

Highlights of Church History

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Nine Simple Reasons to Study History

Church history is a vital area of study for any concerned Christian. Many positive elements will be demonstrated in time from such a study.

For example, a serious study of History will kindle within the believer a spirit of toleration. Far too many believers today feel that they have a market on ultimate truth in all areas of knowledge and that is not so. Many denominations exist as a reaction or a response to other factors that must be understood. There is room for respect to be shown for different conservative theological positions all the while identifying the crucial doctrines and holding fast to the faith. The area of prophesy has divided many sincere Christians over details that only time will which position is correct.

Second, a study of church history enables a Christian to understand the current church situation. If a person knows how the church arrived at its present status it is easier to understand the different points of view. The past has many parallels to the present and because of this certain mistakes need not be repeated.

Third, a study of history enhances the believers conviction that there is indeed a sovereign God who is working all things after the counsel of His own will. Individual pieces when viewed might give the impression that the vessel is broken and fragmented but when put together just right and viewed from a divine point of view there is a wonderful vessel fit for the Master's use. God knows just what He is doing and if everyone had His perspective, they would agree. Sense would be made out of nonsense.

Fourth a study of history demonstrates clearly mankind's desperate need for God. There are wars and rumors of wars. There is bloodshed and violence.

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Dr. Stanford E. Murrell

Sexual immorality is spreading terrible diseases. Men and women full of madness are giving themselves to self-destruction. God speaks through judgment on nature or nation but the message is more often than not lost until the spiritual dimension is considered.

Fifth, a study of Church history provides a greater appreciation of the Cross as the focal point for a pivotal change. The world before Christ and the world after Christ are different.

Sixth, church leaders profit by being students of church history. God has been pleased to speak through religious leaders. That wisdom of the ages is still available for use.

Seventh, a study of church history will provide a greater appreciation for art, literature, music, poetry, plays, and novels. The arts as a whole have been blessed with creative genius inspired by Christ. There would be a vast void if the Christian influence were to be removed from the arts.

An eighth benefit of study of church history is that such a study helps to explain the various denominational divisions. Some denominations can be justified; most cannot.

Finally, a study of church history will enable the student to deal with real concerns of society. There are social needs to be met.

Three Basic Needs the Church Meets

Since Max Weber began studying the needs of people three basic needs have been observed. The Church must not be less sensitive than the sociologists.

The first need is the need to belong. Man is not an island unto himself. He is born a social creature and remains one. There is a natural urging to conform to the culture in which one is reared. While Christianity demands that its followers be not conformed to this world, they are to be conformed into the image of Christ. Jesus promised that all who would follow Him would receive an inheritance and be part of a large family consisting of many fathers,

mothers, sisters, and brothers. The Church can respond to this basic need to belong by being color blind in regard to race. The poor, the outcast, the unlovely and the crippled can be made to feel welcomed.

The second basic need people have is the need to have a meaning to life. Some years ago liberal theologians told people God was dead. Many voices have been raised to tell people what they should do and believe. On August 15, 1987, the nine planets in our solar system aligned themselves and led thousands to believe that a new age was dawning. It did not and will not happen. Only Jesus Christ can give the real meaning to life that people need as He points us back to the Father. Man needs to be reconciled to God. Man is a sinner who needs a Savior. Man will only go on hurting himself believing that all things are the product of chance plus time plus space unless the message of the Church can be heard. The Church can answer the meaning to life by demonstrating afresh that the chief end of man is to know God and to enjoy Him forever.

The third basic need mankind has is the need for comfort or love. There is the physical love of man but more important there is the agape love of God. The sexual love fades but the spiritual soul love is stronger than death and more powerful than the grave. Jesus told us that His love be instilled in His followers so that they could love one another even as He loved them. Once again, the church can meet the special needs of man by thinking of the highest good for those it encounters. To reach out in Christian compassion with specific programs to people is vital and will be most welcomed. There are people who are sick. Others are dying. People grieve, need food, clothing, and shelter. The Church of Jesus Christ can help and should help.

In the Fullness of Time (Galatians 4:4-5)

When Jesus was born the world of His day was fragmented as diverse religious and political groups such as the Pharisees, the Herodians, the Sadducees, and the Samaritans fought

over political issues and spiritual control. The pagan world added to the chaotic spiritual situation through vain philosophies and cult worship. The cult worship permitted much sexual promiscuity, which appealed to many individuals who gave themselves to the honor of nature. Satan had provided something for everyone. Those with a bent to immorality could find expression in hedonism. Those with bent towards asceticism could play with Gnosticism.

Christ's coming supplied the basis of freedom for man. He came "*in the fullness of time*"; that is, He arrived upon the scene of human history at the time previously fixed by the Father.

This is about all that can be said with certainty about the phrase "*the fullness of time*." Other ideas, however, may have been included in the concept; for example, that of ripens of opportunity for the scattering, far and wide, of the seeds of the gospel. In this connection think of

- the spread of the Greek language throughout the civilized world;
- the presence of Jewish synagogues in many places, enabling Christian missionaries to reach both Jews and Gentiles (proselytes) simultaneously, and
- the help which these evangelists derived from the network of Roman roads and, to some extent, from the enforcement of Roman Peace.

But it is God alone who fully knows why, in His inscrutable decree, He had decided that the long period of time (*chronos*) in which all the preparatory events were to occur would run out at that specific moment. It was then He "*sent out from Himself*" his Son.

The Foundational Message of the Church

Kerygma is a virtual equivalent of *euaggelion* or evangelism. Kerygma stresses the manner of delivery while *euaggelion*, the essential nature or the content of the message. In briefest outline, the early

Christian message contained the following.

First, there was a historical proclamation of the death, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus, set forth as the fulfillment of prophecy and involving man's responsibility.

Second there was a theological evaluation of the person of Jesus as both Lord and Christ.

Third, there was a divine summons to repent and receive the forgiveness of sins. It will be noticed that the essential core of this message is not the dawn of the messianic age—although this is most certainly involved—but that sequence of redemptive events which sweeps the hearer along with compelling logic towards the climatic confession that Jesus is Lord. The gospel is not the product of a bewildered church pondering the theological significance of Good Friday. It is rather the result of a natural development that had its origins in the teachings of Jesus Himself. *The Passion-sayings of Jesus*—far from being "*prophecies after the event*"—are undeniable evidence that Jesus laid the foundation for a theology of the cross. In His teaching regarding His own person, Jesus furnished "*the raw materials of Christology*". The resurrection was the catalyst that precipitated in the minds of the disciples the total significance of God's redemptive activity. It released the gospel!

A Tale of Two Kingdoms

Jesus taught that man must give to Caesar what is due to him while giving to God the honor and worship that is due to Him. Jesus also taught that if the world hated Him, and it did it would also hate His followers, and it does. Since Jesus was persecuted it was not long before His disciples were hurting too.

Persecution of Christians began with the action of the Sanhedrin against Peter and John in reprisal for their proclamation of the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 4:1-3,5af). Another persecution took place at the time of the stoning of Steven, when the Christians of Jerusalem

were driven out of the city and scattered in every direction (Acts 8:1-4). Organized persecution by the state did not begin until the time of Nero, and was then probably only temporary and local. There were traditionally ten official state persecutions under the Empire.

- Nero AD 64
- Domitian AD 5
- Trajan AD 100
- Antoninus Pius AD 161-80
- Septimius Severus AD 197
- Maximinus AD 235
- Decius AD 249
- Valerian AD 257
- Aurelian AD 274
- Diocletian AD 303

Diocletian attempted not only to exterminate the Christians but also to destroy their literature. He confiscated and burned all copies of the *Scriptures* he found, and demolished the church buildings. Official persecution ended when Constantine in AD 312 by the Edict of Milan declared a policy of toleration for all religions, with a view toward enlisting the public support of Christians for his regime. The causes of persecution were numerous. The Christians were misunderstood by the pagans, who considered them atheists, anti-social, and politically subversive. In particular the Christians would not participate in the cult worship of Caesar. From the time of Julius Caesar onward deification was a carefully regulated part of Roman policy. Traditional Roman sentiment was inimical and Caesar worship, as a test of loyalty, was restrained but present in Rome; but in the empire local communities frequently outran official pronouncements. Julius received worship in his conquests. Augustus promoted the worship of "*Divus Julius*," but moderated the worship offered to himself. He and most of his successors were officially deified at death (hence Vespasian's deathbed joke, "*I think I'm becoming a god*"). Unbalanced Emperors such as Caligula, Nero and Domitian insisted on

divine honors during life. All this, the persecution and the cult worship of Caesar, was too much for the Christian community. The civil and political authority and government would be resisted.

Twin Heresies: Docetism and Ebionism

Docetism is a theological term derived from the Greek verb *dokeo*, which means, "*to seem*." Docetism was the doctrine that Christ did not actually become flesh, but merely seemed to be a man. It was one of the first theological errors to appear in the history of the church, for it is probably the target of the warning in 1 John 4:2,3; *'Every spirit that confesses that Jesus is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is the spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that is should come: and even now already it is in the world.'*

The first known advocate of this doctrine was Cerinthus, (c. AD 85) traditionally an Alexandrian, who was a pupil of Philo. He held that Jesus differed from other men only **in** that he was better and wiser than they, and that the divine Christ descended upon him at the baptism and left him at the **Cross**. The effect of this reasoning was to make the incarnation an illusion. Either there was no human Jesus at all, but only an apparition, or also the real on of God was simply using the human Jesus as a vehicle of expression, but was not in real union with him.

Marcion in the middle and latter part of the second century was willing to concede the reality of the suffering of Christ but not the reality of his birth. In his version of the gospel of Luke he asserts that Christ simply appeared in the reign of Tiberius, by which we understand that He descended from heaven. Docetism was attacked by Ignatius and Irenaeus, who dealt extensively with its varied forms, and by Tertullian, who wrote five books against Marcion. The essence of this heresy, which influenced Mohammed, has survived in some of the doctrines of Islam concerning

Jesus, and in modern cults that regard matter as evil.

The name "*ebionite*" is derived from the Hebrew. In the *Old Testament* the word poor implied humility, suffering for righteousness' sake. The sect was a logical development from the Judaizers of Paul's day. It kept the entire Mosaic Law with special attention to circumcision and Sabbath, and revered Jerusalem as if it were the abode of God. Jesus was regarded as the last and greatest of the prophets, the natural son of Joseph and Mary, out not the eternal Son of God. "*After his baptism Christ descended upon him in the form of a dove,*" but departed from him before the crucifixion. Jesus died and rose again, but Christ remained impassible, being by nature spiritual. Only the *Gospel of Matthew* was used, and Paul was rejected as an apostate from the law (Eusebius iii. 27).

The destruction of the temple in AD 70 was a fatal blow to all Jewish Christians. They ceased to wield any influence because they were removed from the main centers of activity which were exclusively gentile. They lingered for a long time and the remnants were absorbed by Islam. Their imperfect conception of Christ has reappeared from time to time in Christian history.

An Apology for Christ

Apologetics for the Christian is the task of showing on what grounds the Christian religion possesses knowledge of God. Since knowledge of God is imparted by revelation, however defined, the concept of revelation is central to Christian apologetics. Christian apologetics differs

- from apology, which is a reply to a specific accusation;
- from a theodicy, which is an attempt to alleviate the problem of evil;
- and from Christian evidences, which attempts to show the supernatural imprimatur upon Christianity and its congruity with all types of facts.

There is no standard set of topics that comprises Christian apologetics, but certain questions are fundamental to its discussion.

Question. "*What is the character of revelation?*"

Answer. Revelation may be stressed as absolutely unique and thereby excluding natural religion (Barth). Or the uniqueness of revelation may be stressed while admitting the validity of a natural theology only in the light of special revelation (Calvin). Or there may be a natural religion which gives rise to a natural Theology, which forms the preamble to special revelation.

Question. "*What is the relationship of philosophy and revelation?*"

Answer. This is usually and inappropriately put as an issue of faith and reason. However, faith is the reception of revelation and not its creator; and reason is not an unambiguous notion but is to be defined within an accepted philosophical position.

Question. "*What is the status of theistic proofs?*"

Answer. The empirical tradition accepts the validity of the a posteriori proofs as demonstrations or as credible evidences. Others believe that the proofs are logically invalid, and still others accept the validity of the proofs based upon some inward property or possession of the human mind which usually turns out to be some form of the ontological (a priori) proof.

Justin is the first among the fathers who may be called a *earned theologian and Christian thinker. He had acquired considerable classical and philosophical culture before his conversion, and then made it subservient to the defense of faith. He was not a man of genius and accurate scholarship, but of respectable talent, extensive reading, and enormous memory. He had some original and profound ideas, as that of the spermatic Leos, and was remarkably liberal in his judgment of the noble heathen and the milder section of the Jewish Christians. He lived in times when the

profession of Christ was a crime under the Roman law against secret societies and prohibited religions. He had the courage of a confessor in life and of a martyr in death. It is impossible not to admire his fearless devotion to the cause of truth and the defense of his persecuted brethren. This he does in his two *Apologies* against the heathen, and his *Dialogue With the Jew Trypho*. The first or larger Apology of 68 chapters is addressed to the Emperor Antoninus Pius (AD 137-161) and his adopted sons, and was probably written about AD 147, if not earlier; the Second or smaller Apology of 25 chapters is a supplement to the former, perhaps its conclusion, and belongs to the same reign. Both are a defense of the Christians and their religion against heathen calumnies and persecutions. He demands nothing but justice for his brethren, who were condemned without trial, simply as Christians and suspected criminals. He appeals from the lower court; and the violence of the mob to the highest tribunal of law, and feels confident that such wise and philosophic rulers as he addresses would acquit them after a fair hearing. He ascribes the persecutions to the instigation of the demons who tremble for their power and will soon be dethroned.

Three Great Heresies

Gnosticism, Marcionism, and Montanism.

GNOSTICISM. This was a very dangerous heresy that came into the Church like a flood in the second century. Its errors are clearly referred to in the *New Testament* (1 John 2:22; 4:2-3), where reference is made to those who denied that Christ "*had come in the flesh.*" The term Gnostic comes from the Greek word "*gnosis*" that means "*knowledge*". The Gnostic claimed special esoteric or secret knowledge. It could be possessed only by that section of humanity that was "*pneumatic,*" or spiritual. They alone were inevitably led back to the realm of light of the Supreme God. There was a

second class of men, those who were only "*psychic*" and could not get beyond faith. The prophets and of per good Hebrews belonged to this class but they must be eternally in a sphere much inferior to that occupied by those who had "*gnosis.*" A third class represented the overwhelming mass of human kind. They were merely "*hylic*" (subject to matter) and their case was utterly hopeless for they were in endless bondage to Satan and their own lusts, and their end was to be completely- destroyed. Here was one of the worst features of Gnosticism, the elevating of a limited number into a specially privileged class, and the consigning of the vast majority of mankind. to unredeemable destruction.

MARCIONITES (MARCIONISTS). This was an unorthodox community founded by Marcion in AD 144 on his excommunication from the church in Rome. The sect was marked by strict asceticism, distinctive sacramental Practices and the use of truncated Scriptures. Despite persecution the Marcionites increased with sack rapidity that both Justin and Tertullian could claim that they permeated Rome and its Empire. To what extent they accepted their master's pseudo-Gnostic teaching is uncertain. Apelles, the best known of Marcion's successors, tempered his radical pessimism and denied the evil origin of the created world. By the end of the seventh century the movement had died. The real significance of the movement lay in the stimulus it provided towards the definition of creed and canon.

MONTANISM was a second century apocalyptic movement named after its founder Montanus. Its adherents were formerly known as Phrygians or Katakphrygians and sometime Pepuzians after Pepuza where Montanus, with his taro female associates, Prisca and Maximilla, prophesied. Possibly the whole body were called Priscillianists unless this title

refers to a later subdivision. The characteristics of Montanism has been summarized.

First, there was a strong faith in the Holy Spirit as the promised Paraclete, present as a heavenly power in the Church of the day.

Second, there was a belief that the Holy Spirit was manifesting Himself supernaturally at that day through entranced prophets and prophetesses.

Third, there was an inculcation of a specially stern and exacting standard of Christian morality and discipline.

To these must be added a tendency to set up prophets against bishops and an intense expectation of the imminent return of the Lord.

The Sacred Imitates the Civil

As early as the third century the foundation of a complete spiritual or religious hierarchy was to be found in the Church. A distinction was made between the clergy and the laity, between the leaders and the led. The expansion of the church, the development of her cults, and the tendency towards hierarchical pomp, led to the multiplication of offices below the diaconate, which formed the *ordines minores*. About the middle of the third century the following new officers are mentioned.

- Sub-deacons, or under-helpers; assistants and deputies of the deacons; the only one of *these* subordinate offices for which a formal ordination was required.
- Readers, who read the Scriptures in the assembly and had charge of the church books.
- Acolytes, attendants of the bishops in their official duties and processions.
- Exorcists, who, by prayer and the laying on of hands, cast out the evil spirit from the possessed, and from catechumens, and

frequently assisted in baptism. This power had been formerly considered a free gift of the Holy Spirit.

- Preceptors, for the musical parts of the liturgy, psalms, benedictions, responses, etc.
- Janitors or sextons, who took care of the religious meeting rooms, and at a later period also of the churchyards.
- Besides these there were in the larger churches Catechists, and, where the church language in the worship was not understood, Interpreters but Presbyteries, Deacons, or Readers commonly did the interpreting.

In all of this, the civil governments position of centralization, distinct functions, special privileges and autonomy is reflected. With the conversion of Constantine and his new freedoms for the Church, it was certain that the religious body would take on the form of Rome.

A New Understanding of the Bible

ALLEGORICAL INTERPRETATION. When a book, or collection of books, from the past is regarded as an inspired, authoritative standard of religious belief and conduct, it becomes necessary to reinterpret it to fit later beliefs and practices, disregarding its literal or plain meaning. The first Christians accepted the Jewish Scripture as binding and authoritative, but made it so by allegorizing it, finding underneath the literal meaning veiled prophecies concerning the Christ and the new dispensation. Still later Christians, such as Justin, Clement, and Origen, by using the Philonic method of exegesis, accommodated the *Old Testament* to the developing theology, which was increasingly Hellenistic in character. In some parts of the *New Testament* were allegorized, with Augustine, for example, reading the entire scheme of salvation into the parable of the Good Samaritan. Allegorical exegesis of

the Bible dominated the succeeding centuries, and is widely used even today.

LITERAL INTERPRETATION. In contrast to the mystical, symbolic, typological, or allegorical types of interpretation, the literal interpretation of the Bible is according to the natural or usual construction of a passage, following the plain, ordinary, and apparent sense of the words. Greatly to be preferred to the allegorical and other more fanciful methods of interpretation, it tends to become mechanical unless applied with reference to the historical context.

Early forms of Worship

The earliest description of the Christian worship is given by a heathen, the younger Pliny, AD 109, in his well-known letter to Trajan, which embodies the result of his judicial investigations in Bithynia. According to this, "*the Christians assembled on an appointed day, Sunday at sunrise, sang responsively a song to Christ as to God, and then pledged themselves by an oath or a sacramentum not to do any evil work, to commit no theft, robbery, nor adultery, nor sacrifice property intrusted to them. Afterwards, at evening, they assembled again, to eat ordinary and innocent food called the agape or love feast.*"

The account of a Roman official bears witness to the primitive observance of Sunday, the separation of the love feast from the morning worship with the communion and the worship of Christ as God in song. Justin Martyr, at the close of his larger Apology, describes the public worship^p more particularly, as it was conducted about the year AD 140. After giving a full account of baptism and the holy Supper, he continues with the following words.

"On Sunday a meeting of all who live in the cities and villa s, is held, and a section from the Memoirs of the Apostles (the gospels) and the writings of the Prophets (Old Testament) is read, as long as the time permits. When the reader has finished, the president, in a discourse, dives an exhortation to the imitation of to the noble

things. After this we all rise in common prayer. At the close of the prayer, as w have before described, bread and wino with water are brought. The president offers prayer and thanks for them, according to the power given him, and the congregation responds the Amen. Then the consecrated elements are distributed to each one, and partaken, and are carried by the deacons to the houses of the absent. The wealthy and the willing then give contributions according to their free will, and this collection is deposited with the president, who therewith supplies orphans and widows, poor and needy, prisoners and strangers, and takes care of all who are in want. We assemble in common on Sunday, because this is the first day, on which Cod created the world and the light, and because Jesus Christ our Savior on the same day rose from the dead and appeared to his disciples." Here, reading of the Scriptures, preaching (and that as an Episcopal function), prayer, and communion, plainly appear as the regular parts of the Sunday worship; all descending no doubt from the apostolic age.

During the periods of persecution the early Christians in the catacombs or burial grounds. At present some thirty-five of these burial grounds have been discovered. Each consists of a complicated network of subterranean passages from three to four feet wide and **six or** more feet high, with excavations in the walls for several tiers of bodies each carefully sealed in with cemented slabs or tiles. These corridors occupy two or more levels, sometimes even seven, *and their* total length has been estimated at several hundred miles. These places were not se much hiding places for the early Christians as they were meeting^p place used by the Christians who, due to their belief in physical resurrection were unwilling to adopt the current Rowan practice of cremation.

Baptism and the Early Believers

BAPTISM. The "*Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*" (ch. 7) enjoins baptism, after catechetical instruction, in these words:

"Baptize into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost in living (running) water but if thou hast not living water, baptize into other water; and if thou canst not in cold, then in warm. But if thou halt neither, pour (running) water upon the head thrice, into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost."

Justin Martyr gives the following account of baptism: *"those who are convinced of the truth of our doctrine, and have Promised to live according to it, are exhorted to prayer, fasting and repentance for past sins; we praying and fasting with them. Then they are led by us to a place where is water, and in this way they are regenerated, as we also have been regenerated; that is, they receive the water-bath in the name of God, the Father and Ruler of all, and of our Redeemer Jesus {mist, and of the Holy Ghost. For Christ says: Except ye be born again, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. (John 3:5). Thus, from children of necessity and ignorance, we become of choice and of wisdom, and partakers of the forgiveness of former sins.... The baptismal bath is called also illumination, because those who receive it are enlightened in their understanding."*

LORD'S SUPPER. Again, Justin Martyr gives an account of the celebration of the Eucharist of Holy Communion with the appropriate prayers of the faithful that was the culmination of Christian worship. *"After the prayers (of the catechumen worship] we greet one another with the brotherly kiss. Then bread and a cup with water and wine are handed to the president (bishop) of the brethren. He receives them, and offers praise, glory, and thanks to the Father of all, through the name of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, for these his gifts. I en he has ended the prayers and thanksgiving, the whole congregation responds: 'Amen.'"*

For "Amen" in the Hebrew tongue means, "be it so." *Upon this the deacons, as call them, give to each of those present*

some of the blessed bread, and of the wine mingled with water, and carry it to the absent in their dwellings. This food is called with us the Eucharist of which none can partake, but he believing and baptized, who live according to the command s of Christ. For we use these not as common bread and common drink; but like as Jesus Christ our Redeemer was ^srade flesh through the word of God, and took upon Him flesh and blood for our redemption; so we are taught that the nourishment blessed by the word of prayer, by which our flesh and blood are nourished by transformation (assimilation), is the flesh and blood of the incarnate Jesus."

Novatianism

The Novatians were a sect formed by Novatian a presbyter at Rome. During the persecutions under Decius and Valerian (AD 249 to 260) man^y thousands of Christian's shamefully denied the faith and sacrificed to the heathen gods. When, afterwards, many sought readmission to the church, Novatian insisted that they be rejected permanently no matter how deep their contrition. God might pardon them at death but the church never. It would cease to be true church if it did so. Bishop Cornelius at Rome, and the renowned Cyprian at Carthage, could receive them back on giving signs of true repentance. Novatus, a presbyter of Carthage, advocated receiving back everyone without question. He suddenly changed completely, departed to Rome, and joined Novatian's party of severity.

A few obscure bishops and presbyters in Italy set up a schismatically church and elected Novatian bishop. It grew rapidly and spread to Gaul, Africa, and Asia. Constantine dealt severely with the Novatians, but they managed to survive down to the sixth century.

A Clash of Cultures

The ancient world of classic heathenism, having arrived at the height of its glory, and at the threshold of its decay, had exhausted all the resources of human nature

left to itself, and possessed no recuperative force, no regenerative principle. A regeneration of society could only proceed from religion. But the heathen religion had no restraint for vice, no comfort for the poor and the oppressed; it was itself the muddy fountain of immorality. God, therefore, who in his infinite mercy desired not the destruction but the salvation of the race, opened. In the midst of this hopeless decay of a false religion a pure fountain of holiness, love, and peace, in the only true and universal religion of his Son Jesus Christ.

The superiority of the principles of Christian ethics over the heathen standards of morality even under its most favorable forms is universally admitted. The superiority of the example of Christ over all the heathen sages is likewise admitted. The power of that peerless example was and is now as great as the power of his teaching. Contrast with the popular amusements of the heathen—the theatre, the circus, and the arena—was the Christian practice of emphasizing fellowship with God. The Christian had no concord with worldly frivolity and sensual amusement, which carry the sting of a bad conscience, and begets only disgust and bitter remorse. Holding high offices in government service was discouraged. The principles of Christianity prompted Christian slaveholders to actual manumission. Chastity was demanded and divorce was forbidden. Again, this was in stark contrast to the heathen world which encouraged both, open immorality and change of partners as often as one liked. Brotherly love, and love for enemies was introduced by the Christian community into a world that was filled with violence and long memories of past bad behavior to be revenged.

Charged Against Christians

To Christianity, appearing not as a national religion, but claiming to be the only true universal one, making its converts among

every people and every sect, attracting Greeks and Romans in much larger numbers than Jews, refusing to compromise with any form of idolatry, and threatening in fact the very existence of the Roman state religion, even this limited toleration could not be granted. The same all-absorbing political interest of Rome dictated here the opposite course, and Tertullian is hardly just in charging the Romans with inconsistency for tolerating the worship of all false gods, from whom they had nothing to fear, and yet prohibiting the worship of the only true God who is Lord over all. Born under Augustus, and crucified under Tiberius at the sentence of the Roman magistrate, Christ stood as the founder of a spiritual universal empire at the head of the most important epoch of the Roman power, a rival not to be endured. The reign of Constantine subsequently showed that the free toleration of Christianity was the deathblow to the Roman state religion.

Then, too, the conscientious refusal of the Christians to *pay* divine honors to the emperor and his statue, and to take part in any idolatrous ceremonies at public festivities, their aversion to the imperial military service, their disregard for politics and depreciation of all civil and temporal affairs as compared with the spiritual and eternal interests of man, their close brotherly union and frequent meetings, drew upon them the suspicion of hostility to the Caesars and the Roman people, and the unpardonable crime of conspiracy against the state.

The common people also, with their polytheistic ideas, abhorred the believers in the one God as atheists and enemies of the gods. They readily gave credit to the slanderous rumors of all sorts of abominations, even incest and cannibalism, practiced by the Christians as their religious assemblies and love-feasts, and regarded the frequent public calamities of that age as punishments justly inflicted by the angry gods for the disregard of their worship. In North Africa arose the proverb, "*If God does not send rain, lay it to the Christians.*" At every inundation, or drought, or famine, or pestilence, the fanatical populace cried,

"Away with the atheists! To the lions with the Christians!" Finally, persecutions were sometimes started by priests, jugglers, artificers, merchants, and others, who derived their support from the idolatrous worship. These, like Demetrius at Ephesus and the masters of the sorceress at Philippi, kindled the fanaticism and indignation of the mob against the new religion for its interference with their gains.

Claiming an Empire for Christ

Constantine (272 or 274-337 AD) was the son of Constantius Chlorus who was successively Caesar and Augustus over the prefecture of Gaul. He was a competent soldier and constructive ruler. His mother was Helena. From AD 292 to 305 Constantine was at the court of Diocletian, ostensibly for education but really as a hostage. After the abduction of Diocletian in AD 305 he fled the imperial court to join his father who had become Augustus. Upon the latter's death in 306 Constantine was designated Augustus (by the paternal testament and army). He gained popularity in Gaul, especially with the Christians for his mild treatment of them. In AD 311 he delivered Rome from Maxentius in the Battle of the Milvian Bridge. On the way to Rome he had seen his vision of the cross and the words *"In hoc signo vinces."*

In AD 313, together with Licinius, he issued the celebrated Edict of Toleration. Constantine now controlled the prefectures of Gaul and Italy; a defeat of Licinius, partly because of the latter's persecution of Christians, ended in Constantine's final defeat of him in 324 and in his issuance of a decree of universal toleration. In AD 325 he convened and took part in the Council of Nicea. What Constantine did to Christianity in the fourth century American has done in the twentieth—tolerated it. For the church today *toleration was best seen* when the social gospel prevailed based on Darwinian principles of the survival of the fittest and also when liberal theology reduced the Bible to popular myths. The fundamentalists were not blameless in certain areas for they too tried to

reconcile the Bible with the known science of their day reflected in such nonsense as the Gap Theory of Genesis 1:1-2.

The Arise of Arianism

The Arian controversy arose in the diocese of Alexandria, Egypt, about the year AD 320, and was concerned primarily with the person of Christ. It took its name from Arius, a presbyter in Alexandria, who taught that there is a difference between God the Father and Christ the Son that makes the latter secondary. Arius maintained that God the Father alone is eternal, that Christ *was* created out of nothing as the first and greatest of all creatures, and that he in turn created the universe. Arius thus represented Christ as but the first and greatest of all creatures, God's intermediary agent through whom all other things were created. Yet, because of the power and honor delegated to Him, He was to be looked upon as God and so was to be worshipped. Most of the Arians also held that the Holy Spirit was the first and greatest of the creatures called into existence by *the Son*. This, therefore, meant a God who had a beginning and who might therefore have an end. In demanding worship for a created Christ, the Arians were in effect demanding worship of a creature and so were asserting the central principle of heathenism and idolatry. This controversy continued longer and was more serious than any other that agitated the early church.

In the teaching of Arius it was assumed that deity could not appear substantially on the earth. Hence Christ was assumed to be a second essence, which God had created, which came down to earth and took upon himself a human body. He was assumed to be not a *"perfect man,"* for his body the Logos took the place of the human intellect or spiritual principle.

In order to settle the controversy the Emperor Constantine called the first Christian council at Nicaea, in Asia Minor, in the year AD 325. It was hoped that a formula could be worked out which would be acceptable to the whole church. The leader of

the orthodox forces was Alexander, Bishop of Alexandria. The teaching of Arius was condemned. Christ was held to be of the same substance with the Father, *homoousia*, not merely of similar substance, *homoiousia*, and was declared to be "*God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, being of one substance with the Father.*"

The defeat of Arianism was only temporary. Both views were tolerated in the church, with the result that Arianism rallied and for a considerable time became the dominant view. Alexander soon died after the council adjourned. He was succeeded by Athanasius, who contented strongly and skillfully for the orthodox doctrine, and to Athanasius for the triumph of orthodox doctrine at the Council of Constantinople in AD 381. By denying the true deity of Christ while at the same time demanding worship of Him, Arianism was opening the door to polytheism and destroying the basis for Christian Trinitarians. Athanasius properly saw that only as the deity of Christ is maintained can there be established a firm basis for the Christian faith. For his faithful stand to the truth Athanasius received prolonged attacks by numerous and powerful Arians. His life is an incomparable epic of heroism, fortitude, and faith.

A House Divided

The ultimate separation and incurable antagonism of the churches may be traced to several specific causes.

First, there was the politico-ecclesiastical rivalry of the patriarch of Constantinople backed by the Byzantine Empire, and the bishop of Rome in connection with the new German empire.

The second cause is the growing centralization and overbearing conduct of the Latin Church in and through the papacy.

The third cause is the stationary character of the Greek and the progressive character of the Latin Church during the Middle Ages. The Greek Church boasts of the imaginary perfection of her creed. When the Greek church became stationary,

the Latin church began to develop her greatest energy; she became the fruitful mother of new and vigorous nations of the North and West of Europe, produced scholastic and mystic theology and a new order of civilization, built magnificent cathedrals, discovered a new Continent, invented the art of printing, and with the revival of learning prepared the way for a new era in the history of the world.

One such scholastic and mystic theology was monasticism. Derived from the Greek *monos*, "*alone*". It is a general word for the renunciation of life in the world for the ideal of unreserved devotion to God. It is not exclusive to Christianity, but is found in every religious system that has attained an advanced degree of ethical development. Monasticism is commonly extended beyond its strict implication of solitude to embrace the religious communities.

Six Contributors to the Church

SIMON STYLITES. St. Simon is the most famous of the anchorites. This extreme type of Christian ascetic appeared first in the third century. Men and women sought spiritual perfection by withdrawing themselves from the community, often exposing themselves to hardships such as inadequate clothing or shelter, wearing coarse cloths and sometimes chains. Some, like Simon, even spent years on top of pillars.

ANTHONY. (AD 251 - c. 356) was the founder of Christian monasticism. At the age of twenty he gave away his inheritance to the poor and for twenty years lived in solitude in the mountains. At the end of *this time he* organized the monastic life for the crowds who had come to him. He visited Alexandria in AD 311 to support the Christians in persecution, and again in AD 350 to preach against the Arians. His feast is celebrated on January 17 and his relics repose in a church near Vienna.

BASIL (c. AD 330-379), known as the Great, was a churchman, theologian, and representative of the monastic ideal. He

gave normative suggestions to the articulation of Greek orthodoxy. In particular he rejoiced in extensive physic-theological discussions. But he also exhibited a strong urge to transcend everything hylic, to ascend to God, and to live only in Him.

BENEDICT (AAD 751-821) was called Witiza until he left soldiering for monastic life. He founded the monastery of Aniane (AD 779), compiled monastic rules, and, having removed to the vicinity of Aachen, became general supervisor of the Frankish monasteries (AD 817).

AMBROSE (AD 340-397) of Milan was one of the notable of the exegetes, hymn-writers and orators of the early Christian Church. Forming the bridge that from Cyprian to St. Augustine, Ambrose, the bishop of Milan, was energetically engaged in the expansion and defense of inherited Christian doctrines. Noticeable intimations and beginnings of Augustine's theology are found in his views: that faith rests upon biblical authorities, that the authoritatively transmitted truth can be to some degree rationally explained; of the relation between Adam's sin and guilt in the race by physical propagation, on the effects of Christ's work; on baptism, repentance and the church.

CHRYSOSTOM (AD 347-407), being a title, meaning '*Golden mouthed*' was bestowed on John of Antioch because of his matchless pulpit eloquence. Born in Antioch in ad 347, given an excellent education by his saintly mother Anthusa, John became an advocate in Antioch, but later, after three years of instruction by Bishop Meletius in Antioch, was baptized. He avoided election as bishop in AD 370, and, after the death of his mother who had opposed his desire, he went into monastic retirement. Returning to Antioch in AD 380, he was appointed Deacon in 380 and Presbyter in 386. Then, in AD 387 he was made Patriarch of Constantinople. He wrote commentaries, expository homilies, apologetic treatises, and a work on the Priesthood in which he

commended virginity and asceticism. His orthodox has never been challenged though he was of the Antiochan School.

The sum total of the contribution of these men on the early church was that they presented the Christian way of life as one that was demanding. This flies in the face of the easy believism of today. These men called for brave soldiers of the cross. Christians are to be serious students of the Word as well.

Ecumenical Councils for Christendom

- **Nicea I, AD 325** to which largely may be attributed the Nicene Creed, occasioned by the Arian controversy.
- **Constantinople I, AD 381**, elaborated the Nicene Creed so as to define more explicitly the deity of the Holy Spirit.
- **Ephesus, AD 431** defined the personal unity of Christ, and the Virgin as Theotokos, as against Nestorius.
- **Chalcedon, AD 451** defined Christ's two natures.
- **Constantinople II, AD 553** reaffirmed the first four councils and condemned errors of Origen and others.
- **Nicea II, AD 787** regulated veneration of images.
- **Constantinople IV, AD 869** dealt with the Photian Schism. This council, in which East and West were undoubtedly represented, is not everywhere received as ecumenical.

Note. Protestants do not generally consider as ecumenical the councils since Chalcedon; they also hold that all councils, even Nicea I, may err, and that only the *Scriptures* cannot err.

APPOLLINARIUS. This is the name of Apollinaris of Laodicea, a

theologian who held that Christ had a human body and a human soul but no human spirit. In Him this was replaced by the divine Logos, the source of Christ's self-consciousness. Apollinaris attracted a considerable following in spite of the fact that his ideas were anathematized by synods of the church but soon after his death, the sect became extinct.

NESTORIANISM This was the doctrine of the Person of Christ as set forth by Nestorius, Patriarch of Constantinople (AD 428--431) and the Antiochene School represented by John Chrysostom and Theodore of Mopsuestia. The School represents a rebellion against the hypostatic Christology of Alexandria and the heresy of Apollinaris by its own emphasis on the historic Jesus as well as the divine Son. The starting point of the controversy is to be found in their opposition to the attribute *theotokos* applied to the mother of the humanity of Christ; in its place Nestorius suggested *Christotokos*, which offended contemporary piety. In place of hypostatic union of the divine and human natures, Nestorius suggested prosopic union: The manhood is the fact (*prosopon*) of the Godhead, and the Godhead is the face (*prosopon*) of the manhood. The doctrine was attacked by Cyril of Alexandria who mistook *prosopon* as a philosophical term--either intentionally or ignorantly—and it was his caricature that was condemned at the Councils of Ephesus (AD 431) and Chalcedon (AD 451).

ATHANASIUS, Bishop of Alexandria (AD 293; 296-373) was the great defender of the Nicene faith against prolonged attacks by numerous and powerful Arians. To him more than to any other single individual is due the triumph of the Nicene position as opposed to a doctrine now universally acknowledged to have represented the reduction of Christianity to a thinly disguised paganism. As a theologian Athanasius won his spurs before the outbreak of the Arian Controversy with such writings as his *Contra Gentiles* and *De Incarnatione*. Of Nicea Athanasius

planted himself steadfastly and increasingly made its terminology his own. Behind all of his doctrinal writings, polemical and otherwise, is the central conviction that God Himself has entered into humanity.

CYRIL. History knows Cyril of Alexandria (AD 376-444) and Cyril of Jerusalem (c. AD 315-386). Cyril of Alexandria was an acute theologian but a violent controversialist who became Patriarch of Alexandria about AD 412. He administered this high office in a high-handed and not disinterested manner. His Alexandrian rivalry with the Antiochians led him to active opposition to Chrysostom. After AD 428 he became the most influential, but unprincipled, champion of Christological orthodoxy against the Nestorians. He was a zealous advocate of veneration of the Virgin Mary. Cyril of Jerusalem became the Bishop of Jerusalem about AD 350. From 357 to 381 he suffered much as a champion of the Nicene faith against the Arians, though he found it possible to be friendly with Semi-Arian bishops. He made contributions to the doctrine of the sacraments and to the liturgy of the church.

The Rise of Papal Rome

Important is the distinction of apostolic mother-churches such as those at Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria, Ephesus, Corinth, and Rome. In the time of Irenaeus and Tertullian they were held in the highest regard, as the chief bearers of the pure church tradition. Among these Antioch, Alexandria, and Rome were most prominent, because they were the capitals respectively of the three divisions (*eparchiae*) of the Roman Empire, and center of trade and intercourse, combining with their apostolic origin the greatest political weight. To the bishop of Antioch fell all Syria as his metropolitan district; to the bishop of Alexandria, all Egypt; to the bishop of Rome, central and lower Italy, without definite boundaries.

The Roman church claims that only Rome had a 'Pope' over all the Church

centers. The Roman church claims not only human but divine right for the papacy, and traces its institution directly to Christ, when he assigned to Peter an eminent position in the work of founding his church, against which not even the gates of hades shall prevail. This claim implies several assumptions.

First, Peter by our Lord's appointment had not simply a primacy of personal excellency, or of honor and dignity, but also a supremacy of jurisdiction over the other apostles (which is contradicted by the fact that Peter himself never claimed it, and that Paul maintained a position of perfect independence, and even openly rebuked Peter at Antioch, Gal. 2:11).

Second, the privileges of this primacy of supremacy are not personal only but official, hereditary and transferable.

Third, they were actually transferred by Peter, not upon the bishop of Jerusalem, or Antioch but upon the bishop of Rome.

Fourth, Peter was not only at Rome but acted there as bishop till his martyrdom, and appointed a successor.

Fifth, the bishops of Rome, as successors of Peter, have always enjoyed and exercised an universal jurisdiction over the Christian church (which is not the case as a matter of fact, and still less as a matter of conceded right). All these important assumptions are too much for the Protestant theologian to handle.

Contribution of Augustine and Jerome

A descendant of the Punic people, Aurelius Augustinus' life and career coincided with the disintegration of the Western empire of Rome. Born November 13, AD 354 in Tagaste, North Africa, he practiced the profession of rhetoric at Carthage, Rome, and Milan. At the latter place where he experienced a spiritual catastrophe in AD 386, he was baptized with his son by St. Ambrose during Easter, 387. He became Bishop of Hippo in 395, and died as the Vandals surged around the wall of his Episcopal town in August, 430.

Coming under the influence of Cicero in his youth, he adhered for nine years to Manicheanism and favored for a short period the skepticism of the Now Academy. He experienced in Neo-Platonism a culmination of his intellectual and religious quest, and concurrently, by the authority of the Catholic church his moral conversion.

The doctrines in which the inspiration of Augustine prevails cannot be reduced to synthetic expositions. Augustinianism is the seeing in the saint's mature ideas of sin, predestinarian grace, original sin, predestination, free will and church while ignoring the many knots, gaps and flaws of human logic trying to understand the infinite. Still, Augustine did develop a comprehensive philosophy of the church and a new sacramental doctrine in opposition to Donatism. A potent religious and ethical idealism is joined with church political tendencies in his hierarchical conception of the church. In contrast to Pelagius' rationalistic view of sin and grace, Augustine worked out an essentially voluntaristic doctrine of sin and grace. The sovereignty of God is stressed.

JEROME (c. AD 347-420) was born at Stridon in Dalmatia. A visionary experience at Antioch in AD 374 determined him to devote himself to Biblical studies. He lived for a short period in a monastic community in the Desert of Chalcis and then at Antioch and Constantinople. In AD 382 he went to Rome, but opposition to his monastic doctrines forced him to leave in AD 385. The following year he founded an establishment for monks and nuns at Bethlehem, where he spent the rest of his life. While at Rome, at the request of Pope Damasus, he revised the Latin *New Testament* by the use of Greek manuscript. This together with a new translation of the *Old Testament* into Latin from the Hebrew, made at Bethlehem, became the first official text of the Bible in the Western Church (the *Vulgate*). Also the author of numerous biblical commentaries and controversial works, Jerome died in the Lord leaving the church a rich contribution.

The Problem with Pelagius

In AD 412, just before beginning the City of God, Augustine found himself launching out on what was to become the most significant of all his controversies, that with Pelagianism. Intermittently it occupied his attention until his death. Unlike the Donatist problem, Pelagianism was not merely a local matter. The British-born Pelagius, who had just visited Italy and North Africa on his way to Palestine, spread his doctrine wherever he went. Augustine, immediately alert to its heresy, preached against it at Hippo and soon was dispatching letters and tracts to warn outsiders. Within a few years the whole Christian Church was aroused, including St. Jerome at Bethlehem, Pope Innocent and later Pope Zosimus, and the Emperor Honorius at Constantinople. Councils were held, and by 418 Pelagius and his disciple Coelestius were almost everywhere condemned.

Pelagianism, as Augustine was quick to perceive, undermined a central pillar of Christian theology. In positing for man a native competency to accomplish, of his own choice and doing a completely good life, Pelagius was calling in question man's need of divine grace in the acting of every good deed. Pelagius was, as we might say today, something of a romantic. He believed in man's innocence and perfectibility. He denied any inherited bias in man, any transmitted disposition impairing the liberty of operation of man's free will. Insisting that God had given man free will, he saw its character or present state as that of unconditioned freedom. Augustine could not accept this view. Scripture was against it, as well as his own experience. What motion toward the good could any man make, even with the benefit of commandments and teaching, unless God also draw the will? Had the free will of Saul of Tarsus, or of the young Augustine, actually been as indifferent as a pair of well-balanced scales? Would either one of them ever have arrived at conversion merely by invoking the free will which by nature God had given them?

Augustine thought not. Against Pelagianism Augustine argued for the truth of original sin, human insufficiency, complete predestination, preventive grace, and regenerative baptism. Moreover, he insisted on investigating human free will not as an abstract problem but as a fact having historical context.

The Understanding of Augustine

Augustine understood justification to be the judicial act of God executing the demands of the law whereby the guilty are declared righteous based on the substitutionary work of Jesus Christ on the cross. Only the elect will be declared righteous, only the elect can be declared righteous for they alone are appointed to be the heirs of eternal life. Concerning the concept of the predestination of the elect, Augustine declared that God's grace is irresistible and inexorably effectual in accomplishing the divine purposes. Salvation is a sheer miracle wrought by God's inscrutable will on behalf of a part of ruined mankind and is in no way congruent with human action or ability. Damnation is, likewise, sheer justice wrought by the same inscrutable will. God's mercy and justice are both alike beyond human questioning. The elect rejoice in God's mercy; the damned must acknowledge His justice. Both take their destiny from His choice and by His fixed decree. According to Augustine, the vast majority of mankind goes in misery to its foreknown and foreordained doom, terrible, endless—and just. Augustine sharply decries any mere human sentiments or feelings that cause the tenderhearted to be perversely compassionate and to deplore the eternal punishment and the unceasing and everlasting torments of the damned or to tone down everything that seems harsh. Whatever apparent morality one observes among the non-elect is nugatory and inconsequential. Only the just shall live by faith. the just are the elect who have been declared righteous by the grace of God based upon eternal foreknowledge and foreordination to eternal life.

Alternatives to Augustine

St. Vincent of Lerins, Massilia, Faustus, and Cassian were all semi-pelagians. These fifth century theologians reacted against the stricter teaching of Augustine in opposition to Pelagianism. The main points which were felt to be objectionable were rigid predestination, the priority and irresistibility of grace, and infallible perseverance. Against these, it was taught that, although grace is essential to salvation, it is added when the first steps are taken by the will of man. Cassian of Marseilles seems to have taken the initiative in this movement, and Lerins became its main center, with Vincent of Lerins as one of its leading exponents. According to the semi-pelagian man's nature is damaged by sin not totally depraved so that there is no movement towards God. Man has ability and responsibility to obey the gospel and when the effort is made grace will be supplied so that salvation takes place.

A Matter for Mediation

At the Synod of Orange in the year AD 529, at which Caesarius of Arles was leader, the Semi-Pelagian system, yet without mention of its adherents, was condemned in twenty-five chapters or canons, and the Augustinian doctrine of sin and grace was approved, without the doctrine of absolute or particularistic predestination. The Synod of Orange was a victory of Semi-Augustinianism. The decisions of the council were sent by Caesarius to Rome, and were confirmed by pope Boniface II in AD 530. Boniface, in giving his approval, emphasized the declaration, that even the beginning of a good will and of faith is a gift of God's prevenient grace, while Semi-Pelagianism left open a way to Christ without grace from God. Beyond question, the church was fully warranted in affirming the pre-eminence of grace over freedom, and the necessity and importance of the *gratia proeveniens*.

Moving into the Middle Ages

The three phases of the medieval period may be noted.

- AD 590-1049 The Church Among the Barbarians
- AD 1049-1294 The Papal Theocracy in Conflict With *the* Secular Power
- AD 1294-1517 The Decline of the Papacy and the Preparation for Modern Christianity

CLOVIS. The conversion of the Salian Franks took place under the lead of their victorious king Chlodwig or Clovis (Ludovicus, Louis), the son of Childeric and grandson of Merovig, hence the name of Merovingians. He ruled from the year AD 481 to his death in 511. With him begins the history not only of the French empire, its government and laws, but also of the French nation, its religion and moral habits. He married a Christian princess, Chlotilda, a daughter of the king of the Burgundians (AD 493), and allowed his child to be baptized. Before the critical battle at Tolbiac near Cologne against the invasion of the Allemanni, he prayed to Jesus Christ for aid after having first called upon his own gods, and promised, in case of victory, to submit to baptism together with his warriors. After the victory he was instructed by Bishop of Rheims. When he heard the story of the crucifixion of Christ he exclaimed: "*Would I had been there with my valiant Franks to avenge Him!*" On Christmas, in the year AD 496, he descended before the cathedral of Rheims and was baptized along with three thousand of his warriors.

But the change of religion had little or no effect on the character of Clovis and his descendants, whose history is tarnished with atrocious crimes. The Merovingians, half tigers, half lambs, passed with astonishing rapidity from horrible massacres to passionate demonstrations of contrition, and from the confessional back again to the excesses of their native cruelty. According to one Catholic Freshman, The Franks were sad Christians. While they respected the freedom

of the Catholic faith, and made external profession of it, they violated without scruple all its precepts, and at the same time the simplest laws of humanity.

In summary the importance of Clovis is seen in that he was the real founder of Frankish kingdom. He adopted Christianity in orthodox form for himself and his people. He extended his kingdom at the expense of heretical (Arian) neighbors. He laid the foundation of strong now state forms which was important for an emerging European power. In it the Teutonic and Roman civilizations became blended.

A Basis for Christ in Britain

The church history of Ireland is peculiar. It began with an independent catholicity or a sort of semi Protestantism, and ended with Romanism, while other Western countries passed through the reverse order. Lying outside of the bounds of the Roman Empire, and never invaded by Roman legions, that virgin island was Christianized without bloodshed and independently of Rome and of the canons of the ecumenical synods. The early Irish church differed from the Continental churches in minor points of polity and worship, and yet excelled them all during the sixth and seventh centuries in spiritual purity and missionary zeal.

Evangelized by St. Patrick, the Christianity of this man was substantially that of Gaul and old Britain, i.e. Catholic, orthodox, monastic, ascetic, but independent of the Pope, and differing from Rome in the age of Gregory I in minor matters of polity and ritual. In his *Confession* Patrick never mentions Rome or the people; he never appeals to tradition, and seems to recognize the *Scriptures* (including the Apocrypha) as the only authority in matters of faith.

An Interest in Icons

The controversy which broke out in the Byzantine Empire over the worship of images (or icons) is known as the Iconoclastic Controversy. It began in AD 725 with the prohibition of image worship

by Emperor Leo III. The church both East and West opposed the edict, Pope Gregory II denouncing iconoclasm as a heresy (AD 727). Patriarch Germanus of Constantinople was deprived of his see. The most important of the Eastern iconodules (image worshipers) was St. John of Damascus who denied the Emperor's right to legislate in dogmatic matters. The struggle continued during the reign of Emperor Constantine V (AD 741-775), but during the regency of Irene terminated with the victory for image worshipers. At the Seventh Ecumenical Council (AD 787) it was decreed that images should be venerated but not adored. The struggle broke out anew in the reign of Emperor Leo V (AD 813-820), who made the supreme effort to impose iconoclasm upon the church. The chief defender of iconodulism was Theodore of Studion. However, this attempt failed again, this time in the regency of Theodora. She convoked a Council in AD 843 that restored the worship of images. Since that time it became the chief feature of the Orthodox type of piety. The event is celebrated to this day in The Festival of Orthodoxy.

Response from the Easter Church

On the 19th of February, AD 842, the images were again introduced into the churches of Constantinople. The Easter church had to address an issue in which the soldiers were largely iconoclastic, and the monks and the people were in favor of image-worship. Too many people were dying over images in holy wars.

A Controversial Effect

The decree of Nicaea did furnish aid and comfort to a low and crude order of piety which needs visible supports, and it did stimulate the development of Christian art. Iconoclasm would have killed it. It is important to note that the Catholic Raphael and Michael Angelo, and the Protestant Lucas Kranach and Albrecht Duer, were

contemporaries of the Reformers, and that the art of painting reached its highest perfection at the period when image-worship for a great part of Christendom was superseded by the spiritual worship of God alone.

The controversy effected history in that it provided yet another issue for Protestants to contend with and rightly so. Protestant churches disregard and condemn image-worship as a refined form of idolatry and as a fruitful source of superstition; and this theory is supported by the plain sense of the second commandment, the *views of the primitive church*, and, negatively, by the superstitions which have accompanied the history of image-worship down to the miracle working Madonna of the nineteenth century. However, while the Protestants and Catholics wore to grow apart on *this issue*, East-West church relations grew stronger after the fighting stopped.

The Conviction of Calvin

The Church of Rome did not believe Exodus 20:4-5 as part of the first commandment. John Calvin did. Why? The chief argument against iconoclasts was the second commandment. It was answered in various ways. The prohibition was understood to be merely temporary till the appearance of Christ, or to apply to graven images only, or to the making of images for idolatrous purposes. The cherubim over the ark, the brazen serpent in the wilderness were appealed to as examples of visible symbols in the Mosaic worship. The incarnation of the Son of God furnished the divine warrant for pictures of Christ. Since Christ revealed himself in human form it can be no sin to represent him in that form.

The reformers like John Calvin did not accept these arguments and held that Exodus 20:4-5 were part of the first commandment. Calvin is not sympathetic to the "*good intentions*" of those who expect to be incited to a greater degree of devotion through the use of images. He believes this is but a pretext to excuse a proclivity to conceive of idols. Perhaps he

is right. The Christian cannot be too careful in the worship of God. The scripture is simple and so should not be added to with sentimental rationale.

A Champion named Charlemagne

This extraordinary man represents the early history of both France and Germany which afterwards divided into separate streams and commands the admiration of both countries and nations. His grand ambition was to unite all the Teutonic and Latin races on the Continent under his temporal scepter in close union with the spiritual dominion of the pope; in other words, to establish a Christian theocracy, coextensive with the Latin church (exclusive of the British Isles and Scandinavia). His life is thus filled with no less than fifth-three military campaigns conducted by himself or his lieutenants, against a number of different enemies. His incessant activity astonished his subjects and enemies. He seemed to be omnipresent in his dominions. His ecclesiastical domain extended over twenty-two archbishoprics or metropolitan sees. He had no settled residence, but spent much time on the Rhine and especially at Aix-la-Chapelle on account of its baths. He encouraged trade, opened roads, and undertook to connect the Main and the Danube by canal. He gave his personal attention to things great and small. He introduced a settled order and unity of organization in his empire, at the expense of the ancient freedom and wild independence of the German tribes, although he continued to hold every year, in May, the general assembly of the freemen. He secured Europe against future heathen and Mohammedan invasion and devastation. He was universally admired or feared in his age. The Greek emperors sought his alliance; hence the Greek proverb: "*Have the Franks for your friends, but not for your neighbors.*"

Charles had a commanding, and yet winning presence. He was tall, strongly built and well proportioned. He was naturally eloquent, and spoke with great clearness and force. He was simple in his attire, and

temperate in eating and drinking. He was fond of muscular exercise. He enjoyed religious works and was not respecter of persons. His greatest merit is *his zeal for education and religion*. He delighted in cultivated society.

Charles was a firm believer in Christianity and a devout and regular worshipper in the church. He was very liberal to the clergy. Notwithstanding his many and great virtues, Charles was by no means so pure as the poetry and piety of the church represents him, and far from deserving canonization. He sacrificed thousands of human beings to his towering ambition and passion for conquest. He converted the Saxons by force of arms; he waged for thirty years a war of extermination against them; he wasted their territory with fire and blood; he crushed out their independence; he beheaded in cold blood four thousand five hundred prisoners in one day at Verdun on the Aller (AD 782) and when these proud and faithless savages finally surrendered, he removed 10,000 of their families from their homes on the banks of the Elbe to different parts of Germany and Gaul to prevent a future revolt. It was indeed a war of religion for the annihilation of heathenism but conducted on the Mohammedan principle: submission to the faith, or death. This is contrary to the spirit of Christianity that recognizes only the moral means of persuasion and convection.

The most serious defect in his private character was his incontinence and disregard of the sanctity of the marriage tie. He married several wives and divorced them at his pleasure. Finally, on January 28, AD 814, in the 71st year of his age, and the 47th of his reign, he died and was buried on the same day in the cathedral of Aix-la-Chapelle. despite the efforts of Charlemagne, after his death relations between the East and West church continued until there was to be the ultimate separation. It was due chiefly to three causes.

The first cause was the politico-ecclesiastical rivalry of the patriarch of Constantinople backed by the Byzantine

Empire, and the bishop of Rome in connection with the new German empire.

The second cause was the growing centralization and overbearing conduct of the Latin church in and through the papacy. The third cause: the stationary character of the Greek and the progressive character of the Latin church during the middle ages.

Christianity finds the Franks

The Franks were Catholics from the time of their conversion under Clovis, and *achieved* under Charles Martel (the Hammer) a might victory over the Saracens (AD 732), which saved Christian Europe against the invasion and tyranny of Islam. They had thus become the protectors of Latin Christianity. They also lent their aid to Boniface in the conversion of Germany. When the Lombards renewed war with the pope after AD 754 the pope wrote letter upon letter to Pepin III, admonishing and commanding him in the name of Peter and the holy Mother of God to save the city of Rome from the detested enemies, and promising him long life and the most glorious mansions in heaven, if he speedily obeyed. To such a height of blasphemous assumption had the papacy risen already as to identify itself with the kingdom of Christ and to claim to be the dispenser of temporal prosperity and eternal salvation. Pepin crossed the Alps with his army, defeated the Lombards, and bestowed the conquered territory upon the pope. The year was AD 755.

Charlemagne died on January 28, AD 814, after a short illness, and after receiving the Holy Communion. Charles had regarded the royal and imperial dignity as the hereditary possession of his house and people, and crowned his son, Louis the Pious, at Aix-la-Chapelle in AD 813, without consulting the pope or the Romans. He himself as a Teuton represented both France and Germany. But with his death there was to be the political separation of the two countries under his successors, and the imperial dignity was to be attached to the German crown. Hence also the designation: the holy German Roman

empire.

Questions for the Pope

Boris of Bulgaria put some 106 questions to the popes. A few of the more "important" questions included the following.

- **Question.** "Why can't the Bulgarians take baths on Wednesdays and Fridays?"
- **Question.** "Why couldn't the Bulgarian take communion not wearing belts?"
- **Question.** "Why couldn't Bulgarians eat the meat of animals killed by the eunuchs?"
- **Question.** "Was it really true that a Roman could not conduct public prayers for rain or make the sign of the cross over a table before a meal?"
- **Question.** "What animals might a Christian eat?"
- **Question.** "Should women wear a cover for their heads in church?"
- **Question.** "Can a person work on Sunday and before feast days?"
- **Question.** "Is sex permissible on Sundays?"

Pope Leo III made a move to shift the imperial power from the Franks to the Germans with a symbolic crowning of Charles who was celebrating Christmas in St. Peter's in the year of our Lord, AD 800. While Charles was kneeling in prayer before the altar, the pop under a sudden inspiration (but no doubt in consequence of a premeditated scheme), placed a golden crown upon his head, and the Roman people shouted three times: "To Charles Augustus, crowned by God, the great and pacific emperor of the Romans, life, and victory!" From this time on, after ancient custom he was adored by the pope, and was styled Emperor and

Augustus.

The readiness with which the Romans responded to the crowning act of Leo proves that the re-establishment of the Western empire was timely. The Holy Roman Empire seemed to be the necessary counterpart of the Holy Roman Church. For many centuries the nations of Europe had been used to the concentration of all secular power in one head. The transfer of the seat of empire from Rome to Constantinople withdrew from the Western church the protection of the secular arm, and exposed Europe to the horrors of barbarian invasion and the chaos of civil wars. The popes were among the chief sufferers, their territory being again and again overrun and laid waste by the savage Lombards. Hence, the instinctive desire for the protecting arm of a new empire, and this could only be expected from the fresh and vigorous Teutonic power which had arisen beyond the Alps and Christianized by Roman missionaries. Into this empire all the life of the ancient world was to be gathered; out of it all the life of the modern world was to arise.

The Growing Power of the Papal System

Nicolas I (April, AD 858- Nov. 13, 867) was the right pope at the right time to put into effect the principles of the Decretals. He had the good fortune to do it in the service of justice and virtue. So long as the usurpation of divine power was used against oppression and vice, it commanded veneration and obedience, and did more good than harm. It was only the *pope who* in those days could claim a superior authority in dealing with haughty and oppressive metropolitans, synods, kings, and emperors. Nicolas I was somewhat of a new Elijah who ruled the world like a sovereign of divine appointment, terrible to the evildoer whether prince or priest, yet mild to the good and obedient.

The pope was viewed, according to Nicolas I, as the divinely appointed superintendent of the whole church for the maintenance of order, discipline and righteousness, and the punishment of wrong

and vice, with the aid of the bishops as his executive organs. He assumed an imperious tone towards civil governments. He regarded the imperial crown a grant of the vicar of St. Peter for the protection of Christians against infidels. To support such views Nicolas made use of the Pseudo-Isidorian Decretals, which advocates the papal theocracy. The aim of Pseudo-Isidor is, by such a collection of authoritative decisions to protect the clergy against the secular power and against moral degeneracy.

By using these documents Nicolas increased power for his decisions. Likewise, other techniques were to be used to gain psychological control over princes and people. In particular through use of penance or confession and absolution power was wielded over people who believed that the church alone in an official way had the right to invoke the blessings of God. Through fear of having these spiritual elements being withheld, through fear of being placed outside the true church for failing to comply with the demands of penance, and thus being damned for all eternity, papal theology provided the psychological control it needed over the less educated masses.

Three Basic Views of Society

With all of the fruits of religious genius, the medieval period ended with a sense of frustration. The word "*reform*" rings through the literature concerned with the welfare of the church and of Christendom. The failure of the Crusades in their original purpose, the prevalence of abuses in the life of the clergy, the decline of the religious orders from their early zeal, and the entanglements of the papacy in worldly affairs all tended to create a mood of disillusionment and distrust. Laymen were becoming more literate and more vocal in criticism of ecclesiastics. The literature of satirical exposure and proposed reformation became abundant everywhere. Earnest preachers continued to testify to the essentials of Christianity, and in many homes there was Christian instruction and prayer. The greatly expanded pilgrimage life

of the 15th century marks the rising religious anxiety of the time. When printers, long before Luther, began to publish the vernacular Bibles, the demand was far greater than the supply.

The biblical pre-Reformers, John Wycliffe in England and John Hus in Bohemia, lacking the help of printers, had little success.

The conciliarists were concerned for a fundamental reform of the church yet it was the conciliarists at Constance who were responsible for the death of John Hus (AD 1415). That council's elaborately prepared reforming decrees were designed to reduce the pope's control and to correct detailed abuses; but the revived papacy was to condemn conciliarism and neglect most of these reform measures. In the century after Constance no pope made the spiritual and moral condition of the church his chief concern. The most zealous of reforming spirits before Luther was Savonarola, who in his denunciation of clerical misconduct had the passion of a Hebrew prophet. His agitation for a new reformed council set the train of events leading to his death in 1498. Such was the condition at the later middle ages. The pope was still declared to be sovereign and the king subject to him; the church was still supreme and the general populace must obey or face damnation.

Feudalism: Its Rise and Failure

Feudalism was a system of contractual relationships among the members of the upper class in medieval Europe, in which lords made grants to fiefs to vassals in return for pledges of military and political service. There has been much controversy over the origins of feudalism. French scholars sought the origins of vassalage in the ancient Roman institution of patronage, in which men gave service to a powerful patron in return for his protection. German scholars, on the other hand, claimed it arose from the similar campaignage of the German war chiefs, described by Tacitus. Gifts in return for political and military services could be found among the primitive Germans, while

the Romans had precarious land tenures (that is, land was given conditionally for a term of years or lives). All of these elements entered into the development of the new feudal institutions. During the 11th, 12th, and 13th century feudalism reached its fullest development and widest extent.

Again, the exact causes are disputed among scholars but concerning the "*Carolingian feudalism*" tradition credits Charles Martel, the real ruler of the Frankish kingdoms at this time, with its establishment; it is said that he gave benefices to vassals from the lands of the church in order to acquire a heavily armed cavalry. His descendants made increasing use of the enormous landed wealth of the church to benefice vassals and this to secure both professional soldiers and loyal administrators.

The feudalization of the successor states to the Carolingian Empire proceeded throughout the 10th and well into the 11th century without much opposition. By 1050, feudalism *had* clearly become a widespread phenomenon. Emperor Frederick I Barbarossa made it the chief principle of organization in his empire, now deprived of the tribal and the ecclesiastical bases of his predecessors.

Feudalism had been developed to meet the military and political needs of an age of small weak states composed almost entirely of two classes: noble and peasant. Even in the 12th century, conditions were already changing with the emergence of the bourgeoisie as a major class and with the emergence of both city-states and monarchies supported in large measure by the wealth, the arms, and the political values of the new class. Strong rulers were beginning to dislike the expense of the old system since it was no longer profitable.

The church too was now opposed to warfare among the feudal class and so was not averse to the disappearance of the services it owed. These four elements: stronger central rulers, loss of money, a rising middle class, and opposition from the church brought the decline of feudalism.

The Cluniac Reform

Founded in 910, the Congregation of Cluny, in the person of Abbot Berno and his immediate successors, sought a reformation of monastic life through a more disciplined re-application of the Benedictine rule. The early emphasis upon personal poverty, labor, and rigid discipline declined as the mother foundation arrogated to itself the feudal control of numerous subject houses. Mother and daughter establishments at their peak of worldliness evinced striking example of architectural brilliance, literary studies, and cultic magnificence. Drawn increasingly into the stream of papal politics, the wealthy order rapidly lost its pristine reforming character and gave rise to the sad spectacle of privilege and decay. In this way it played into the hands of the Papacy that used all the collected wealth, wisdom, and ability for itself.

The Honor of Hildebrand

Hildebrand, better known as Pope St. Gregory VIZ, the "*Monk Hildebrand*" (b. between. 1020-25), is rightly looked upon by Church historians as the turning point from the "*Dark Ages*" of the papacy to the brighter future of Medievalism. He was not the first of his century either to see or inculcate the need of ecclesiastical reform. Others before him were just as intent on church reform and on formulating a program that was in time to find its culminating victory 40 years after Gregory in the Concordat of Worms in AD 1122, between Emperor Henry V (AD 1106-25) and Pope Callixtus II (AD 1194-24) ratified the following year by the First Lateran Council (AD 1123).

Gregory's main attacks were directed against concubinage of the clergy, simony in the procuring of ecclesiastical benefices, and investiture by secular princes. The chief offenders among the latter was Emperor Henry IV of Germany (AD 1056-1106), although the evil had been prevalent in the Church for centuries. To obtain his end, Gregory was finally forced to excommunicate the Emperor, thereby

releasing the German princes and people from their oath of fealty. They were on the verge of electing a successor at Augsburg, February, 1077, when Henry voluntarily appeared, in mid winter of Jan., 1077, in penitential garb at Canossa, the palace of the Countess Mathilda, whose guest the Pope had been on his way towards Germany, and sought the Pope's absolution, which was granted to him.

Ungrateful for his rehabilitation Henry continued to violate the Church's canons and to persecute by military arms the very Pope who had saved for him the imperial crown. Gregory died in exile, at Salerno, May 25, 1085. He did not seek to dominate secular princes, as is frequently, but falsely asserted according to some scholars; rather, he sought to free the Church from their unwarranted usurpation, internecine strife and interference in matters ecclesiastical and primarily spiritual. He is considered to have been one of the greatest of the Roman Pontiffs and one of the most remarkable men of all times.

A Contest between the Crown and the Church

When Henry IV bowed before Gregory VII in the winter snow he conceded that the Church was indeed superior to the State. From then on the die was cast as a power struggle broke out in earnest who had ultimate authority on earth.

The Concordat of Worms helped to solve some of the questions. An agreement between Henry V and Pope Calixtus II (Sept. 23, 1122) concluded the investiture controversy in Germany, which had troubled the German ecclesiastical scene for nearly a century and had, as has been indicated, developed into open conflict between Henry IV and Gregory VII with the Pope winning the first major victory. By the terms of this agreement, which was one of the earliest concordats, Henry V relinquished investiture by ring and staff and permitted the free election of bishops; Calixtus on his part agreed that all elections should be held in the presence of the emperor who would have

the right to invest the elected ecclesiastic with the temporal prerogatives of the office.

To appreciate this it would be well to understand what a concordat is. A concordat is an agreement made between the highest officials of Church and State concerning the mutual relations they propose to observe permanently in any given country concerning either all matters, or only in certain eventualities, that might otherwise cause friction, and as agreed upon. Concordats generally refer to matters of a mixed nature, e.g. diocesan or religious organizations, appointments to important ecclesiastical positions (pastors, canons, bishops, etc.), matrimonial contracts and celebrations; schools and educational matters; financial assistance on the part of the State, etc.

When Henry V and Pope Calixtus agreed on the Concordate a legal precedent was set between Church and State with each recognizing the power and sovereignty of the other. According to Church scholars there are predominantly three theories to explain the legal nature or binding force of Concordates

First, the Legalist Theory, which considering the State the supreme society, holds that it can only obligate, not agree with any inferior body, such (as they hold) the Church.

Second, the Compact Theory, that makes the contract a bilateral contract.

Third, the Privilege Theory, which holds that Concordates are obligatory only on the part of the State because of the privileges conceded by the Church. The last-named is often considered the more plausible theory.

Charlemagne's Noble Ambition

Charlemagne, who became the master of the French kingdom in AD 768, had the noble ambition to unite the German tribes in one great empire and one religion in filial communion with Rome, but he mistook the means. He employed material force, believing that people become Christians by water-baptism, though baptized against their will. He thought that the Saxons, who were

the most dangerous enemies of his kingdom, must be either subdued and Christianized, or killed. He pursued the same policy towards them as the squatter sovereigns would have the United States government pursue towards the wild Indians of the Western territories. Treaties were broken, and shocking cruelties were committed on both sides, by the Saxons from revenge and for independence, by Christians for punishment in the name of religion and civilization. Prominent among these atrocities is the massacre of four thousand five hundred captives at Verden in one day. As soon as the French army was gone, the Saxons destroyed the churches and murdered the priests, for which they in turn were put to death.

Their subjugation was a work of thirty-three years, from AD 772 – 805. Widukind and Albio, the two most powerful Saxon chiefs, seeing the fruitlessness of the resistance, submitted to baptism in AD 785, with Charlemagne as sponsor.

The Christianization of North-Eastern German, among the Slavonic races, along the Baltic shores in Prussia, Livonia, and Courland continued until it was completed in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. By that time the Saxon-Salian Empire had emerged to contend for spiritual power but it all died with the emergence of nationalism, the decline of feudalism, and the acceptance of a separation of the powers of the Church with the powers of the State reflected in Concordates. The clergy were too corrupt and the issues too emotional to be handled apart from war.

Investing in Investitures

Rome realized that some things had gone too far. There was no longer the spiritual power of the Church to be felt and this must be regained. The issue of investiture offers one example. Investiture was originally the bestowal of an ecclesiastical office by investing the recipient with the symbols (rings, staff, keys) of his authority. In this conflict (c. AD 1059-1122) the popes disputed the claim of the lay rulers to confer bishoprics, abbacies, and

other ecclesiastical offices. Sovereigns had in early medieval times arrogated this right to themselves. Simony, an incontinent clergy, and the subordination of the spiritual to the temporal power resulted.

From the reign of Nicholas II (AD 1059-1061), the popes endeavored, for the sake of reform, to free the Church from this scourge and particularly from the tutelage of the Holy Roman Empire in Italy and in Germany. The struggle reached an acute stage in 1075 when St. Gregory VII delivered an ultimatum to the emperor Henry IV. There followed the celebrated scene between the pope and the emperor at Canossa. Many have seen in this the humiliation of the civil power by an ambitious Church. *Some are* inclined to interpret it as a political triumph for Henry.

The conflict continued under the successors of *the* pope and of the emperor and was settled by a compromise, the Concordat of Worms (1122) between Henry IV and Callistus II. The civil authority was deprived of its unlimited power over the appointment of bishops, while the church had to be satisfied with something less than the full exclusion of alien influence from canonical elections. In England Henry I had renounced investiture in 1107. In France a reform had been effected by AD 1080. Further action concerning lesser ecclesiastical offices was taken at the Lateran Council of AD 117^e.

When Priests Were Allowed to Marry

The clergy stood, during the middle ages, at the head of society, and shared with kings and nobles the rule of the people. They had the guardianship of the souls and the consciences of men, and handled the keys of the kingdom of heaven. They possessed nearly all the learning, but it was generally very limited, and confined to a little Latin without any Greek. Some priests descended from noble and even royal blood, others from slaves who belonged to monasteries. They enjoyed many immunities from public burdens, such as military duty and taxation. The priests were expected to excel in virtue

as well as in education, and to commend their profession by *an exemplary life*. Upon the whole they were superior to their flock, but not infrequently they disgraced their profession by scandalous immorality. According to ancient discipline every priest at his ordination was connected with a particular church, except missionaries to heathen lands. But many priests defied the laws, and led an irregular wandering life as clerical tramps. They were forbidden to wear the sword, but many a bishop lost his life on the battle field, and even some popes engaged in warfare. Drunkenness and licentiousness were common vices.

Clerical immorality reached the lowest depth in the tenth and eleventh centuries, when Rome was a sink of iniquity, and the popes themselves set the worst examples in high places.

In the East the lower clergy were always allowed to marry, and only a second marriage is forbidden. In the West the life of celibacy was the prescribed rule, but most clergymen lived either with lawful wives or with concubines. In Milan all the priests and deacons were married in the middle of the eleventh century, but to the disgust of the severe moralists of the time. Hadrian II was married before he became pope, and had a daughter, who was murdered by her husband, together with the pope's wife, Stephania (AD 868).

The wicked Pope Benedict IX sued for the daughter of his cousin, who consented on condition that he resign the papacy (1033). The Hildebrandian popes, Leo IX and Nicolas II made attempts to enforce clerical celibacy all over the West. They identified the interests of clerical morality and influence with clerical celibacy, and endeavored to destroy natural immorality by enforcing unnatural morality. It was indeed a sad day in the history of the church when the obligation of celibacy was imposed on clerics by Gregory the Great (d. 604).

The Gnostic Religion

In his book, *The Gnostic Religion*, Hans Jonas has as his stated purpose a philosophic goal of understanding the spirit of Gnosticism as it was communicated through various voices in the ancient world. Jonas would have his audience understand the spirit speaking through these voices and in its light to restore an intelligible unity to the baffling multiplicity of its expression.

That there was such a Gnostic spirit and therefore an essence of Gnosticism as a whole is revealed in this work as the author traces the heretical world of Gnosticism, whose mythology and symbolism were defeated in the competition for the minds of men while the biblical creeds survived.

The Gnostic crux is simple. The collision of Christian and Greek assumptions directed attention to the origin of evil in the world. For those reared on Greek assumptions this might be formulated as, How does the divinely originated soul become imprisoned in matter, and how can it escape? For teachers believing in the love and goodness of God these posed particular problems. The general answer is to give a mythological scheme, in which redemption becomes a drama played out among cosmic forces--the "principalities and powers" of the NT.

The problem arose when individuals borrowed from the Christian religion while rejecting its main tenet which was that God became man. According to Gnosticism this was not *possible for God is* conceived as remote from all the material creation. The gap, then, is filled by a hierarchy of intermediary beings, in a descending order of magnitude. These are eons, usually linked in pairs or syzygies (usually male and female), and are collectively given the name the *pleroma* (fullness). The earliest may be the result of God's creative act; the other emanate from them. There are different myths as to the origin of our world; but all agree that it was a mistake, an accident, the work of an ignorant being or the mischief of an

anti-god. One picture of the material universe is that of an abortion self-generated by the inordinate desire of a female eon (Sophia, wisdom); and some systems attempt to reconcile this view with such passages as John 1:3 by describing the Logos in creation as giving form to the misshapen abortion, which thus combines the principles of good and evil. In other systems, of which the most influential was that of Marcion, creation is the work of a Demiurge, an inferior divinity.

Clearly such a scheme does not reflect the Creator/Vindicator God of the *Old Testament*. Accordingly, teachers like Cerdo and Marcion frankly abandon the *Old Testament*, and regard themselves as liberating the Church from the fetters of the Judaizers. Since one can only be really radical with the *Old Testament* by being really radical with the *New Testament*, many of those who wished to keep contact with the apostolic writings were forced to try to accommodate the *New Testament*. A long, thoughtful letter from the Valentinian theologian Ptolemy offers a tripartite division of the *Old Testament*: part is from God, part is from Moses acting as the Law Giver, part from the elders; part is eternal, if incomplete; part was temporary and *is now abrogated*; part *is* symbolical, and is now transformed.

Ptolemy, already mentioned tells his correspondent, "*You will learn the order and the begetting of all these [aeons] if you are deemed worthy of knowing the apostolic tradition which we have received from a succession, together with the confirmation of all our words by the teaching of the Saviour.*" That is he is claiming access to a superior source of secret knowledge. Valentinian and other such Gnostics paid lip service to the same authority as the mainstream Church: the Lord and His apostles. They had to show that they possessed reliable knowledge conveyed by the apostles (and thus ultimately from the Lord) that other Christians did not.

The Valentinians claimed a tradition from a disciple of Paul called Theudas; the Basilidians from Peter via one Glaukias, and from Matthias. More exotic groups of their chose James the Lord's brother as their source, or Thomas (Didymus, "*the Twin*," being taken to be the Lord's twin) as being very close to the person of the Savior. The now famous Gospel of Thomas insinuates that Thomas is a source of tradition superior to Matthew and Peter, the apostles associated with the first two gospels.

If God's transcendence implies the impossibility of His contact with matter, how could God take a human body, still less suffer in one? There are several Gnostic answers, depending on the degree of closeness to the central Christian tradition. Some reject the idea of incarnation altogether: Christ was only an "*appearance*" of God in human form, He only seemed to suffer. Others spoke of the divine Logos resting on the righteous but human Jesus—but being withdrawn at the Passion (the cry of dereliction, Mark 15:34, was held as evidence of this). Others used the traditional language, but emphasized not the historical events of the incarnation but the relations between the disordered elements of the Pleroma, which the incarnation righted.

All of this created a strong reaction in the early church against heresy. Until recent years the Gnostic writers were known almost entirely through the writings of their antagonists. Of these Irenaeus and Epiphanius provide extracts, often sizeable, from Gnostic works. The last twenty years have seen the gradual publication of items from a Gnostic library discovered at Nag Hammadi in Egypt containing Coptic translations of works of diverse character. These include as well many works further from the Christian tradition, and some Manichean ones. These recent archaeological discoveries have made it possible for the Gnostic documents to speak

for themselves, where previously they had to be understood from the polemics of the Church Fathers against them. However, the Church Fathers did not give a misleading impression. Jonas had been successful in reaching his stated purpose of showing a spirit of Gnosticism of understanding. Such understanding is not easy to come by because there was a *wide variety of* the movement. There are Gnostic systems that make testing intellectual demands, others that depend on mumbo-jumbo and sleight of hand. There are Gnostic leaders who are high-minded ascetics, and others who are licentious charlatans. Nevertheless, they all offer knowledge--and in a form or degree not to be found outside their own teaching. This concern for knowledge links the higher and the lower forms of Gnosticism. At its lowest, the knowledge offered related simply to power and secrets of the future--the same sort of things as those for which people consulted astrologers and fortune tellers, but put into a religious setting. In its highest forms, it is related to abstract speculation, grappling with problems which had long been obstacles for educated pagans: how came good and evil into the world, and how do they relate to God? The Gnostics knew. But their knowledge was built upon the rejection of the Christian message. Because of this they were challenged by true believers who won the day so that now we enjoy a faith that is sure and pure: God has dwelt among us and redeemed us for Himself.

Augustine of Hippo

Peter Brown sets out in his volume to convey something of the course and quality of Augustine's life. The author makes the following comments. *"Not only did Augustine live in an age of rapid and dramatic change; he himself was constantly changing. The historian of the declining Roman Empire can trace through his life the movements that would lead Augustine the schoolboy, weeping over the old story of Dido and Aeneas in a secure province, to end his life*

as the Catholic bishop of a North African port, that was blockaded by the war bands of a tribe which had ultimately come from Southern Sweden.

He can also seize some of the more elusive changes in the man himself: he will be constantly reminded, often by a stray detail--by nothing more, perhaps, than by a turn of phrase used in addressing a friend--of the long, inner journeys of Augustine. Most difficult of all, and most rewarding, the historian can attempt to seize that crucial area where external and internal changes touch each other. Augustine will have to meet the challenge of new environments; his style of life will be unconsciously transformed by long routines; and outside circumstances, in their turn, will take on a different meaning at different times, by being subtly charged with his personal preoccupations. By writing, by acting, by influencing an ever-increasing body of men, he will help to precipitate changes in the world around him, that were no less headlong than his own inner transformations.

I shall be more than satisfied if I have given some impression of the subtle overlapping of these differing levels of change, and if, in so doing, I have encouraged others to believe, that it is possible to glimpse a figure in so distant a past in this way."

Brown achieves his stated objectives as he traces the life of Augustine and the manifold influences on his life. In the opening chapters the author portrays an age of rapid and dramatic change, and a man striving to find himself changing with the world he lived in, and himself changing it by the impact of his thought and personality. From part one the author traces Augustine's relation with Ambrose. He explains how Neoplatonism freed Augustine from the Manicheans and prepared him for his conversion.

In parts three and four Brown may not be quite fair to Augustine as he downplays the Donatist controversy that was important to Augustine. Other

important controversies are obscured as being "African."

The basic facts about Aurelius Augustinus may be briefly stated. His life began on 13 November, AD 354 and closed on 28 August, AD 430, and for these seventy-five years his career focused around six geographical points:

- Tagaste
- Madaura
- Carthage
- Rome
- Milan
- Hippo.

When Augustine was born Tagaste in Numidia (now Souk-Ahras in Algeria) was a Roman province. His father, Patricius, a wealthy landowner, was a pagan. His mother, Monica, was a devout Christian. In his "*Confessions*" Augustine writes seven chapters about an incident in his early life—stealing pears from a neighbor's tree. This sin troubled him for the rest of his life. He also confessed to immoral behavior at the University of Carthage, where he was sent at 16. Augustine remained in Carthage, teaching rhetoric, until he was 29. Then he went to Rome, taking with him his mistress and his son, Adeodatus. His religion at this time was Manichaeism, which combined Christian with Zoroastrian elements.

The next year Augustine was teaching in Milan, where his mother joined him. Here he came under the influence of the city's great bishop, Ambrose. On Easter, AD 387, Ambrose baptized Augustine and Adeodatus.

From this time Augustine lived as an ascetic. He returned to Africa and spent three years with his friends on his family's estate. Then he was ordained a priest. In AD 395 he was consecrated a bishop. He spent his last 35 years in Hippo (now Bone, Algeria), a small seaport. He continued to lead a monastic life with his clergy and encouraged the formation of religious communities. He also founded a community of women, with his sister at the head.

Augustine was ill when the Vandals besieged Hippo. He died 28 August, AD 430 before the town was taken.

Augustine's most widely read book is "*Confession*", a vivid account of his early life and religious development. "*The City of God*" was written after AD 410, when Rome fell to the barbarians. The aim of this book was to restore confidence in the Christian church, which Augustine said would take the place of the earthly city of Rome. During the Middle Ages the book would give strong support to the theory that the church was above the state. Augustine's writings on communal life formed the 'Rule of St. Augustine', the basis of many religious orders.

The cold facts in summary do not do justice to the way that Brown brings the man and the issues he confronted back to life. There is fire and passion in the book as the ancient controversies over free will and predestination are debated afresh. The author writes on the latter: "*Predestination, an abstract stumbling-block to the sheltered communities...had only one meaning for Augustine; it was a doctrine of survival, a fierce insistence that God alone could provide men with an irreducible inner core.*"

Perhaps the author can be forgiven for oversimplification for the preceding paragraphs retrace the ancient terror that had suddenly come back to the civilized bishops: *fear of the* wholesale lapse of the faithful under persecution, fear of massacre, of subtle propaganda, of ingenious torture. Augustine's doctrine came to the rescue. The Church would survive. God had planned it all even the evil. He is the Author, man is the actor. His will is done. The Church is stronger because of Augustine and the student of church history is grateful for Brown's presentation of the man and his message. Augustine being dead, yet speaks.

Christianity and Classical Culture

Charles Norris Cochrane

The theme of this work is the revolution in thought and action which came about through the impact of Christianity upon the Greco-Roman world. The book is written in an intelligent and lively style, which shows, on every page. The author is keenly aware of the problems of the era of which he writes. Lucid exposition of administrative and legal developments *are* provided from the original sources. Citations from modern day authors have been kept to a minimum. Excellent portraits are given of Augustus, Julian, Valentinian, and Theodosius. Because the author has such a firm grasp of his facts as well as the nuances of history he achieves a high degree of success in reaching his goal of making a transition from the world of Augustus and Virgil to that of Theodosius and Augustine.

The history of Greco-Roman Christianity resolves itself largely into a criticism of that undertaking and of the ideas upon which it rested; viz. that it was possible to attain a goal of permanent security, peace and freedom through political action, especially through submission to the 'virtue and fortune' of a political leader. This notion the Christians denounced with uniform vigor and consistency. To them the state, so far from being the supreme instrument of human emancipation and perfectibility, was a straight-jacket to be justified at best as "*a remedy for sin.*"

To think of it otherwise they considered the grosses of superstitions. The Christians traced this superstition to the acceptance of a defective logic, the logic of classical 'naturalism', to which they ascribed the characteristic "*vitia*" of the classical world. In this connection it is important to notice that their revolt was not from nature, it was from the picture of nature constructed by classical "*scientia*", together with its implications for practical life. And what they demanded was a radical revision of first principles as the presupposition to an adequate cosmology and anthropology.

The basis for such a revision they held to lie in the "*logos*" of Christ, conceived as a revelation, not of "*new*" truth, but of truth that was as old as the hills and as everlasting. This they accepted as an answer to the promise of illumination and power extended to mankind and, thus, the basis for a new physics, a new ethic and, above all, a new logic, the logic of human progress. In Christ, therefore, they claimed to possess a principle of understanding superior to anything existing in the classical world. By this claim they were prepared to stand or fall.

The philosophical position of the Christian community was soon tested by the imperial cult which constituted a public official recognition of "*surpassing qualities*" of mind and heart thought to be embodied in the spirit (*genius*) of the city and its ruler. As such, it found expression in two modes, the veneration of the living and the deification of the dead emperor.

The cult served to mark the recipients as the source of beneficent activity issuing in some form of "*common good*".

When Julius was deified, duly authorized by the senate in 42 B.C. a precedent was set and it became the prime duty of a new prince, on succeeding to the imperial dignities, to nominate his predecessor to membership in the Pantheon. This was, on the one hand, a mark of *pietas* or loyalty; on the other, it was connected with the ratification of his *acta*, the executive measures which he had enforced during life by virtue of his *imperium*, and it had the effect of giving to them permanent validity. Appl'ed in this way, it served also to register the verdict of what was equivalent to *modern* 'public opinion' with respect to the character and achievement of deceased princes. Thus, as the 'good' emperors were successively elevated to divine status, their spirits were thought to take a place alongside Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva as guardians and protectors of the Eternal City. The Christian community refused to have anything to do with the acts

of honor or the theology of the concept.

Other issues would soon emerge to force a confrontation between Christianity and the Greco-Roman world. The thinking of Cicero and Virgil created an impressive system of a world community united by ties of the spirit. As such it was genuinely political; it went beyond race, beyond color, and, in all but a few exceptional instances, beyond religion as this was envisaged by antiquity.

From this standpoint it might appear that Romanists transcended all purely natural bonds. This in fact it did, in so far as it denied the possibility of discovering any real basis for concord on the merely affective level of experience. But while transcending, it did not, however, repudiate the human affections, seeking rather to organize them in support of the imperial idea. Under the aegis of Eternal Rome, Greek and Latin, African, Gaul, and Spaniard remained free to lead their own lives and achieve their own destiny; as late as the end of the fourth century it was still possible for Augustine to speak (in his own words) "*as an African to Africans.*"

But, while local and racial differences continued to exist, citizens of the empire discovered a bond of community with one another on the plane of natural reason. It was on this account that the Roman order claimed a universality and a finality to which alternative systems of life could not pretend.

With the acceptance of the system power came to Rome. So great was the apotheosis of power *that* supermen were created. The hopes and expectations of mankind became fixed upon the august being to whom they had placed themselves in tutelage. Once again, Christians looked with profound suspicion and disfavor upon the "*incense majesty of the Augustan peace*"; why, indeed, despite the inestimable benefits of security and order which it embodied, a man like Tertullian felt himself justified in denouncing the realm of Caesar as the realm of the devil. As the power of the gospel

continued to change lives so it began to change the political thinking of multitudes of people and those in power. God not man should be in control of the state. For the Christian with his faith in the existence of but one world of genuine reality and that not archetypal but the actual world of concrete experience, it becomes true to say *that the kingdom is already present among men, if only they have the wit and the desire to see it.* That kingdom is nothing more or less than the divine society, the congregation of the faithful, the Church in the world. In human history, therefore, the hand of God is the power of God, and the power of God is the power of the good, i.e. of the fully integrated will.

To see history in this light is to see the point of departure between the two societies 'both alike enjoying temporal goods and suffering temporal evils, but with a faith that is different, a hope that is different, a love that is different. It is to see that the disparity and contrariety between them is one, not of nature but of will. It is, moreover, to perceive that in the final and complete ascendancy of the good over the bad will is to be found the true issue of the *saeculum*. This is not a struggle to be settled by mere blows, as though the contending forces were nothing more than masses in motion. Not is it a mere battle of abstract ideas, to be conducted in the rarefied atmosphere of the academies. What is demanded is a united effort of hand and heart and head, in order to expose the fictitious character of secular valuations and to vindicate the reality of Christian claims.