LESSON 7

CHURCH EXPANSION AND DEVELOPMENT

TO A.D. 500

Introduction

By the end of the third century, Christianity had become strong in many parts of the Empire in spite of persecution by various emperors. In a time when old institutions and ideals were disintegrating, Christianity offered new meaning to life and a challenging moral standard.

By 180, there were Christians in all the provinces of the Empire and in Mesopotamia. During the next century, Christianity enjoyed remarkable growth and overcame the strong opposing forces it had faced earlier. While the Church comprised only a small minority of the population during the early part of the second century, it was considered a public menace, and some emperors sought its extermination. By the time of Constantine, Christianity had become such a strong force in the Empire that he had to make peace with it.

During the fourth and fifth centuries, Western Christians had to face the challenge of converting the invading Germanic tribes. The conversion of the pagans to Christianity and the Arian Christians to orthodoxy became the responsibility of the Roman church.

Arian Christianity survived and prospered in places beyond the Roman Empire. Although the early spread of this faith is not well documented, its later strength implies a vigorous missionary work at an early date.

Early in the second century, patterns of worship and church organization began to deviate from those of New Testament times. Alignment of the Church with the State and the entrance into the Church of multitudes with pagan backgrounds additional changes.

Christianity had early rapid growth because it offered new meaning to _____ and a challenging _____ standard.

life, moral)

When did patterns of worship and church organization begin to differ from those of New Testament times? _____
(century)

(Compare your answer with the text.)

Expansion of Christianity before A. D. 311

Expansion within the Roman Empire

Palestine. –After the initial response of the Jews to the preaching of the apostles, Palestine was very slow in responding to Christianity. Following the Gentiles' response to the faith, a large portion of the Jewish population in Palestine remained untouched. Probably the struggling churches in Palestine were dominated by Jews who developed a Jewish brand of Christianity.

Syria. –There were Christians in Tyre at a very early date. The Book of Acts gives information concerning the origin and development of the church in Antioch. This area became the first great stronghold of Hellenistic Christianity and expanded its faith in various directions. Syriac-speaking Christianity developed from the influence of Edessa rather than Antioch which was Greek-speaking. By the end of the third century, Christianity in Syria had become strong and widespread.

Asia Minor. –By the end of the third century, Christianity was more widely adopted in Asia Minor than in any other part of the Roman Empire. Ephesus was the most influential stronghold of the faith. It is obvious that the spread of the gospel did not cease with the death of Paul, nor was it limited to the regions and provinces where Paul worked. Statements in the letter of the

younger Pliny to Trajan indicate that Christianity had spread widely in the towns and countryside of Bithynia. By the third century, the majority of the population in a section of Pontus had adopted Christianity. This accomplishment was attributed largely to Gregory Thaumaturgos (Worker of Wonders) who was made bishop and laboured in that area for thirty years until his death in 270. It is said that in contrast to the seventeen Christians whom he found on his accession to the position, only seventeen of the populace remained pagan. Apparently the governing class was brought into the church and the citizenry followed its leadership.

Greece and the Balkan Peninsula. –We know that Paul established the churches in Corinth, Athens, and Thessalonica. By the third century, the faith had spread into Peloponnesus, Thessaly, Byzantium, Pannonia, Dalmatia, and Moesia. A few Christians may also have been found in the Danubian pronvinces.

Egypt. –Tradition states that Mark was the first to be sent to Egypt to proclaim the gospel. Apollos, who was related to Paul's work in Corinth, was called an Alexandrian Jew. He did not have a full understanding of the faith when he went to Corinth. However, his Christian faith suggests that there was a witness in Alexandria. By the end of the second century, the church was strong in that city, and the famous catechetical school had developed under the distinguished teachers Clement and Origen. The Christian witness had spread also into other parts of Egpt. By the beginning of the fourth century, a native Egyptian or Coptic church had been established.

Northwest Africa. –Christianity had become very strong west of Egypt on the shore of North Africa around Carthage (the present Tunis and Algeria), and this area, like Asia Minor, was strong numerically. The natives which resided in the rural areas were called the Berbers. They were joined later by Phoenicians or Punic elements and Italians who formed the upper and middle classes of the cities. It is uncertain how Christianity was brought to this part of North Africa. Since the region had commercial contacts with the East, there was opportunity for the Christian witness to spread. The original Christian community appears to have been Greek-speaking; however, Latin eventually replaced Greek, and North Africa became the first main home of Latin Christian literature. It was in this area, the home of Augustine, that parts of the Bible were put into Latin. The Latin writings of Tertullian and Cyprian have already been mentioned.

Italy. –The church in Rome existed before Paul's visit there. The proselyte and Jewish pilgrims from Rome at Pentecost may have taken the witness back to their native land. Converts resulting from Paul's preaching in other areas may have migrated to the city. When Paul arrived there in A.D. 60, he probably found a church with numerous members. Apparently the early church was Greek-speaking, but it is natural that Latin Christianity would eventually make its head-quarters in Rome. Perhaps a number of Christians from North Africa migrated to Rome and strengthened the Latin element in the church. By the first half of the third century, the Roman church became predominantly Latin. It has been estimated that, at that time, the membership numbered at least 3,000. In another century, the membership may have increased to 50,000.

Little information is available concerning the spreading of Christianity to other parts of Italy and to Sicily, but there were many Christians by the end of the third century. Christianity appears to have been brought into northern Italy from Dalmatia in the East.

Spain. –It was mentioned previously that perhaps Paul had opportunity to carry out his plans to take the gospel to Spain. Practically no information is available concerning the initial

Now that you have read the first three paragraphs of the text, answer the following:

1. The part of the Roman Empire in which Christianity was more widely adopted than in any other part was _____.
2. Growth of Christianity was very slow in _____.

(Asia Minor, Palestine)

According to tradition, the gospel was proclaimed frist in Egypt by _____.

(Mark)

It is possible that the Christian witness in Northwest Africa spread through

c_____ c_____ with the East.

(commercial contacts)

It is believed that Italy may have received the Christian witness from p_____ and J_____ pilgrims who were at Pentecost.

(proselyte, Jewish)

development of Christianity in that area. Third century accounts concerning Spanish Christians reveal a degenerate Christianity. A bishop apostatized during the Decian persecution (250), but he returned to office after the danger passed. Other bishops left their responsibilities to engage in commerce. Records from a council held in about 300 reveal that the church struggled with the problems of idolatry, homicide, and adultery and attempted to correct these errors.

Western and central Europe. –Towards the end of the second century, Christianity had become relatively strong in Gaul (France). Again, there is no record which indicates how it was introduced to that area and made its initial growth. The same is true of the sorrounding areas of Germany, Belgium, and the Rhine Valley. The gospel could have been taken to those areas by merchants, missionaries, or soldiers who had been converted. Irenaeus was a prominent leader in Lyons on the Rhone towards the end of the second century. Numerous Christians suffered in the persecution in Lyons and Vienne in 177. Irenaeus was pastor of a native element in the society and probably preached in Celtic; however, he wrote in Greek. Lyons was joined by Narbonne and later by Trier as Christian centres. During the third century, Arles, Toulouse, Vienne, Rheims, Cologne, Metz, Bourges, and Paris became prominent centres of Christianity.

Britain. –Christians were mentioned in relation to Britain in the first decade of the third century. Three bishops from Britain attended the Council of Arles in 314.

Expansion beyond the Roman Empire

By the beginning of the fourth century, Christianity had moved beyond the environments of Judaism and Hellenism and the boundaries of the Roman Empire. Different branches of the Church were influenced by Jewish, Syrian, Hellenistic, Latin, and Coptic cultures. Doctrinal and cultural trends seem to have been influenced more by language than by national and territorial differences.

Mesopotamia. –The Hellenistic church of Antioch may have extended the gospel to Edessa where Syriac was the predominant language. Syriac was similar to the Aramaic of Palestine. This church did not develop along Hellenistic lines but became the centre of a Syriac type of Christianity which spread into Mesopotamia and the edges of Persia. The gospel may have been carried to Parthia, Media, and Elam by pilgrims who were at Pentecost. However, it may have moved down the Tigres–Euphrates Valley into these areas and on to China. A record has been left of a missionary making converts along the upper region of the Tigres at Arbela in about 100.

Although Christianity spread over a wide area east of the Roman Empire, perhaps even to Bactria, the Christian communities remained small. Possibly the reason was the religious policy of the Sassanid rulers of Persia. They made Zoroastrianism the state religion and gave it state support. After Christianity was adopted by the Roman Empire, the Persian rulers identified it with their enemy.

Armenia. –This country lay on the northwestern edge of the Roman Empire and was bordered on the south by Media. Christianity could have been carried there from the Roman provinces of Pontus and Cappadocia. After the king accepted the Christian faith in the latter part of the third century, he made Christianity the state religion. Parts of the native religion were assimilated into Christian worship. Pagan priests became the clergy in the churches. After an alphabet had been devised for the Armenian language, religious books were translated from Greek and Syriac.

India. –Perhaps Indians came into contact with Christianity

READ *WESTERN AND CENTRAL EUROPE* AND *BRITAIN* BEFORE DOING THE FOLLOWING EXERCISE.

Although there is no record of how Christianity was introduced in some areas, it is known that western and central E_____ as well as B_____ had been reached by the gospel in the second and third centuries.

(Europe, Britain)

By what century had Christianity moved beyond the boundaries of the Roman Empire? _____

(beginning of the fourth)

Now that you have read all of the topic *Expansion beyond the Roman Empire,* try to list at least six of the areas to which Christianity had spread.

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

(There are eight listed in the text. Compare your answers with the text and write below the two you did not list.)

at an early date. Tradition states that two apostles, Bartholomew and Thomas, carried the faith to India; however, the tradition is questionable. Commerce between India and the Roman Empire was primarily through Alexandria where a strong church existed. Traders from India may have been converted there and then carried the faith back with them.

Conversion of the Invaders

The story is not clear how Christianity was carried to the Germanic (Teutonic, Celtic) people before they invaded the Roman Empire. They had long threatened the frontiers of the Empire along the Rhine and the Danube. Marcus Aurelius had waged a desperate but successful war in the region of the upper Danube (167–180). In the third century, the Alamanni had settled in a region above the upper Rhine. Before the end of the century, the Franks had settled on the lower east side of that river. Decius (249–251) had lost his life in defending the frontiers against the Goths who settled in the region north of the lower Danube. The frontiers of the Roman Empire were threatened constantly by these invaders throughout the fourth century.

From the time of Aurelius, much interchange took place between the Romans and the Germans. Increasing numbers of German barbarians served in the Roman armies. Roman traders had gone among these people, and prisoners of war probably were taken by the Visigoths (West Goths) when they raided Cappadocia in 264. Perhaps some of the prisoners and traders shared their Christian faith with the Visigoths in the third century.

The Visigoths were the first of the northern people to adopt Christianity in large numbers. A Gothic bishop is supposed to have attended the Council of Nicaea in 325. Although Ulfila (about 311–383) did not introduce Christianity to the Goths, most of the credit for their conversion is due to his missionary work. He was probably a descendant of Cappadocian slaves who were captured by the Gothic raiders. He was sent to Constantinople in his teens where he learned Latin and Greek. He was ordained as bishop in 341 and sent back to labour among his own tribes. He invented a special alphabet for the language of the Goths by blending Greek, Latin, and Runic letters, and he translated the Scriptures from Greek into Gothic. However, he ommitted the brooks of Kings and Samuel because of their war-like tone. He was Arian in faith, but his views differed at points from those condemned at Nicaea in 325. Nevertheless, he was recalled from his missionary endeavours by Theodosius, the orthodox emperor, in 383, and he died shortly threafter in Constantinople.

Due to pressure from the Huns, the Visigoths crossed the Danube in 376. Their history of capturing Rome in 410 and settling in parts of the Roman Empire has been discussed previously. Since the Visigoths were Arian, they were regarded as heretics by the orthodox Romans and were persecuted frequently. They usually followed a tolerant policy, leaving the orthodox clergy undisturbed. They continued in Arianism until a Catholic revolution was led by Hermenegild (579–585), resulting in the Third Council of Toledo's decision in favour of the Catholic faith in 589. The Visigoths were concerned with preserving their state and thus accepted Catholicism. Persecution had taught them that they could not survive long in the midst of a Catholic population if they continued Arian.

The Visigoths brough the Ostrogoths and part of the Vandals, Burgundians, and Lombards under the influence of the Arian faith before these groups invaded the Empire. Only those from northwestern Germany– the Franks and the Saxons– remained overwhelmingly pagan at the time of the invasions.

Prisoners and traders may have shared their faith with the _____ (West Goths) in the third century.

(Visigoths)

Primary credit for conversion of the Goths is given to _____.

(Compare your answer with the text.)

Name the German tribes which had been influenced by the Arian faith before their invasions into the Roman Empire.

O _____, V _____

B _____, L _____

(Compare your answers with the text.)

The Vandals who invaded North Africa in the fifth century were not as tolerant of the orthodox Christians as the Goths. Arianism was promoted while Catholics were persecuted. The ruler Huneric (477–484) made it a crime to profess any faith other than Arianism and confiscated the property of Catholic churches. Arianism was established in the kingdom under the patriarch of Carthage; however, Arians failed to convert the Catholic residents and remained a minority movement. The area was returned to orthodoxy with the fall of the Vandals to the Eastern emperor in 534.

The Burgundians had sought baptism in order to secure help from the God of the Romans in their fight against the Huns. Upon defeating a group of Huns much larger than themselves, they gave God the glory and became sincere Christians. Their leader was converted from Arianism to the orthodox faith, and they became the first of the barbarians to give up Arianism for Catholicism. They substituted a vulgarized Latin for their Germanic dialect. Their history as a kingdom ended when they were defeated by the Franks in 534.

The embracing of Christianity by the Franks came largely as a result of the promise of Clovis (481–511) to embrace the faith of his Burgundian wife if her Saviour would grant to him victory over the powerful Alamanni. He won the battle; therefore, he and 3,000 of his soldiers were baptized into Catholic Christianity on Christmas Day, 496. He continued to be a cruel chieftain. His successors followed his example. The standard punishment became the infliction of blindness for any disobedience of the commands of the king. "Yet despite the general degeneracy of the people and especially their rulers, who at best were lustful ogres, and at worst blood-thirsty tyrants, the Catholic church became the most powerful Frankish institution."[1]

Theodoric, king of the Ostrogoths (471–526), was a conscientious and zealous Arian; however, he was tolerant of the orthodox churches during the first part of his reign. His policy changed in 518, and he became a ruthless persecutor of the orthodox. Justin, the Eastern emperor (518–527), made Arianism a crime to be punished severely. The Ostrogoths' kingdom and Arianism were brought to an end after several wars with the armies of Justinian in 553.

Now that you have finished reading this paragraph, you have seen that the Burgundians and Franks both sought help through Christianity to defeat their enemies. (See also first paragraph which actually begins on previous page.)

Draw a line to connect the opposing forces.

Burgundians	Alamanni
Franks	Huns

(Burgundians–Huns, Franks–Alamanni)

Organizational and Clerical Developments

The heretical and schismatic movements caused those who regarded themselves orthodox Christians to develop a tighter organization and to clarify their beliefs. The New Testament reflects that requirements for admission to the Christian fellowship included repentance, affirmation that Jesus is Lord, reception of the Holy Spirit, and baptism (Acts 2:38ff.). The appearance of Gnostics and the Marcionites caused church leaders to give a more detailed definition of the gospel and to require additional tests for admission to the Church which called itself catholic.

Clarification of beliefs by orthodox Christians was made necessary by h_____ and s_____ movements.

(heretical, schismatic)

[1] William R. Cannon, *History of Christianity in the Middle Ages* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1960), p. 18.

The emergence of the Catholic Church

The word "catholic" appeared in the letter of Ignatius to the church in Smyrna: "Wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church." It appeared next in a letter from the church in Smyrna which described the martyrdom of Polycarp in about 155. Twice it meant simply "universal," but once it carried the connotation of orthodox. By the end of the second century, catholic had become a technical term meaning both universal and orthodox. It was used to distinguish those who regarded themselves as the true body from those who were thought of as heretics. The primary interests of the Catholic Church were to preserve the unity of the Church, to bring all Christians together into a visible body of Christ, to preserve the purity of Christianity, and to spread the gospel.

To maintain the purity of the gospel and unity of the Church, some leaders emphasized the importance of bishops' direct and uninterrupted succession from the apostles. Such bishops would more likely possess pure apostolic teachings; therefore, the practice of apostolic succession developed. New bishops were to be ordained only by those who could trace their ordination back to the apostles. The writings of the apostles became very valuable and were formed into the New Testament Canon. The books of our New Testament were recognized by practical use as inspired and authoritative before the end of the second century; however, an official decision by the Church concerning the actual books of the New Testament was not made until the end of the fourth century. A third feature of the Catholic Church was the development of the Apostles' Creed, which is a concise statement of the true faith.

Development of the hierarchy

Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons, emphasized apostolic succession in refuting heretical teachers. He stated that the apostles had appointed as successors bishops who were dependable teachers and guardians of the truth. Undoubtedly, these bishops in turn had appointed successors who were authentic teachers and guardians of the truth. He recorded a list of the bishops of the church in Rome, emphasizing that the church had been founded by Peter and Paul. A century and a half later, the early church historian Eusebius gave lists of bishops of several churches. His lists indicated the importance of succession of bishops from the apostles.

The terms "presbyter" and "bishop" ceased to be interchangeable, and a single bishop in a given city or area became the ecclesiastical pattern. The bishop came to be more than an overseer or administrator. He was in charge of worship and supervised the entire life of the churches within his territorial jurisdiction. In North Africa and Italy, every town had its bishop, but all of the churches in other areas were under the supervision of one bishop who was assisted by presbyters of priests. Before his death in 258, Bishop Cyprian of Carthage had agreed that since the episcopate was founded upon the rock (Peter) by Christ, the Church was in the bishop, and those who were not with the bishop were not in the Church. Cyprian insisted that outside the Church there is no salvation. Since bishops determined whether apostates could be readmitted to the Church or not, salvation came to reside in their hands (sacerdotalism).

A distinction between clergy and laity began to be made early in the second century. Ignatius maintained that the celebration of the Lord's Supper was valid only when conducted or authorized by the bishop. The right to baptize was also placed under the authority of the bishop. Tertullian stated that presbyters

By the end of the second century, the technical term "catholic" meant both _____ and _____.

List the primary interest of the Catholic Church in the second century.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Emphasis on apostolic succession in refuting heretical teachers was a step in the development of the _____.

(hierarchy)

Another step in the heirarchical pattern was the giving of great supervisory authority to _____.

(bishops)

Cyprian advanced the hierarchy another step by declaring that the C_____ was in the b_____.

What actually came to reside in the hands of bishops?

_____

(Compare your answers with the text.)

and deacons were not to baptize without the authority of the bishop. The clergy was expected to maintain higher moral standards than the common people or laity. During persecution by emperors, special emphasis was placed on the bishops or leaders of the churches. These factors contributed to the elevation of the clergy and their distinction from the common people.

Bishops usually were elected by the presbyters and other clergy of the city, ratified by the congregations they were to serve, and approved by other bishops in the area. The ordination of bishops was by other bishops, but the bishop who ruled over an area selected an ordained subordinate clergy of presbyters and deacons. Lower orders included sub-deacons, acolytes, exorcists, readers, and janitors. Deaconesses were part of the Eastern Church and were given the responsibility of caring for members of their sex.

In following centuries, the power of bishops continued to increase. The Council of Nicaea in 325 provided that other clergy should not move from a diocese without the bishop's consent. Constantine made the clergy a privileged class by exempting it from public taxation; however, to prevent loss of revenue to the government, another law was passed which ordered that only those of small fortune should be ordained. This policy resulted in the trend to recruit the majority of clergy from among those who had little property and education. With the development of the view that the clergy should not engage in any wordly or gainful occupation, Emperor Valentinian III forbade the work of clergy in 452. This action demanded support beyond the gifts of the faithful, and the need was met by an increased number of landed estates being presented to the Church by wealthy Christians. This property was in the hands of the bishops. Income from it was divided equally among the bishops, the lesser clergy, the upkeep of the services and buildings, and the poor.

The exaltation of celibacy and virginity

The tendency to identify celibacy with the holier Christian life appeared at an early date. The ascetic tendency is not unique to Christianity but existed in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Brahmanism many centuries before Christ. Paul's denunciation of the flesh and advice that the unmarried more influence with some than his teachings in the Pastoral Epistles which allow marriage for ministers. Paul did not consider the marriage relationship evil but chose the unmarried life because of greater freedom to serve Christ without the duties and responsibilities of providing for a family.

The exaltation of virginity implied the depreciation of marriage. Even though the first companion had died, Tertullian objected to the Catholic practice of permitting the clergy to marry a second or third time. Hippolytus reproached the Roman bishop Callistus for permitting the clergy to marry after having been ordained. The Council of Elvira in Spain (306) prohibited marriage after ordination and required strict abstinence of married priests from conjugal intercourse. The Council of Nicaea (325) attempted to pass this rule but did not succeed. The Council did prohibit the practice of an unmarried clergyman living with an unmarried woman unless she was "a mother or sister or aunt or person above suspicion." From this position, the Eastern church gradually adopted the principles and practices of–

1. limiting the law of celibacy to bishops who were taken usually from monasteries;
2. making a single marriage the rule for the lower clergy.

It was required that the marriage of lower clergy had to have taken place before ordination, however, and could not be

Bishops who ruled over an area selected and ordained subordinate _____.

(clergy)

Property was given to the Church by wealthy Christians for support of b_____, the lesser c_____, the p_____, and maintenance of b_____.

(bishops, clergy, poor, buildings)

READ ALL OF THIS SECTION BEFORE DOING THE FOLLOWING EXERCISE.

Identify the views concerning the marriage of clergymen as those of the Greek Church or the Latin Church.

The _____ _____ limited the law of celibacy to bishops and made single marriage the rule for the lower clergy.

The _____ _____ prohibited clerical marriages, including the lower clergy.

(Greek Church, Latin Church)

repeated. In the sixth century, Justinian excluded married men from the episcopate. This practice was legalized in 692.

The Latin Church of the West adopted the principle of absolute prohibition of clerical marriage, including even the lower clergy. Jerome, Augustine, and Chrysostom gave extravagant praise to the superior sanctity of virginity. Pope Leo I held that even sub-deacons should refrain from marriage. "Thus celibacy was gradually enforced in the West under the combined influence of the sacerdotal and hierarchical interests to the advantage of the hierarchy, but to the injury of morality."[2]

Worship and the Ordinances

Church buildings

Before the third century, Christians worshipped in private houses, in desert places, at the graves of martyrs, and in the catacombs. Their poverty, oppressed and outlawed condition, love of solitude, aversion to heathen art, and emphasis on the fact that spiritual worship is independent of place and ritual determined the places Christians gathered to worship. Most private homes had oblong dining halls which were suited for the love-feasts, the reading of Scriptures, and preaching.

Severus Alexander (22–235) granted Christians the right to a place of worship in Rome. After the Decian persecution, the building of churches spread rapidly. The Diocletian persecution (303) began with the destruction of the magnificent church at Nicomedia. At that time, Rome had more than forty churches. Constantine the Great initiated the era of church architecture with the magnificent churches he built in Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and Constantinople.

The Christian year

The annual festive seasons of the early Church were Passover, in commemoration of the suffering of Christ, and Pentecost, in commemoration of His resurrection and exaltation. The Christian Passover grew out of the Jewish Passover which celebrated the deliverance of Israel from Egypt with the slaying of the lamb and the eating of the paschal supper. Easter is the resurrection festival which follows the Passover proper and is part of the same festive week. Easter is connected with the sunrise in the east which reflects the time and victory of Christ's resurrection. The feast commemorating the resurrection, which completed the whole work of redemption, gradually became the most prominent part of the Christian passover celebration: however, Christ's crucifixion continued to be celebrated on what is called "Good Friday." The Passover (paschal feast) was preceded by a season of penitence and fasting. Through the influence of the Roman church in the fifth century, the length of this period was fixed at forty days.

A controversy arose over the proper time to observe the Christian Passover. The Roman church always celebrated the death of Jesus on Friday, but Christians of Asia Minor followed Jewish chronology and celebrated the Christian Passover on the fourteenth of Nisan which might fall on any of the seven days of the week. The Roman church emphasized the Christian Sunday, the day of resurrection, while the churches of Asia Minor emphasized the day of Christ's death. The Roman practice gained

The era of church architecture with magnificent churches built in Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and Constantinople was initiated by

_____

(Compare your answer with the text.)

The two annual festive seasons of the early Church were:

P_____

P_____

(Passover, Pentecost)

Easter is the _____ festival.

What connexion does Easter have with the sunrise in the east?

_____

(resurrection, It reflects the time and victory of Christ's resurrection)

[2] Philip Schaff, *Ante-Nicene Christianity*, Vol. II of *History of the Christian Church* (9th ed.; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910), p. 413.

support, and the Council of Nicaea in 325 ordained that Easter should always be celebrated on the first Sunday after the first full moon succeeding the vernal equinox (March 21) and always after the Jewish Passover. This rule causes Easter to come as early as March 22 or as late as April 25.

Epiphany is mentioned in the third century as the feast commemorating the appearance of Christ in the flesh and the manifestation of His messiahship by His baptism, thus a festival combining His birth and baptism. It was usually observed on January 6. The East restricted the celebration to the baptism of Christ, but the West included the adoration of the Magi, the first miracle of Cana, and the feeding of the 5,000.

The Christmas festival as an emphasis on the nativity of Christ did not originate until the fourth century since the Feast of Epiphany had held the place of it and more emphasis had been placed on the death and resurrection of Christ than on His birth. The festival of Epiphany celebrated Christ's birth on January 6. Early in the fourth century, the West developed a nativity festival on December 25. This date was determined partly by the idea that the birth of the world occurred on the vernal equinox (March 25) and correspondingly the conception of the Saviour would have been at the same moment.[3] The actual birth would have come nine months later on December 25. Also, December 25 was the day of a great pagan festival, *Sol Invictus*, which celebrated the victory of light over darkness with the lengthening of the sun's rays at the winter solstice.

Christians had chosen Sunday as their day of worship in commemoration of the resurrection, but Constantine established it as a civil holiday as well. His prohibiting manual labour on Sunday enabled the religious observance and included the worshippers of Hercules, Apollo, and Mithras. He forbade the public desecration of Sunday, not as the Lord's Day but as the day of the sun god. Ecclesiastical legislation at a later date attempted to prohibit needless labour, attendance at theatres, participation in public amusements, and the solemnization of weddings on Sunday. As the Church gained in political power, it attempted to legislate the regular attendance of public worship and the payment of offerings (tithes). Substituting political power for moral conviction did not improve the sanctity of Sunday.

From an early date, Christian worship consisted of assembling at sunrise on Sunday, singing responsively a song to Christ, and the pledging of the participants by an oath not to do any evil work, commit theft or adultery, break their word, or sacrifice property entrusted to them. The Christians assembled again in the evening to participate in the *agape* (love) meal. Justin Martyr, about 140, described worship as including the reading from the memoirs of the apostles (the Gospels) and the writings of the prophets (the Old Testament). Then the president exhorted the participants to imitate the things set forth in the readings. The exhortation was followed by common prayer, breaking of bread, and drinking of wine with water. After the president offered prayer and thanks for them, the consecrated elements were distributed to each one present and carried by the deacons to the houses of the absent. The wealthy made contributions to be deposited with the president who would distribute them to the orphans, widows, needy, prisoners, and strangers. Justin stated that "we assemble in common on Sunday, because this is the first

[3] Williston Walker, *A History of the Christian Church*, rev. by Robert Handy (3rd ed.; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970), p. 115.

READ ALL OF THIS PAGE OF THE TEXT BEFORE DOING THE FOLLOWING EXERCISE.

Match the events of the Christian year with what they commemorate.

____1. Passover	a. the appearance of Christ in the flesh and His baptism
____2. Pentecost	b. the suffering of Christ
____3. Epiphany	c. the resurrection of Christ
____4. Christmas	d. the exaltation of Christ
____5. Sunday	e. the nativity of Christ

(b–1, d–2, a–3, e–4, c–5)

Did the Church's substitution of political power for moral conviction improve the sanctity of Sunday?

_____

(no)

day on which God created the world and the light, and because Jesus Christ our Saviour on the same day rose from the dead and appeared to His disciples."[4]

From the middle of the second century to the close of the fifth, the catechumens were dismissed after the sermon, and the faithful remained for the Holy Communion. The first part of the service consisted of Scripture reading, preaching, prayer, and song. Tertullian demanded that the believers, catechumens, and heathen should occupy separate places in public worship. Holy Communion, baptism, and confession came to be treated as mysteries for the initiated, and they were withdrawn from the view of Jews and heathen. Perhaps this procedure was influenced by the misunderstanding and slandering of these Christian practices by the heathen society of the early centuries.

The Lord's Supper

The celebration of the Eucharist, or Holy Communion, with appropriate prayers was the climax of Christian worship. At first, the Lord's Supper was observed with simplicity. The bread and a cup of water and wine were handed to the president (bishop) who offered praise, glory, and thanks to the Father through the name of the Son and the Holy Spirit for these gifts. The congregation responded to his prayer and thanksgiving with "amen" (be it so). The deacons then distributed the elements. The celebration was referred to as the Eucharist (giving of thanks– 1 Corinthians 10:16).

Ignatius had called the Lord's Supper "the medicine of immortality, and the antidote that we should not die but live forever."[5] Justin Martyr affirmed that "in like manner as Jesus Christ our Saviour, having been made flesh by the Word of God, . . . so likewise . . . the food which is blessed by the prayer of His Word, and from which our blood and flesh by transmutation are nourished, is the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh."[6] Irenaeus stated that the Supper confers life: "For as the bread, which is produced from the earth, when it receives the invocation of God, is no longer common bread but the Eucharist, consisting of two realities, earthly and heavenly; so also our bodies, when they receive the Eucharist, are no longer corruptible, having the hope of the resurrection to eternity."[7] The trend of emphasizing the reality of Christ's passion as presented in the Supper continued to develop. Cyprian regarded it as a sacrifice offered to God by a priest. The primary business of the Christian priest was to serve the altar and celebrate the divine sacrifice. By the time of Cyprian, the Supper was conceived as a sacrament in which Christ is really present, and the believer partakes of Christ who is a sacrifice offered to God by a priest and who influences God to be gracious to the living and the dead.

In the fourth century, the East held that Christ was made present in the sacramental elements during the prayer known as the Invocation. Petition was made for the Holy Spirit to descend and to effect the change in the consecrated elements. The West viewed the consecration of the elements as taking place when the historic words of Christ were stated: "this is my body . . . this is

From the middle of the second century worship has included:

S_____ reading

p_____

p_____

s_____

H_____ C_____

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Fill in the blanks with the following words:

sacrament
sacrifice
believer

By the time of Cyprian, the Supper was regarded as a _____ in which Christ is really present, and the _____ partakes of Christ who is the _____ offered to God by a priest and who influences God to be gracious to the living and dead.

(sacrament, believer, sacrifice)

Were there different emphases by the East and West on the Lord's Supper? _____

(Compare your answer with the text.)

[4] *Apology*, 1. 67.

[5] *Epistle to the Ephesians*, 20.

[6] *Apology*, 1. 66.

[7] Against Heresies, 4. 18. 5.

the new covenant in my blood." The presence of Christ made the Supper both a sacrifice and a communion. The East emphasized the aspect of communion in which the Supper was a life-giving mystery wherein the partaker received the transforming body and blood of his Lord and thus became a partaker of the divine nature. The West, which emphasized salvation as coming into a right relationship with God through a sacrifice, viewed the Lord's Supper as a drama in which the priest, behind a veil, offered a sacrifice to God and appealed to God to be gracious to those on whose behalf the divine sacrifice was offered.

Baptism

The *Didache* gave instructions to baptize in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in living (running) water. If living water was not available, then the candidates could be baptized in other water, preferably cold. If water for immersion was not available, then the candidate could be baptized by having water poured upon his head three times in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Tertullian and later writers revealed that the candidate was required to vow solemnly to renounce the service of the devil, to give himself to Christ, and to confess the sum of the apostolic faith in God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This act of turning from sin (repentance) to God (faith) was followed by an appropriate prayer of the minister and by three successive immersions of the candidate who stood nude in the water. Single immersion was introduced in the fourth century and was declared valid by Gregory I two centuries later.

Baptism by pouring water from a vessel on the head of the candidate was practised very early in the second century and was considered equivalent to immersion. Later, this mode was used only for sick persons.

For Paul, baptism symbolized a cleansing from sin and identity with the death and resurrection of Christ. In the second century, baptism came to be regarded as indispensable for salvation. For Justin Martyr, baptism effected regeneration. Tertullian described it as conveying eternal life. Baptism became the rite of purification in which all previous sins were washed away and the person was initiated into eternal life. Only martyrdom could stand as proper substitute.

Persons were required to have reached the age of discernment before being baptized; however, Tertullian spoke of infant baptism as a definite practice but discouraged it at the beginning of the third century. Others concluded that baptism should be put off until near the end of life in order that it would pardon the greatest number of sins possible. Constantine postponed his baptism until his deathbed. Cyrian supported infant baptism on the basis of original sin. Probably infant baptism arose as a logical conclusion to two doctrines: there is no salvation outside the Church, and baptism is the door to the Church. Infant baptism did not become universal until the sixth century.

In the second century, baptism came to be necessary for _____.

Match the man with his belief about baptism.

____ Justin	a. baptism effected regeneration
____ Tertullian	b. baptism conveyed eternal life

(Salvation, a-Justin, b-Tertullian)

Probably infant baptism arose as a logical conclusion to two doctrines:

1. There is no s_____ outside the Church.
2. Baptism is the door to the _____.

Infant baptism became universal in the _____ century.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Aids to Worship

Mariolatry

Mariolatry (worship of Mary) grew out of a design to enhance the glorification of Christ. The mystery of the incarnation of the Son of God in connexion with the Virgin Mary created early theological interest (Mariology). As mother of the Saviour of the world, Mary has held a special place in Christianity, and her name is included in the Apostles' Creed: "conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary."

In the middle of the fourth century, theologians changed the

"mother of the Lord" to "mother of God," and "queen of heaven." Instead of being "blessed among women," Mary became an intercessor above all women to participate in man's redemption. Veneration of Mary was transformed into worship and, at times in history, devotion to her has exceeded that to Christ. The worship of Mary continues to be one of the principal points separating Roman Catholics and Evangelical Protestants.

In the controversy over the nature of Christ, Mary became sanctioned as the "Mother of God" in the Councils of Ephesus (431) and Chalcedon (451). Pagans who had been converted to Christianity were accustomed to femine gods in the polytheism of Egypt, Syria, and Asia Minor. When Monophysitism emphasized the divinity of Christ at the expense of His humanity. He was unintentionally put so far beyond man that a mediator, Mary, was needed to represent human needs before Him.

Ascetic monasticism, which elevated celibacy over marriage, focused on the virginity of Mary. Joseph was regarded as an aged person who married Mary only to protect her from slander. Jesus' brothers, who were referred to in the Scriptures, were explained as sons of Joseph by a former marriage rather than as sons of Mary. It was felt that for other children to be born to Mary was irreconcilable with her dignity and the dignity of Christ. In the fourth century, Mary's perpetual virginity was asserted.

It seemed logical that if Mary was the mother of God she herself would be divine and thereby an object of worship. By the latter part of the fourth century, Mary was besought for protection. In the fifth century, many churches and altars were dedicated to the "Holy Mother of God," the "perpetual Virgin." Justinian I implored her intercession with God for the restoration of the Roman Empire. In following centuries, her image was worshipped and legends arose concerning countless miracles wrought through her. Popular belief ascribed to her a sinless conception and birth, a resurrection, and an ascension to heaven.

Saints and relics

The influx of pagans into the Church led to the worship of martyrs, saints, and relics. Christian martyrs took the places of the old golds and heroes for the masses. To the list of martyrs were added saints who were recognized for their extraordinary ascetic piety and service to the Church. Although such saints as Abraham and Peter from the biblical period were married, only virgins and celibates qualified as saints after the time of Ambrose and Jerome. After Nicaea, formal invocations to the saints as patrons and intercessors before the throne of grace were made. New churches and chapels were built over the graves of martyrs and consecrated to their names. The sick were placed in these buildings in order that they might be healed. Banquets were held in the martyrs' honour, and their relics were preserved and believed to possess miraculous virtue.

The relics which were special value included the cross of Christ with its superscription and nails, which is said to have been miraculously discovered by the Empress Helena in 326. According to legend, Christ's crown of thorns and coat were preserved miraculously. The bones of the bishop-martyr Ignatius were preserved as a priceless treasure. The half-burnt bones of Polycarp were considered more valuable than jewels and gold. During the fourth century, the relics were displayed to the veneration of the believing multitudes, carried about in processions, and preserved in golden and silver boxes, which were worn around the neck as amulets against disease and danger. The relics were considered instruments through which the saints in heaven and in conjunction with Christ wrought miracles of healing. The simple spiritual worship of the first two centuries gave way to superficial

Match the word with its meaning.

____1. Mariolatry	a. the doctrine of the Virgin Mary as mother of the Saviour and mother of God
____2. Mariology	b. the worship of Mary

(b-1, a-2)

READ THE REST OF THIS SECTION BEFORE DOING THE FOLLOWING EXERCISE.

Three doctrinal statements concerning Mary in the fourth and fifth centuries are:

She was mother of_____.

She was besought for_____.

She was called the perpetual _____.

(God, protection, Virgin)

Underline the correct word or words.
After the time of Ambrose and Jerome, saints (were, were not) highly honoured.

Formal invocations were made to them as

_____

New churches were built over graves of

_____.

Relics were believed to possess

_____ virtue.

(were, intercessors, martyrs, miraculous)

worship of external objects. Even the best theologians of the period–Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa, Basil of Nyssa, Jerome, Ambrose, Chrysostom, Augustine, and Leo–supported the veneration of relics because of the belief that sensible stimulants gave encouragement to faith.

The Formation of the New Testament Canon

The term *canon* referred originally to a reed or cane which was used as a measuring rod. In early Christian usage, it came to mean rule of faith, normative writings, or the authoritative Word of God. In about 350, the term "canon of the Church" was used by Athanasius in reference to the Bible. The expression referred to the books which the Church officially recognized to be the standard of conduct and faith.

The process by which the various books of the New Testament came to be agreed upon as authoritative was a long one. Perhaps none of the writers of the New Testament books felt that he was producing a work which might later become a part of a body of sacred writings which would give guidance to the Church through the centuries. The writers wrote under the leadership of the Spirit to meet specific and immediate needs which arose in the churches. Gradually, by common usage and consent, books of Christian authorship which gave evidence of divine inspiration were brought together.

From a very early date, several of the Pauline epistles were read in Christian worship services. The four Gospels won such acceptance that Irenaeus (about 180) strongly maintained that there must be only four Gospels; however, he recognized that some questioned the position of the Gospel of John.

The official recognition of the 27 books of the New Testament came in 397, but practical usage had determined in the second century which books should be included in the collection. The Muratorian Fragment (about 170) refers to all the books of our Canon except four: Hebrews, James, one epistle of Peter, and one epistle of John. The Apocalypse of Peter is the only one included then but not in our Canon.

Writings which were highly regarded and which appeared in a number of lists along with New Testament books are:

The Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians
The Didache
The Shepherd of Hermas
The Apocalypse of Peter
The Epistle of Barnabas

The canonical books were decided eventually on the basis of doctrinal consistency, apostolic origin, and divine inspiration.

Athanasius gave a list of New Testament books in 367 which coincides exactly with our New Testament. The Third Council of Carthage in 397 adopted a list of books as Holy Scripture and decreed that nothing be read in a church under the title of divine Scripture except the canonical books. This decision stabilized the recognized books and has been acknowledged by scholars as the climax to the process to canonization.

In early Christian usage, the term *canon* came to mean the authoritative _____ of _____.

(Word, God)

In the process of canonization, books included were determined at first by practical _____
About 170 the Muratorian Fragment referred to all the books of our canon except H_____, J_____, one epistle of P_____, and one epistle of J_____.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

In what year and by whom was a list of New Testament books given which concides exactly with our New Testament?

_____, by _____

(367, Athanasius)

Home Study Exercise

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

1. Give one reason for Christianity's early rapid growth. _____

2. Compare the expansion of Christianity in Palestine with its growth in Asia Minor. _____

3. How did Christianity first arrive in Northwest Africa and Italy? _____

4. To what areas beyond the Roman Empire had Christianity spread at the end of three centuries? _____

5. Who took the gospel to the Goths? _____

6. What caused the Germanic tribes to be Arian? _____

7. What influenced the Burgundians and Franks to become Christians? _____

8. Give the early meaning and interests of the Catholic Church. _____

9. Give four steps in the development of the hierarchy. _____

10. How did the early Greek and Latin churches differ in their views of the marriage of clergymen? _____

11. What is the meaning of Easter and what are the important days in the Christian year?

12. What elements were included in worship from the middle of the second century?

13. How was the Lord's Supper regarded by the time of Cyprian?

14. When did baptism come to be considered indispensable for salvation?

15. Distinguish between Mariolatry and Mariology.

16. Give three doctrinal statements concerning Mary in the fourth and fifth centuries.

17. Describe the place of saints in the Church after Ambrose and Jerome.

18. List three important developments in the process of canonization.

Supplementary activity (Levels 2 and 3). Read pages 65–81 in *A Summary of Christian History* by Baker and answer the following questions.

1. What was the nature of the conflict between Church and State after Nicaea and how did its adoption as the State religion affect Christianity?

2. List the characteristics the Church had received by 325.

3. What were the foundations for a new advance in hierarchical development of the Roman Church?

4. How was the Roman bishop strengthened by the doctrinal controversies?

Advanced activity (Level 3). Read pages 33–37 and 111–122 in *Documents of the Christian Church* by Bettenson and answer the following questions.

1. How did the Creed of Caesarea differ from the Creed of Nicaea? Did they resemble the Apostle's Creed (the Old Roman Creed)?

2. What additions to the Creed of Nicaea are found in the Nicene Creed?

3. What claims of Rome were made by Julius and what attitude did Jerome reflect towards the Pope?

4. How did the synod of Carthage respond to the Pope's interference in African affairs? Did the Council of Calcedon place Rome over Constantinople in authority?

5. Since Scripture can be variously interpreted, how did the Church fathers determine the true Catholic faith?

Seminar Discussion

1. To what regions had Christianity reached by 325?

2. Why did many of the Germanic tribes first adopt Arianism and later change to Catholicism?

3. Distinguish between the "Old Catholic Church" and the "Roman Catholic Church."

4. Trace the development of the hierarchy and invite a Level 2 or 3 student to explain how the Roman bishop gained authority.

5. Why were celibacy and virginity exalted in the early Church?

6. What were the important dates of the Christian year in the early Church?

7. Describe the observance of the Lord's Supper and the order of worship in the early Church.

8. What changes from the New Testament were made concerning baptism and the Virgin Mary?

9. Name four important stages in the development of the Canon.