Chapter One

Part One

1. Introduction

1.1. Course Description

Church History is the history of the kingdom of God upon earth. As such it naturally deals with the founding and development of this kingdom, with the fortunes of its citizens, the congregations of saints and true believers The citizens of this kingdom include the people of the Old Testament (Mat 8:11), and those of the New Testament. Therefore, properly speaking church history extends from the creation, as records in Genesis, down to the present. The central event in this long history is the coming of Jesus Christ the saviour of the world. He is not only the centre of history but also He is the key stone to the universe (John 1:3).

Thus, we find an intimate relationship between the Old and the New Testament. The New Testament is concealed in the Old Testament and the Old Testament is revealed in the New Testament. But the term church history is now commonly used in a more restricted sense, designating merely the second stage in the development of God's kingdom upon earth. In this sense, church history means a history of the Christian church. In another way, church history may be defined as the history of God's kingdom upon earth from the time of Jesus Christ and the first Pentecost down to the present.

Various aspects or branches of Church History may be distinguished, depending on whether the emphasis is upon *practice*, *forms*, *thought*, or *opposition*. Christianity as expressed in practical life naturally deals with the History of Home and Foreign Missions, and their subordinate activities such as charities, medical care and rescue mission. Special study of the *forms* of Christian life would lead to a History of Church Polity (Organization and discipline), and a History of Christian worship. Similar attention to Christian

thought would lead to a History of Creeds and confessions, and a History of Christian Theology or Leaning. Special consideration of *opposing forces* would lead to a History of Persecutions, of a History of Religious Liberty.

The teacher who prepared the handout divided the History of the Christian Church into **four parts** in terms of time; because this serves as landmarks along the route the student is to travel.

- The **first Part** tells us the events from the time of **Jesus Christ to the end of the third century** or to the coming of Emperor Constantine to the throne of the Roman Empire;
- **The second** part contains the incidents **from the beginning of the fourth century to the beginning of the sixth century;** the **third part** supplies us with important points **from the sixth century to Reformation**, whereas
- **The fourth** part teaches the events **from reformation to the foundation of World Church Council.**

1.2. Objective of the Course

1.2.1. General objective

The general objective of the course is to study the grand events from the foundation of the universal Church in the first century A.D. to the establishment of World Church Councils (WCC) in the 20th century. The subject is studied in terms of time sequence or chronological order.

1.2. 2.Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of the course are listed as follows:

1. Church History brings the student in touch with his spiritual forefathers. A patriotic citizen should know the history of his country, because such knowledge makes for better citizenship; a corresponding knowledge of Church History makes for better and more intelligent church membership.
2. Knowledge of church backgrounds broadens the perspectives, and gives more a correct understanding of Jesus Christ. He is the central figure in both

universal and church history. In the pre-Christian systems of religion, philosophy, and government, mankind was prepared –positively and negatively-for his coming. The full significance of Christ for the Christian world is revealed, not merely in the New Testament, but also in the twenty centuries of Christian History. Church History helps to portray the fullness of the stature/figure of Christ.

3. It promotes high-mindedness and toleration. It reveals the comprehensiveness of the Kingdom of God upon earth. It leads to the study of Christianity in all its places. The study of the great religious controversies of the past should cultivate proper respect for the opinions and convictions of others. A general and widely diffused knowledge of the Church is also a most powerful factor in eliminating disconnected, isolated group movements teaching against the Word of God.

4. Knowledge of the Church of the past services as basis for understanding the present. History does not necessarily repeat itself; yet, the past has many parallels to the present. Adequate knowledge is the best preventive for the repetition of the mistakes of the past; it greatly helps in the solutions of problems of the present.

5. Christianity a stabilizing influence upon society. But we live in an age of *scepticism*/disbelief/cynicism. The very foundations of Christianity are challenged and shaken. The older order of things, must as it seems, give room to new customs, modes, and ideas. Are there new things simply old errors exploded long ago, or are we witnessing the birth-pangs of a new order? Will these changes lead to chaos and defeat, or to ultimate victory for the church? The records of the church will shed much light on these problems, and Church History will furnish one of the strongest of the continuous presence of the Lord with his people.

6. Many think it strange that the Christian church is broken up into so many sects and denominations. Why the many doctrinal systems variegated/multicoloured forms of organizations, life and worship? Church

History will answer all these questions. It will reveal the larger unity which exists between these groups.

7. It has a special value of such study for church leaders. Church History is veritable/real store-house of information on successful religious leadership. Christian leaders cannot preserve the historic continuity of their groups without knowledge of the past. Furthermore, this history presents a wealth of material that may be used in sermons and addresses.

8. Finally, it has intellectual, cultural, and stimulating values. The constant search for the relation between cause and effects develops the intellect. Furthermore, the Christian Church has always succeeded in establishing itself in the great centres of culture and civilization. Christianity and true culture go hand in hand. The influence of Christianity upon society has produced some of the choicest fruits of modern culture. Knowledge of Church History leads to a better appreciation of this culture. Lastly, the study of the noble lives and the great ideals of apostles, evangelists, martyrs, reformers, and other saints of God, are pregnant with inspiration and vitalizing enthusiasm.

1.3. The Definitions of Ecclesia

In the pre-Christian period the gathering of God's people was designated by two terms: *edhah* and *kahal* meaning "assembly". In the Christian world this body of the true believers is referred as to ecclesia or as the Christian "church". The word ecclesia is from a Greek term meaning "those called together," or "those called out," or simply, "assembly". The word "church" is evidently from another Greek word "kyriakon," which means "the Lord's" and may refer one of two things: (1)The Lord's "body "or the congregation of believers; (2) The Lord's "or the consecrated building house". The word Christian was coined in Antioch around 40 AD (Acts 11:26). In addition to the original term of ecclesia (Church) is now employed for the service, as to attend the church. The church of Rome or the church of Alexandria or any

other particular church; the body of the Christian either people in one local community or in the world or it may be an ideal conception embracing only true believers either on earth only or also in heaven.

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The term ecclesia is attested from the 5th BC, and it denoted at first the popular assembly of the full citizens of a city. So centuries before the translation of the OT, the term ecclesia was clearly denoted as political phenomena. In the Septuagint (LXX) the term ecclesia denotes the gathering of an army in preparation for the war or the coming together of a potentially dangerous crowd (1Sam. 17:14, 2chr.28:14, psa.26:5). Moreover, some passages of the Bible describe ecclesia as the coming together of the people to hear the word of God or the voice of God (Deu.4:10, 18:16, 31:30, judge 20:2).

1.3.1. Ecclesia in the New Testament

The word ecclesia appears 114 times in the New Testament: with 62 instances in St. Paul's letters, 3 times in St. Mathew, 23 in Acts, 20 times in Revelations, and six times in other epistles.

a. The sayings of Jesus Christ about Ecclesia

The saying in matthew18:20 give the precise meaning of a church. Here He designates the term ecclesia as the gathering of the congregation of the believers in his name. Here the term implies some kinds of organization which gather in the name of Jesus Christ.

Matthew.16:18 gives several factors, first Jesus creates a new congregation which is evidently a special ground within Judaism. Second Jesus speaks himself as Messiah and my congregation means to us that he

established the congregation of messiah. Third, the congregation is built on this rock which is, according to the Roman Church, taken to refer to St Peter and the term Petra suggests that the foundation of the church is the content of Peter's confession of faith that Jesus Christ is the son of God and the messiah. Finally that Jesus Christ is speaking on cosmic scale is apparent from the references to the opposition from "gates of Hades" and keys to the kingdom, this means that ecclesia is a divinely instituted community against which the full force of evil is pitted.

All these materials show that Jesus proclaimed the rule of God and He called the people to be his own disciples and constituted the ecclesia of the messiah. He saw them as the children of God and called them to live together as brothers and sisters. Here is the essence of the church.

b. Ecclesia in the Epistles

St Paul uses the term ecclesia in different ways. The first one is local assembly or the congregation of the believers (1Tess. 1. '1, 2 pet 1'1), in his greeting to the Christians of Thessalonica, Paul says "Silas and Timothy to the Church (ecclesia) of the Thessalonians God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ". Here the term is employed in the some way as in the Greek and in the Jewish circles. However, it is distinguished from the regular political assembly by the addition of the words "in God the Father" and from the regular synagogue meeting by the additional phrase "in the lord Jesus Christ", so here it is clear that Paul has in mind an actual gathering of Thessalonians Christians (2 Tess.1:4, Gal.1:2, 1cor 7:17, 11:16, 2cor8:19, 11:8, Rom. 16:4)

C. House Church

In a second group of references Paul uses the term ecclesia in the sense of a house church on some occasions a whole congregation in one city might be small enough to meet in the home of one of its members, and it must be remembered that it was not until about the middle of the third century that early Christianity owned property for the purpose of worship. In

other places, house churches appeared to have been smaller circles of fellowship within the larger group. In addition to Nympha's house in Laudicea [col.4:15], we know that in Colossia Phlemon's house was used as a meeting place (phi.2). At Philippi Lydia's home seems to have been used it this way (Acts 16:15, 40), while at Corinth Gaius' house is described as "host" to the whole church (Roman 16:23)

d. Heavenly Church

This title has got a mystical and eschatological significance. In Colossian 1:18 St. Paul states that Christ is the head of the body that is the church (eph.1:2, 3:10.21). Most commentators interpret this reference in Colossian and Ephesus the church is universal to which all believers belong whether they are in heaven or on earth. As a member of the body of Christ, they are not only related to Christ Himself but also to one another even when they are separated by space and time. It is expressedly mentioned by St Paul that God made as alive with Christ raised us up with him and seated us in the heavenly reasons in Christ Jesus (Eph.2:5-6)

e. Ecclesia and Synagogue

In the Septuagint both ecclesia and Synagogue were used to translate Hebrew *kahal* (Num.16:3-5-synagogues, Deut 31:30-ecclesia. In James 2:2), Synagogue is used for the ordinary gathering of the people for worship, whereas the Revelation 2:8 and 3:7. Ecclesia is quiet definite by applied to the Christian assembly and synagogue to the Jewish assembly.

The word church suggests a derivation from Kyriakon, which means belonging to the Lord and it may refer to two things: the Lord's body or the congregation of believers and Lord's house or the secrete building. The word Christian was coined in Antioch around 40 AD (Acts 11:26).

1. 4. Backgrounds to the Foundation of the Church

It is impossible to understand the early history of the church without the knowledge of the political, religious and cultural backgrounds into which the church came.

1.4.1. The Dispersion of the Jews

The wide-spread of the Jews started from the time of the Babylonian exile at the time of Nebuchadnezzar II (605—562). Their dispersion in most of the countries of the Roman Empire and Persian Empire prepared the way for the evangelists to preach the gospel. They were most numerous in the kingdom of Persia. They were counted by millions in Mesopotamia, Nubia, Media and Babylonia. The Jews of the dispersion were much more liberal minded than the Jews of Palestine. They had translated the OT into Greek about 250 BC which became known as Septuagint and this version was universally used by the Jews who had settled outside Palestine, and made the OT Scripture accessible to the Gentiles. The OT Book had taught the highest conception of God. They stressed that God is one. In contrast to the many gods of the pagan world they taught that God is Holy who had given to man a moral law of the highest order. The promises and prophecies concerning a saviour who was to redeem the world led to look for the coming of such a saviour.

The synagogues were the worshipping places of all the colonies. They were gathering for worshipping God and listening the teaching of Torah and prophecies. Wherever the evangelists of the gospel went there, they found communities small and great of God fearing people, eagerly expecting the coming of the Messiah and zealous of good works. Their expectation of the coming of a Messiah who would reign in righteousness had aroused hope in many devoted and serious minded Gentiles and Jews. In this way many were prepared to listen with respect to the preaching of the gospel for the kingdom of God.

1.4. 2. The Greek Cultural Influence

The Hellenistic culture was the product of the political conquest of the east by the Macedonian Alexander the Great (336-325 BC). His dream was the real fusion of all the races conquered. He had planned the administration

of the empire on this principle, however, the fusion of Asia and Europe on the basis of Greek culture did not achieve in the full sense.

Alexander introduced the Greek culture /language in all the countries he conquered and Greek became the universal language understood and spoken by every educated people. Aramaic was the language of the Jews of Palestine and it was certainly the language spoken by our Lord Jesus Christ. But the Book of the NT was written in Greek, and the Apostles and the evangelists were preaching in Geek in the countries they visited. The wide-spread knowledge of Greek was a great help to the preacher of the gospel.

The political power of the Greek empire ended with the flourishing up of the Roman Empire. But Athens, the capital of Greece remained as an intellectual centre of the world with its universities centuries before Christ himself. Many students from all nations flocked here in Athens to listen to wisdom of the Geek philosophers.

a. Socrates (470?-399

He was the founder of philosophy, and he taught the existence of God. He explained man himself as the most important theme investigation, not of the universe. According his teaching, righteousness is based on knowledge and the true knowledge will enable a man to acquire four things: virtue, prudence, courage, self control and justice.

b. Plato (427-347 B.C.)

To Plato the passing forms of this visible world give no real knowledge. That knowledge of permanent and real comes from our acquaintance with the “ideas,” those changeless archetypal (typical), universal patterns exist in the invisible spiritual world–the “intelligible” world, since known by reason rather than by the senses—and give whatever of reality is shared by the passing phenomena present to our senses. Plato Defined virtue as a likeness of God, but he taught that only the intellectual man could attain to the

highest good. He had no message of hope to the poor, illiterate and the sinner.

C. Aristotle (384-322 BC

He was a far less mystical spirit than Plato. To Aristotle the visible world was an unquestioned realty. He discarded Plato's sharp discrimination between "ideas" and phenomena. Neither exists without the other. Each existence is a substance, the result, save the case of God, who is purely immaterial, of the impress of "ideas," as the formative force, on matter which is the content. Matter in itself is only potential substance. It has always existed, yet never without form. Hence the world is eternal, for a realm of "ideas" antecedent to their manifestation in phenomena does not exist. He conceived God as the first cause. But according to him, God is indifferent to man. He stressed the importance of a moral life only

Socrates, Plato and Aristotle were all theists, but their supreme God was far removed from man and took no interest in their well being. It must be remembered their teaching for the elect and it had no massage of hope, or of salvation from the power of sin. It could educate the intellectuals, but it could not vitalise the religious life of the people. This failure of Greek philosophy to satisfy the spiritual needs of the people prepared them to turn them to Christianity for satisfaction. Many of the philosophers believed and taught the existence of the supreme God, the resurrection of all men from the dead, and a final judgement. Thus, all these teachings were the factors to real preparation of the ground for all preachers of the gospel.

In Alexandria a great centre of Greek learning, Philo the Jew had blended some of Plato's philosophy with the teaching of all that was best in Jewish writings and literary works had a great influence on Christian theology.

1.4.3. The Roman Political influence

The Roman Empire was a unified international world, formed itself into a single great monarchy. Geographically, The Roman Empire extends from the River Euphrates in the East to Atlantic in the west, from the Danube, the Rhine, and the firths of Scotland to the African deserts bordering on the Mediterranean Sea in the south. This vast territory was naturally divided into two general divisions: the orient, or the East; and the Occident, or the West. The former included Egypt, Arabia, and the Roman territory to the East of the Adriatic Sea. The latter included the Roman territory to the West of Asia. This vast territory with its many different nations and languages was under the rule of one man, the Roman Emperor who presided in Rome. The empire was divided into provinces. The provinces were governed by procurators who were appointed by the Senate. The Senate was appointed by the emperor.

Within the circle of the empire, there was peace. Internationalism was a fact; the roads were excellent. Throughout the empire there was a net-work of communication by land and sea, connecting all the chief towns and made reasonable safe for the travellers. There was a regular trade with India and Sri-Lanka. The east coast of Africa was known for commerce. Roman coins have been in India, Africa, and Dunlin and in China. Rome was the capital city of the empire. It was the geographical centre of the world. From Rome good roads branched out to all parts of the empire and to every important city. When Christ was born in Bethlehem, a small town in Palestine the then emperor was governed by Augustus Caesar.

Although it was a unified world, the provinces defined as much in the character of their cultural civilization. Culturally, the Asian and the Grecian people were superior to Rome. In Syria and Egypt there was a great civilization which was older than that of Greece. Asia was famous for its cities centuries before Roman history began.

1.4.4. Other Religious Influences

We may distinguish three main religious influences in the world in which Christianity come to existence

1. The religions of Greek associated with the classic culture
2. The religions of the pre-Roman culture in the West.
3. The ancient religions of the east: Persia, China, India, Ethiopia, Nubia and etc.

The earlier religions saw a super human power at work in the play of natural forces and the products. Trees, streams, sky, air, planets, moon earth, etc were revered as supper and as such personified and worshipped. There was no fixed dogmatic teaching. The ritual practices were the real affair of the religions. There was a false belief in the future, gave themselves to pleasure, injustice and anarchy (confusion). Sexual immorality played their part in the life of the people. Polytheism was strong and emperor worship became prominent.

No remedy (solution) could be found for these evils. The majority of the pagans were despondent, having no hope, and a minority looked with ancient to the east, the east of ancient religion, in the hope of finding their remedy for the disorder of their time, and possibly a saviour.

At such a time in the world’s history a star appeared in the east, which directed the wise men to Bethlehem where they discovered a little child, recently born, was to become the saviour. In the fullness of time when the world had been prepared for his coming, God sent his son, Jesus Christ to be the saviour of the world.

Chapter Two

The Church of the First Century

2. 1. Jesus Christ the Jewish Messiah

Christianity begins with Christ and for our knowledge of Christ we are more dependent on the gospel than any other documents.

2. 1.1. The Birth of Jesus Christ

In the little town of Bethlehem a boy was born of a pure virgin by the power of the Holy Spirit. The child's destiny had been foretold to his mother Mary by the angel of God who announced the coming through the direct operation of the Most High, and too Joseph was given like explanatory vision and prophecy.

The angel announced to the shepherd that the saviour has been born. Wise men from the east, directed their way by remarkable star, arrived in Jerusalem, one eagerly enquired where he that is born of king of the Jews is? For we have seen his star in the east and come to worship him, and when they found him they paid him homage, and presented to him the gifts of gold, frank-incense and myrrh. According to the Jewish law, He was circumcised in the eight day, presented in the temple, and given the name, Jesus, and taken to Nazareth the home of Joseph and Mary. He was taught to pray by his mother and instructed in the Jewish law and Scriptures by the Rabbi and Scribes.

2.1.2. Beginning of His Mission

When the news reached Nazareth, a great spiritual revival among the Jews through the preaching of John the Baptist, and that all men were expecting the coming of the promised Messiah, Jesus realized that the time had come to begin his Mission, and was baptized by John in the River of Jordan coming up from the water, His belief in his mission was confirmed, a

voice from heaven declaring “This is my beloved son, in whom I am well blessed”, and in order to empower him for his ministry, the Holy Sprit in the form of a dove descended from Heaven and rested up on Him.

He fasted 40 days and resisted the Temptation of the evil one. He preached and exhorted the people to “Repent to the Kingdom of at his hand” immense crowds followed him attracted by his preaching and wonderful of healing action.

Jesus was revolutionary and he revolutionized the prevailing ideas about God, denouncing the common idea that God was a more tribal deity and the exclusive possession of Jews, and revealing him as the God and Father of all mankind. He opened the doors of the kingdom of heaven to all believers. He fearlessly attacked the narrow excessiveness of the Jews who believed that they alone were the people of God.

2.1.3. His Teachings

In the sermon on the Mount Olive /Mat 5, 6, and7/ taught the basic principles of Christianity. According to Him, the first and the greatest commandments “Hear, O! Israel the Lord our God is one God, and thou shalt love the lord thy God with all your heart and with your entire mind and with your soul and with all the strength” and the second is” thy shalt love thy neighbour as they self” (Mk12:29.31)

His new commandment is “a new commandment 1 give you love one another, as I have loved ye (John 13:34).He taught the disciples how to pray (Matthew,6:9-14)

He refused to fill the role of the messiah as expected by the Jews that he would lead a rebellion (revolt) and throw off the heated yoke of the Romans and restore the kingdom of Israel, reigning as a king. Instead He clearly stated “my kingdom is not of this world (Mat.22:21lohn)

2.1.4. His claims

Without having any fear of the Jews Jesus made many stronger claims – example that he was the son of God, and that he and the father were one,

that he was the only way to God, that he was the truth, and that the only means by which man could inter the kingdom of God and obtain the eternal life.

He selected the Apostles and carefully trained them and instructed in the mysteries of the kingdom of God. He appointed the sacraments, especially those of baptism and Eucharist. During a ministry of three and half years, He not only taught and preached but also revealed his divine power by miracles of healing. The common people listened gladly him, and very many accepted him as their Messiah. However, all through his ministry the leaders of the Jews vehemently opposed Him and tried to kill him.

2.1.5. His Trial, Death and Resurrection

Jesus was betrayed by one of his apostles (Judah the Iscariot) and sold into the hands of the rulers who promptly brought him before the Roman Procurator or Prefect Pilate of Pontius. After a cruel trial and on the evidence of false witness, he was condemned death. After being scourged by the soldiers, he was taken outside the city of Jerusalem and was crucified with two criminals. On the cross, Jesus offered himself as a full perfect and a sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. On the third day as he himself prophesied Christ emerged alive from a tomb and was declared to be the son of God. For forty days, Christ remained in this world, showing himself alive to his disciples and other people by man infallible proof, speaking the kingdom of God and of the church which was to be established in this world.

On the forty days after resurrection, the Lord led his apostles and disciples out to Mount Olive, giving them his last promise and a command ‘you shall receive the power after that the Holy Spirit come upon you; and you shall be my witness from Jerusalem and to the outer most part of the earth,”

He ascended to heaven and seated in glory at the right hand of his Father leaving his disciples to found and build up the Christian faith, the one, Holy, catholic and apostolic church.

2.1.6. The Foundation of the Universal Church

The church of Christ began its history as world movement on the day of the Pentecost, 50 days after our Lord's resurrection and ten days after his ascension. When Lord ascended to heaven, he left behind the disciples to proclaim the good news of salvation to the world. This consisted of the apostles and the disciples who had witnessed his ascension, one hundred and twenty in number (Act1:15) besides them were 500 to whom He showed himself after the resurrection (1 cor15:6), and there must have been many more believers in the towns and villages of Palestine in which he had preached and worked his divine miracles.

Most of these people were poor in this world's goods. They were having no great standing in the social intellectual, political or official field. But they were firm believers in the resurrection of Lord. They had confessed their belief in him as Messiah, the Son of God, Lord and God, the divinely appointed savior of the world.

These people were very much eager to begin the work of evangelizing the world. But Christ had instructed them to wait in Jerusalem for the promise of the father, for the coming of the Holy Spirit upon them.

In obedience to this command they waited in Jerusalem spending their time in prayer and choosing Mathias to fill the place of Judas the Iscoriot, who had betrayed his Lord.

2.1.7. The Gift of the Holy Spirit

On the morning day of Pentecost, while all the followers Jesus in number 120 were assembled in their meeting place (the house of John Mark's mother) and praying, the Holy Spirit came upon them in a marvelous manner. The Holy Spirit transformed them and enabled them to witness in many languages to the crowds of pilgrims who gather there.

The effect of this experience was three fold:

1. It eliminated the minds, giving them a new view of the kingdom of God, that it was not a political empire, but a spiritual one, with the ascended Lord as its invisible ruler.
2. It empowered them, bestowing upon, every member and a power of utterance made their testimony convincing to those who heard it.
3. The divine spirit has dwelt in the church from that day as abiding presence, as a personal individual possession of every believer.

From the out pouring of the spirit on that day, the birth day (the baptismal day) of the Christian church, the fellowship of those earliest years has been rightly named the Pentecostal church.

2.1.8. The Early Church in Jerusalem (34-44 AD)

It is essential that the student should get a good perspective of the Apostolic Age. Jerusalem was the great church centre. The Apostle Peter and James, the brother of the Lord, were the great leaders of the church at that time. From 44-68 AD. The Apostle Paul made Antioch in Syria the great centre of the foreign mission. From 68-100 AD. The Apostle John made Ephesus the great church centre of the world. Rome did not come into prominence as a church centre till after the Apostolic Age. The Book of Acts is practically the only historical writing that gives first-hand information concerning the early church in Jerusalem, AD. 30-44. Only a few additional remarks may be found scattered in the New Testament Epistles.

The Books of Acts may be considered in the earliest history of the Christian Church. The narrative centers mainly about two Apostles: Peter, chapters 1-12, and Paul, chapters13-28. The church had great centre of foreign mission. Paul spread the Gospel to the north and to the west until he reached Rome, the great capital of the world.

2.1.9. The Expansion of the Early Church

The church began in the city of Jerusalem and apparently was limited that city and its immediate surroundings. The upper room on Mount Zion and

Solomon's porch in the temple were the head quarters of the church throughout its earliest epoch.

As a result of the remarkable miracles of the apostles and of their preaching, many people were added to the church. St. Luke records four marks of the apostolic church.

1. The converts continued in the apostolic teaching, receiving the instructions regarding the life and the teaching of Jesus Christ.
2. They formed a fellowship. They were brothers united in devotion to the Lord, and in the service of one another.
3. Daily obeyed the Lord's instruction to break the bread in remembrance of Him.
4. They assembled for public worship-apparently a regular course of daily prayer was maintained. Thus, the church was a great united family, a brother-ship, a fellowship and a bond which they held together with faith in a common Savior.

2.1.10. The Government of the Church

In a church of comparatively small numbers, all in one city, all of one race, all absolutely obedient to the will of the ascended Lord, and all are in fellowship with the Holy Spirit, little government was needed, but that little was given by the little apostle as a body.

However, Acts 6: records the appointment of the first officials of the newly formed church, whose special work was to administer relief to widowers and the poor.

This incidence was the first step in the development of the organization of the apostolic church after the event of Pentecost.

2.1.10. Stephen the First Martyr

The first among the seven was Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit. Immediately after his election, he soon attracted notice as a preacher. He preached so boldly and was so emphatic about the universality of the gospel.

He proclaimed Jesus as a savior not only for the Jews but also for the Gentiles of every nation. He was stoned to death by the Jews, and so became the first of the martyrs. His faith and love for the living Christ was so strong. His martyrdom consequents on his declaration that he beholds the Son of man as his Lord on the right hand of God the Father were final reputation by the Jews of Christ as king of Israel.

2.1.11. Philip and His mission

The Martyrdom of Stephen and the persecution of Christians which followed was a mill-stone in the history of the infant church. Many people left Jerusalem and sought refugee in other towns and other villages. They zealously preached Christ and made many convert. Philip another of the seven deacons found refugee among the Samaritans a mixed people who were neither Jews nor Gentiles but held in contempt by the Jews. He preached a gospel to the Samaritans and established a church in Samaria. He won many to the faith in Samaria. Baptized the eunuch of Condance, the Queen of Ethiopia, and formed new congregation in Joppa, Gaza, and Caesarea.

2. 2.12. The Family, Education and Character of Saul

Saul was born somewhere about 1 B.C. The boy Saul belonged to a family which formed part of oligarchy within the oligarchy. Why or when Saul’s family went to live at Tarsus? We have clear means of knowing. Anyway, Jerome gave a clue what heard during his time Saul’s family went from Gischala, in North Galilee to Tarsus. His parents seem to have been the people of wealth: this confirmed by the fact that they could afford to send him, as well as his nephew after him, to Jerusalem to continue his education. His parents gave him a Jewish name, Saul which was changed while Christ revealed on his way to Damascus persecuting the Christians.

His parents were ardent Pharisees (Acts 23:6, Rom. 4:1), and taught their children “ancestral tradition”. They chose Gamaliel as his teacher in Jerusalem; for whereas the stricter Palestinian Jews deprecated even the use

of the Greek tongue in reciting; Phylactries, Gamaliel's son tells us that his father taught a thousand boys, of whom half studied the Law, half "the wisdom of Greeks."

The fourth century tradition told that he served God (as a preacher) for thirty-five years and died at the age of sixty-eight. Harmonies with two other indications of his age: first, he was a member of the Sanhedrin when Stephen was stoned, and therefore was over thirty years of age; secondly, he calls himself "Paul the aged" when he writes to Philemon about A.D. 62.

One of those who heard Stephen and were aroused to anger by Stephen's utterance was Saul of Tarsus on the coast of Asia Minor. He was an accredited Rabbi of Jewish Law. Saul took part in the slaying of Stephen and immediately after his death he became the leader in a persecution of the Disciples of Christ, seizing, scourging, binding and torturing both men and woman. The Jerusalem church was broken up for the time and its members scattered abroad. But wherever the Christians went to Samaria, to Damascus, they became preachers of the gospels and established churches. This made Saul to hate the Christians and he went here and there to persecute them.

2.1.13. The Conversion of Saul

The next outstanding event recorded in the acts of Paul is the conversion of him. On his way to Damascus for persecuting Christians, he was arrested by a vision of the ascended Lord. Thus, he became Paulos the apostle of Gentiles. After his baptism, he retired to Arabia for three years, then he visited Damascus, Jerusalem, and Tarsus and at the invitation of Barnabas, he settled at Antioch for a time in order to build up the rapidly growing church of the town. It was here that the converts were first called Christians; St Peter too was very busy in preaching, and when he admitted to the church. Cornelius, the Roman centurion, the Jewish believer learned that God had granted repentance and unto life to the Gentiles. The church was on

its way to become the great international and inter-racial society opened to all men who it was since became.

2.1.14. St. Paul's Missionary Journeys

St. Paul's missionary activities were among the Gentiles though he did not neglect preaching to Jews.

a. First Missionary Journeys (Acts13-14)

It is strange how God guides His Church. In every age she seems fearfully to look backwards; but the Divine hand draws her on: else she had ceased to exist long ago. So from one point of view, she seems to have stumbled into her world-wide mission; and having stumbled, to have found the man uniquely fitted to fulfill the destiny.

When Barnabas and Saul got back to Antioch, they laid their plan for a foreign missionary tour before the Church there; for it was to Antioch, rather than to Jerusalem, that they belonged. The two missionaries had brought with them from Jerusalem Barnabas's cousin, John Mark. His Mother, Mary was a leading Christian at Jerusalem (Acts 12 where we find a Christian community assembled at her house). Her son seems to have known our Lord personally and followed Him after His arrest. Barnabas and Saul took him as their assistant, probably to act amanuensis, to baptize converts, and to help generally.

In A.D. 46, Paul, Barnabas sailed from Seleucia for Cyprus. Disembarking at Salamis, they went throughout the island, eventually reaching Paphos where their labors culminated in the conversion of Sergius Paulus, the pro-consul. They next took ship for the coast of Asia-Minor, where after Mark had left them, they made Antioch of Pisidia their centre.

The town of Antioch lay, strictly speaking, outside the boundary of Pisidia. Ethnographically it belonged to the old Phrygian stock, politically to the provinces of Galatia. From Antioch St. Paul and St. Barnabas visited Crete

and a number of cities in Asia-minor; made converts and established churches in every place they visited.

Barnabas and Saul went to Iconium (Acts 14:17). It is the great central road of Asia-Minor, and they made a large number of converts, both Jewish and "Greek." Then they visited Lystra (Acts 14:8-20). From Lystra Barnabas and Saul went to Derbe (Acts 31-28). It was a small remote frontier town, 50 miles from Lystra, on the extreme south-east of the plateau. They were quite near to Antioch from which they had started their journey. But instead of returning to Antioch they turned back and re-visited the churches which they had founded on their journey, and appointed over them elders according to the plan of the synagogue.

Wherever, it was possible, they began their work by preaching in the synagogue, because there every Jew had a right to speak specially an accredited/qualified Rabbi like Paul coming from the famous school of Gamalial would be welcome. Moreover, through the synagogue they would find not only the devotee Jews, but with them also the serious minded God fearing Gentiles. The new congregation formed by Paul and Barnabas were mainly of Gentiles with the nucleus of the Jews believers. The large number of Gentiles converted aroused the jealousy and enmity of many Jews Christians who insisted that all converts from the Gentiles must be circumcised and observed the Jewish ceremonial laws. This demand was strongly opposed by St, Paul because it belittle the atoning work of Christ on the cross and made man's salvation dependent upon his observance of the Mosaic law only.

b. The Council of Jerusalem in 50 AD (Acts 15)

Between the two parties (Jewish Christians and Gentiles) a great controversy aroused threatening a division inside the church. Finally a council was held in Jerusalem to consider the question of the Gentiles membership and to frame a ruling for the church. It is not too worthy that in this council not only the apostles but the leaders and the whole churches

were represented. James was the president of the council; Paul, Barnabas and Peter were the main speakers in the council. After a series discussion, St. James proclaimed the decision of the council. The decisions were as follow:

In the case of Gentile believers the Leviticus Law as not to be enforced, but that the Gentiles should be careful to abstain from certain acts which might offend the Jewish convert. The decision of the council declared in emphatic terms that the Gentiles Christians apart from the Mosaic Law, admitted to the full privileges and membership of the church.

The judgment of the council was sent to the Gentile churches in the form of a letter and caused much rejoicing (Acts 15:29). With this decision, the period of every race and land was completed, and the gospel could forward on its every widening way.

c. The Second Missionary journeys of St. Paul

After the council of Jerusalem, Paul started his second missionary journeys from Syria (In Antioch). In his journey he was accompanied by Silas and Timothy. He visited again the churches he founded on his first journeys. As a result of a vision proceeded to evangelize Macedonia, visiting and establishing churches in Philippi, Thessalonica, Brea, Athens, Corinth and Ephesus, after which he returned to Antioch. From Corinth Paul wrote two letters to the church at Thessalonica. In his journeys of three years by land and sea, he had covered more than two thousand miles. And had planted the church in many cities, and had opened the imperial continent of Europe to the gospel.

d. The Third Missionary Journey of St. Paul

After a brief period of rest, Paul started his third missionary journeys again from Antioch. His only companion in the beginning was Timothy, who had joined him on his second journeys and remained to the end as his faithful helper and son in gospel. However, a quite number of fellow travelers were with him before the end of this journey. He began by visiting the

churches in Syria and Cilicia including his birth place, Tarsus. Then he passed over his old route calling for the last time visit upon the churches of his previous journey. But after crossing the province of Phrygia, instead of turning north-ward to Troas, he went south-ward, Ephesus the main city in Asia-minor. Here he stayed more than two years, the longest at any place in all his journeys his missionary won great success, resulting not only in the churches of Ephesus but also in planting the gospel through out the provinces. Following his method of re-visiting in the churches he sailed from Ephesus to Macedonia, called upon the disciples in Philippi Thessalonica, Berea and also the other cities in Greece.

He was led to return by the same route for a final visit to a church he visited, sailed to Troas and thence along the coast of Asia-minor. At Mellitus, the sea port of Ephesus, he sent for the elders of that church, and gave to them a touching farewell (Acts 20:6-12m 17-36), then he went on his voyage again to Caesarea and climbed up the mountain to Jerusalem. In Jerusalem his third missionary journey ended. Epistle to Roman and Galician were written in this period.

While he was worshipping in the temple, Paul was attacked by the Jewish opponents, and they tried to kill him. But he was rescued by the Roman soldiers and confined to prison.

Paul was a prisoner for a short time in Jerusalem, then for three years in Caesarea and for at least two years at Rome. Even in his bounds Paul was still a missionary, employing every opportunity to preach the gospel of Christ. While awaiting his trial at Rome, he preached and thought and many convert, even of the members of the Caesar’s household. During this time, he wrote his Epistles to Ephesians, Colossians, Philippe and Philemon and built up the church in Rome. On his release, he appears to have re-visited the churches had established in Macedonia, and he may also have visited Spain. Traditions state that at Nicopolison on the Adriatic sea, north of Greek he was arrested again and sent to Rome, where he was martyred (68 A.D),

beheaded by Nero's persecutions. His three Epistles may belong to this period-First Timothy and second Timothy including Titus.

2.2. The Age of the Shadows

2.2.1. Nero's persecutions (54--68)

The first imperial persecution, almost accidental, the Christians began in 64 AD. The Christians by this time were known to be distinct from the Jews and so no longer enjoyed the privilege which the stage allowed to the Jewish people. They were now known as members of unrecognized and unlawful religion. From the 19th to the 24th of July, 64 AD., the City of Rome was burned. Emperor Nero wanted to divert from himself the suspicion of being the author of the fire. He knew the Christians had already become objects of the popular hatred. By accusing them of incendiarism, he could furnish new entertainment for his diabolical cruelty, and make himself popular by inflicting sufferings on the hated Christians. Consequently, the Christians in Rome were accused of incendiarism, misanthropy, and unnatural vice. A horrible persecution followed. Many Christians were executed in the cruelest manner. Burning alive was the ordinary punishment of incendiaries**.** The Christians were accordingly nailed to posts of pine, covered with combustible material, and set on fire to illuminate the public gardens at night. Some were crucified. Others were sewn up in skins of wild beasts and exposed to be torn to pieces by mad dogs. Peter is said to have suffered martyrdom in Rome under Nero in 67 AD. Paul was also martyred by the same emperor in 68.

This persecution seems to have been confined mainly to the city of Rome, although the example set by the Emperor may have been followed in some of the provinces. But the Christians were from then on in constant jeopardy in many parts of the Empire. Nero was followed by Vespasian (68-79), and Vespasian's Titus (79-81). There were no official persecutions by these two Emperors. Vespasian, however, demanded rigid loyalty to the State; and Titus felt that both Christianity and Judaism had in them the same tendency of revolt against the State.

The brutal cruelty and the whole slaughter of the innocent men and women at length aroused the combination of the Roman people who demanded that it should cease, and Nero fearing a revolution, ordered the persecution to be stopped. We have no record from any scholar historian that the Christians outside of Rome were persecuted at this time. However, the Book of Revelation refers to this time as a time of terror in Asia-Minor.

In A.D. 68 the Roman army suffered and was defeated by the Persians; revolt broke out in Rome and the people expelled Nero from the city who shortly after wards committed suicide.

2.2.2. The Destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem

Two years before the martyrdom of Peter and Paul, during the interregnum in the Roman procuratorship after the death of Festus and before the arrival of Albinus, Ananus, the Sadducean high priest, seized the opportunity to remove the Christian leader and had James stoned. Two years after the martyrdom of Peter and Paul, the political and religious ferment in Palestine came to the head. In 64 Gessius Florus became procurator of Judaea and by 66 his tyrannical administration had stirred up a rebellion. The Jewish people revolted against the yoke of the Romans and was at first successfully resisted the army sent against them by the Romans. Unable to make headway (development) against the Jewish uprising, Florus sought the assistance of Cestius Gallus, the governor of Syria, who, after some day, advanced into Palestine with a strong force of legionaries and auxiliaries, but, although elsewhere successful, he withdrew from before Jerusalem. Nero accordingly entrusted Vespasian with the task of putting down the revolt, and in 67 he began a systematic occupation of all strong points throughout the country, until, upon the death of the Emperor in 68. Vespasian, the veteran Roman general was called to Rome to take the imperial throne, and he transferred the command to his son Titus. He transferred the command to his son Titus, and he continued the campaign. On August 10, A.D. 70, the soldiers of Titus captured Jerusalem and the temple was destroyed by fire.

The pillaged its treasures, including the seven-branched candlestick, which was feature both in the eventual triumph at Rome and on the arch of Titus. By September 8, all resistance throughout the city had ceased and Jerusalem passed into the hands of the Romans. More than One million Jews perished in the siege. The Colossian at Rome was built by the forced labor of the Jewish captives, multitude being literally (actually) worked to death. The Jewish state was annihilated and was not until 1948 A.D.

In the fall of Jerusalem, the Christians escaped because of the prophetic utterances of Christ (Mat.24: 16), they received a warning, escaped from the city of Jerusalem and found refugee in the Jordan valley. But great effect upon the church by this distraction was that it put an end forever to all relationships between Judaism and Christianity.

2.2.3 .The Persecutions of Domitian

The second persecution occurred towards the end of the reign of Emperor Domitian in the year of A.D. 95. He had adopted the title “Lord and god” by that title he was saluted by the common Roman people. But the Christians refused to pay him divine honor. He charged the Christians with being atheist and ordered to kill them. Thousands and thousands of believers were slain, especially in Rome. Ireneus states that at this time the Apostle John was banished to Patmos and was imprisoned there. Domitian was assassinated in A.D 96 and was succeeded by Nerva who immediately stopped the persecution, and for a time the church enjoyed rest from attack.

2.3. The Main Writings of the First Century Christianity

2.3.1. Old Testament

The church inherited the OT Books from the Jews. The Jewish canon of the Holy Scripture completed about 160 B.C contained 39 books written in Hebrew by various authors at different periods. These books were quoted by Christ as the word of God and as such at all church services. The OT had been translated into Greek in the reign of Ptolemy II (285-246 B.C.) and was known as the Septuagint. In addition to the above mentioned 39 books, a

certain number of books had also been translated and read by the Jews but they were not included in the canon of the Scriptures. Lord also did not quote any word from the scriptures; nevertheless, the provincial council of Carthege in 397 A.D. included them in the canon.

2.3.2. The New Testament

At the time of the council of Jerusalem 50 A.D none of the NT Books had been written, and the church was dependent for its knowledge of the Christ's life and teaching upon the memory of the disciples. Before the close of the 60 AD, a large part of the NT was in circulation, including the gospel of Mathew, Mark, and Luke the Acts of Apostles, the Epistles of Paul and James, Peter first and second. It is to be remembered that the epistle to Hebrews was not of Pauline Authorship; and was written probably after St. Paul's death. Now it is generally accepted that the Gospel of St John completed about AD 95 when he was living in Ephesus. During the last part of the 1st century the Books of New Testament were written.

2.3.3. The Main Writings of the Apostolic Fathers of the 1st Century

Besides the Gospels and epistles of the apostles, there were some other books so highly esteemed by the Christians that were read in the church service and treated with great respect. The writers of the books are known as apostolic fathers. They are so called Apostolic Fathers because they had personally known the apostles, and so they could state clearly and authoritatively their teaching. Those written in the 1st c are the Epistles of Clement of Rome, Barnabas and the Didache (consider your Patrology)

2.4. The Condition of the Church at the End of the 1st Century

It is interesting to note the state of Christianity at the close of the first century, about 70 years after the ascension of Jesus Christ. In the first century the mother church in Jerusalem made an amazing progress. From Jerusalem the Apostles and evangelists had gone forth in obedience to their

Lord's command, and as a result of their preaching and witness by the end of the first century, churches were well established in many parts of the world. Its membership includes several millions. The well known letter of Pliny (the Roman procurator in Bithynia, Asia-minor to emperor Trajan, about AD 112 states that in the provinces of Asia-minor bordering on the Black sea, the temples of gods were almost forsaken and the Christians were everywhere multitude. The members were of every class from the noblest in rank to the slaves. In the church, its service and offices the slave was treated as equal to the noble.

Considering the spiritual activities of the Church in the Grico-Roman World managed by the 120 families of Jesus, the nature of the first century Church can be defined as follows:

1. **One**: All the church members were united by the faith to the great head of the church, Jesus Christ. They were all taught by the same spirit, and agreed in all essentials of the Christian faith. They were members of the one church.
2. **The church is Holy**: Its members were not by any means perfect, but they hated sin, keeping themselves separate as far as possible from the world, and they were being transformed by the Holy Sprit into the likeness of the Lord.
3. **Catholic**: Because its members were found everywhere. And their union was not limited by nationality or by any particular form of organization or by any form of worship.
4. **Apostolic**: The church was apostolic because its members held firmly to the doctrine they had received from the apostles; unitidily they formed the one, Holy catholic and apostolic church.

2.4.1. The main Doctrinal Teaching of the First Century

At first the church had a simple theology or a body of believers. Systematic doctrine was developed later in the minds of Paul. But three

predominant thoughts were held as essential in the beginning stage of the church.

1. **The Messiahship of Jesus**: that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah, Christ long expected by Israel, and now reigning over his kingdom though invisible in heaven.
2. **The Resurrection** of Jesus: that he had been crucified, had arisen from the dead, and is now living the Head of his Church, today no more.
3. **The Return of Jesus**: that He who had ascended to heaven was in due time to come back to earth and reign over his church.

At the end of the first century doctrines set forth by the Apostle Paul in the epistles were accepted throughout the church as the standards of the faith. The teachings of Peter, John and the other Apostles show a complete occur with the view of Paul. Heretical opinions were arising and sects were forming, the germs of which had been noted and warned against by the Apostles. But their full development came later.

2.4.2. Worship in Apostolic Church

The Jewish converts although baptized, were still attending the Jewish religious services in Jewish temple and synagogue (Acts3:1, 14:1, 17...).But when they found that the Jewish failed to give full expression to their Christian belief and devotion, they began to hold separate meetings for the worship, especially on the first day of the week, the day on which the Lord had risen from the dead (Acts 20:7).

We have no clear record of the order of these services, but it is said that hymns and psalms were sung, prayer was offered, and lessons from the scriptures were read and instruction given. Probably a short confession of faith was also recited by the whole congregation of which some fragments have been incorporated in the epistle of Paul. Example 1Cor. 15:3-4, 1 Tim. 3:11, There were the small beginnings of what at a later day developed into the creeds of the Orthodox Church.

The Lord's Day was generally observed, though not with the strictness as a day absolutely set apart. As we noted above, as long as the church was mainly Jewish, the Hebrew Sabbath was kept but as it became increasingly Gentile, the first day gradually took the place of the seventh day. We find, before the end of Paul's ministry the church meeting on the first day of the week (Rev.1:10) and in the Book of Revelation that day is called the Lord's day (Rev.1:10)

The Lord's Supper was universally observed. This began as a service in the home like the Jewish Passover, out of which it was an outgrowth. But among the gentile churches the custom arouse of celebrating it as a supper to which each member brought some share of provisions. Paul rebuked the church at Corinth for abuses that had crept into this method of observance (1Cor. 11:20-30). By the end of the fist century, the Lord's Supper was everywhere a service held at the meeting place of the Christians, but (probably an account of persecution not in public the unbaptized and the pagan catechumens were warmly welcomed for the prayer services, but they were excluded from the mass (communion) which was held as a great mystery. The recognition of the eastern Sunday as the anniversary of the Lord's Resurrection was sanctioned and was growing, but it was not becoming a universal phenomenon by this time.

Baptism is the right of initiation into the church. It is a sacramental ordained by Lord (Mat 28:19, Mk. 16:16) it was administered either by total immersion in the water or by pouring upon the head of the candidate in the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:36, 9:18, 10:47).

2.4.3. The Ministry of the First Century

Paul gives a list of the ministers to the Christians to the early date of the Church. They were the Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers, etc (Eph. 4:11, 1cor. 2:28, Rom. 12:6-8)

a. The Apostles: They had been appointed by the Lord Jesus; they were to be his witness to the world; they were to be unitedly the foundation of his church (Rev. 21:14) to them were given the key of the kingdom of heaven by which they were to admit to the church membership of all believers. To them was given the authority to bind and loose that is to declare what was forbidden and what was lawful for all Christians. Some Christians (especially Roman Catholic Church) believe that Lord granted to Peter special privileges and gave him the authority over the other Apostles. It is not correct for the following reasons.

1. The Gospels do not reveal that Lord granted to Peter any special dignity, status or authority which he did not grant to the other Apostles.
2. The Apostles themselves did not understand that our Lord had granted to Peter the right to rule over them or they would not have disputed among themselves who should be the first and the greatest (Mk. 9:33-34, Lk. 22:24)
3. The Acts and the epistles supply no evidence that Peter ever acted as a man of supremacy in the church which had been granted to him by Christ for example; the president of the council of Jerusalem was James the Bishop of Jerusalem. The Apostles and the disciples did not start their missionary journeys by the order of Peter. They were sent by the Holy Spirit.
4. The writings of the early Fathers show clearly that in the primitive church, the Apostles were all considered to be equal, that none was greater or less than the others.

The last survival of the twelve Apostles was John, dwelling at Ephesus until about 100 AD. We read of no successors in that office, but about 120 AD there is mention of “Apostles” who appeared to have been evangelist travelling among the churches but without authority and evidently not highly respected because the churches were recommended to them entertainment for three days and no longer /didake/

b. Prophets: These were an order of man who had received a special gift from the Holy Sprit which enabled them to preach with the convincing power in the church. They were not restricted to any particular place or church, but travelling here and there strengthening the brothers in faith. They were highly honoured in the church of the first century. They presided at the celebration of the Lord's Supper and had an important voice in the selection of the minister of the church, and also in administrating the discipline. In the 2nd due to the increase and claims made by the Montanist prophets, their influence declined and they had to give place to the regularly ordained ministers of the church.

c. Evangelist: They were itinerant preachers, hearing good news to all manhood.

d. Pastors/ teachers: There were men also placed in charge of the settled congregations-they conducted religious services taught the members of their congregations, and were generally responsible for the spiritual well-being of the Christians committed to their charge, and for the organization of the church.

e. Elders (presbyters, bishop, overseers): in the Acts and the epistles, the elders are named as though the two titles were applied interchangeably to the same person (Phil 1:1, Acts 20:7, 28, 1 Tim 3:1-7, Tit. 1:5-9...) Paul appointed elders in all the churches founded by him (Acts 14:23, 20:17, Titus 1:5). They are also mentioned with the Apostles in Acts 15:4-23, 21:18, 1Pet. 5:1. They were responsible people who were appointed to take charge of congregations (Acts 14:23, Phil. 1:1, col. 4:17). Their qualification and duties are described in Paul's Epistles 2Tim and Titus. From among the presbyters some of them were bishops or overseers in the modern sense of the term. James, the brother of the Lord appears to have acted as the first bishop of Jerusalem. He presided from the prison reported his release to James (Acts 12:17)

The “angels of the churches” mentioned the second and the third chapter of the book of the Revelation where almost certainly the bishop of those churches. In each church these were probably several presbyters and one among them would have been elected as their president, early in the second century this president was recognized as the bishop of the church, and he had the charge of the Christians of the one taken only. “The model dioceses” was not developed at that time although Paul appointed Titus to organize the churches of Crete (Titus 1:5)

f. Deacons and Deaconess: Acts 6 describes the election of seven deacons who were appointed especially to look after the material needs of the people.

The service of the women in the church was early recognized by the appointment of Pheba as a deaconess in the church of Cencreal (Roman 16); possibly Persis who laboured much in the Lord was also a deaconess (Rom. 16:12). The reference in 1Tim 3:10-11 may also be to a woman holding that office.

Their special duties were to prepare women for baptism, to seat women in the church and to take communion to sick in their homes. They were no permitted to preach or to teach in the church services.

Chapter Three

The Church of the Second Century

3.1 Persecutions of the Church by the Roman Government

This period was the period of terrible testing for the church. The Roman Empire became large and powerful and it included a great part of the Roman World. The empire was governed by the emperor who was regarded by the Romans as a god. The wealth of the empire reached an enormous figure. Luxury and sensuality among the people produced moral degradation within the empire. Christian community faced dangers and persecutions from the pagan, Jews and especially from the pagan emperors. At some time, many heresies and schisms emerged out from within the church itself. The true early Christians survived these dangers and difficulties and defeated the attacks of heresies and unbelievers, survived better persecution, and emerged as Holy, One, universal and Apostolic church. Here are giving a brief note on each and every event of the second and third centuries' church.

The most prominent fact in the history of the church through 2nd and 3rd centuries is the persecutions of the Christians by the emperors. For them Christianity was unlawful religion. The profession of the Christian faith brought the convert within the reach of the law, and he found himself liable all swords of the penalties, ranging from imprisonment and even death. A number of causes may be named for the antagonism of the emperors to Christianity. Some of them are the following:

a. Disloyal to the emperor and the Government: The emperor was considered as an embodiment of the divine power and was believed to be god. In some prominent place every city stood a statue of the reigning emperor, and before this image incense was afford as to a god. No one in the empire was asked to abandon his own particular duty, but he was expected to show his loyalty to the government by worshipping the emperor. The Christians, of course, refused to do this and they abstained themselves from these festivals. So they were charged with the disloyalty and they had to suffer the consequences.

b. Idol worship Inter-woven with life: Idol worship was interwoven with the life in every department. Images stead in every house to receive

adoration. They were worshipped with every civic or provincial ceremony. The numbers of gods were increasing day by day. One emperor even wanted to include the statue of the Lord Jesus among gods (pantheons of Rome). Christianity opposed all other worship except to its own God. So they were charged atheists and had to suffer persecutions.

c. Christians Refusal to Serve as Soldiers and Civil Service:

Many Christians objected because all soldiers and civic services of the state had frequently to pay divine honour to the emperors and to those gods recognized by the government. So the Christians were all suspected of and charged with being disloyal and unpatriotic, and in consequence they were shunned despised and hated by the pagan.

d. The Judaism Recognition: The first Christian generations were regarded as somehow connected with Jews, and Judaism was recognized by the government as a permitted religion. They were expected from worshipping the pagan gods and were guaranteed some privileges. And so long as the Christians were taught to be a more Jewish sect. They also enjoyed the same privileges. They were now known not as Jews, but as members of an illegal association, and so they were persecuted as law breakers.

e. The Accusation of the Christians as the Cause for Calamities: whenever any calamity, such as earthquake, famine, flood, fire, plague or invasion happened, the Christians were always blamed as being of the cause of the calamity for their neglecting of the pagan gods. They were considered to be the enemy of human race and the result was persecution.

f. Secret Meetings: This aroused suspicion. They were either before sunrise or at night, often in caves or catacombs (underground). So worth charges were brought against them. They were said to be cannibals and to eat babies. This story started because the Lord’s Supper was practised in secret. The pagan did not know what happened at this meetings, but they heard that somebody being eaten Jesus had said at the last supper “This is

my body and this is my blood". Hearing this, the pagans thought that the Christians must be eating and drinking human flesh and blood. Moreover, the autocratic government of the empire was jealous and suspicious of all secret gathering and all societies fearing disloyal aims.

g. The Equality of the Christians in the Church: Christianity look up on all man as equal. Each made no distinction in its membership and its services; a slave might be chosen as bishop in the church. This was abhorrent (hated) to the minds of the nobles (even to the Christian nobles) and to the ruling classes. The Christians were regarded as anarchists, and subverts of the social order, and hence, as enemies of the state.

h. The Loss cause to the Business people: The rulers were influenced to persecute the Christians by people whose financial interest was affected by the progress of the church. For example, the pagan priests, the lay servants of the idol temple, the idol makers, the merchants who sold animals for sacrifices etc. Then something happened to St. Paul at Ephesus (Acts 19:23-28).

For any one or more of the above reasons, the Christians for the two centuries were subjected to persecutions; and they received no sort of help from the government officials.

3.1.1 Stages of Persecutions

During all the 2nd and 3rd centuries the Christian religion was forbidden. There were several periods of shorter or longer duration, throughout the empire; the church was exposed to persecution. As we noted above the main persecution in the first century were by Nero and Domination. These were simply the outbreaks of frenzy (violent attack) and hatred, without having proper reasons. In the 2nd and 3rd centuries also the church was subjected to the systematic empire-wide, serious of attempts by the government to crush the over growing faith.

a. Trajan's Persecutions (96-117 AD)

Trajan was a brilliant soldier. He was an ambitious man and he added many new provinces to the Empire including Armenia, Assyria Mesopotamia and Arabia. He was a wise ruler, good tempered and he was determined to maintain public order and to enforce the existing laws. He ushered in a new stage in persecutions, first by applying a Roman law against secret association in harassing Christian Congregations; and second, by his rescript to Pliny the Younger (AD. 12) in which the Empire, without so intending, actually shaped the policies of the Roman government toward the Christians for nearly two hundred years.

In AD 111-113 he sent one of his governors, Pliny to Bithynia-Pontius (Asia-minor). In Bithynia Pliny found that a very large number people had become Christians. The pagan priests complained to him that the revenues of their temple had fallen, and everywhere the Christians accused of being disloyal to the government. One further enquiry he confirmed that:

1. The Christians assembled on the 1st day of the week (Sunday) for worship
2. They sang hymns to praise God.
3. They took an oath to abstain from any crime and to be loyal to any promise or contract they made to Christ.
4. At the end of their worship they partook a common meal (agape).

Pliny was uncertain about what action he should take as the number of Christians was so large and he wrote to the emperor to ask for instructions. This letter of Pliny is a striking witness to the purity of the life of those who were professed Christians in Bethany. It is clear that he was astonished at their extra ordinary steadfastness, and calm refusal to renounce their religion when ordered to do so.

Trajan answered that he approved of this procedure, adding that while no general rule could be laid dawn, the Christians should not be sought out; but if brought before the government by responsible accusers, they were found guilty of being Christians, they should be executed unless they recanted.

Anonymous charges should be disregarded. This procedure was to apply in Bithynia-Pontius only, but soon it spread throughout the Empire. While the rule the Christians was inexorable/unalterable, it was to be administered cautiously. The Christians were out-laws, but the officials were not bound to notice them ultil some informer brought them to court. Much depended upon the temper of the provincial governors. They could a great deal to encourage or to discourage accusers. Trajan's rescript to Pliny actually prevented a general systematic persecution of the Christians for many years. The prominent martyrs to the faith during this time were the following:

1. Simon (Mk. 6:3), the successor of James as the bishop of the church of Jerusalem, and like him also a brother of the Lord, said to have been attained the age of 120. He was crucified by the order of the Roman governor of Palestine in AD 107.

2. Ignatius, bishop of Antioch in Syria was more than willing to be a martyr, and on his way to Rome, he wrote letters to the churches, hoping that he might lose the owner of dying for the Lord. He was thrown to the lions in the amphitheatre at Rome in AD 115. These were also many other martyrs beside these two distinguished men.

b.Hadrian's Persecutions (AD 117-138)

Emperor Hadrian was one of the best of the Roman emperors. He was a vigorous ruler who travelled widely throughout the empire, personally supervising the administration and checking the corruption. He pursued the general policy of his predecessor. During his reign mobs of the towns were wont, on occasions of heathen festivals, loudly to call for the blood of the Christians. Additionally, the Jews brought many accusations against the Christians, which Quadrates and Aristides of Athens answered to defend the faith which they forward to Hadrian. Hadrian issued an edict against such riots, but legal persecution of the Christians continued. In reply to the apology (both defending) Hadrian issued in AD. 124. A decree to all the governors of the provinces to the effect that:

1. The Christians should not be persecuted without a good reason.
2. Christians were to be allowed to make their defence when put to trial.
3. False information against the Christians was to be severally punished.
4. The Christians were not to be persecuted from the mob violence.
5. If convicted and refused to withdraw, they were to be suitably punished.

The declaration did not mean that the Christians were to be favoured in any way or that they were to be accounted guiltless. The mere fact that a man was known to be a Christian was not to be considered sufficient to convict and punish him, and the informer must supply proof evidence of his charges. So the rules gave the Christians a certain amount of protection. However, numerous Christians were persecuted and the emperor did not take any measurement on this fact.

c. Antonio Pius' Persecutions (138-161)

Antonio Pius succeeded Hadrian in AD 138. He did not order any persecution of the Christians, but due to the plague broke out in Greece; the Christians suffered severely from the mob violence. In Athens, Thessalonica and other towns, many Christians were put to death by the crowd (mob). In Athens bishop Pubius and at Rome bishop Telephorus, Presbyter Ptolemy and the lawyer Lucinius were executed. These exceptions were contrary to the decree of the emperor but no action was taken against the persecutors.
During the reign of Antonio Pius, Polycarp of Smyrna was the one who was killed in AD 155 (156), and its brief account must be given here. The story is given in a letter addressed by the Church of Smyrna to the Church of Philadelphia which is fully quoted Eusabius of Caesarea in his ecclesiastical history.

At Smyrna eleven Christians were cast to the wild beasts in the arena having been horribly tortured before being killed. Saving the enthusiasm (strength) of the Christian people the pagan mob, demanded the death of the aged bishop Polycard. He was caught and the governor ordered him to

worship the Caesar's Lord and insisted him to put the incense on alter of the Caesar. Polycarp refused and was brought to the arena to be thrown to the lions. The governor gave him three chances to save his life. First he was ordered to say “Away with the Atheist.” Polycarp pointed to the pagan's statues and said "Away with the atheist." The Governor gave him another chance, “Curse Christ” Polycarp answered “eighty six years I have served him and He has done me no wrong and how I can curse the King who saved me?” A third time the governor said “swear by Caesar” Polycarp answered “I am a Christian. If you want to know what it is, set a day and listen me” The governor threatened him “Then I will put you to the wild beasts” The governor again warned him “If you scorn the beasts, I will put you in fire.” Poly carp answered “you try to frighten me with the fire that burns for an hour and you forget the fire of the hell that never goes out.”

Finally the governor handed Polycarp to the mob to be burnt. Polycarp offered thanks to God for allowing him to be martyr. His prayer was:

Lord God Almighty, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.
Thank you for to have made worthy of this hour that I shall take a part among the martyrs to drink the cup of Christ, and to rise again with the power of the Holy Spirit. May I be an acceptable sacrifice. I praise thee, I glorified thee and I thanked thee in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Sprit Amen!

The friends of Polycarp gathered his charred bones and ashes and “reverently” buried them. The church records the martyrdom of poly carp as an event of the royal triumph of Christianity rather than trouble tragedy.

Justin Martyr in his writings shows that very many Christians were put to death in this time.

d. Marcus Aurelius' persecutions (161-180 AD)

The very best known Emperor Aurelius was a strict philosopher. He was deeply religious and showed much kindness to his own subjects, performing many acts of charity. His “Meditation” a really great book, contains records

of his thoughts, and many of his thoughts are noble and sincere. His great statue still stands as a huge figure in ancient capital of Rome. Unfortunately this ruler was a bitter persecutor of the Christians. He wanted to restore the old Roman life with its ancient religion in each and every corner of the empire. Many thousands of Christians were beheaded or devoured by the wild beasts in the arena, because he considered the Christians as innovators. Among the multitude of martyrs one should be mentioned. Justin martyr had been a philosopher and he continued his Christian teaching after his acceptance of Christianity. He was one of the ablest men of his time and the outer most defender of orthodox. His works, still extend, give much valuable information concerning the church in the middle of the second century. His martyrdom took place at Rome in AD.166 together with another six noble Christians.

The Roman officials refused to allow the bodies of the Martyrs to be buried; and exposed them in the market square for the crowds to mock. Some of them burnt while some others were thrown to the river.

The account of the sufferings and death of these martyrs was sent in the form of a letter from the Churches of Lyon to the churches of Asia-Minor, and it breathes throughout a truly Christian spirit of patience and forgiveness. The decline of the Roman Empire begins from the death of Marcus Aurelius in AD.180.

e.Commodes' Persecutions (180-193 AD)

The brutal persecution continued in time of Marcus Aureoles' son, Commodes. He was sensual, prodigal of money, cruel and weak. He had some 300 concubines, of whom Marcia a Christian was his favourite one. Persecution broke out in North Africa in AD 180 and many Christians were condemned to death. Commodes was a very indifferent about this matters, but that at the intercession of Marcia, his Christian concubine he gave order that these should be no more persecution of the Christians.

Chapter Four

The Church of the Third Century

4.1. The Continuation of Persecutions in 3rd Century

4.1.1. Septimus Severus' Persecutions (193-211 AD)

After a period of confusion, Septimus come to power in 193. All persecutions were stayed for a time as the emperor was engaged in restoring the order he turned his attention to the religious matters, and in 202 AD. he issued an order forbidding all conversions either to Judaism or to Christianity. Everywhere prosecution raged against the church, but it was the

most severe in Egypt and North Africa. Clement of Alexandria speaks of the Martyrs “who are seen everyday before his eyes roasted, crucified and beheaded” Eusabius of Caesarea tells the martyrdom of many and he records the list of the suffering people in Asia. In Alexandria Jews and pagans together combined in persecuting the Christians. Priests were burned to death and virgins were tortured and forced into brothels to be raped by the scum of the city. Leondes, the Father of Origin of Alexandria was killed in this time. At Carthege Perpetua, a noble lady, with her faithful slave girl, Felicitas was raped and then torn into pieces and put into the beasts.

So bitter was the spirit of Emperor Septimus Severus that he was regarded by many Christian writers as anti-Christ.

4.1.2. Caracalla’s Persecutions (211-217 AD)

Septimus was succeeded by Caracalla who began his reign by murdering his brother and all his brother’s friends and followers. During his reign, many Christians were killed and the Catechical School of Alexandria was closed. All the Christian teachers were expelled from the city. He was murdered by the officers of his own army.

4.1.3. Elagabalus’ Persecutions (217-222 AD)

Elagabalus succeeded Caracalla. He sold all the public offices and properties to the highest bidders and his scandalously wasted the public revenues. Many Christians were persecuted in his time and he was quite indifferent to the Christians, but his wife Severina openly favoured the Christians. In 222 his soldier murdered him.

4.1. 4. Alexander Severus' Persecutions (222-235 AD)

He was favourable to the Christians. He attempted to unite the religions of the empire into one. At the same time showed not merely toleration but a real sympathy to Christians. He allows the Christians to hold properties and to build churches, and many officers of his household became Christians. His mother Juliana invited Origen of Alexandria to teach her the

Christian faith. Alexander Severus was defeated in bottle by the Persians, and he was murdered in AD. 235

4.1. 5. Maximun the Goth' Persecutions (235-238 AD)

Maximun reversed the policy of toleration by issuing an edit ordering the persecutions of the Christians. In Capodocia, Pontius and Palestine Christians suffered severely. Influenced by the emperor, the mob attacked the Christians and looted their property. Origen was compelled to hide, and in Rome Bishop Pontionus and Hyppolytus were banished and both died in exile. Maximun was murdered by his soldier in 238 AD. After his death there were six men came to the throne, each reigning few days or weeks or months, and the empire came to verge of bankruptcy (money problem). Amid all these confusions the Christians were undisturbed.

4.1. 6. Philip the Arabian' Persecutions (244-249 AD)

He became emperor in 244 and up to the end of his reign the Christian had rested from persecution. A rumour spread that Philip was certainly Christian. During the later part of his reign some rioting took place against the Christians for which Philip was not responsible. These out breaks were local and were quickly stopped by Philip, and finally He was over thrown by Decian in 249.

4.2. Some Rival Religious System

4.2.1. The Gods of Rome and Greece

So far we have been considering mainly the struggle of Christianity with the emperors and with the mob. Here we look at some other religious systems with which Christianity in conflict.

They are best known to us are those who sat up on the Mountain of Olympus .Some of the Greek gods were Jupiter ,Juno ,Mercury ,Venus ,Saturn ,Mars ,and Minerua. Some of these names were given to the planets and one to a day of the week; Saturday is

Saturn's day other gods were also popular in the Roman Empire: the gods of the earth such as Attis, Denis, Isis, and Osiris.

4.2.2. Mithraism

Emerged from Persia and was a strong rival religion to Christianity .The worship of Mithra was found in the Reg-Veda where Mithraiat depicted as the god of light .Mithra was also worshipped in Iran in which Zoroastor, the god of war worshipped .In the third c. AD. it flourished and gained many converts in the Roman Empire. According to a legend, Mithra killed a bull by stabbing in flank, and from the wound came out grains [wheat]. Here is an explanation to the growth of vegetation, because the grain came out by the light and warmth from Mithra. Mithra, the god of Sun, his birth day was on December 25th When the Sun begins its upward course. This date was adopted by some Christian Churches as the birth day of Jesus Christ and was observed for the first time in Rome in AD.353 .Since that time Christmas Day has been one of the most joyous day of the Christian festivals.

After the end of the third c. and especially Christianity was founded by the emperors, Mithrism abolished and its followers were either swallowed up by Manchianism or by Christianity.

4.2.3. Manchianism

The best organized and the most dangerous system opposed to Christianity .It arose in the East at the beginning of the third c. AD .It was derived from Persian religion and had very little Christianity in it ,although it used Christian terms and phrases in unchristian sense ,but its influence was wide spread ,and far a very long time it exercised great influence both in the east and west Very little of its literature has survived .Its founder was Many **,a** Persian noble who had been brought up in Babylonia .In AD 245 ,when he was 30 years old, he claimed to be the promised **Paraclit ,and** began to preach in the east .Many had visited Central Asia ,and China .His system was a strong mixture of Zoroasterism ,Judaism

and Christianity ,and he also added some Gnostic ideas that the material world is evil ,and that there are intermediate being between man and God .

It differed from Gnosticism was that its salvation was the reward ,not of acquiring of the superior knowledge but not of an ascetic life based on the Manchian belief It was dualistic in that Many preached the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness which were opposed to one another . Man was made of light and darkness which is mingled by Satan. To deliver man from the evil of darkness, a succession of prophets came into this world, of whom Christ was the one.

Christ had no connection with Jesus of Nazareth and many entirely denied any incarnation .Sin was dwelling in the flesh of man because the flesh is matter. To overcome evil, many preached an extreme ascetism, ordered severe fasting and denied marriage to his followers. He formed an organization in which there were twelve Apostles and Seventy-two Bishops under whom there were Presbyters, deacons and evangelists. There were many rituals in the worship and Sacraments were celebrated. Baptism was given only at the point of death, and was regarded assure passport into the kingdom of light. Hearers were allowed to present the celebration of the communion, but only the elect were permitted to partake in it .Many's followers were divided into two: the elect and the novices. The novices were allowed to eat meat but the elect had to abstain from flesh and marriage. Sunday and Monday were observed as fasting day.

In AD.276, Many were executed by the government for the perversion of state religion. Many's system gained many converts especially in the east. Even if this religious system disappeared from Persian and Roman Empire because of the attacks of the emperors, its ideas prevailed in some quarters especially in the west till the 13th century.

4.2.4. Neo-Platonism

Founded by Ammonius Sacass a Porter in the market of Alexandria. He was born of the Christian family and he was a Christian, but apostatized. He

attempted to form a religion which is Pantheistic and he taught that there is a supreme God from the inferior gods issued. This religion included magical activity in their system and taught that human race had astray from God, and in order to resume Communion with him, man must become virtuous by the practice of ascetism and self deny. Neo-Platonism attempted to spiritualise the old pagan faith and it was the religion which favoured few. This religion also because of the Christian emperors disappeared from the life the people.

4.3. Schisms and Controversies of the Second and the Third Centuries Church

In the second and third centuries the church had not only to fight with the attacks of the persecuting emperors and rival religions but also she was attacked from within the form of schism and controversies. Some important schisms and controversies are the following:

4.3. 1. The Montanist Schism and Revolt

Montanius, a presbyter of Phrigyan Church [Asia-Minor] associated with Maximila and Pricilla who were the exponents of this system. They claimed themselves as the prophets of God and they said themselves to reform the church. About AD .157 Montanius began the existing hierarchal order of the church .He claimed that he was the chosen instrument of God. Through whom the Holy Spirit revealed to the world. He asserted that the doctrine and the teaching of the clergy at that were imperfect. He announced that at the time of Christ's coming was at hand, and in order to prepare the church the Holy Spirit has ascended upon him and his direct followers, and had given full revelation of God for the purpose of the world. Montanius declared that the Holy Spirit always spoke through him whenever he preached, so that his utterances were inspired and authentic.

Montanist taught that in to prepare for the near coming of Christ the Christians must renounce everything of this world and especially they must abstain from marriage, they should practice ascetism.

The Montanist made their head-quarter at the village of Pepuza in Phrigya and announced that Christ would return there immediately to inaugurate his reign. As time went and Christ failed to appear, they changed their view and declared Pepuza as the New Jerusalem, the city of Paraclet. In AD 160 the Bishop of Asia-Minor convened a number of Synods in which they condemned Montanism and excommunicated its entire adherence. As a result, the Montanist formed a separate church in they gave the prophets of especial honour .This sect was well organized having central fund from which its ministries were paid regular salary They continued till the 6th c. and disappeared by the continuous attacks of the emperors .

4.3.2. Paschal Controversy

In the early church there was a universal custom to keep the solemn fast and prayer in the time of great Easter feast .Most of the Easter Churches completed the fast on the eve of Nissan 14th (the day of the Jewish Passover) The Eastern Churches celebrated regardless of the Jewish Passover . But the Western Churches kept their own Sunday next after the 14th of Nissan, maintaining the fast until Saturday evening. This caused much inconvenient especially in those town where both Westerners Easterners lived together .Those who were celebrating the Easter on 14th Nissan were called Quatar-Decimen.

In AD 155, St. Polycarp of Smyrna visited Rome to discuss this problem with the Bishop of Rome, Anacetus, but it was not successful. About AD.195 the dispute became acute. Bishop Victor of Rome was insisted that the Western custom should prevail, not only in West but also in the East. Gaining the support of several small councils which convened by him for this purpose. He threatened to excommunicate all those bishops and churches which would not accept his insisting .Polycratus, the Bishop of Ephesus, firmly refused the demand of Victor and he sent a letter to Victor justifying the Eastern customs .Victor replied by excommunications were disregarded

and the Christians in the Eastern continues until the Council of Nicea [325]; the council settled the disputes in favour of the Western customs.

4.3.3. The Schism of Felicissimus

During the Decian Persecutions large number of Christians denied their faith by force .They were three kinds:

1. **The Sacrifacati**: those who had offered the sacrifice the gods and had eaten the sacrificial offering.

2. Turificati: those who had sprinkled incenses on the pagan altar.

3. Libellatic: those who did not sacrifice but by bribing the officials obtained from them certificates that they had done so.

It is easy to condemned those who had lapsed under trial, but consider the following statement which put into mouth of the one who had fallen away "My mind stood firm , my soul struggled long unshaken by the torturing pains .But when the whip was tearing ,the claps were bruised me ,the shock stretched , the iron claw dug into me , the fire roasted me ...my flesh failed me in the fight ,the weakness of my body gave away ."

When perfections ceased many of these lapsi desired to be readmitted the church membership and much controversy aroused about the restoration .There were two parties in the church, especially in the church of North Africa. One group favoured severe measure and the other group desired that the lapsi should be readmitted the church on confession of sin and proof genuine repentance.

The controversy broke out in Cartage where Cyprian was the bishop. At the time of persecutions, he left Cartage and advised and contorted his flock from his place of hiding. He, at first dealt some what severely with those who had denied their faith. Many objected him and started agitating against him. The leader of this hostile party was a deacon Felicissimus who defied the order Cyprian and readmitted the lapsed people into his own

authority .his followers proceeded to elect another bishop a man named Protunatus but failed to get sufficient support from the church.

Cyprian returned to Cartage and convened a Council of North African Bishops in 251 AD. Before his return, he had moderated his severe view about the lapsi and had issued orders that all who were sick penitent were to be readmitted to the church membership, but he had excommunicated Felicissimus for his contumacy. The council endorsed his excommunication and ordered the readmission of the lapsi to the communion, but degraded from their office those who were ordained. The schism continued and to counteract this schism, Cyprian wrote his treat De Unitae Ecclesiae. After the death of Felicissimus the schism came to an end.

4.3. 4. The Schism of Novation

He was the leader, presbyter and theologian of the Church of Rome had strongly opposed the election of Cornelius as the bishop of Rome, and charged him with weakness and leniency to as the lapsi. His followers called themselves Cathari [Puritance].They remained orthodoxy in their faith and based their opposition to Cornelius and support of Navation purely on disciplinary grounds. Many bishops especially Dionysius of Alexandria wrote to Novation and his followers and begged them to be merciful to the weaker brethren. The majority of the presbyters and people were one over by his appeal and gave their support to Cornelius. Novation's supporters continued in Rome till the 5thC.

4.3. 5. Controversy about Heretical Baptism

There was a controversy broke out in Africa about the validity of baptism administered by heretics and schematics .Were those persons who had been baptised by heretical and schismatical clergy and desire to be admitted to the church to be re-baptized ? The African church was practicing the re-baptism in the belief that sacraments belong exclusively to the church and the heretics and schematics could not administer a valid sacrament. A council of bishops was held in Cartage in 255AD under the presidency of

Cyprian of Cartage and decreed that such persons must be baptised by an orthodox presbyter. The churches in Asia supported this view but Stephen the Bishop Rome promptly denounced this decision and insisted that the Roman Custom should be practised [the presbyters of Rome acknowledged the validity of the baptism administered by heretics and schematics]. He also threatened to excommunicate any bishop or church which refused to comply with his ruling. Cyprian then convened another council of 80 bishops and reaffirmed their previous findings and refused to recognise the right of the Bishop of Rome to interfere in the church matters outside his diocese. Augustine the Bishop of Hippo supported Cyprian and declared that only a general council of the whole church could decide the matter. The Cappadocian Bishops also rebuked Stephen for his arrogance in attempting to dictate the other bishops. All the bishops together attacked the claims of Stephen of Rome to legislate for the whole church. The quarrel continued till the death of Stephen, and when his successor, Sextus came, he cancelled the order of excommunication which resulted in mutual toleration and each church continued its usual practice.

4.4. The Rise of Sects or Heresies

In the first three centuries the church had to face from outside in the form of persecutions by heathen emperors, and in the form of rival religions. The church had also to face more serious attacks when some of her own members tried to introduce heretical doctrine to the Holy Orthodox Faith. Here we may notice some important sects emerged out in the second and third centuries.

4.4. 1. The Gnostics

They are not easy to define because they are so varied in their doctrine in different localities end of different periods. They aroused in Asia-Minor and

were a grafting of Christianity upon paganism. They had a dualism of superior supreme god of goodness and an inferior god of darkness (for details read your petrology notes).

4.4. 2. Nazaraites

They accepted Christianity in the second century but emerged as a separate movement and clang to the Levitical Law and observances. They accepted the findings of the Council Jerusalem did not impose the Levitical Law on Gentile converts. Even if they emerged at first as an isolated movement from Christianity, gradually many of them became the full members of the church and the remained joined into Judaism.

4.4. 3. Ebonites

They were Jewish Christians who insisted that Jewish Laws and customs should be observed. They rejected the writings of St. Paul because his letters recognised the Gentiles as Christians. They were condemned by the Jews as apostates and considered by the Christians as heretics. Gradually in the end of the second century they disappeared (for their teaching see Patrology notes).

4.4. 4. Elcesoutes (Sampseans)

They lived in Dead Sea and were the followers of one Elcesai, a Jew who had some connections with the Essenes. They practiced circumcision, observing the Jewish Sabbath and lived according to the Mosaic Law. During prayer they faced towards Jerusalem. They baptised the infants by immersion and celebrated a form of communion with bread and salty water. They refused to acknowledge the Books of the Old and New Testaments. They respected a Book called the book of Revelation which had been delivered to Elcesai by an angel from heaven [like Quran].They continued till the 5th c., after which nothing is known about them.

4.5. The Trinitarian and Christological Heresies

In the 3rd c. certain men tried to explain the great mystery of Trinity .but in their attempt they taught and preached such heretical doctrine that they were excommunicated from the fellowship of the church. The dispute was not on Trinity until the general council of the 4th c. [325-381]. The council defines the orthodox....on the Trinity. The men who imposed their heretical views inside the church are the following: Dynamic Monarchianism, Adoptioninism. Theodosius of Byzantine and Paul of Samosata are the exponents. Modalistic Monarchianism and Saelianism were exponents [consider your patrology study].

4.6. Main Authors and Fathers of the 2nd and 3rd centuries

4.6. 1. Apostolic Fathers and Apologetics

Some of the main Apostolic Fathers of the first and second centuries are the following:

1. Clement of Rome
2. Barnabas
3. Ignatius of Antioch [seven Epistles
4. Hermass the Shepherd
5. Papius (exposition of the oracles of our Lord)

Besides the main Apostolic Fathers, we have another group of writers called Apologetics or defenders of the Orthodox faith of the second and the third centuries. They refuted and answered all the charges and accusations made by the pagans, the emperors and the Jews .They were very able men and they were having a capacity to present the Christian faith in convincing manners to the emperors and to the non-Christians. The following are the main Apologetics:

1. Quandratus
2. Aristides
3. Aristo of Pella
4. Jestin Martyr
5. Tation the Syrian
6. Theophilos of Austrods
7. Athenagoras of Athens
8. Clement of Alexandria
9. Origen of Alexandria
10. Irenios of Lyons
11. Hypolytus of Rome
12. Cyprianof Cartage and etc...

Besides these Apologetics, there were also some other Apostolarum, Apostolic Constitution, Apostolic Tradition, Church Order (Cyprian Church Order).

4.6. 2. Apocryphal Writings of the Second and Third Century

Besides the authentic books a number of other writings have come down to us. They do not bear the names of their proper authors .Some of them were really religious nobles, which complied religious instructions with amusement. Many of them were written in order to supplement the gospel narratives .Some were written by heretics ,specially the Gnostics and some others were perhaps by the Orthodox Fathers [authors].Some of the important writings are the following :

1. The Pseudo-Gospel of Mathius 2. The Life of Blessed Virgin Mary 3.The Proto-Gospel of James (Proto Evangelism)

The Proto-Gospel of James recorded the birth of Jesus with details that are not found in the gospels. It records also the boyhood of Jesus and his numerous miracles performed when Jesus was child. He moulded clay into birds which at His command came to life and flew away. The same narratives are found in the other writings: the Gospel of Nativity, History of Joseph the Carpenter and etc. The Gospel of Nicodemos ,Apocripha of Peter ,Hospel of Peter and Paul ,Acts of Peter and Paul ,Gospel of Thomas ,Acts of Thomas ,Acts of John ,Acts of Andrias and Barnabas ,The Transitus of Mary ,The Doctrina Apostolorum, The Pseudo-Clementine Writings .

4.7. The Condition of the Church at the End of the 3rd Century

At the beginning of the 3rd c., the Christian faith had been spread all over the world. And by the end of the third c. strong churches had been established all over the world .The scattered Christians of the world were beginning to contact with each. In many places the dioceses were forming under the guidance of bishop. Correspondence between the bishops was frequent and they often visited each other for consultation and common

action. Legally Christianity had no right to exist but practically it was growing and growing religion of the world.

4.7. 1. The Development of Doctrine

A significant feature of this was the development of doctrine. In the Apostolic Age faith was of the heart ,a personal surrender to the will of Christ as Lord and King ,a life in accordance with His example ,and as a result the indwelling of the Holy Spirit . Bur in the 2nd and 3rd centuries, faith has gradually come to be of the mind, an intellectual faith with the fast system of doctrine. Beside the inner spiritual life, they started emphasizing the correct doctrine. The schools of Theology emerged and developed as the centre of investigations into the doctrine of the Church (School of Alexandria, Antioch, Caesarea, Asia-Minor, North Africa-Nisivis)

The Church was attacked from within in the form of heretical teaching against the Holy Spirit. So the 2nd and the 3rd centuries Fathers of the Church spoke of the Trinity of three persons in the one Divine Being. When they spoke of God, they described Him in terms of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit .The Apostolic Fathers and Apologetics taught that the same doctrine and their writings are of full references to the Fathers, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Tertulian was the first to use the term Trinity.

4.7.2. Organization

Between 100 and 300 AD, the independent and widely scattered congregation began to realize that they were one universal Church governed and supervised by the bishops. The title Apostle in its proper sense was last from the Church with ST. John, the last of the Apostles. The order of the prophets also gradually disappeared from the Church owing to the excessive zeal ecstatic utterance of the Montanist Prophets .IN the first quarter of the 2nd century; we find deacons, presbyters, or priests and bishops, the three well established and recognized orders of the Church. Ignatius of Antioch clearly mentioned this fact in his Epistles.

The struggle with Montanism and Gnostism strengthening of the position of the bishop as the centre of unity, witness to the Apostolic Faith and Tradition and a successor to the Apostles. They were looked upon as the guardians of the Apostolic and Orthodox faith.

The Churches of the important cities were looked as leaders in the one Church. The political importance of such cities as Antioch, Caesarea, Rome, and Alexandria were reflected in the increased respect with which the bishops of the Churches were regarded and there soon to be given the title Patriarchs. The title Episcopise [Bishop of the village] also appeared in the 3rd century. They were not equal with the dignity of city bishop. They could appoint and ordain men to the minor orders, but were not allowed to ordain full deacons or presbyters.

4.7. 3. Worship

From the Apostolic time the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion were the basis of all Christian Worship. Baptism was practised by infants and adults. For the adult baptism, there was always a regular instruction of faith, and before baptism, the candidate was required to fast for two days .Baptism was generally administered by the clergy by the complete immersion of the candidate in water, or if it was impossible, by springing of water on the head of the candidate in the name of the Holy Trinity. Easter and Pentecost were the favourite seasons for Baptism. Also we find references made to Baptism of infant and children of the very tender age were confirmed and admitted to the Holy Communion.

The Sacrament of the Holy Communion was the most important part of Christian Worship. It was regarded as a very definite means of grace, bringing the faithful into the living relationship with the risen Lord. It was something more than mere memorial feast and was generally looked upon as an offering to God. Justin Martyr, and then Hypolytus gave description of the service in their writings. The order of the service, according them was as follows: a portion of the Scripture was read and followed by a sermon by a

priest. After the Creed, the prayer was offered to the elements of bread and wine and then they were presented to the faithful.

4.7. 4. Festivals and Feasts

The Easter and Pentecost were now added the 40th days after Easter to commemorate the Ascension of Christ, and the festival of Epiphany to celebrate the Revelation of Christ to the world. Two days before Easter were observed as days of fasting .The period of fasting varied in each locality. The mention of the fasting days of Lent to be observed as a fast first occurs in the 5th Canon of Nicea (325), and it implies that it was a well established custom in the Church. Wednesday and Friday were now observed as fasting days in memory of Christ's suffering on the Cross. The fast was kept till three P.M. Hours of prayers were recognized officially.

4.7. 5. The Discipline of the Church

In the Church of the 2nd and 3rd c. if a Christian after Baptism denied the faith or was proved to be immoral he or she was immediately suspended and out off from all Christian privileges. If the person repented and wished to be readmitted the Church, he had to make a public confession of his sin, expressing his repentance and submitting to whatever punishment the Church ordered. The penitent was publically humiliated ,he was not allowed to sit in the congregation, but had to sit apart in a place set aside for that purpose only when the clergy were fully satisfied that his repentance was genuine ,he could receive absolution. The more severe punishment was the measure of excommunication when the impenitent sinner was publically out off from all Christian fellowship and was regarded as delivered to Satan. The deadly sins were idolatry, blasphemy, murder, adultery, fornication and false witness.

4.7. 6. Creed

The Creed at the 2nd c. was based on the baptismal formula of apostolic days. The confession of the Ethiopian Eunuch gives as the earliest form of the Creed. [I believe that Jesus is the Son of God [Acts 8:37].] At the

early time, at the time of Baptism the candidate was asked "Do you believe that Jesus is the Son of God?" Gradually this was expanded into much full of statements and which is taught to have been used until about the middle of the 3rd c (The so called Apostolic Creed or Roman Creed). The Apostolic Creed was not composed by the Apostles but it is Apostolic in that it contains the truth taught and preached by them and believed by the early Christians

4.8. Decius's Persecutions (249-251 AD)

He ascended the throne in AD 249, and he was an honest and capable ruler. He was very anxious to restore the vitality of the empire. He determined to restore the society by returning to the old Roman laws and manners of life, and so restore the unity and the vigour of the empire. To affect this, he determined to wipe out Christianity and in AD 250 he published an edict commanding everyone to sacrifice to the national gods. All Christians were to appear before the magistrate, abjure/renounce the religion and to offer sacrifice to the gods of Rome. Those who refused to do so were threatened with confiscation, imprisonment, torture, exile and even death.

Agatha a noble girl of the city was asked to renounce Christ. She replied that "He is my life and salvation. I can not renounce him" she was raped, tortured and was finally murdered. Many Christians who refused to offer sacrifice were able to obtain certificate that they had done so by bribing the officials (libellatici), other by fear offered sacrifice (thrutifati).

In Rome Bishop Fabius was martyred. In Antioch Bishop Babylon was executed. Origen of Alexandria was cruelly tortured in prison. Bishop Alexander of Alexandria died of ill-treatment in prison. A very large number of laities suffered the same in this time.

4.9. Gallus' Persecutions (251-253 AD)

During his short reign plague ravaged the empire and many people were killed and everywhere there was confusion. As usual, the Christians were accused of being the cause of all these calamities and they suffered too

much. Cornelius the bishop of Rome was imprisoned and died after a captivity of some months.

4.10. Valerian's Persecutions (253-260 AD)

At first Valrian left the Christians in peace, but the conditions of the empire were precocious; Spain and north Italy were attacked by the Franks; the German tribes raided Greece and Asia-minor; plague was still ravaged the empire. Thousands of people were killed of plague.

Valerian determined that all his subjects must appeal to the national gods for deliverance and in AD 257 he issued an edict to that effect. All Christian meetings were banned; the church properties were confiscated; and all the bishops were banished. Then, a much more severe edict was published. All clergy should be executed; all married Christian women should be sent into exile. In Rome bishop Sextus and his deacons were executed. In Carthege Bishop Cyprian was executed and others were martyred. In Palestine many Christians were thrown to the wild beasts in the public arenas.

4.11. Gallienus' Persecutions (260-284 AD)

In AD 260 Valerians was captured and executed by the Persians and his son (Gallienus) a weak and incompetent ruler gave up the struggle with the Christians and put a stop to all persecutions. He restored the churches and granted full liberty of public worship to the Christians. This is explained by the fact that there was a political conflict inside the empire. A rival empire had been established in goal (France) which extended itself over Britain and Spain. The Goaths invaded Asia-minor and Greece, attacked Italy, and because of all these disorders the Christians escaped from persecutions.

5.12. Diocletian's Persecutions (284-305 AD)

Dioclition, a man of the humblest origin, became emperor of a Roman Empire in AD. 284. As he wanted to reconstruct the whole imperial system, he moved slowly and in 285 divided the empire into two appointing his old companion, Maximian, in the west with the title of Augustus, which he

himself bore. In further aid of military efficiency, he designated two Caesars in 293; Constantius Chlorus under Maximian and Gallerius under him. In character, Dioclition was rude and a firm supporter of heathenism. Though there had never been a Christian uprising against the empire and interference in political matters, Dioclition regarded the Church as an object of serious political problem simply because of the rapid growth. Thus, he wanted to force it into submission and break its power so that he issued four edicts against Christianity. His first edict of February 303 ordered the destruction of all Christian places of worship and the burning of all their sacred books. A second edict robbed the Christian communities of their pastors. Third one continued more detailed instructions for proceedings against the clergy whereas the fourth and the last edict, early in 304, completed the imperial legal measures against the Christians by imposing sacrifice to the gods all of them without exception.

Since Gallerius was against Christianity, alike Dioclition, the persecution in the eastern part was bloody enough. Notable Christians lost the privileges of their rank and all Christians in the empire were declared incapable of performing legally valid acts. The real impact of the persecution was aimed against the clergy, so that clerics suffered imprisonment or death because they didn’t comply with a provision of the edict requiring them to hand over the sacred books. Of course, it is true that there were some among the clergy who handed over the books, especially in North Africa and Rome, and they later were stigmatized as *traditores*. In the West, emperor Maximian showed himself particularly complaint, while his Caesar Constantius carried out the decree very negligently in Gaul and Britain. Although he destroyed buildings, he did not imprison or put to death the Christians.

In AD 305, the aged emperor, Dioclition, worn out with his struggle to suppress Christianity and abdicated. Also Maximian gave up and their common abdication exalted Constantius Chlorus and Gallrius to the title

Aogusti. In the appointment of Caesars the claims of the sons of Constantius Chlorus and Maximian were passed over in favour of two protégés of Gallerius, namely Severus and Maximinus Daia. Persecutions had now practically ceased in the west, as Constantius and his Caesar Severus were against it. But in the east the church was forced to bear the full burden from the first edict of the year 303 until Gallerius' decree. There were reports about the martyrdoms in Egypt. In Asia –Minor Provinces of Cappadocia and Pontus, the persecuted Christians were faced with particularly inventive tortures accompanied by putting out the right eye or maiming the left leg with red-hot iron. The real turning point came with the serious illness of the Augustus Gallerius, which seemed to be a divine intervention. He realized that his violence against the Christians was an error or a failure and thus, issued an edict of toleration in AD 311. Even the edict exhorted Christians to pray for the emperor to their God that for the first time an imperial edict recognized the Christians annulling the religious policy which had been in force for more than 200 years. Thus, the God of the Christians had proved to be real power that was to be recognized together with its followers and incorporated among the numerous religious beliefs of the empire so that the attained religious peace might prove a blessing to the state and its ruling.

The death of Gallerius in May 311 left four contestants: Constantine, Licinus Maximinus Daia and Maxentius for the empire. Constantius died in 306 and his Constantine was made emperor of Britain, Gual and Spain. Maximian's son Maxentius defeated Severus and made himself master of Italy and North Africa. Licinus, the portege of Gallerius, succeeded to the Severus' portion and granted toleration in his dominion. In contrast to him, Maximinus, who had scarcely concealed his inner resistance to the policy of Gallerius' toleration, returned after a few months step by step to his earlier methods of oppressing the Christians. Constantine, who had joined Gallerius and Licinus in the edict of 311, inherited A KINDLY FEELING TOWARD THE Christians. Maxentius, while not a persecutor, was a

pronounced parting of heathenism. Also Constantine regarded him as tyrant, plundering and oppressing his subjects from whose yoke Rome ought to be set free. Thus, he felt that the next trial of strength in the struggle for the empire to which he had set himself must be with Maxentius.

A brilliant march and several successful battles in North Italy brought Constantine face to face with Maxentius at Saxa Rubra, to the North of Rome. There, it would seem, in a dream the night before the battle, he saw the initial letters of the name of Christ, i.e. X and P of ΧριστΟ (Christos) with words `Toutoi Nika`- by this sign you will conquer your. Taking this as an omen, hastily painted the monogram ☧ on his helmet and on the shields of his soldiers. In a sense, it is likely to say he entered the conflict as a Christian. On October 28, 312 occurred one of the decisive struggles of history at Milvian Bridge in which Maxentius lost the battle and his life. Constantine believed that the Christian God had given him the victory and conquered the whole west. Lucinius, the one who had been united with Constantine by mutual interest, defeated Maxintius Daia in April 313 and became emperor of the east.

Early in A.D. 313 Constantine and Lucinius met at Milan and came to mutual agreement permitting full freedom To Christianity. On June 14th /313 they issued an edict called `edict of Milan` which granted unrestricted liberty to the Christians. Of course, the edict didn’t make Christianity the religion of the Empire but placed it on a full legal equality with any religion of the Roman World and ordered the restoration of all Church properties confiscated in the recent persecution. It can be considered as religious policy, which Constantine was chiefly striving to carry out. The marked favour shown to Christianity by Constantine led Lucinius gradually to diverge from the line of religious policy laid down in Milan. Thus, Constantine overcame Lucinius in A.D. 314 at Adrianople and the latter’s’ hostility grew to persecution. From 314-323 he held some part of the east and showed his resentment by preventing the Christians from public worship. Thus, in A.D.

323 Constantine defeated Lucinius at Chrysopolis in Asia-Minor and became the sole emperor. It is obvious that the victory of the Christian faith over paganism was completed by Constantine’s ascension as the sole emperor. The Church was everywhere free from persecution and fateful union with state began.