

**History of
Christianity 1:
Survey of Church
History to 700**

Survey of Church History to 700

1. Overview major events, people using timeline

2. The early Christian community
3. Persecution of the early church
4. Major theological disputes
5. The Champions of Orthodoxy: St Ambrose, St. Jerome and St. Augustine
6. Monasticism
7. Celtic Christianity and Christianity in Britain

Timeline

The Apostolic Period (to ~100)

- 33-36** Crucifixion of Jesus
- 45-64** Missionary Journeys of Paul
- 49** First Christian Council in Jerusalem
- 64** Persecution by Emperor Nero
- 70** Romans sack Jerusalem
- 94** Persecution by Emperor Domitian

TimeLine

The Patristic Period (100-451)

Before Constantine

- 155** Martyrdom of Bishop Polycarp of Symrna
- 177** Persecution at Lyons
- 178** Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons
- 235-8** Persecution by Emperor Maximus
- 249-50** Persecution by Emperor Decius
- 303-11** Persecution by Emperor Diocletian

TimeLine

Patristic Period (100-451)

After Constantine. The Imperial Church

- 312** Emperor Constantine adopts Christian symbol at battle of Milvian Bridge
- 313** Edit of Milan
- 323** Building of St. Peter's in Rome
- 325** Council of Nicaea
- 325-81** Arian controversy
- 328-373** St. Athanasius
- 330** Constantinople (Byzantium) made new capital of empire
- 341-83** Ulfilas, Bishop of the Goths
- 361-3** Emperor Julian the Apostate

- 370** Basil, Bishop of Caesarea
- 374-97** St. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan
- 381** Council of Constantinople condemns Arianism
- 386** St. Jerome settles in monastery at Bethlehem; translates bible into Latin (Vulgate)
- 395** St. Augustine appointed bishop of Hippo
- 410** Goths sack Rome; Roman troops withdrawn from Britain
- 416** Teaching of Pelagius condemned at Church Council at Carthage
- 430-61** Pope Leo I
- 431** Council of Ephesus
- 451** Council of Chalcedon

- 460** Patrick (Magonus Sucatus Patricius)
missionary to the Irish
- 476** End of the Western Roman Empire

TimeLine

Dark Ages in the West

Empire in the East

- 496** Clovis, King of the Franks, converted
- 525** St. Benedict founds monastery at Monte Cassino; forms Rule of Benedict
- 527-65** Byzantine Emperor Justinian I recaptures N. Africa and S. Italy
- 590-604** Pope Gregory the Great
- 597** Augustine sent by Pope Gregory to reconvert Britain; founds church at Canterbury
- 632** Death of Mohammed

- 638-56** Muslim armies conquer Palestine, Iraq,
Syria and Egypt
- 664** Council of Whitby accepts Roman dating
of Easter

Some Notes on Events in the Timeline First Missionary Journey of Paul

Acts 13:4-15:35

year 46-48

Paul 44 years old

about 14 years after his conversion

Paul, Barnabas, John Mark

visited Cyprus, Galatian (Iconium, Lystra, Derbe)

Second Missionary Journey of Paul

Acts 15:36-18:22

after the Council of Jerusalem

Galatia (joined by Timothy)

Troas (joined by Luke)

Philippi

Macedonia

- first time Christian gospel preached in Europe

Thessalonica (Acts 17-1-19)

- established new church, to which he would later write letters
- took temporary employment as a tentmaker to support himself

Second Missionary Journey of Paul

Athens

- intellectual center of ancient world
- Paul gave famous address on Mars Hill
- no church apparently founded

Corinth

- huge seaport
- stayed for 18 mos.
- wrote letters to church at Thessalonica

Third Missionary Journey of Paul

Acts 18:23-21:17

year 53

Ephesus

- stronghold of pagan superstition, centering on goddess Diana

Quotes

“The eternal, holy and unfathomable goodness of God does not allow us to wander in darkness, but shows us the way of salvation . . . This I have seen in others as well as in myself.”

- Constantine

Quotes

“This is how that very humane prince [Constantius] dealt with us, although we were close relatives. Without benefit of trial, he killed six of our common cousins, my father, who was his uncle, another uncle on my father’s side, and my old brother.”

- Julian the Apostate

Quotes

“It is a scandal that there is not a single Jew who is a beggar, and that the godless Galileans care not only for their own poor but for ours as well.”

- Julian the Apostate

Quotes

St. Jerome on the Fall of Rome

“There is no created work which is not attacked by old age and consequently disappears. But Rome! Who would believe that Rome, built up by the conquest of the whole world, had collapsed, that the mother of nations had become also their tomb. . . . We cannot relieve these sufferers: all we can do is sympathize with them, and unite our tears with theirs.”

“The world goes to ruin. Yes! But in spite of it, and to our shame, our sins still live and even prosper. The great city, the capital of the Roman Empire, has been devoured by a great fire, and all over the earth Romans wander in exile. Churches which once were revered are now but dust and ashes.”

Quotes

The New Order after the Fall of Rome

“If only to this end have the barbarians been sent within Roman borders, . . . that the church of Christ might be filled with Huns and Suevi, with Vandals and Burgundians, with diverse and innumerable peoples of believers, then let God’s mercy be praised, . . . even if this has taken place through our own destruction.

- Paulus Orosius

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The Early Christian Community

by **150** thinly spread throughout the empire

Church order of deacons, priests or presbyters,
bishops

- bishops became leaders
- met in synods with other bishops
- bishops of major Roman cities became particularly important
- often described as Latin *papa* or Greek *pappas*

The Early Christian Community Lifestyle

admitted by rite of baptism

renounced sin; had to do penance if they lapsed

attended Eucharist and the common meal

performed in a room in an ordinary house or small

building set aside, usually in secret

The Early Christian Community

condemned exposure of children, incestuous marriage,
fornication and adultery, abortion, homosexuality
many writers insisted marriage only for procreation.
Stressed chastity

The Early Christian Community

caring fellowship

did not seek to revolutionize society or condemn slavery

- held that slaves must submit to masters, but masters must treat slaves “patience, equity, and philanthropy”

stressed brotherhood, concern and compassion

looked after widows & virgins, the poor, sick, imprisoned

disapproved of the gladiatorial shows

The Early Christian Community

lived among pagan neighbors, not in a ghetto

beset by superstitions, of their contemporaries:

surrounded by spiritual beings, demons, guardian
angels

guidance through dreams and visions

feared a literal fire of hell

The Early Christian Community

“We see them, wooldressers, cobblers, and fullers, the more uneducated and common individuals, not daring to say a word in the presence of their masters who are older and wiser. But, when they get hold off the children in private, and silly women with them, they are wonderfully eloquent.”

- Celsus, 2nd century critic

The Early Christian Community

had great appeal to woman
not treated as sexual objects
church cared for widows and virgins
provided women with a vocation

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Persecution of the Early Church

Pliny the Younger Letter to Trajan, 112:

I ask them if they are Christians. If they admit this, I ask them the question again and second and third time, threatening them with the death sentence if they persist. . . . But they declared that their only crime or error was that they used to meet regularly before daybreak on an appointed day, and to sing a hymn to Christ as to a god, and to bind themselves by an oath (not to commit any crime, but to abstain from theft, robbery, adultery or breach of trust, and not to deny a deposit when this was required). After the end of this ceremony, they would leave, and then meet again to take food. But it is ordinary and harmless food . . . I found out what truth there was in this by torturing two maidservants (who were called “deaconesses”), but found nothing but a depraved and extravagant superstition.

Persecution Under Emperor Decius

249: became emperor

Jan 250: executed Fabian, bishop of Rome

Jun 250: Edict of Decius

- sacrifices must be offered to Roman gods and to the emperor
- certificate issued
- variably enforced
- thousands of Christians martyred

Bishops of Antioch and Jerusalem killed, bishops of Carthage and Alexandria fled into hiding

Jun 251: Decius killed on military expedition; persecution continued under Valerian

253: Cornelius, bishop of Rome exiled

258: Sixtus, bishop of Rome arrested during Mass and
executed

Bishop Cyprian of Carthage beheaded

261: Emperor Gallienus issued Edict of Tolerance
new conflict began in the church: how to treat
Christians who had offered the sacrifice

Persecution Under Emperor Diocletian

Feb 303: edit issued:

- destruction of all Christian places of worship
- surrender & destruction of all books
- end to all acts of Christian worship
- Christian civil servants reduced to status of slaves
- prominent Christians forced to offer sacrifice

Diocletian forced his wife and daughter (both Christians) to obey

Persecution Under Emperor Diocletian

persecution continued under Galerius in **304**
several Christian communities wiped out in Africa,
Egypt and Palestine

305: new Emperors Constantius and Maxentius
revoked edicts in West

313: Galerius issued Edict of Toleration in East

Galerius' Edict of Toleration, 313

“We have tried to restore universal observance of the ancient institutions and public order of Rome. In particular, we have aimed to bring Christians, who had abandoned the religion of their forebears, back to a right observance. . . We are now pleased to grant indulgence to these people, allowing Christians the right to exist once more, and to establish their places of worship, providing that they do not offend against public order. . . In return for our tolerance, it will be the duty of Christians to pray to God for our recovery, for the common good as well as for their own, and that the state may be preserved from all dangers, and that they themselves may live safely in their homes”

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Three major centers of theological debate

1. Alexandria (modern day Egypt)

- distinctive style of theology, association with Platonic tradition
- Athanasius

2. Antioch and surrounding region of Cappadocia (modern day Turkey)

- distinct theological style
- Cappadocian Fathers (4th century)
 - ❖ Basil of Caesarea (Basil the Great)
 - ❖ Gregory of Nyssa (works on mystical contemplation; brother of Basil)
 - ❖ Gregory of Nazianzus (a poet and orator)

Three major centers of theological debate

3. Western Northern Africa (modern Algeria)

- Carthage (Roman colony)
- major writers:
 - ❖ Tertullian
 - ❖ Cyprian of Carthage
 - ❖ Augustine of Hippo

Theological Divisions

1. The Donatist Controversary

- how should Christians who collaborated with Roman authorities during the Diocletian persecution be treated?

2. The Arian Controversary

- Jesus not God, but the supreme creature among God's creatures

3. The Pelagian Controversary

- What roles do God and humanity play in salvation?
- is salvation purely a gift from God?
- is salvation earned by merits/good works?

“The servants of God are those who are hated by
the world.”

- Donatist slogan

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Champions of Orthodoxy

St. Ambrose of Milan

339: born at Trier, son of the Praetorian prefect of Gaul

374: became bishop of Milan

fiercely opposed paganism and Arianism

tried to maintain Christian standards in public life

- forced Emperor Theodosius to do public penance after he perpetrated a brutal massacre at Thessalonica in reprisal for the death of the governor

Champions of Orthodoxy

St. Jerome

well educated, esp. in rhetoric
most prodigious scholar of his time
in a dream, God condemned him for being a
Ciceronian rather than a Christian
gave up classics, learned Hebrew, lived as a hermit
subsequently went back to Antioch and then to
Rome, where Pope Damasus gave him the task
of producing the standard Latin text of the
Bible (the Vulgate)
lived at Bethlehem as a monk for remainder of his
life

Champions of Orthodoxy

St. Augustine

born of pagan father and Christian mother at Tagaste
in North Africa

studied University of Carthage

became passionately interested in philosophy and
embraced Manichaeism

moved to Rome to found school of rhetoric then
moved to Milan, where he felt under influence of
St. Ambrose

386: became Christian, returned to North Africa,
founded monastery

395: assistant to bishop of Hippo, who he succeeded

430: died as the Vandals were besieging Hippo

Champions of Orthodoxy

St. Augustine

demolished **Manichaean** faith; God sole creator, evil deprivation of good

opposed **Donatists**

- unworthiness of a minister did not affect validity of a sacrament

attacked **Pelagius**, who said man could save himself of his own free will without divine help

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Monasticism

Anthony of Egypt (251- 326)

“There is one thing that you lack. Sell all you have and distribute the money among the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come follow me.”

- Mark 10:21

lived as a hermit in the desert
reputation for holiness attracted followers
organized a community of hermits

Monasticism

“Monks who leave their cells, or seek the company of others, lose their peace, like the fish out of water loses its life.”

- Anthony

Monasticism

Pachomius (290-346)

started as hermit

founded monastery on Nile; soon numbered 3000
monks

common clothing, meals, cells

celebrate the Eucharist and meditate on the Bible
together

manual labor for the good of the community

life with a Rule

encouraged similar settlements for women

Monasticism

4th century: many monastic communities in the east

5th century: monastic communities in the west

Augustine: founded 2 communities; common life essential to Christian ideal of love

Monasticism

Benedict of Nursia (480-550)

lived in a cave for 3 years, attracting followers
set up 12 monasteries,
founded monastery at Monte Cassino in **525**, near
Naples

formed Rule of Benedict

- much less emphasis on austerity, mortification of the flesh, penance, and more on harmony of living together
- life lived around Matins (or Lauds), Prime, Terce, Sext, Nones, Vespers, and Compline

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Celtic Christianity

460: Romano British Christian named Patrick (Magonus Sucatus Patricius) converted the Irish Monasticism dominant force in Christian community, and spirituality carried on active missionary work

- Columba, migrated from Ireland to found monastery at Iona off the Scottish coast
- sent missionaries to Picts in Scotland and into Britain

Christianity in Britain

by fourth century, Roman Britain had its own bishop, and the church a substantial following
early fifth century: Britain ruled by Roman-British princes

Prince Vortigern called for aid from pagan barbarian warriors from the continent, the Anglo-Saxons

Anglo-Saxons conquered and colonized eastern Britain and virtually destroyed the Christian church through slaughter, rape, pillage

Britain Re-converted

“pincer action”

- missionaries from Columba’s Celtic monastery in Iona
- Pope Gregory the Great sent Augustine
 - ❖ landed at Kent, established base church at Canterbury in **597**

dispute between these Christian movements on date of Easter settled at Synod of Whitby in **664**