

The Age of Catholic (Universal)

Christianity (A.D. 70 – 312)

I. After the Apostles

A. Church Leaders

1. Apostolic Fathers (A.D. 95-140)

- a) Clement of Rome (A.D. 30-100)
 - May be mentioned in Philippians 4:3
 - Bishop at the Church in Rome
 - Letter to the Corinthian Church
 - Martyred under Domitian
- b) Ignatus
 - Made a distinction between Bishops and Elders
 - Opposed the Gnostic Heresy
 - Martyred under Trajan
- c) Polycarp (A.D. 69-160)
 - Acquaintance of the Apostle John
 - Bishop at the Church in Smyrna
 - Letter to the Philippians
 - Martyred under Antonius Pius
- d) Justin Martyr (A.D. 100-165)
 - Chief Apologist for the early church
 - Trained in Philosophy
 - Martyred under Marcus Aurellius

2. Early Church Fathers (A.D. 160-300)

- a) Irenaeus
 - Student of Polycarp
 - Bishop at Lyons
 - Strongly opposed Gnosticism
- b) Tertullian (A.D. 160-220)
 - Very strong Theologian
 - Many important writings
 - First Christian writer using Latin
- c) Origen (A.D. 185-254)
 - Brilliant student of the Word
 - Prolific writer (First Principles)
 - Advanced the Allegorical Interpretation of Scripture
 - Tortured for three years
- d) Cyprian (A.D. 200-258)
 - Influenced by Tertullian
 - Bishop of Cathrage
 - Held a very high view of the office of Bishop

B. Important Early Writings

1. The Didache (Teaching)
 - a) Christian Ethics
 - b) Sacraments
 - c) Church organization
2. Shepherd of Hermas – (Allegory)
 - a) 5 visions given to Hermas (former slave)
 - b) 12 Mandates
 - c) 10 Parables
3. 1 & 2 Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians
4. The Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians
5. First Principles (Origen)
 - a) Systematic Theology
 - b) God – Trinity – Angels, Salvation, etc.
6. Apology (Tertullian)
 - a) Defends Christianity
 - b) Demands Toleration

C. Church Organization / Government

1. The New Testament
 - a) Two Distinct Offices: Elder / Deacons (Philippians 1:1)
 - b) 1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9 cf. Acts 6:1-4
2. Early Church – Threefold Ministry
 - a) A.D. 180 – A Threefold Ministry developed consisting of bishop, elder, and deacon
 - Bishops were not:
 - (a) Seen as new Apostles
 - (b) Could not claim infallibility
 - (c) Proclaim new doctrine
 - Had no authority over any other church
 - Ordained by other bishops (“Apostolic Succession”)

D. Church Worship

1. Met on the first day of the week (Sunday)
2. Scripture reading from both the OT and NT
3. Expounding the Scripture (Sermon)
4. Prayer
5. Offering
6. Singing (Chanting)
7. Lord’s Supper
8. Benediction

E. Early Heresies

1. Gnosticism
2. Ebionism
3. Montanism

II. The Church in Society

A. Evangelism (Mt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8)

1. East to West trajectory
2. Acts 16:6-10
3. By A.D. 312 Christianity reached the entire Roman Empire
4. Christians Proclaimed the Gospel
5. Transforming effects of the Gospel (Personal)

B. Tension Within Society

1. Could not / would not participate in Pagan Culture
2. Opposed Infanticide
3. Opposed (easy) Divorce
4. Accusations towards Christians
 - a) Anti-Social (Aloof)
 - b) Self-righteous
 - c) Cannibalism
 - d) Incest
 - e) Blamed for natural disasters

C. Persecution (Hallmark)

1. Scripture
 - a) 2 Timothy 3:12
 - b) Luke 6:22
 - c) 1 Peter 4:12-14
 - d) Philippians 1:29
2. 10 Periods of Persecution (See Chart)
3. Decius
4. Diocletian

10. Roman Persecutions of Christians

DATES	EMPEROR	NATURE AND EXTENT OF PERSECUTION	NOTABLE MARTYRS
64	Nero	Took place in Rome and vicinity only. Christians were made scapegoats for burning Rome. Sadistic measures included burning Christians alive to illuminate Nero's gardens.	Paul Peter
c.90-96	Domitian	Was capricious, sporadic, centered in Rome and Asia Minor. Christians were persecuted for refusal to offer incense to the genius of the emperor.	Clement of Rome John (exiled to Patmos)
98-117	Trajan	Was sporadically enforced. Christians were lumped with other groups whose patriotism was considered suspect. Christians were to be executed when found, but not sought out.	Ignatius Symeon Zozimus Rufus
117-138	Hadrian	Was sporadically enforced. Policies of Trajan were continued. Any who brought false witness against Christians were to be punished.	Telesphorus
161-180	Marcus Aurelius	Emperor was a Stoic who opposed Christianity on philosophical grounds. Christians were blamed for natural disasters.	Justin Martyr Pothinus Blandina
202-211	Septimus Severus	Conversion to Christianity was forbidden.	Leonidas Irenaeus Perpetua
235-236	Maximinus the Thracian	Christian clergy were ordered executed. Christians were opposed because they had supported emperor's predecessor, whom he had assassinated.	Ursula Hippolytus
249-251	Decius	Was first empire-wide persecution. Offering of incense to genius of emperor was demanded. Enthusiastic return to paganism required utter extermination of Christianity.	Fabianus Alexander of Jerusalem
257-260	Valerian	Christians' property was confiscated Christians were prohibited right of assembly	Origen Cyprian Sixtus II
303-311	Diocletian Galerius	This was worst persecution of all. Churches were destroyed, Bibles burned. All civil rights of Christians were suspended. Sacrifice to gods was required.	Mauritius Alban

Church History Resources

- History of the Christian Church
 - Philip Schaff (8 Volume)
- A History of The Expansion of Christianity
 - Kenneth S. Latourette (7 Volume)
- 2000 Years of Christ's Power
 - Nick Needham (4 Volume)
- A Survey of Church History
 - Robert Godfrey
- Eusebius – The Church History