traditions of restoration. The Enlightenment affected the Campbell movement in two ways. First, it provided the idea that Christian unity could be achieved by finding a set of essentials that all reasonable people could agree on. The second was the concept of a rational faith that was formulated and defended on the basis of a set of facts derived from the Bible.

Like many others of his time, Alexander Campbell believed in the millennial theory. However, his was more optimistic than Stone's. He had more confidence in the potential for human progress and believed that Christians could unite to transform the world and initiate a millennial age. Alexander's approach was basically postmillennial, anticipating that the progress of the church and society would lead to an age of peace and righteousness before the return of Christ. This optimistic approach meant that, in addition to commitment to primitivism, there was also a progressive strand to his thinking. [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Restoration\\_Movement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Restoration_Movement)

**Comment:** The Millennium is discussed in <https://www.thebiblewayonline.com/HTML/Millennium.html>

### **Merge of the Stone and Campbell movements**

The Campbell movement was characterized by a "systematic and rational reconstruction" of the early church, in contrast to the Stone movement which was characterized by radical freedom and lack of dogma.

Despite their differences, the two movements agreed on several critical issues. Both saw restoring apostolic Christianity as a means of hastening the millennium. Both also saw restoring the early church as a route to Christian freedom. And, both believed that unity among Christians could be achieved by using apostolic Christianity as a model. The commitment of both movements to restoring the early church and to uniting Christians was enough to motivate a union between many in the two movements. [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Restoration\\_Movement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Restoration_Movement)

**Comment:** Since both believed in church autonomy, what was purpose of merging and what did it accomplish?

**Comment:** United in Christ is discussed in [thebiblewayonline.com/HTML/UnitedInChrist.html](https://www.thebiblewayonline.com/HTML/UnitedInChrist.html)

### **"Raccoon John" Smith (1784-1868)**

The two groups united at High Street Meeting House, Lexington, Kentucky with a handshake between Barton W. Stone and "Raccoon" John Smith, Saturday, December 31, 1831. Smith had been chosen, by those present, to speak in behalf of the followers of the Campbells.

Two representatives of those assembled were appointed to carry the news of the union to all the churches: John Rogers, for the Christians and "Raccoon" John Smith for the reformers. Despite some challenges, the merger succeeded. Many believed the union held great promise for the future success of the combined movement, and greeted the news enthusiastically.

With the merger, there was the challenge of what to call the new movement. Clearly, finding a Biblical, non-sectarian name was important. Stone wanted to continue to use the name "Christians." Alexander Campbell insisted upon "Disciples of Christ". As a result, both names were used.

**Comment:** The purpose of names is to denominate one group from another that may or may not have common beliefs or creeds. Does naming provide for accepting or rejection certain groups with their fellowship? If so, it contributes to division.

From the beginning of the movement, the free exchange of ideas among the people was fostered by the journals published by its leaders. Alexander Campbell published *The Christian Baptist* and *The Millennial Harbinger*. Stone published *The Christian Messenger*. In a respectful way, both men routinely published the contributions of others whose positions were radically different from their own.

**Comment:** Publications may cause divisions when opinions become demands for agreement and are considered a test of fellowship.

When Stone and Alexander Campbell's Reformers (also known as Disciples and Christian Baptists) united in 1832, only a minority of Christians from the Smith/Jones and O'Kelly movements participated. Those that did were from congregations west of the Appalachian Mountains that had come into contact with the Stone movement. The eastern members had several key differences with the Stone and Campbell group: an emphasis on conversion experience, quarterly observance of communion, and nontrinitarianism. Those who did not unite with Campbell merged with the Congregational Churches in 1931 to form the Congregational Christian Churches. In 1957, the Congregational Christian Church merged with the Evangelical and Reformed Church to become the United Church of Christ. [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Restoration\\_Movement](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Restoration_Movement)

### **Strains of War, Societies and Singing/Church Music**

Once the pioneer preachers of the Restoration Movement, such as Stone and the Campbell's, had formulated the basic principles of the Movement, they began to preach with a vigor that stimulated the church to a period of phenomenal growth. Estimates among the disciples themselves placed their numbers at 100,000 in 1836 and at 200,000 or even 300,000 in 1850. According to the census of 1850 the disciples constituted the fourth largest religious body in the nation. The census of 1870 placed it at fifth place. The zealous labors of the pioneer preachers, as well as the freedom from denominational shackles offered by the Restoration to liberty-loving Americans, powered this period of rapid progress. However, disruptive influences lay on the horizon, and they threatened to hamper, or even undo, all of this progress.

#### I. The Civil War

The Civil War was greatly disruptive to the American religious scene. Some churches were divided and others were so discouraged that they ceased to meet. The whole nation including many brethren were so caught up with war fever that little room was left in their hearts for spiritual concern. Young men of the church went off to join the ranks of the Blue and the Gray, and not a few of them died in battle. Some preachers deplored brethren taking up arms against one another, while others, forgetting their calling and disclaiming their brethren in the opposing section, themselves unsheathed the sword. One preacher and college president by the name of James A. Garfield became noted for his valor, was promoted to the rank of brigadier-general, and eventually became the twentieth president of the United States.

Two questions were brought to the attention of Christians by the Civil War or its issues. One was the slavery question. Could a Christian Scripturally own slaves? If so, how was he required to treat them? Though there were extremists on both sides of the question, it seems that most preachers were neutral and encouraged Christians in the North and South not to allow this to become a divisive issue. ... The prevailing view among brethren seemed to be that slavery was a political, rather than moral, question. The Bible did not expressly forbid slavery but rather regulated it (Lev. 25:39-46; I Cor. 7:17-24; Eph. 6:5-9; Philemon). Most brethren, while wishing to avert religious division and war over this matter, probably hoped that slavery would eventually be brought to a peaceable and legal end.

The other question to attract Christian's concerns was the Christian's participation in carnal warfare. Again, the most devout and influential preachers were opposed to brethren's involvement in warfare and pled with brethren not to become involved, though their pleas seem to have fallen on deaf ears for the most part.

#### II. The Missionary Society

Since most congregations during the Restoration Movement formed themselves into inter-congregational associations of some sort, the question of "cooperation" was soon raised among the brethren. While those in Stone's following looked with suspicion at such organizing efforts, those of Campbell's following seemed to think that some sort of extra-congregational cooperation or organization was well-nigh essential to the progress of the cause. Consequently, brethren at first began to

meet in informal, district gatherings. However, as time went by these "cooperation meetings" increased in formality and scale. District meetings became state meetings, and state meetings became national meetings. At first, such meetings were defended on the basis that they were only intended to encourage, inform, and unify brethren, and promote evangelism. Alexander Campbell wrote extensively in defense of greater organization among local churches. Brethren finally met in Cincinnati, Ohio in 1849 and formed the American Christian Missionary Society. Alexander Campbell had concerns that holding conventions would lead the movement into divisive denominationalism. He did not attend the gathering. However, he was elected its first president. As soon as the Society was formed opposition to it began to mount. Interrupted temporarily by the Civil War, this opposition continued to increase until conflict over the Society gradually issued in an open breach of fellowship between the advocates and the adversaries in the latter half of the Nineteenth Century.

**Comment:** These corporative organizations appear to negate congregational autonomy and often become a type of hierarchy.

The bases of objections to the missionary society have varied, but the most notable ones may be summarized as follows:

- there is no Scriptural authority for it
- it is not needed, for the church is sufficient to do the spiritual work that needs to be done
- it supplants the church
- it infringes upon the independence and autonomy of the local churches.

### III. Instrumental Music

About the time that the American Christian Missionary Society got underway the question of instrumental music in the worship of the churches arose. Not long before the Civil War the church at Midway, Kentucky became the first church on record to introduce instrumental music into worship (supposedly to aid their deplorable singing). Practically every church and preacher of influence, including Campbell himself, stood united in their opposition to instrumental music in worship. However, following the Civil War churches began to use the instrument more and more and the battle over it was joined with increasing fury. The objections to instrumental music in worship have substantially been:

- it is an unauthorized addition to the singing directed by the New Testament. (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16)
- it is not instructive to the intelligence (I Cor. 14:15).
- it is contrary to the spiritual character of the church's worship. The contentions over the missionary society and the instrument, as well as lesser ones, finally escalated into a division among the churches that was formally recognized by the Religious Census in 1906.

[bible.ca/history/eubanks/history-eubanks-42.htm](http://bible.ca/history/eubanks/history-eubanks-42.htm)

Are these same objections valid today for the following organizations or activities?

- Disaster relief of Global Samaritans
- Heal Hands International
- World Christian Broadcast
- Gospel Broadcast Network
- Inner City Ministries
- Restoration Radio
- One congregation overseeing multiple congregation's mission work
- Multiple song leaders or praise teams
- Singing along in deep feeling of reverence and praise to God with religious music, "gospel music" on the radio, a CD or music group where all media use musical instruments

### **Some Teachings of the Restoration (Stone – Campbell Movement)**

These two movements shared several key beliefs.

- a. They believed the Bible was the inspired Word of God and the ultimate authority in the life of the believer.
- b. They believed the models and patterns of church life in the New Testament were meant to demonstrate God's plan for the church through the ages.
- c. They believed God intended His people, the church not just one assembly or congregation, to be united, not divided. Agreement on the essentials of the New Testament faith can create the unity God intended for His church.

After Campbell's death, fault lines began to form in the movement. The problem was not with the founding principles, but with their application. Everyone agreed on the principle of unity around New Testament essentials, but not everyone agreed on what those essentials were or how to determine what should be considered an essential.

Two primary schools of interpretation formed their battle lines over the question of instrumental music in worship. The group that eventually became the non-instrumental Churches of Christ took a position that prohibited “innovations” in worship that were not specifically commanded in the New Testament. Lacking a New Testament command to use instruments in worship, they argued for their prohibition. The other interpretation position was that since there was not a specific command prohibiting the use of a musical instrument then it was allowable. Refer to [thebiblewayonline.com](http://thebiblewayonline.com) study Bible Forty years after Campbell’s death, the split was officially recognized and the non-instrumental churches we recognized as a separate group.

Sadly, the divisions of this unity movement were not over with this division. The Christian Church movement had another issue simmering just below the surface in the issue of baptism. One of the joyful restorations of the early Campbell/Stone movement was the restoration of baptism by immersion to the church. Infant baptism by sprinkling was a virtually universal practice among the historic European churches represented on the American frontier. As they turned to the New Testament for guidance, the reformers discovered the mode of baptism in the New Testament church was almost certainly total immersion, not sprinkling. They further determined that the only acceptable candidate for baptism is someone of sufficient age to choose baptism for him or herself.

**Comment:** The division problem appears to center around worship. Is the purpose of assembling, the coming together; to worship or to encourage one another to good works and faithfulness? If to worship, then does that conflict with Jesus’ statement to the Samaritan woman that worship is not in a location but in spirit, within the inner man.

Again, the movement was nearly unanimous on the core issue. The divisive question was how to regard those who considered themselves to be Christian but were un-immersed. On one side were those who believed church membership and assurance of salvation should only be offered to those who were immersed. On the other side were those who regarded adult immersion as the ideal but recognized the genuine Christian faith of those baptized by other means in other traditions. The real question is fellowship and how does God want it practiced.

In the late 1920’s this issue came to a head in a series of ugly fights over cooperation on the mission field between Campbell/Stone missionaries and those of traditions who baptize infants. One side wanted to demand that Campbell/Stone missionaries confine any cooperation the mission field to denominations that practiced immersion. Others saw the need to cooperate with others regardless of their baptismal theology.

**Comment:** This conflict occur when there are leaders in multiple organizations in which a group has given their allegiance.

**Comment:** Baptisms are discussed in [thebiblewayonline.com/HTML/BaptismIntoChrist.html](http://thebiblewayonline.com/HTML/BaptismIntoChrist.html)

The struggle became so intense that another split ensued. Thousands of congregations left the movement and formed their own non-denominational group centered around the North American Christian Convention. This group consisted of those who found baptism by immersion to be an absolute issue. Those who stayed in the old International Convention of Christian Churches tended to be those who were more open to accepting the un-immersed as Christians in their own right. The split has been slowly progressing for about 70 years.

In recent decades, yet another division has begun to occur. Since 1985 Disciple Renewal has been challenging the theological liberalism that has grown up in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) denomination that formed in 1968 out of the old International Convention of Christian Churches. Disciple Renewal began with a commitment to work within the denomination for change and spiritual renewal. Unfortunately, as time went by it became clear that the denomination was totally closed to change or challenge, and Disciple Renewal formed Disciple Heritage Fellowship as a gathering point for those who left the denomination and for evangelicals who were still in the denomination.

Though no one wanted to see division, division is slowly taking place. For the first time, division is focused on the founding principles of the movement, not just the working out of the details.

The Disciples of Christ have abandoned their belief in the inspiration and reliability of the Bible, denied there is a consistent New Testament faith to which we can return, and traded the idea of unity around biblical essentials for unity by negotiation between denominational bodies

[disciple-heritage.org/downloads/10.pdf](http://disciple-heritage.org/downloads/10.pdf)

## Restoration Timeline

John Locke	1632 - 1704
John Wesley	1703 – 1791
James O’Kelly	1732 – 1826
Elias Smith	1764 – 1846
Abner Jones	1767 – 1840
Barton Stone	1772 – 1844
Thomas Campbell	1763 – 1854
Alexander Campbell	1788 – 1866
Walter Scott	1796 – 1861
“Raccoon” John Smith	1784 – 1868

## Summary

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

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

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

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

These men and others were persecuted because they dared put their faith in the Bible rather than the teachings and practices of man. But persecution was not something new it began with the Jews, escalated by the Roman Emperors and continued by the Roman Catholic Church, who massacred thousands for owning or just reading God’s word. Persecution will not cease. It exists today in various forms – ridicule, bodily harm, property destruction and even death.

Within less than fifty years from Hus’s death the Guttenberg press made Bibles more accessible. As the Bible became available, more people began to question the teaching, practices and interpretations prevalent at the time. The embers of a call for reform and a return to the Bible lay smoldering for another fifty years. But in 1517 Martin Luther lit the fire when he posted his 95 thesis to the door at All Saints Church in Wittenberg. Soon Zwingli and others followed Luther in condemning the current teachings, practices and unscholarly interpretations. They demanded reform. But reform did not appear possible and many who opposed the established Catholic Church hierarchy lost their lives.

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

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

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

### **Some Controversial Teachings of “Church” Fathers**

1. Unity among believers can occur only from one doctrinal authority – Episcopal councils – Papal system.
2. The “Church” acting through the Bishop of Rome has authority over all Christians – church hierarchy established
3. Nothing should be done without approval of the Bishop.
4. Celebration of special days, such as Easter.
5. Priesthood as a specialized class of intermediaries on behalf of the Bishop – replacing Christ.
6. Development of Sacraments – some of Christ’s teachings are of more importance than others.
7. Created mono-episcopate where Bishops were appointed from an unbroken chain from apostles to current Bishop, Pope, who had assumed the title conferred upon the Emperors, Pontificus Maximus.
8. Changes in practice and form of baptism:
  - a. Children baptized with parent confessing for them
  - b. Substituting pouring for immersion
  - c. Requiring specific words for baptism to be effective.
9. Called an Episcopal council to establish one acceptable doctrine.
10. Combined Greek philosophical tradition with Christian doctrine
11. Humans are divine souls trapped in a material world created by imperfect God.
12. Receiving of direct personal knowledge beyond Gospel. [montanism]
13. Soul passes through successive stages before incarnation as a human and after death eventually reaching God.
14. Established rules for determining biblical doctrines:

What was not allowed in scripture is forbidden

Versus

What was not forbidden by scripture is allowed
15. Established Rule of Faith where authoritative teachings handed down in the Catholic Church and scripture carry equivalent weight.
16. Calvin adapted some of Augustine’s beliefs for his theology
  - a. Sovereignty of God
  - b. Total depravity of mankind
  - c. Unconditional election
  - d. Limited atonement
  - e. Irresistible grace
  - f. Perseverance of saints

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

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

- d. Corruption within church hierarchical structure
- e. Prohibition of marriage in clergy

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

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

### **Restoration**

About the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century several religious leaders independent of each other begin to question how so many differing teaching and practices set forth in so many associations in their creeds all be the church of the Bible. They reasoned that God wanted unity so why could not everyone just turn to the Bible and the Bible alone to find God's instruction to man. In fact, this appears to be the meaning of the parable of the sower in Luke 8. By returning to the Word and planting it in good and honest hearts, free from control of men and, their creeds and doctrines, it will produce obedient people, Christians, the church Jesus established.

### **The heart of the restoration movement was to unite believers:**

1. Cease to use government to enforce religion
2. Use scripture alone. Reject all human creeds and dogma
3. Obtain and retain love of God and man

During this movement various leaders offered their understanding of the requirements for believers in Christ to become united in Him.

### **Locke**

- a. Rejected the right of church through government to establish and enforce a state religion
- b. The Bible supplies a set of essential beliefs upon which all reasonable people can agree:
  - i. The messiahship of Jesus
  - ii. Jesus' direct commands
- c. Non essentials upon which Christians disagree should not be forced upon others

### **Wesley**

- a. Agree to disagree on non-essential doctrine
- b. Cease fighting and arguing about the non-essentials

### **Separate Baptists**

- a. Reject all creeds and use only the Bible as the perfect rule but without requiring complete agreement on pattern
- b. Avoid precise detail as it leads to legalism and division

### **Landmark Baptists**

- a. The Bible is a precise blueprint without any deviations allowed
- b. Deviation from blueprint keeps one from true church

### **O'Kelly/Haggard**

- a. Christ is the only head of the church
- b. The name Christian is the only acceptable name
- c. The Bible is the only rule of faith
- d. Christian character is the only test of church fellowship
- e. The right of private judgment is the privilege of all.

### **Barton Stone**

- a. Congregational governance
- b. Restoring lifestyle of early church that is holy and righteous living rather than or over form and structures
- c. Freedom in Christ is more important than emphasis of a particular practice [as a ritual (rd)].

### **Campbell**

- a. Approved precedent added to core /essential beliefs.
- b. Bible is a book of facts (not opinions, theories, abstract truths or verbal definitions) and a rational faith was to be formulated and defined upon these facts.
- c. Congregational autonomy
- d. A plurality of elders in each congregation
- e. Weekly communion and
- f. Immersion of believers for the remission of sins
- g. Thus saith the Lord,

### **Congregationalists**

- a. People needed a conversion experience

During this long period of time they differed in many ways some unwilling to cut the ties of past teachings and practices yet, they recognized their current “church” was not like the church they read about in their Bible.

Many if not most of these reformers and restorationists had one thing in common they wanted to either reform, restore or return to the church of the Bible and to be united with all other believers and to be Christians only.

There was unity for a time, but diverse and polarizing opinions emerged:

- The Bible is a blueprint, constitution or pattern where **complete agreement on details is not required**. For those IN CHRIST living righteously among men and before God was more important than adhering to form, structure and precise understanding.
- The Bible is a **precise blueprint that must be followed without deviation**. Those who deviate from the leaders’ interpretation of the precise blueprint are not to be fellowshiped. Consequently, there is a continual defining the preciseness of the blueprint which leads to disagreement and more separation.

**To remain united** and in fellowship, issues must be prayerfully resolved:

1. Who decides the degree of preciseness of understanding one must have to remain in fellowship - God or Man?
2. Does one’s interpretation on some teaching, other than Christ being God in a human body while on earth, determine fellowship with God or another Christian by a religious organization of church?
3. Can one be in fellowship with God but not with others in Christ?
4. If the Bible is silent on a subject, does that silence require a thing or prohibit it? Likewise, when the Bible specifies something it neither requires nor prohibits something else.
5. The writings of church fathers, reformers, restorationists or today’s authors cannot be a condition of man’s fellowship with God or His children.

Even after achieving some success it was not long, like their forefathers after 100 AD, that they began to drift and accept doctrines of the past and establish new creeds or reestablish old ones.

## **Conclusion**

There appears to be a common thread running throughout history. Each generation draws upon the beliefs and thoughts of past generation. Leaders and or writers record their conclusions which the next generation draws upon. Some are accepted others reject probably based upon their prior understandings and concepts. This process is absolutely necessary in the world of the unknown such as medicine, computers, chemistry, physics and math where there is not nor has ever been a revealed standard. Therefore, each piece of knowledge is a building block.

This study has shown that men and leaders of their generation tend to accept the opinions of “learned men” of the past rather than relying on a thorough study of the words from God. Observe.

1. Justin Martyr was a disciple of Socrates and Plato and did not appear to have prepared himself very well in regard to the scriptures.

2. Irenaeus of Lyons relied upon *The Shepherd of Hermas* as scripture.
3. Origen corrected the Septuagint from his knowledge of Hebrew. But his Stoic, Neo-Pythagorean and Platonic beliefs clouded his reasoning.
4. Ambrose's theology was significantly influenced by that of Origen.
5. Augustine admired Cicero and ranked him above all other ancient writers and retained his dual system of the soul and body belief.
6. Wycliffe relied upon Jerome's flawed Latin Vulgate in translating the Bible into English, which may have been all that was available to him.
7. Luther was taught to be suspicious of and to test everything but still accepted much of the "church fathers" teachings.
8. John Calvin often quoted the teachings of Augustine and Ambrose.
9. John Locke's teachings influenced Thomas and Alexander Campbell.

Believers in Christ were persecuted for their refusal to deny Christ and accept another Gospel or to conform to some other religious doctrine, such as:

- a) Judaism,
- b) Pagan or Emperor Worship while under Imperial Rome,
- c) Catholicism during and after the Middle or Dark ages or
- d) Catholicism and Protestantism in the Reformation and Restoration eras.

By relying upon divinely revealed knowledge one can obtain a more accurate knowledge and understanding of the will of God.

During hundreds of years through persecution many have attempted to return to God using only the Bible. The last 200 years or so has seen many differences in opinion or interpretation which when put on the same standing as revealed truth has resulted in new religious organizations. One needs to determine if they are part of the problem by asking themselves **"Have I personally searched the scriptures to determine what it states in reaching my conclusions? Or, have I searched the Bible to see if my 'Biblical doctrine' can be found and interpreted to conform to my belief and conclusion."**

The following is a list of some teachings staunchly believed and made a test of fellowship. Many of them have been rejected in whole or in part.

- The "emblems" of the Lord's Supper must be covered.
- The bread used in the Lord's Supper must be made from wheat flour, broken after prayer and before distributing to the members to partake.
- The Cup, fruit of the vine, must be fermented wine.
- Only one cup can be used not individual cups.
- Bible classes divide the church, therefore cannot be practiced.
- Singing as worship to God must not include a musical instrument or in harmony but chants.
- Women must have their head covered with something other than their hair when assembled.
- Women cannot cut or trim their hair.
- Congregations of Christians cannot own buildings.
- Meals cannot be eaten within the "church building."
- Owning gym, family life centers and camps are sinful.
- Christians cannot participate in Christmas.
- Mixed swimming cannot be tolerated as it is sinful.
- Dancing of any kind is sinful.
- Participating in government, even voting is sinful.
- Serving in the armed forces is sinful.
- Donations to church affiliated schools and colleges are sinful.
- Using any literature other than the Bible is wrong.
- The name of the church must be "\_\_\_\_\_" without any location.
- Drinking any alcoholic beverage is sinful.
- Using tobacco of any kind is sinful.
- Marriage among races is not biblical.
- The Bible prohibits Christians owning slaves.
- Churches cannot incorporate in any endeavor.

- Congregations cannot employ a preacher on a regular basis.
- Multiple song leaders at a time is entertainment therefore sinful.

**Comment:** These fellowship tests are all based upon human opinion.

Many devout people, past and present, believe their interpretations were the exact will of God. Yet, many have been rejected in whole or in part upon further study. What changed? Was it the Bible or man's interpretation? Do we NOW know ALL the TRUTH? Will what we so firmly hold as conditions of fellowship with God be proven wrong in generations to come? Are our beliefs so FINAL that we are beyond learning?

The Gospel or Gospel of Christ is:

- a. God, as Jesus of Nazareth, was human but without sin, offered His physical body to God as the blood sacrifice, sin-offering, for the removal of sin – the atoning sacrifice.
- b. His burial and subsequent resurrection was victory of death.
- c. His ascension back to His previous abode with God, the Father.

Those who put their trust in Him by being buried into His death are resurrected as new spiritual beings. They grow into the likeness, image and nature of God by living (walking in) the teachings (doctrines) of Christ and His Apostles only and are in fellowship with God and all others in Christ even if they have some different understanding on some teaching other than the Gospel.

**We must diligently study scripture, accept its truths and be willing to follow it wherever it leads us.**

## **Persecution**

**Persecution** is the systematic mistreatment of an individual or group by another group. The most common forms of persecution are religious, ethnic and political though there is naturally some overlap between these terms.

Persecution appears to occur when someone in power forces his opinion or belief upon another having differing opinion or belief. Persecution can be ridicule and pressure or the loss of freedom, property or life.

Some examples from ancient history to present day:

### **1. Egypt**

- Joseph, a Jew, allowed God to work through him to save Egypt
- Much later there arose a king from another race or ethnic group who had no knowledge of Joseph's actions and who feared the Jews would align themselves with those who might oppose him.

### **2. Babylon**

- They invaded defeated and enslaved the Hebrew people
- A new king, from the Medes and Persians, granted freedom

### **3. Greek/Roman**

- Conquered world, required allegiance, allowed religious freedom.
- Some especially Jews hated Romans

### **4. Jews**

- Held power of Jewish people through religion
- Authority to imprison and punish but not kill
- Christians fled from of Jerusalem

### **5. Roman Empire**

- Implemented and enforced emperor worship
- Executed horrible punishment for opposition

### **6. Roman State & Catholic Churches, Catholic & Protestants governments/ [Zwingli, Calvin and Anglicans of England]**

- Took turns killing all who opposed them

## 7. Colonial America

- Forced non-conformist to their brand of religion to move
- Burned witches

## 8. Nazis Germany 1930, 1940 and 1950's

A testimony from Dr. Hans Grimm. "May I speak of myself as a connecting link of the Central European churches of Christ and the brethren and sisters of the English-speaking restoration movement? Hitler's henchmen in World War II tried to complete the destruction of the Lord's flock. In 1933 all bishops and deacons of the churches of Christ on German soil were imprisoned in Konzentration-slager. In 1939 the adult members in East Prussia followed their shepherds into prisons and hard-labor convoys, where they perished in 1944, and in 1942 the 11 Alsatian families were deported to Poland. There they were massacred by the advancing Red tankists in January, 1945. All died with the same heroism for their Lord as their ancestors did.

"I was born in 1899 at Sablon-les-Metz as a scion {a descendant} of one of the oldest Christian families between Mosele and the Alps. My dear father was one of the last three bishops of the church of Christ in Strassburg, and I was immersed by my uncle in the icy waters of the Hamauer Weiher March 18, 1916. Trained in Strassburg, Konigsberg and Hamburg Universities, I obtained a license in comparative history of religions. Imprisoned in 1933 by the Nazis for preaching the Gospel in the face of a blasphemous government, I had to suffer almost two years in the concentration camps of Hammerstein and Lichtenburg, hunger, thirst and the uninterrupted trashing of arms, shinbones and head, like all other political, religious or non-Aryan prisoners. Released, deaf in one ear and with crushed kidneys, I continued preaching like my ancestors in the woods, hills and swamps or in hiding places in the large cities. I had to sell my special library and furniture to manage to live. When World War II began, I was commissioned as an Interpreter with the army.

"Back in Leipzig on Christmas, 1945, I learned of my dear father's death, and from survivors, the extermination of our churches in East Europe. I immediately took up the task of rebuilding the destroyed brotherhood, and I had to work hard as a proofreader, reporter and lecturer to earn a living not only for me, but also for the old and sick brethren and sisters in Communist-ruled, famine-stricken and ravaged East Germany. I could say with the apostles "These hands have ministered unto my necessities and to them that were with me" (Acts 20:34).

"Just at the beginning of a remarkable revival of young people in Leipzig and three months after my wedding, I was arrested October 9, 1948, by the Communists and for four years imprisoned in the ill-famed jails of Leipzig Waldheim and Graefentonna. The pretended reason: conspiracy against the Red government in religious circles.

"Released in the fall of 1952, I joined my dear wife in Western Germany. In March, 1955, the Protestant State Church of Kurhessen-Waldeck invited me to take over the office of president of the Evangelical Academy for Social Ethics in Kassel. I declined; I could not subscribe to the promise not to attack the teaching of the Confession of Augsburg.

**"But in the same month I met for the first time in my life a member of the restored churches of Christ in America.** What he had to tell me was not other than the faith of my ancestors which I had taught and practiced all my life. My grandfather had had contacts with Scottish (Haldane) Baptists and Sanedmanians, yea, even with Christadelphians in Birmingham {England}, but the American Restoration Movement had been totally unknown to us. And now the fact that the Lord had built up his church beyond the Atlantic, just in time, when his last followers in Europe dwindled, hit me like a thunderclap. **The torch did not die out!** God had kindled it again and put it on a lamp-stand and gives it light for everyone in the house. This was the fulfillment of Christ's promise: I am going to build my church, and the powers of death will never prevail against it."

[The Voice of Truth International](#), Dr. Hans Grimm, vol. 49 pages 59-60.

## 9. India 1990's

In recent years, there has been a sharp increase in violent attacks on Christians in India. From 1964 to 1996, thirty-eight incidents [38 in 32 years] of violence against Christians were reported. In 1997, twenty-four such incidents and in 1998, ninety. Between January 1998 and February 1999 alone, there were 116 attacks. Between 1 January and 30 July 2000, more than 57 attacks were reported. The acts of violence include arson of church buildings, forcible conversion of Christians to Hinduism, distribution of threatening literature, burning of Bibles, murder of priests and destruction of schools, colleges, and cemeteries [apparently Catholic]. The attacks often accompanied by large amounts of anti-Christian hate literature.

[wikipedia.org/wiki/Persecution\\_of\\_Christians#Hindu\\_Persecution\\_of\\_Christians\\_in\\_India](http://wikipedia.org/wiki/Persecution_of_Christians#Hindu_Persecution_of_Christians_in_India)

## 10. Muslim countries

Some prohibit owning or reading a Bible. Persecution also has occurred in other countries.  
christianchronicle.org

11. **Sri Lanka - May 2-10, 2005**

About 30 men irritated with our singing surrounded the house where the missionaries were treating patients blocking all the exits and began shouting angrily. The team left Matara.

(article2042536~Persecution\_church\_growth\_seen\_in\_tsunami\_countries, June 2005)

12. **Myanmar 2006**

Orthodox Hindu people believe that India is the country of Hindus only so conversions upset them. They try to prevent preaching, persecuting preachers. A couple of months ago, two were killed.

(article227~Dialogue:\_A\_conversation\_with\_Babu\_Pothan, March 2006)

13. **United States 2009 & 2010**

Alabama, Florida, Texas and Oregon-church buildings were burned.

14. **Nigeria 2010**

Muslim-Christian Violence 1/21/2010

Reports from the Nigerian city of Jos say that between 200 and 400 people were killed and over 4,000 were injured in three days of violence between Muslims and Christians that began January 17. The Kyiv Post reports that most of the violence took place in the city's poor neighborhoods. There are conflicting reports on what started the violence. Next reports that the Plateau state government has imposed a 24-hour curfew and that the federal government has ordered the deployment of troops to the area.

Muslim-Christian Ethnic Massacre 3/9/2010

In four Nigerian villages on Sunday, at least 378 members of the Christian Berom ethnic group were killed by members of the Muslim Fulanis. The massacres took place in Zot, Dogo Nahawa, Rastat and Shen. The Wall Street Journal, the London Times and BBC News all report on the massacres. The attackers came at night, fired shots to scare residents out of their homes, and then hacked them with machetes as they rushed out. Some residents were caught in animal traps and fishing nets as they tried to escape, and then hacked to death. Other houses were set on fire with residents in them. Apparently the killings, in villages near the city of Jos, were in revenge for killings in January. (See prior posting.) Survivors reported that Muslims in three of the villages had received phone calls two days before the massacres warning them to leave the area. A BBC analysts says: "These killings are often painted by local politicians as a religious or sectarian conflict. In fact it is a struggle between ethnic groups for fertile land and resources in the region known as Nigeria's Middle Belt." [religionclause.blogspot.com/2010\\_03\\_01\\_archive.html](http://religionclause.blogspot.com/2010_03_01_archive.html)

From 1980 Muslims in the North resorted to another strategy at the informal, unofficial level: the use of localized physical force and religious riots to protest against the failure of Nigeria to adopt Islam as the national religion. Between 1980 and 1992, a researcher recorded 25 such riots in which innocent people were killed or maimed, churches and houses burned, and shops looted.

In 1986, the military President, Ibrahim Babangida, employing all his powers as a dictator, registered Nigeria as a full member of the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

## **Muslim Strategy**

We can count six ways in which Muslims in Nigeria have striven to Islamise the country:

1. All-out war: a holy war or jihad; conversion by the sword, with the establishment of a Caliphate as the ultimate objective.
2. Politicians doubling as religious leaders. Abuse of political office: State financing of religion on the principle of *cuius regio, eius religio*.
3. Military take-over of government; suspending the Constitution and installing a Muslim Military Head of State.
4. Getting the Sharia inscribed in the Constitution.
5. Constant religious riots, bloodshed and destruction of property organized by a mafia to pressurize the sitting President.
6. Lastly, breaking the Constitution in open defiance of the Federal Government, threatening a Civil War. "Islam shall be the State religion, or else..."

This last technique, with the threat of a civil war, has recently been successfully used in Nigeria in opposition to President Olusegun Obasanjo.

In 2000, the governor of Zamfara State, Ahmed Sani Yerima, launched with fanfare the introduction of the Sharia Penal Code in Zamfara State, one of the 36 States of Nigeria. In effect, Zamfara became a holy State reminiscent of the Holy Roman Empire of blessed memory. This meant that beer could no longer be sold in restaurants, boys and girls could not hold hands in the street or sit together in a bus, a Muslim girl cannot marry a Christian boy, a Muslim cannot convert to another religion without incurring apostasy, a woman caught in adultery will be stoned to death, a man will have his hand cut off for stealing, etc. - according to the holy law of their tyrannical God.

The whole country held its breath, watching to see what the President would do. For a whole month, the governor of Zamfara and the President of Nigeria were staring at each other, eye-ball to eye-ball. In the end, it was the President who blinked first. Immediately, eleven other States in the Muslim North joined Zamfara and installed the Sharia: Zamfara, Yobe, Taraba, Sokoto, Kebbi, Katsina, Kano, Kaduna, Jigawa, Gombe, Bauchi and Niger States. The President chose peace with a battered Constitution rather than be drawn into another civil war!

### **Christian Strategy**

The Christians, for their part, habitually use the second technique, abuse of power, to infiltrate government institutions, public mass media, schools and hospitals employing them corruptly as means of evangelization. They do this wherever they are the dominant population. They conduct religious services, preach their sermons and work their miracles on State radio and television, in hospitals, and even in government ministries during morning assemblies. In some States, at 12:00 noon every day, the Angelus is recited triumphantly on State radio. Religion gets more airtime than agriculture, health, science and technology!

Christians had long ago, during the colonial era, imposed their religious holidays on the entire nation. It was the flaunting of Christianity during the colonial era that provoked the Muslim backlash after Independence, as a result of which Nigeria, today, has far too many religious holidays. The Church should impose its holidays on its own members, not on the entire nation. In the days before the Biafran War, Nigerian governments were subsidizing Christian and Islamic schools, calling them "government- aided schools". In effect, government was subsidizing evangelism: something it should never do.