LESSON 4

PAGAN OPPOSITION AND DOCTRINAL DEVELOPMENTS

A.D. 200–311

Introduction

Although the law was not always enforced, Christianity remained an illegal religion during the third century and the early part of the fourth. In spite of periodic severe persecution by government officials, it expanded significantly during this period. Christian doctrine began to be expressed in more systematic form as converts were won who had been educated in philosophy, rhetoric, and law.

With the threats of pagan opponents from without and heresies and schisms from within, the leaders were required to define the authority for the teachings held by the Church. In the second century, Irenaeus had leaned heavily on the writings of the apostles, including the Gospels, even though the Church had not recognized an official canon of New Testament books. Authoritative writings were not sufficient to settle controversies within the Church, for opposing sides could support their positions by giving different interpretations to the writings. Some leaders argued for the validity of traditional interpretations and creedal statements which the Church had always held. Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Hippolytus, Tertullian, and Novatian frequently used the phases "rule of truth" and "rule of faith" in referring to standardized teachings. It is presupposed that the Rule of Truth referred to a definite, tangible expression of doctrine clearly formulated. Perhaps the baptismal candidate would confess it after being instructed, and this confession would become the standard for his subsequent life and for the testing of all doctrines presented to him. The whole body of teachings in the Church was an expansion of this basic statement of faith.

Concern developed over maintaining the unity of the one universal (catholic) Church.[1] False teachings were judged by the Rule of Faith and its recognized amplification. This Rule expressed what the true (orthodox) Church had always taught. Perhaps it was the forerunner of the Apostles' Creed which was first known in its longer form in the fourth century. This concern also led to a centralization of authority in the hands of the bishops. A recognition of the prestige of the Roman bishop began to emerge as opposing factions appealed to Rome for help in the time of controversy.

Persecution from the State

Septimius Severus (193–211) introduced a dynasty which

Underline the correct word or words. Christianity (was, was not) an illegal religion during the third and part of the fourth centuries.

(was)

The standardized teachings of the Church were referred to as_____ of_____

(Rule, Faith)

Match the following:

____1. "Old Catholic Church"

____2. Roman Catholic Church

(Compare your answers with the footnote.)

a. the ecclesiastical organization under control of the Roman bishop

b. churches in the Roman Empire which sought unity.

[1] "Old Catholic Church" refers to the churches throughout the Roman Empire which sought unity in doctrine before the development of the ecclesiastical organization, known as the Roman Catholic Church, under the control of the Roman bishop.

was Oriental rather than Roman; therefore, there was less concern to maintain the old state religion. Nevertheless, local persecution continued. Clement of Alexandria wrote: "Many martyrs are daily burned, confined, or beheaded before our eyes."

Although Severus did not appear hostile towards Christianity at first, perhaps the excesses of Mountanism caused him, at the beginning of the third century, to enact a rigid law against the further spread of Christianity and of Judaism. The enforcement of the Trejanic law againt Christianity as an illegal religion produced many martyrs. In Alexandria, the father of the renowned Origen was beheaded. Eusebius stated that many thousands were crowned with martyrdom. As a youth, Origen himself was eager to rush into the conflict and terminate his life as a martyr, but his mother hid his clothes in order to compel him to remain at home. A Christian maiden, noted for her purity and chastity, was tortured with boiling pitch which was gradually poured over her body. Basilides, her executioner, soon embraced Christianity and was himself beheaded. The persecution became so severe in Alexandria that Clement, who was head of the catechetical school, was forced to retire. At Carthage two young women, Perpetua and Felicitas, refused to yield to the entreaties of parents and friends to save their lives by denying the faith.

Caracalla (211-217) was a contemptible ruler, but he tolerated Christianity. He recalled those in banishment but had his brother, who was a co-heir, and twenty thousand of his supporters murdered. Caracalla was assassinated by *Macrinus (217-218)* whose reign was cut short by the intrigues of Julia Maesa. Her grandson Avitas Bassianus was priest of the Syrian sun god at Emesa. He became known by the name of his favourite deity *Elagabalus (218-222)*. His female relatives intended to merge Judaism, Samaritanism, Christianity, and the state religion into a single eclectic system (derived from several sources), with sun worship predominating. During his reign, Christianity was freed from persecution but was endangered by the infiltration of paganism.

The next emperor, *Severus Alexander (222-235)*, was a cousin of Elagabalus (Heliogabalus). Although he had not embraced Christianity, he gave to it a place in his eclectic system and had a bust of Christ, among those of other religious heroes (Apollonius of Tyana, Orpheus, and Abraham), in his private chapel. His mother, who is said to have sent for Origen in order to be instructed in the principles of Christianity, influenced his rule. In a dispute between Christians and some cooks regarding the possession of a building, Alexander decided in favour of the Christians. He contemplated erecting a temple to Christ in Rome and having the negative form of the Golden Rule inscribed on public buildings. Christians houses of worship were first erected during his reign, and the catechetical school of Alexandria flourished.

While the Emperor was amicable towards Christianity, the general public was not. Ulpian, a famous jurist, collected the imperial decrees against Christianity for public use. The Senate and Roman aristocracy were not ready to give up their traditional gods for a new religion.

Severus Alexander was assassinated during a mutiny led by Maximinus, a Thracian peasant. The soldiers were disgruntled with his subservience to his mother. This rebellion plunged the Empire into a half century of internal confusion and civil war. Twenty-six men, including colleagues in the imperial power, obtained recognition in Rome as emperor. Of those, only one escaped violent death. Most of them were revolutionary officers who engineered their own acclamation by their soldiers. Some were unsuccessful claimants who were defeated and killed by

Underline the correct word or words. At first, Septimius Severus (did, did not) appear hostile towards Christianity.

(did not)

Later he enacted a rigid law_____ the spread of Christianity and enforced the law of_____.

(against, Trajan)

Underline the correct word. (Many, Few) suffered martyrdom during the rule of Septimius Severus.

(Compare your answer with the text.)

Severus Alexander favoured Christian in _____ decisions and allowed Christian houses of_____ to be built.

(court, worship)

Severus Alexander was killed during a mutiny led by_____.

(Maximinus)

their rivals. During this chaotic period, there was a loss of loyalty to the Empire.

The three-year reign of *Maximinus (235–238)* brought a renewal of persecution. He was a brutal military leader who hated Alexander, and he expressed that hatred towards Christians who had been given positions in the imperial household. An earthquake excited anew the fury of the pagan populace against the Christians. According to Eusebius, Maximinus commanded "that only rulers of the churches should be put to death as responsible for the gospel teachings."[2] Maximinus did not initiate a general persecution of the Church, but his efforts were directed mainly towards Rome and Palestine. Several of the prominent leaders of the Church at Caesarea, Palestine, suffered severely under him. Ambrosius, a wealthy patron of Origen, was robbed of his property. Pontianus and Hippolytus of the Roman church were banished to Sardinia.

Gordianus (238–244) left the Christians alone. *Philip the Arabian (244–249)*, son of a bedouin sheik, was supposed by some to be a Christian. Origen wrote letters to him and to his wife Severa. The relaxation of persecution, however, cooled the moral zeal and brotherly love of the Christians.

The disorder in the Roman Empire gave Christians the opportunity to gain many converts. Military leaders vied for power and led their soldiers in revolutions. The army lost its feeling of duty or obligation towards the State and followed the leader who promised generous donations, often enriching themselves at the expense of the civilian population and the public treasury. The provinces were heavily taxed and barbarian tribes were pressing in on various fronts. Armies had been withdrawn from frontier defence to engage in civil war.

Philip lost his life in a battle with the Goths who had crossed the Danube. *Decius Trajan (249–251)* was elevated to the throne by the army on the Danubian frontier. He led the Empire for two years before falling also in the battle against the Goths. He desired to restore the Empire to its original vigour and strength. Since Christians had been favoured by his predecessor, he possibly suspected them of disloyalty to himself. Apparently, he concluded that the extermination of Christianity was a political necessity if the state religion and loyalty to the emperor were to be restored. In 250, he issued an imperial edict which was aimed at the universal suppression of Christianity . Christians were required to conform to the state religion and to participate in its ceremonies. Officials were commanded, under heavy penalty, to enforce the law. In each district, Christians were required to appear before the magistrate and to offer sacrifices to the gods. They were not hindered from fleeing instead, but their property was confiscated and death was the penalty for returning. If they did not flee or could not prove that they had fulfilled the requirements of the law, they were brought before a commission composed of officials and citizens. If they continued obstinate after threats, they were tortured. If they still refused to sacrifice to the gods, they were imprisoned and further tortured with hunger and thrist. Bishops were to receive unusually severe treatment. The Emperor determined to force every provincial official to carry out the law.

Maximinus persecuted Christians because of his_____ for Alexander who had favoured them.

(hatred)

Between 238 and 249, disorder in the Roman Empire gave Christians the opportunity to gain many_____.

(converts)

Is this statement true or false? Decius concluded that the extermination of Christianity was a political necessity if the state religion and loyalty to the emperor were to be restored._____

(true)

In 250, an imperial edict by Decius ordered Christians to offer sacrifices to the_____. Christians could flee but their property would be_____.

(gods, confiscated)

[2] *Ecclesiastical History* 6, 28.

During the previous years (before Decius) of chaos in the Empire and of favourable expression towards Christianity, multitudes had entered the Church. The majority had no idea of the implications of the Christian life. Even the clergy became characterized by worldliness. The imperial decree brought great fear to those whose faith was weak. Cyprian wrote:

> Before the battle, many were conquered, and without having met the enemy, were cut down; they did not even seek to gain the reputation of having sacrificed against their will. They indeed did not wait to be apprehended ere they ascented, or to be interrogated ere they denied . . . .Nor did they even leave it to be said for them that they seemed to sacrifice to idols unwilling. They ran to the market place of their own accord. *(De Lapsis, 8.)*

Those who refused to flee or sacrifice suffered severe torture and died in prison or were cruelly executed. Some bribed the officials to procure certificates of having sacrificed without having committed the overt act. Those who gained the false certificates were usually judged in the same category as those who lapsed (denied their faith). Although Decius was slain in battle a year later, he had wrought havoc to the churches. Fabiannus of Rome, Babylas of Antioch, and Alexander of Jerusalem perished in this persecution. Other bishops withdrew with the hopes of delaying by their absence the fury of the pagans against their people and of saving their own lives for future service. Cyprian justified his actions on the instructions of the Lord to flee when persecution came upon Jerusalem (Matt. 24:16ff.).

Under *Gallus (251–253)*, the Christians received a brief respite from persecution. It was cut short by the renewed invasion of the Goths and the recurring pestilence, drought, and famine. These calamities caused the populace to renew their accusations that the gods were hostile because Christians refused to offer sacrifices to them. Many Christians were sent to the mines where they endured hardships and many died.

Valerian (253–260) was described by Dionysius of Rome as being "mild and friendly toward the men of God" and as having treated them more kindly and favourably than any of his predecessors. However, the natural calamities continued, and the Emperor was eventually persuaded by a general to renew the persecution of Christians. In 257, he ordered all Christians to conform to the state religion on pain of banishment. Pastors were separated from their churches, religious assemblies were prohibited, and the property of prominent laymen was confiscated. After these measures proved fruitless, he renewed the death penalty in 258. Bishops Sixtus II of Rome and Cyprian of Carthage fell victims to the death sentence. Cyprian was represented as an enemy of the Roman gods and laws. After being attended to the scaffold by a vast multitude, Cyprian prayed once more, undressed himself, covered his eyes, and requested a presbyter to bind his hands and to pay the executioner 25 pieces of gold. His faithful friends caught his blood in handkerchiefs and sorrowfully buried the body of their saintly pastor.

A. H. Newman gives four pertinent remarks concerning the persecution under Decius and Valerian:

1. Their aim was the utter destruction of Christianity by means of executing the leaders and demolishing the Christian houses of worship.
2. The faith of Christians was put to a severe test, and multitudes were found wanting.
3. The various responses of Christians to persecution gave rise to many controversies in the Church regarding the treatment of the lapses, the authority of confessors, and the prerogatives of bishops.

From 251 to 253, under Gallus, Christians were relieved_____.

(persecution)

Use the following words to fill in blanks below:

confiscated, banishment, ordered, renewed, separated, prohibited

Valerian (253–260)_____ all Christians to conform to the state religion on the pain of_____. He _____ pastors from churches, _____ religious assemblies, _____ property, and _____ the death penalty.

(ordered, banishment, separated, prohibited, confiscated, renewed)

4. The ability of Christianity, even though corrupt, to withstand the severe assaults gave Christians the fullest assurance of ultimate triumph.[3]

Gallienus (253–268) shared the *princeps* for seven years before becoming sole emperor. In 260, peace came once more to the Church, and Christianity was acknowledged as a legal religion. During the next forty years, Christians were spared persecution. Gallienus favoured the Christians in court cases, recalled the exiles, restored church property, and forbade further persecution. The time of peace which followed enabled the Church to grow in numbers, wealth, organization, and worldliness. Pagans flowed into the churches without forsaking their pagan habits.

Gallienus was assassinated by his own staff officers. *Claudius (268–270)*, his successor, was successful in battle against the Gothic invaders. It remained to *Aurelian (270–275)*, Claidius' successor, to restore the Roman Empire. He had been commander of the imperial cavalry under Claudius. As emperor, his first task was to free the heart of the Empire from new waves of northern barbarians. A group of Germanic people invaded northern Italy. After he drove them back, he put down rebellions in Palmyra and Alexandria. His next move was to subdue Gaul and Britain and require their allegiance as part of the Empire. Aurelian received the title "Restorer of the World." He believed that Elagabalus, the sun god of Emesa, had aided him in his victory over Palmyra; therefore, he erected a temple to the Unconquered Sun God in Rome as the protective deity of the Empire. Rather than importing the cult from Emesa, he appointed a priestly college of senatorial pontiffs to supervise the ritual of the new god. This new divinity was looked upon as the highest of the gods, the source of imperial authority, and the protector of the emperor. Aurelian's death came while he was on the way to the East to deal with a Persian conspiracy. He was murdered by a group of his officers who had been falsely informed by his secretary that they were going to be executed. Because of his zeal for the sun god, he had issued an edict of persecution against Christians, but it was rendered void by his assassination.

Probus (276–282) became emperor after Tacitus and Florianus, aspirants, for the throne, were killed by their troops. Probus continued the work of restoring the authority of the Empire. He was followed by *Carus and his sons Carinus and Numerianus (282–285)*. A legendary report of persecutions in 284 and 285 is not documented. The Church continued to increase in numbers and toward prosperity. Splendid houses of worship were erected in the chief cities, and collections of sacred books and vessels of gold and silver were acquired by the churches for use in the administration of sacraments. However, discipline was relaxed and quarrels, intrigues, and factions increased.

Diocletian (285–305) was sole emperor at first, but he later elevated *Maximian to the status of Augustus (286–305)*. He undertook reforms in order to preserve the Empire as the seat of civilization. His aims were to defend it against external attack and internal disorder. He regarded his selection by the soldiers as an expression of the will of Jupiter; therefore, he claimed divine sanction for his authority.

In 260, Christianity was acknowledged as a _____ religion.

For the next_____ years Christians were not persecuted.

(legal, forty)

Aurelian erected a temple to the Unconquered _____ _____ in Rome.

(Sun God)

Although the Church increased in numbers and outward prosperity until the reign of Diocletian, there were many q_____, i_____, and f_____

(quarrels, intrigues, factions)

[3] *A Manual of Church History*, Vol. 1 (Rev. ed.; Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1933), p. 167.

Military conditions forced Diocletian to share the leadership of the Empire with Maximian and two appointed Caesars. In 293, he elevated Constantius and Galerius to the status of Caesar, a position next in authority to Augustus. They became joint emperors when Diocletian and Maximian abdicated in 305. To bind the rulers more closely together, he gave his daughter in marriage to Galerius, and Constantius married the daughter of Maximian. Diocletian assumed the title of Jovius, indicative of his being the choice of Jupiter, and he bestowed on Maximian the title of Hercules who appeared in mythology as the helper of Jupiter. Constantius also was given the title of Hercules and Galerius Jovius. Although the rulers did not proclaim themselves gods, they did claim divine sanction and inspiration in exercising imperial power. The Empire was divided into four areas, each under an Augustus or a Caesar. The provinces were grouped into new administrative districts called "dioceses."

In 303, Diocletian initiated the last persecution of the Christians. They had enjoyed immunity from persecution for more than forty years. They had increased greatly in number during this time and comprised perhaps as much as a tenth of the population.[4] Since Diocletian placed emphasis upon the divine sanction of imperial power and upon worship of the state gods, a conflict between the State and Christianity was almost inevitable. For twenty years of his reign, he had respected the toleration edict of Gallienus. His own wife Prisca, his daughter Valeria, and most of his eunuchs and court officers were either Christians or favoured the Christian religion. However, Diocletian continued with his pagan superstitions and required those who approached him, when he was seated on the throne in rich vestments, to bow until the forehead touched the ground. He must have concluded that his work of restoring and consolidating the Empire required the restoration of the old state religion. Christianity had become strong enough to threaten pagan worship, and the Emperor feared it as a "state within a state."

Early in 303, Diocletian called for the destruction of Christian churches and Christian books, especially the Bible. A second edict ordered that the Christian clergy of all ranks be imprisoned, and a third that all Christians be compelled to sacrifice to the state gods. A fourth edict followed in 304 that required all persons to make the customary sacrifices upon pain of death. All Christians were to be deprived of public office and civil rights. Fortunately, the edicts were not enforced everywhere with equal vigour. Constantius was content to carry out only the first, but Maximian and Galerius were zealous persecutors. The furor of the Emperor was increased when an imprudent Christian, named John, expressed his abhorrence of such "godless and tyrannical rulers" and tore down the posted first edict. He was gradually roasted to death with every species of cruelty.

The persecution began on February 23, 303, with the *Feast of Terminalia* (an end of the Christian sect) and with the destruction of the magnificent church in Nicodemia. Christians in Gaul, Britain, and Spain were spared the severest persecutions since Constantius and his son Constantine the Great were co-regents of that area. Syria and Egypt experienced maximum persecution under Galerius and his barbarous nephew Maximin. Maximin

How much of the population was probably Christian in 303? _____

(one-tenth)

Because Diocletian feared the strength of Christianity he passed four laws. The key words of the laws are given below. Can you write the laws? Try it.

1. churches, books— _____
   _____
2. clergy— _____
   _____
3. sacrifice— _____
   _____
4. public office, civil rights— _____
   _____

(Compare your answers with the text.)

[4] Philip Schaff, *Ante-Nicene Christianity*, Vol. II of *History of the Christian Church* (9th ed., New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910), p. 22.

issued a fifth edict in 308 which commanded all males and their wives, servants, and children to sacrifice and actually taste the accursed offerings. All provisions in the market were to be sprinkled with sacrificial wine. This law brought terror for two years and left the Christians no alternative but apostasy or starvation. Torture included any treatment which iron and steel, fire and sword, rack and cross, wild beasts and beastly men could inflict. The historian Eusebius witnessed this persecution in Caesarea, Tyre, and Egypt. He saw church buildings razed to the ground, Holy Scriptures committed to the flames in the market places, and pastors hunted, tortured and torn to pieces in the amphitheatres. The executioners grew weary and had to relieve each other; nevertheless, the Christians continued to sing hymns of praise and thanksgiving in honour of Almighty God. Eusebius himself was imprisoned but released.

This persecution resulted in many members of the Church renouncing their faith. In addition, some delivered Bibles to the heathen authorities to be burnt and were known as *traditores*. On the other hand, the zeal and fidelity of some Christians in the face of martyrdom bore strong witness for the faith. Confessors were highly respected and almost worshipped while hatred increased for the apostates. This division led to the Donatist schism. The number who became martyrs is unknown; Eusebius mentioned seven pastors and 92 laymen in Palestine. A number of distinguished military officers and a large mass of common soldiers also were persecuted as Christians. The persecution failed to produce the desired results and was ended with the collapse of the tetrarchy (rule of four) and the Edict of Toleration (311) which was issued by Galerius who was mortally ill. An account of the reign of Constantine (305–337) will be reserved for a later lesson

Four results of the persecution by Diocletian were:

1._____of their faith by many members

2._____of many Bibles

3._____of some who remained faithful

4. The_____schism

(1. renouncing, 2. destruction, 3. respect, 4. Donatist)

Did the persecution bring all the desired results?_____

(Compare your answer with the text.)

Third Century Teachers and Teachings

Introduction

The writings of the Apostolic Fathers (100–170) were followed by a new type of literature in the following age, "the Old Catholic Age" (170–325). The beginnings of Ebionism and Gnosticism are implied in the New Testament writings of Paul and John. These heresies came to full maturity in the second century and were refuted in the works of various writers, including Justin Martyr and Irenaeus. In the third century, additional perversion of New Testament teachings took place. The question of the relation of Jesus as divine to the Father brought forth two explanations which were referred to as Dynamistic and Modalistic Monarchianism. The first steps towards episcopal organization, reflected in the writings of Ignatius, were further developed. The Logos theology of Justin and Irenaeus triumphed in one segment of the Church.

In the third century, Christian doctrine began to reflect the influence of the regions where it was developed:

- The School of Asia Minor, with Irenaeus (d. about 205) and his pupil Hippolytus as leading teachers;
- The School of Alexandria, represented by Clement (d. before 216) and his famous student Origen (d. 254);
- The School of North Africa, led by Tertullian (d. about 225) and Cyprian (d. 258).

Each of the famous theologians of the period–Irenaeus, Origen, and Tertullian– represented one of these schools.

Write the correct numbers and names in the blanks.

In the third century, Christian doctrine was influenced by_____ regions and the same number of famous theologians. The theologians were I_____, O_____, and T_____.

(three, Irenaeus, Origen, Tertullian)

The School of Asia Minor

The concepts of *Irenaeus,* who was the theological leader of this school, were presented in the preceding lesson on Gnosticism and its refutation. A further word needs to be added concerning

his contribution to Eastern theology. He is often referred to as the founder of Biblical theology and the father of Eastern theology. His theology followed in the tradition of the Apostle John, and he was also influenced by the spirit and thoughts of Paul. Irenaeus had lived in Asia where he knew Polycarp personally, and Polycarp had known John.

The theological tradition of Asia Minor was distinguished by a firm grasp of Scripture, solid faith, conciliatory treatment of those within, and energetic polemics against heretics. Perhaps as a reaction to threatening Gnosticism, Irenaeus opposed philosophical speculation in matters of religion. He held that God is known to us not through speculation but through revelation. He contended that we should abide by the language of Scripture and not depart from the Rule of Faith. He began with the historic Christ who revealed the Father. Although he spoke of the Logos, his theology centred in Christ who became man. Christ is the new man, the renewer of humanity, the second Adam. God created Adam with the quality of goodness and the capacity for immortality, which was dependent on his obedience. Both goodness and immortality were lost by Adam's sin. Christ, the Incarnate Logos, recapitulated in Himself the stages of Adam's fall, reversing the process and regaining what Adam had lost, namely the image and likeness of God. Christ became what we are in order that He might bring us to be what He is in His exaltation.

Irenaeus described Christ as pre-existent and co-eternal with the Father. The manner in which the Father generated the Son was altogether incomprehensible. He refused to depart from the language of Scripture and the Rule of Faith in describing the divine nature of Christ in relation to the Father. Three valid characteristics of his theology are: it is Biblical, it sustains a deep reverence for the apostolic tradition, and it is Christocentric.

Hippolytus (about 170–236) was an important writer, but very little is known of his life. Photius asserted that he was a disciple of Irenaeus, and he seems to have been an important leader among the Roman presbyters in the early part of the third century. He took an active part in attacking the heretical doctrines of Sabellius and refused to accept the teachings of Pope Zephrynus (198–217) and of Pope Callistus (217–222) whom he regarded as heretics. He was exiled during the persecution under Emperor Maximinus (235–238) but was apparently reconciled to the Roman church before his death.

Hippolytus' principal work was "Refutation of all Heresies." Its purpose was to show that philosophical systems are responsible for heresies. His most important doctrine was his view of the Logos. He regarded the Word as an instrument whose personality was completed only in the Incarnation when He received the title of Son. This position implied a development in the Word which involved a change in the relation between the Word and the Father and implied ditheism (the gods). It was at this point that he was opposed by Zephyrinus and Callistus. They had adopted a heresy which made absolute identification of Father and Christ as God. This heresy held that the Father was born of a woman and suffered on the cross.

Hippolytus was accused of being a ditheist because he insisted on the absolute deity of Christ and yet refused to identify Him with the Father. Sabellius was influenced by Callistus and held that the terms "Father," "son," and "spirit" are only designations of the three different phases in which the divine essence reveals itself. This teaching failed to make a distinction among the three persons of the Trinity.

Under the leadership of Zephyrinus and Callistus, the church at Rome had become morally lax. Callistus had been a slave, and he had embezzled a large sum of money. He was imprisoned and then released and banished to the mines of Sardinia. After he es-

Write *revelation* and *speculation* in the blanks below.

Irenaeus believed that God is known to us through _____ and not through _____.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Use the following words in the blanks below:

reversing, recapitulated, regaining

Irenaeus' view of salvation is called the Recapitulation Theory which states that Christ, the Incarnate Logos, _____ in Himself the stages of Adam's fall, _____ the process and _____ what Adam had lost, namely the image and likeness of God.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Name the writer in the School of Asia Minor who regarded Logos (the Word) as an instrument whose personality was completed only in the Incarnation, with the title of Son. _____

(Hippolytus)

Match these theological leaders with their beliefs by writing their names in the blanks.

Sabellius, Hippolytus

_____ Christ was deity but not identified with the Father.

_____ The Father, Son, and Spirit are only designations of the three phases in which God revealed Himself.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

caped, he returned to Rome and became and associate of Zephyrinus. When he became bishop, he permitted various moral delinquencies in the church. He restored many who had been excluded from the church for gross misconduct. He taught that even if a bishop should be guilty of a mortal sin, he could not be deposed. Using Noah's Ark as a type of the Church, he argued that both clean and unclean beasts were preserved together.

The School of Alexandria

Greek philosophy and Judaism met in Alexandria. Philo, an Alexandrian Jew (about 20 B.C. - A.D. 50), reinterpreted Judaism in terms of Greek philosophy. Christianity had become deeply rooted there at an early date. The speculative environment forced Christian teachers to give attention to the speculative tendency in presenting the gospel.

A school to prepare catechumens for Christian baptism was established about 185 by Pantaenus. Little is known of the founder of the school other than he had formerly been a Stoic philosopher. He was succeeded by *Clement (about 150–216)* who gave an emphasis to Logos Christology but with a Docetic quality. The emphasis on philosophy distinguished Alexandrian theology from that in Asia Minor and in the West where the contest with Gnosticism had bred distrust of philosophy. The best of Platonism and Stoicism was used by Clement of Alexandria to express his doctrine.

Clement wrote *Exhortation to the Greeks,* an apologetic treatise; *Instructor,* a treatise on Christian conduct; and *Stromata* or *Miscellaneous Studies,* a collection of thoughts on religion and theology. He held that the divine Logos has always been the source of all intelligence and morality of the human race. Logos is the source of all true philosophy:

> God is the cause of all good things; but of some primarily, as of the Old and the New Testaments; and of others by consequence, as of philosophy. Perchance, too, philosophy was given to the Greeks directly and primarily, till the Lord should call the Greeks. For that was a schoolmaster to bring the Hellenic mind, as the law the Hebrews, to Christ." (*Stromata 1.5.*)

The aim of *Stromata* was to present an introduction to the perfect Christian knowledge (*gnosis*). It discussed the relation of Christian truth to philosophy and of faith to knowledge. It divided Christians into two levels: (1) Those who lived by simple faith lacked understanding and intelligence, but they tried to keep the law. Most Christians lived on this level, and it was sufficient for salvation. (2) Those who were Christian Gnostics, the true Gnostic added knowledge to faith: "To him that hath shall be given; to faith, knowledge; to knowledge, love; and to love, the inheritance" (*Stromata 7.10.*) Clement had little interest in the earthly life of Jesus. His emphasis was on the Logos who became incarnate and through whom man gained a knowledge of God.

Origen (about 182–254) was born of Christian parents, probably in Alexandria. He gained an early knowledge of the Scripture and of the writers in the early Church. As previously mentioned, his father became a martyr during the persecution under Septimius Severus in 202, and the youthful Origen was ready to follow his father's example. He was an ascetic who emasculated himself to prevent slander from arising out of his relations with his numerous inquirers.

Persecution drove his teacher Clement out of the city and caused the continuation of the school to fall into Origen's hands in 203. He continued in that position until Emperor Caracalla drove all teachers of philosophy from Alexandria in 215. After spending a few months in Caesarea in Palestine, Origen was permitted to return to Alexandria in 216. He remained a layman un-

The Alexandrian Jew who had reinterpreted Judaism in terms of Greek philosophy (about 20 B.C.–A.D. 50) was_____.

(Philo)

Clement of Alexandria emphasized that the divine Logos has always been the source of i_____ and all true p_____.

(intelligence, philosophy)

Write *little* or *much* by each of the following subjects to indicate Clement's emphasis on them.

_____1. The earthly life of Jesus.

_____2. The Logos who became incarnate and through whom man gained knowledge of God.

(1. little, 2. much)

til a further visit to Palestine in 230 when he was ordained a presbyter in Caesarea. His Alexandrian bishop, Demetrius, viewed this action as an intrusion on his jurisdiction. He invoked synods to have Origen banished from Alexandria and deposed from the ministry. Origen returned to Caesarea where he continued his studies and teaching. He was imprisoned and tortured during the Decian persecution of 250. He died in Caesarea of Tyre, probably about 254.

Origen is known for his monumental work, the *Hexapla*– a Hebrew text, a transliteration, and four Greek texts of the Old Testament in parallel columns. He composed commentaries and wrote notes treating the entire range of Scripture. *De Principiis was the first great systematic presentation of Christianity. Against Celsus* is an able reply to a heathen criticism of Christianity.

Origen held that all Scripture has a threefold meaning:

> The simple man may be edified by the "flesh" as it were of the Scriptures, for so we name the obvious sense; while he who has ascended a certain way may be edified by the "soul" as it were; the perfect man . . . may receive edification from the spiritual law, which has a shadow of good things to come. For a man consists of body and soul and spirit, so in the same way does Scripture. *(De Principiis 4.11.11.)*

By finding three levels of interpretation in Scripture, Origen could make it mean what he wanted it to. The common or historical sense was the literal (fleshly) meaning and was sufficient for the simple-minded. Origen was unwilling to stop at that level since many things in Scripture were unworthy of the nature of God; therefore, these Scriptures should have different interpretations. The second level consisted of the moral meaning (soul) of the Scripture which edifies those who perceive. The third or spiritual level has a hidden meaning which must be interpreted by allegory. This meaning is hidden under what is repugnant superficially to the conscience or the intellect, but it can be expressed by allegory when it is discerned. The three levels are illustrated by his interpretation of the fall of Jericho: (1) The literal meaning is simply that the walls fell. (2) The moral meaning is that when Christ comes into the life of a person, the walls of sin in his life must crumble. (3) The spiritual meaning is that idolatry will fall with the return of Christ.

Origen taught that there is *one God*, the Father, just and good, who is creator of all things. He emphasized that *Jesus Christ*, the God-man, was the incarnation of the Logos who is wisdom, word, life, and truth. The Logos is co-eternal with the Father, for since the Father is always Father there must always have been a Son. The Son is in the image of the Father, but He is dependent upon the Father and thus subordinate to Him (subordinationism). Jesus Christ was not, as so many of the Gnostics held, a phantom, but He was truly born of a virgin and the Holy Spirit. His suffering, death, and resurrection were real. Origen stated that the *Holy Spirit* is associated in honour and dignity with the Father and the Son, and He is uncreated. He distinguished the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit from one another, although they constitute a unit. Men derive their existence from the Father, their rational nature from the Son, and their holiness from the Holy Spirit.

With regard to *salvation*, Origen believed there was a previous spiritual world where the spirits of men committed sin. God created the present visible world to punish and reform the fallen. The Logos, which became united with a human soul, had not sinned in His previous existence. The Son was self-revelation of God and gave Himself as a ransom for man's sin. In so doing, He conquered evil in the hearts of the fallen. He is a propitiatory

Origen, a student of Clement, is known for his monumental work, the H_____, which is a_____ text, a_____, and four _____ texts of the O_____ T_____ in parallel columns.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

The levels of interpretation Origen advocated for Scripture were:

1._____

2._____

3._____which had to be interpreted by *allegory*

(1. literal, 2. moral, 3. spiritual)

Concerning Jesus, Origen taught:

1. He is the_____-_____.
2. He is_____-_____ with the Father.
3. He is_____ on the Father.

(1. God-man, 2. co-eternal, 3. dependent)

offering to God. Ultimately, all fallen spirits of the previous spiritual word will be restored to full harmony but will suffer punishment before full restoration. The punishment will purge them from imperfection. After this age there will be a third in which the unrepentant will be given further opportunity to repent. Eventually all– even the devils– will be fully saved through repentance, learning, and growth. Origen believed that human souls existed from eternity before they came into these present bodies and all souls will be saved and grow into perfection through discipline.

Origen moved closer to an essential trinitarian doctrine than his predecessors. Since the Father and the Son are co–eternal, Fatherhood is not prior in time but in relationship. The Son is the same substance as the Father. Against the Monarchians, Origen stressed the distinction between the Logos and God. The distinction he made implied a subordination in relationship of the Son to the Father. Both orthodox Catholics and heretics found support in Origen's teachings.

The School of North Africa

Tertullian (about 160–220) has been called the founder of Western Latin Theology. His theology was practical and dogmatic in nature in contrast to the mystical emphases of Irenaeus, the Father of Eastern Theology.

Tertullian was born of wealthy parents in Carthage. He studied law and practised his profession in Rome, read widely in philosophy and history, and mastered Greek. He was converted to Christianity in about 195, after which he devoted himself to the study of Christian literature. He returned to Carthage and became a presbyter. His rigorous views led him to sympathize with Montanism during the time of persecution under Septimius Severus in 202. His background in law contributed to his legalistic thinking and his desire to express thoughts in precise words. He was not attracted to the mystical concept of "the hiddenness of God" and opposed the speculations of Origen and Clement. He emphasized the apostolicity of the Church's teachings as expressed in the Rule of Faith and in holiness of life. He looked upon Greek philosophy as a guide leading to error:

> What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What concord is there between the Academy and the Church? What between heretics and Christians? Our instruction comes from the "porch of Solomon." . . .Away with all attempts to produce a mottled Christianity of Stoic, Platonic, and dialectic composition! (*Prescription Against Heretics, 7.*)

Tertullian faced two unacceptable or heretical concepts of *God:* (1) The Gnostic view which sharply separated the divine God of creation and the God of redemption; and (2) Monarchianism which refused to distinguish between God the Father and the Son. Tertullian determined to formulate a doctrine which avoided both extremes. He was the first to use the word "trinity." He appears to have been influenced by Stoicism which held that nothing exists that is not of a corporeal nature. The soul itself is of a finer species of matter. It is like breath or wind breathed into man by the Creator. This Stoic emphasis caused him to define the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as "one substance." The Son is from the essence of the Father, proceeding from Him, not by emanation as the Gnostics thought but by self–projection. The Son or Logos is eternal since the Logos is the reason and logic of God. The Father projected the Son as the sun does its rays; therefore, there is no separation between them. There is a unity of substance, yet a triplicity of persons. However, Tertullian continued to speak of the Logos as the impersonal reason of God which did not emerge into per-

The essence of Origen's belief about salvation was that:

Men's _____ had sinned in a previous _____ world;

The Logos conquered _____ in the hearts of the fallen man and made a _____ offering to God;

Eventually all–even _____ – will be fully saved through repentance, learning and growth.

(souls, spiritual, evil, propitiatory, devils)

List each leader and his theological concept under the proper heading below.

Irenaeus
Tertullian
Practical and dogmatic
Mystical emphases

Western Latin Theology

_____

_____

Eastern Theology

_____

_____

(Compare your answers with the text.)

The two heretical concepts of God which Tertullian faced were:

1. _____

2. _____

(1. Gnosticism, 2. Monarchianism)

Match meanings of the two unacceptable views of God which you listed above.

____1. Gnosticism

____2. Monarchianism

a. Refused to distinguish between the Father and the Son.
b. Separated God of creation and God of redemption.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

sonality until the work of creation had begun. He implied subordination in the Trinity in his expression of a greater of lesser participation of the divine substance on the part of the several persons: "For the Father is the whole substance, but the Son a derivation and portion of the whole" (*Adversus Praxeas, 7*). In maintaining the unity of substance of the Godhead, Tertullian emphasized that nothing is parted from the source from which it derives its properties.

To Tertullian, *substance* was the basic property of a person and defined that person. The basic substance of a king was his royalty. More than one person could share in the common property of royalty. The property of God is omnipotence, which is possessed by the three persons of the Godhead. Tertullian understood *person* to refer to the functioning entity. Three persons could have a common property; for example, three princes brought before a court have the common property of prince. Tertullian's terminology was used 125 years later to define the Trinity.

He also emphasized the *two natures of Christ*. He maintained that the human was not absorbed by the divine nor vice versa. Each nature contained its own attributes: there was not confusion, but a conjuction of the human and the divine. Christ was really a man who possessed a rational human soul and spirit. His suffering was in the "human substance" of His person. The union of the human and the divine caused Tertullian to speak of the "sufferings of God" (Patripassianism).

Tertullian taught that men are *justified by faith*, but faith meant fulfilment of the divine commandments in addition to acknowledging Christ as Saviour. Man's need of salvation grew out of his breaking God's law and violating His sovereignty. Man's sin robbed God of omnipotence; therefore, sinful man incurred guilt and deserves punishment. Sin is a legal crime against a sovereign God. Guilt and punishment are removed by baptism which imparts the power of sanctifying grace. This sanctifying power is attached to water. The Holy Spirit is obstained through baptism. Even though man is sinful, he has freedom of will which enables him to choose between the opposites of good and evil. Man is capable of doing good and is obligated to do so. After baptism, he must render satisfaction for sins by repentance, a deep sorrow, by confession in which the sinner humbles himself, and by fasting. Man's most valid satisfaction is martyrdom. Tertullian's legalism emphasized man's performance in salvation and led to a theology of merit which was the forerunner of Roman Catholic theology.

Sins committed after baptism were divided between venial (those for which satisfaction can be made) and mortal (those which cannot be forgiven, such as murder, adultery, and idolatry). Sins tended to be identified as external acts or crimes rather than attitudes which destroy relationships. Man is capable of performing right actions– legal righteousness– by the grace of God.

Tertullian formulated the doctrine of the transmission of the soul by propagation from parent to child. This theory is known as "Traducianism." The doctrine is consistent with his materialistic view of the soul and of God.

Cyprian (about 200–258) has been called the intellectual heir of Tertullian whom he called master. He was born probably in Carthage of Africa about 200 and, like Tertullian, was the son of a Roman officer and was educated as a rhetorician. He was a teacher of rhetoric when he was converted to Christianity about 246. The Christian community at Carthage became so impressed with his sanctity and scholarship that he was made bishop of the North African church about 250. The Decian persecution,

Tertullian was the first to use the word "_____."

He believed that in the Trinity there is a unity of _____ a triplicity of _____.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Tertullian taught that men are justified by _____ which included fulfilment of the divine commandments.

(faith)

Tertullian's emphasis on man's performance in salvation was the forerunner of R_____ C_____ theology.

(Roman Catholic)

directed particularly towards the bishops, forced Cyprian to flee Carthage. He was charged with unfaithfulness by his enemies, but his letter reveals that he felt a responsibility to live in order to give later instruction and help to the Christians in Carthage. When persecution was renewed in 258 he stood boldly and suffered beheading as a martyr.

Cyprian has occupied a high position among the Fathers of the Church. He was inferior to Tertullian in learning and philosophical ability, but he transferred Tertullian's theology into the life of the Catholic Church. Although he was a sincere and holy man, his teachings did more to develop hierarchical views and to exalt the bishopric than any other man's.[5] He was the first to make a clear distinction between presbyters and bishops, and he recognized the primacy of the Roman church because of Peter's relation to it. At a time when persecution and schismatics threatened the unity of the Church, Cyprian thought that a centralization of authority would best preserve it. He was determined to maintain unity at any price because he believed the Church was the vehicle and medium of all salvation. In his tract on the "Unity of the Church," he stated:

> The primacy was given to Peter, that one church of Christ and one chair might be pointed out.
> Does he believe that he is in the faith, who does not hold this unity of the church? Does he trust that he is in the church who strives against and resists the church? Who deserts the *Cathedra-Petri* on which the church has been founded?
> He cannot have God for his Father who has not the church for his mother.

In his letters to various bishops, clergy confessors, and churches of Africa and Rome, Cyprian stated:

> There is no salvation out of the church. Whence ye ought to know that the bishop is in the church and the church in the bishop; and if any one be not with the bishop, that he is not in the church.

Apparently Cyprian regarded the Church of Rome as the highest in dignity, but he was not ready to admit that the Roman bishop had judicial authority over others or that he was more than the first among equals.

The Decian persecution created a new problem for the churches. Approximately half of the members either burnt incense in worshipping pagan gods or secured a paper stating that incense had been burnt. After the brief persecution, the lapses wanted back into the churches. A tradition had grown up that confessors could forgive lapses which permitted them to re-enter church membership. Callistus, bishop of Rome (217-222), had relaxed the moral standards by restoring those who repented of mortal sins (adultery, etc.) and insisted that the bishop had the power to grant forgiveness to them. He claimed that grace for forgiveness of mortal sins comes through the bishop who occupies the position by succession and not on the basis of his character. This view changed the understanding of a church's being a righteous fellowship of saints to its being a group of forgiven

Cyprian emphasized the authority of bishops to preserve the_____ of the Church.

(unity)

He believed the Church was the medium of all _____.

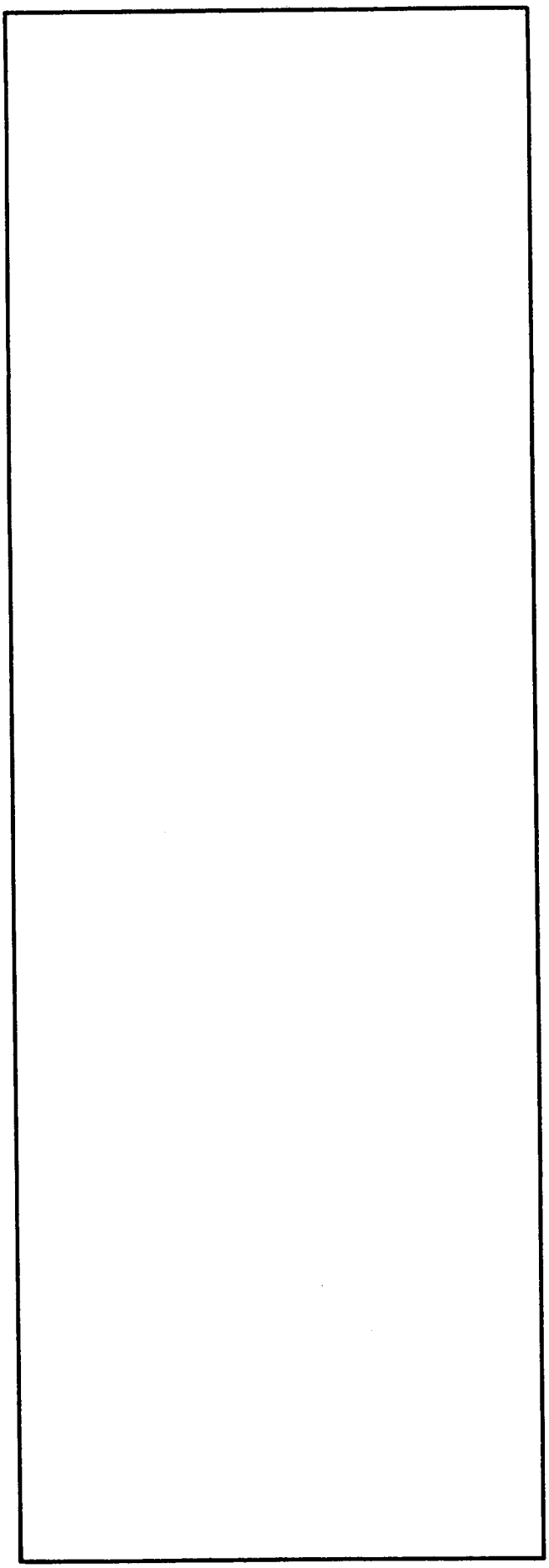
(salvation)

According to Cyprian, the only people qualified to admit members into churches were _____.

(bishops)

[5] Newman, *A Manual of Church History*, p. 266.

sinners. Sinful people were in the churches by the authority of the bishops who ministered the Holy Sacraments and not by their own righteousness. Cyprian was concerned that confessors were making it too easy for lapses to return to the churches. He agreed that lapses could be readmitted by outward and real repentance, but the bishops would have to determine the seriousness of their repentance. Therefore, only bishops were qualified to admit members into the churches.



Home Study Exercise

Basic Activity (Levels 1, 2, and 3). After reading the study guide text, answer the following questions.

1. Explain the meaning of *Rule of Faith* and *Old Catholic Church.* _____

2. What was the attitude of Septimius Severus towards Christianity? _____

3. How were Christians treated under Severus Alexander? _____

4. Why did Maximinus and Decius persecute Christians? _____

5. What law did Decius pass against Christians? _____

6. What law did Valerian pass against Christians? _____

7. What laws did Diocletian pass against Christians in 303 and following? _____

8. Give four results of the persecution. _____

9. As a biblical theologian, what was the attitude of Irenaeus to philosophy? _____

10. Why is Irenaeus' view of salvation called the Recapitulation Theory? _____

11. How did Hippolytus and Sabellius differ regarding the relation of the Father and the Son? _____

12. What was Clement of Alexandria's attitude towards philosophy?

13. What is the Hexapla?

14. What three levels of interpretation did Origen advocate for Scripture?

15. List three teachings of Origen concerning Jesus Christ.

16. What did Origen believe about salvation?

17. What two unacceptable concepts did Tertullian face and what words did he use to explain the Trinity?

18. Why did Cyprian emphasize the authority of bishops?

Supplementary activity (Levels 2 and 3). Read pages 22–25 and 41–50 in *A Summary of Christian History* by Baker and answer the following questions.

1. Who were the emperors in 311 and what was Constantine's attitude towards Christianity?

2. Summarize the changes in the understanding of the nature of faith, the nature of the Church, the nature of ecclesiastical authority, and the nature of worship which came about during the first three centuries.

Advanced activity (Level 3). Read pages 18–21 and 88–110 in *Documents of the Christian Church by* by Bettenson and answer the following questions.

1. What punishment of Christians was called for by the rescript of Valerian and Diocletian?

2. Briefly outline the concept of church, ministry, and sacraments reflected in the Didache and the writings of Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Cyprian.

Seminar Discussion

1. Which emperors persecuted Christianity and why?

2. What were the general characteristics of the doctrines of the schools in Asia Minor, Alexandria, and North Africa?

3. Name two theologians associated with each of the three schools and briefly describe their doctrines.