

Lesson 1

Introduction

The Patristic Period – also known as the first centuries of the Christian Period, or the period of the founders of the church; the fathers (or patres) who turned the Christian movement into a self-assured religious, social, and intellectual force.

- This period began around the same time of Jesus's immediate followers (also called postapostolic times) roughly around 100 of the common era (CE).
- The actual end of this period is largely debated throughout religions and traditions. It is safe to say that the patristic period probably ended around the year 800.

Christianity – mostly focuses on the history of religions or religious studies, however, others topics which are also talked about include the “history of dogma”, the history of doctrine, the history of Christian thought, the history of theology, and the history of Christian practice.

Topics in Patristic Studies –

- The names of G. E. Lessing (1729-1781) and A. von Harnack (1851-1930) mark two important moments in the field of critique of dogma. Lessing turned to the church fathers in order to find out the extent to which Christianity rests on solid, rational grounds. His findings revealed that the churches ideas and positions (especially about the “rule of faith”) were totally at odds with what was currently written in recent theology which said that the Bible was the norm.
- G. W. F. Hegel (1770-1831) and F. C. Bauer (1792-1860) signaled the emergence of historical consciousness. Both Hegel and Bauer stressed the importance in understanding Christianity by first understanding historical perspectives in order to understand the present.
- It is no longer possible to do Christian theology today without a close look at the writings of the fathers.

Trends in recent research – 3 trends

- Increasingly, Christianity in Late Antiquity is carried out in the context of European and world history, whose past traditions it wishes to recover. It is a fact that Western religious thought is rooted in both Semitic and Indo-European cultures.
- A second trend characterizes recent work in patristics: that work is performed in the broader context of the history of religions.

- Current work is characterized by a direct, resolute, and extensive dealing with sources. New discoveries and editions of sources have made this situation possible.

About THEO 206 - "I consider that period one in which Christianity evolved as a religious and social movement, one that exhibits that development mainly through its literary and historical remains. I consult the early Christian writers in order to construct a narrative of the many turns taken by Christianity in those centuries."

STUDY NOTES

Christianity is the faith based on Jesus Christ's:

- life
- teachings
- death
- resurrection and ascension into heaven

Jesus lived some 2000 years ago.

The Christian Bible contains:

- Old Testament (OT) + apocrypha/deutero-canonical books
- New Testament (NT): 27 books, including 4 Gospels ("good news")
- Gospels were written some 40-50 years after Jesus's death

Methods of Bible Interpretation

- Historical critical method: looks at historical context and how the authors of a particular book (gospel or letter) went about their writings and telling's of history.
 - Literal method
 - Allegorical method
 - Mystical method
 - Moral method
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- The most widespread method of interpretation today is the Historical Critical Method. This method looks at historical context, the intended audience of the author, and the desired effect of the author.
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- First three gospels are known as the synoptic gospels and these three support the "already view". These are the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Matthew and Luke's gospels look very similar in contents which lead scholars to conclude that these gospels looked so similar because they had used the earlier gospel of Mark as a source (or Q). Matthew's gospel targets a Jewish/Christian audience

because Jesus is presented as the second Moses and Messiah. Luke's gospel is targeting a non-Jewish audience, also known as a gentile; therefore he has to introduce who Moses was because the targeted readers are not familiar.

(Matthew's 6.9-13 ("Our Father" or "The Lord's Prayer"), 5.3-12 (The Beatitudes), and 8. 11-12 all support the "not yet" view)

The fourth gospel talks about Jesus as the eternal son of God or the locust of God (locust signifies work and reason). Apocryphal was what the other gospels were called, and this word means "secret". These include the gospels of Peter, Mary Magdalen, Thomas, and the gospel of Judas.

The Gospels:

Synoptic (Greek for "seen together"):

- Matthew (Mt), Mark (Mk), Luke (Lk).
- Matthew and Luke are based on Mark and Q (from the German word "Quelle" = source).

The historical critical method established that:

- Matthew targets a Jewish-Christian audience, because Jesus is presented as the second Moses and Messiah.
- Luke targets a Gentile audience, because it speaks in universal terms.

The Gospel of John (Jn):

- Jesus is the eternal Son and Logos (or Word) of God, the incarnate God on Earth.
- There are also apocryphal (or secret) gospels attributed to Thomas, Peter, Mary Magdalene, Philip, and even Judas - most of them come from Gnostic circles and are later.

The evangelists, along with their symbols in iconography from the *Book of Kells* (image), are:

- Matthew the Evangelist, symbolized by a man, to represent the human nature of Christ.
- Mark the Evangelist, symbolized by a lion, to represent Christ as king.
- Luke the Evangelist, symbolized by a bull or a calf, to represent Christ as sacrifice and as priest.
- John the Evangelist, symbolized by an eagle, to represent the Christ as God.

Biblical Prophecies:

- Jesus was born in the year 0 of the Common Era (CE) (this is the secular alternative to AD (Anno Domini)).
- There are Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah being born in Bethlehem.
- Jesus's parents: Mary and Joseph.
- The gospels tell us about Jesus's birth, then an episode at age 12, and his life around the age of 30

John the Baptist: An important character, was Jesus's forerunner and he baptized people for the forgiveness of their sins.

Jesus's baptism by John has been seen as:

1. Consecration of God as the Messiah
2. John publicly announced that the Messiah has arrived
3. Jesus identifies himself with sinful humanity

After the baptism, Jesus undergoes a 40 day retreat in the desert before starting his ministry. He then begins to gather his first disciples: Simon, Peter, Andrew, James, and John. *The emphasis on Jesus's ministry is on spiritual life.*

Miracles: Miracles are seen as signs of the presence of the Kingdom of God.

Examples:

1. Turning water into wine
2. Healing the sick
3. Restoring life to the dead
4. Casting devils out of the possessed
5. Multiplication of bread

*"The kingdom is **already** here, but **not yet** fully realized"*

This quote means that we have a foretaste of this reality however we don't have a full taste of this reality. Basically, Jesus can practice healing and helping the suffering however he cannot prevent death.

- Understand the presence of miracle and the connection between the kingdom of God.

Is Jesus the Messiah? Jesus reluctantly applies the title to himself because of misunderstandings. At the transfiguration (witnessed by three disciples) Moses and Elijah appear to seal the fact that Jesus is the Messiah.

Jesus's Ethics and Teachings

- Touched lepers and a bleeding woman to heal them
- Welcomed women as disciples
- Extended the command against adultery to adultery in one's heart
- Preached "turn the other cheek" (as opposed to "an eye for an eye")
- Taught love your enemies
- Proposed love is for God and for one's neighbor
- Offered forgiveness to those who repented
- Challenged the interpretation of the Mosaic Law (generally NOT the law itself)
- Challenged the Jewish authorities

Jesus's Crucifixion, Death and Resurrection:

1. Jesus returns to Jerusalem; has Last Supper with his disciples
2. Judas betrays Jesus for 30 pieces of silver, Jesus is arrested
3. At the trial Caiaphas, the high priest asks Jesus if he is Christ (or the Messiah) and Jesus answers: "you have said so", thus answering in the affirmative

4. Caiaphas and the other priests see this declaration as blasphemy against God
5. Roman authorities are asked to crucify Jesus
6. The crucifixion occurs sometime between 27-33CE
7. Resurrection; Women visit the tomb; Jesus's appearances; women's presence witness the historical truth in claims of Jesus's resurrection

After his death and resurrection:

- Acts of the Apostles (author Luke), Paul's Letters, the other letters of the New Testament
- Jesus's ascension to heaven is followed by the descent of the Holy Spirit at the Pentecost (Acts 2)
- Paul's attempts to convert both Jews and Gentiles to Christianity
- Anti-Christian feelings among Jews which led to anti-Jewish feelings among the early Christians
- The new message Christianity proposes: salvation is by faith (not by circumcision, says Paul)

Lesson 2

- For the Roman religions, morality wasn't really an issue. It was more about rituals and maintaining the right balance in the relationship with the Gods whether it was moral or not. The Roman religion was known as paganism.
- Christianity was born from Judaism. It was regarded as a "weird" religion until year 313 because it focused more on what was moral. An example would be how abortion and discarding of malformed babies was a common practice in Roman religions however in Christian religions it was regarded as being immoral.
- Normative Christianity or Proto-orthodox Christianity is starting to talk about canonical writings. A canon is a list of books that are accepted as normative. The four gospels were an example of what was considered as being normative.
- JEWISH vs. Christianity - this battle was ambiguous from the beginning. Christians were developing anti-Jewish sentiments in an attempt to clearly distinguish between their own Christian identity was. This led the Jews to having a bad attitude towards the Christians.
- After 190/200 in Greco-Roman society, a period of stagnation hit where birth rate decreased, less slaves were recruited, there was military over growth, and anarchy, pestilence, and soil abandonment (due to fiscal burden) were ever so common.
- During the period between 70 and 120, Romans were known to believe in numerous Gods and deities and also practiced numerous rituals and ceremonies. At the end of the republic, the religion was revitalized by Augustus, Apollo, Artemis, and the formality unsuitably called "emperor cult" was introduced. Over time, the common Romans started viewing each deity

as having a single power however the more educated Romans were more skeptical and tended to believe in Providence.

- Prophets – prophets receive a message from God for the people, remind them of their commitment to a personal God, insist that moral codes flowing from faith be adhered to, and act as social critics.
- The early Christian communities initially shared common beliefs with the Jews however they were harassed and denied exemption from public rituals, and were eventually considered atheists even more so than the Jews themselves already were.
- After difficult beginnings in Palestine, the early Christians had turned to the Mediterranean world, had opted for the Greek language, and were soon found in major centers of the empire (Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, Ephesus). At this point they also opened their doors to the Gentiles, and those of the lower societies (at first – afterwards this included the higher societies). At this point, the religion of Christianity stood out because of their strong belief in only one God (monotheism – as did the Jews). The Pagan faith (romans) somewhat believed in the opposite as they believe in man Gods.
- With the growth of Christianity, and their desire to take over the whole inhabited world, they gathered the Gentiles along with them in hope to found the “New Israel”. In the end, they could be found in Asia Minor, Egypt, Syria, and Rome, where they suffered sporadic prosecutions.
- Ignatius of Antioch was known to be one of the most typical writers of them all. He was the bishop of Antioch and he wrote letters of encouragement to various communities when he was taken prisoner to Rome, where he was later killed.
- 7 important roles of the Apostolic fathers:
 - They reflect the first developments beyond the New Testament writings in matters of church order, life practices, language, and theology.
 - They offered an initial delimitation of normative Christianity as regards its faith and its literature.
 - They witnessed the reception of certain apostolic writings as particularly treasured and deserving the name of “scripture” (meaning the authentic holy books held to be depository of Christian truth and worthy to be used in the public proclamation of the church).
- Overtime, it was said that the Christians who were part of Rome became very hard to deal with as their beliefs differed and they had such different ways of life. They also managed very well to irritate the traditionalists who governed and peopled the empire, by the “abomination” of their practices and their refusal to participate in the prescribed religious rituals. Christian beliefs were deemed irrational, their “scriptures” of poor quality, their behavior disrespectful of honorable conventions. They were also accused of “hatred of the human race” due to their repressive morality, their imputed neglect of civic duties (military service and procreation), and their lack of fear before violent death.

- Jews viewed Christians as rivals because they were once a very similar religion until Christians started believing in Jesus.
- Labelling, name-calling, and stereotyping were soon the easy way of dealing with Christians as they had no positive contribution to make to society and they were almost considered the aliens of the land.
- In the end, Christianity was seen as having a double relationship with Judaism on one hand (which they were slowly growing apart from), and on the other hand Hellenistic culture (which seemed to offer it support and expression).

The Roman World

- Christianity was born in the Roman Empire
- Roman colonization was militaristic and administrative
- Culturally and religiously, the East colonized the Empire

Pax Romana (Romani peace)

- Administration: Roman citizenship was possessed by entire cities, but it was bestowed on others as recompense for services rendered to Rome. Local administration was quite effective.
- System of Justice: While respecting local customs, it applied the principles of Roman law and it enabled citizens to take their case to the Emperor himself.
- Currency: Unified throughout the Empire.

Roman Religion

- Astrology – horoscopes were routinely compiled
- Chance, Fate, or Fortune were the most important Gods
- Apostle Paul dismissed Roman religion when he wrote about coming to God and then turning around to be a beggar
- “Elemental Spirits” are demonic beings or forces to whom Paul believed humans had been enslaved before their conversion to Christianity
- Old view of the Roman Empire: unprogressive society ruled by impersonal forces whose nature was not understood and which was morally degenerate.
- Newer view: not the case of the old view. Examples: grave memorials to testify to the affection of family life, and surviving papyrus letters testify to its decency and sobriety.
- In society: the fear of chaos if the empire fell was shared by all. Religion was thought to ensure world order. No scriptures in Roman religion only performed religious acts that were meant to achieve the right relationship between the gods and humans.

Opposition from New Religious Movements

Opposition from:

- previously organized and established religions
- governments struggling to balance religious freedom with public safety

Examples from the contemporary era:

- illegal businesses or money extortionists posing as religious groups

- neo-fascists disguised as medieval cults but promoting white supremacy and hatred of immigrants
 - concern that NRMs may cause psychological damage, especially to vulnerable young people
 - loneliness and alienation from mainstream culture
- ❖ Christians were seen as revolutionaries (by the state) because they did not behave like the rest of the population. They refused to worship foreign Gods, especially emperors who claimed divine descent. This refusal led to persecution and martyrdom.

The result was the scapegoating of Jews and Christians with false accusations.

Lesson 3 *The Jewish Legacy*

Rabbinic literature – Mishnah by Tannaim, “instruction by Teachers”. Mishnah is divided into six sections: seeds, festivals, women, damages, holy things and purities. Mishna + rabbinic commentaries on it = The Talmud.

Two movements that mark the course of the Second Temple Judaism:

Messianism: rooted in ancient Judaism and it expressed yearnings for a redeemer who would appear in the end of days to restore the monarchy, destroy the wicked, and liberate the land from foreign domination.

Apocalypticism: expected the advent of the Messiah as immediate and imminent at the same time that is sketched graphic scenarios for his coming. Such scenarios included the revelation of other worldly secrets about God, the upper world, the last days, and the bodily raising of the dead. Apocalyptic movements basically assumed the termination of present day secular rule.

Parousia – The return of Christ to end history

- Palestinian Judaism – also called Rabbinic Judaism because Palestine and Babylonia were the homelands, took over the tradition of Pharisees, when Rabbi’s emerged as a distinctive group. The Rabbi leader was a Patriarch, and they concentrated on biblical interpretation of the Midrash, emphasizing legal discussions, and ethical teachings and stories about biblical and rabbinic figures.
- Diaspora Judaism – also known as Christianity, found in Egypt, Asia Minor, Syria, Cyrene, and Greece, attempted an interpretation of the biblical tradition for Greek-speaking Jews. This form showed a higher assimilation to Greek culture than the other form of Judaism.

Both forms of Judaism, the Law of Moses retained undisputed primacy, and both were submitted to Hellenistic influences.

Oral Torah – Traditions of the fathers.

- Two schools emerged among the Pharisees: the rigid school of Shammai and the more lenient school of Hillel.

- The high priestly office was under the control of the Sadducees, who claimed some continuity with the times of Solomon. Sadducees thought that purity laws did not apply to the daily life of all people but only to the Temple and its priests.
- When a Hasmonean leader took over the high priesthood sometime between 152 and 140 B.C.E. many of the Sadducees, out of resentment, seem to have moved to Qumran.
- Priestly Sadducees lost their influence in favor of the learned Pharisees, and indirectly contributed to the later shift from Temple to Torah.

The Essenes were described by Philo, Josephus, and Pliny as a sect entered through initiation; practicing collective ownership, frugality, and asceticism; keeping its distance from the Temple but emphasizing ritual purity. They wrote The Dead Sea Scrolls (discovered in 1947). They disappeared after 73 C.E. Philo also mentions a Jewish sect in Egypt, the Therapeutae, similar to the Essenes.

The Dead Sea Sect (Qumran) presented basically the same features as the Essenes with the addition of sharp messianic and apocalyptic overtones. They actively prepared for the coming age when a clear distinction would emerge between temporal and priestly authority. They were prone to castigate the priest officiating in the Jerusalem temple. Their relation to the Sadducees and to the Essenes is still debated but seems to have been real in view of their common anti-Hasmonean bent.

The Zealots by Josephus, opted for an activist, even military solution to the national predicament. Either recruiting from all the previously mentioned factions, significantly perhaps from among the Shammaite Pharisees, or made up of a mere coalition of brigand bands from the countryside pushed out of their lands by the Roman advance in the late sixties, they made the headlines for a short while. The Zealots vanished definitively after 135.

Messiahism - a movement that talks about the Messiah and the expectations of it. In Judaism, it is where the kings of the ancient times and those who were appointed as kings. When they were consecrated as kings, oil was poured over their heads. They were known for liberating the Jewish people. The Zealots considered him a political savior.

Apocalypticism - both Jewish and Christians believed that this took place during times of crisis where people end up expecting something better than leads them to this mentality where they believe there will be a return of Jesus.

- ❖ Philo of Alexandria - promoter of Judaism with a lot of injection of philosophical Greek interpretations, using the Greek translation of the Hebrew bible. He was very revered by the church fathers of Christianity as another honorary church father who was actually never a Christian although his insights were very helpful for Christians. He represented the Greek Diaspora.

The events that created Israel as a nation:

- The call of Abraham (ca. 1850 B.C.E.), the activity of Moses and the Exodus from Egypt (ca. 1250) followed by Yahweh's manifestation at the Sinai, the migration through the desert and the occupation of the land that was to become home.

Diaspora (dispersion):

- The kingdom of Israel fell to Assyria in 722 and many of its inhabitants were deported. Then the fall of Judah in 597/587, culminating in the destruction of the Temple in 586, shocked the nation (and the approximately 150,000 inhabitants of the land) at its roots and sent more deportees to Babylonia or fugitives to Egypt.
- Exile lasted from 597 to 538/537

Second Temple Judaism - given to the religious and national entity that lasted from 520/515 B.C.E. to 70 C.E. It is the soil out of which both Rabbinic Judaism and Christianity grew in the first century C.E.

- ❖ First Jewish revolt (66–70 C.E.), in Alexandria and throughout Palestine
 - Qumran wiped out (68)
 - Jerusalem burned (70)
 - Temple destroyed

Pentateuch - the first five books of the Bible

Year 70 AD: Romans destroy the Jewish temple in Jerusalem and disperse the Jews throughout the world

Biblical Stories

- Problem of Historicity: Scholars are uncertain about the historical accuracy of the early biblical stories because no other evidence exists about certain events and people genealogies mentioned in the Bible.
- Tradition holds: Torah (Five Books of Moses) were revealed by God directly to Moses, who wrote them down
- Scholars hold: Torah was an oral tradition reworked and redacted by later authors
- Final form of Torah around 430 BCE: created by Ezra the Scribe and Priest and his editorial team
- Intent of later authors: interpreting the formation of Israel from a religious point of view as the results of God's actions in human history
- Similarities of biblical stories with Mesopotamian legends: creation, the Garden of Eden, the great flood, the tower of Babel

Despite concerns about accuracy, biblical stories are religiously significant for both Christians and Muslims

From Creation to the God of Abraham

Genesis 1.1-2.4 - "Priestly" source (God - referred to as Elohim) dates from after 586 BCE

- creation of heaven and earth by God in six "days"
- creation of material universe
- creation of man and woman in the divine "image"
- humans placed as masters of the earth

Genesis 2.4 - The "Yahwist" source (God - referred to as Yahweh) is thought to be an earlier account than Genesis 1.1-2.4

- God is a transcendent creator, without origin, gender, or form, a being utterly different from the created world

Abraham

- born in Chaldean City of Ur, Mesopotamia, migrated to Haran, and then called by God to Canaan
- shows an example of obedience to God's commandments through:
 - circumcision - sign of the covenant with God
 - ready to sacrifice his son Isaac (from Sarah) upon request from God
- Abraham's son Ishmael and his mother (slave Hagar) are driven into the desert - Ishmael is an ancestor of the Arabs
- Abraham is taught by God to be monotheistic

Noah

Ten generations after Noah:

- the "patriarchs" (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob)
- the "matriarchs"
(their wives - Sarah, Rebecca, Leah and Rachel)

Israel - meaning the one who struggled with God. Jacob, Isaac's second son, took on this name after fighting all night long with an Angel.

The Twelve Tribes of Israel

- Jacob/Israel had 12 sons and one daughter from his two wives.
- The 12 sons become heads of the twelve tribes of Israel.

Biblical stories:

- Joseph and the Egyptian Pharaoh
- Moses and the burning bush
- Exit from Egypt: signs, plagues, Passover, redemption from bondage, crossing of the Red Sea
- God's presence as a pillar of cloud/fire; then, Ark of the Covenant
- the Ten Commandments

The First Temple of



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|---------------------|--|
| 1010-970 BCE | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> King David establishes Jerusalem as the capital |
| 961-931 BCE | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> King Solomon builds a great Temple in Jerusalem Burnt offerings of animals, grain and oil were made to God in the Temple Solomon ended up an idol worshipper and womanizer Division of Israel follows into the northern and southern kingdom (Israel and Judah) |
| 722 BCE | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Israel is conquered by Assyria - most Jews are sent into exile in Assyria |
| 586 BCE | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Judah is conquered by Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar and the Temple is destroyed The destruction of the Temple is interpreted as divine punishment for Israel's infidelity toward God |

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| 530 BCE | King Cyrus of Persia allows the Jews to return to the land of Israel |
| 515 BCE | The Temple is rebuilt |
| 430 BCE | Ezra, a priest and scribe, coordinates the redaction of the Torah |
| Judaism becomes contaminated with foreign influences (Persian, Greek Parthian, Roman) | |
| 175-164 BCE | Antiochus IV Epiphanes, a Hellenistic ruler of Syria, forces Greek ways upon the Jews |



Return to

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| 164 BCE | The Maccabean revolt rejects Antiochus IV's rule and manages to re-establish a Jewish independent kingdom |
| 63 BCE | Roman general Pompey conquers Israel |

Sadducees:

- priests and wealthy businessmen
- conservatives who provided a literal interpretation of the Bible
- rejected oral law and traditions
- denial of an afterlife and coming of a messiah

Pharisees:

- more liberal citizens of all classes
- studied the applications of Torah to everyday life
- in 1st century. BCE - civil war between Sadducees and Pharisees

Perceptions of God**In early biblical narratives, God is perceived as a:**

- burning bush
- pillar of cloud/fire
- smoking mountain

In the prophets, God is present through:

- visits by angelic messengers
- inner voices

Rabbinical tradition:

God's presence in the world is called Shekinah.

Shekinah is a feminine quality representing God's nurturing, motherly aspect.

this is a non-anthropomorphic, transcendent presence

sometimes Shekinah is depicted as a radiant, winged presence

Lesson 4

- The books of the New Testament were all written in Greek. The original languages of the books written about Jesus were in Greek.
- Hellenism was a blend of Greece and Orion that arose in the wake of Alexander the Great's conquest. He was a Macedonian king who lived in the 4th century before Jesus. He was keep on conquering territory and spreading the Greek way of life (education and ideals in matters of administration, warfare, trade, commerce, sport, rhetoric, literature, philosophy, business, fighting, learning, trading). This all became known as Hellenism. His short life was still very influential though (he died in his 30s).
- Generals who fought with him were very keen on him and they helped establish and spread Hellenism. The reaction against Hellenism in Palestine (where the Jewish people lived at the time), was different from the reaction to Hellenism outside of Palestine.

- Hellenism was rejected in Palestine because of the 2nd century Hellenistic ruler from Syria who placed a statue of the Greek god Zeus in the Jewish Temple. This led to rejection of Hellenism and a revolt and the Greek consecration of the Temple.
- Philo of Alexandria in Egypt was impressed by Hellenism (he was a Hellenistic Jew) probably because he wasn't a speaker of the Hebrew language. They had to order a translation of the Hebrew bible into Greek (Septuagint) because they didn't understand Hebrew. Those outside of Palestine were not so much against Hellenism. They were familiar and proud of Greek thinking/philosophy and were harmonize it with Hebrew thought and Moses and other Hebrew prophets.

The Greek Legacy: Vallee

- Christianity was helped by Hellenism by adopting Greek as the Lingua-Franca of the time. Greek was like English today because a lot of people in the Roman Empire spoke it.
- The first Christian writings are written in Greek as was the New Testament.
- Virtue & Happiness and dissatisfaction with current Human condition. Christians were encouraging people to be Virtuous and they connected happiness to Virtue. Christianity was persecuted at this time.
- Philosophers taught people to turn from a life of luxury, self-indulgence, and superstition, to a life of discipline, freedom, and wisdom. They promised tranquility and happiness to those who did.
- Christians blended together these philosophies with Christian elements to make the first Christian Theologies at the time.
- Competition between Greek philosophies and Christianity because Christians were trying to bring and attract new believers. In 2nd and 3rd century, Philosophy had the sense of religion in the Jewish and Christian sense of the word which made it rejected.
- Celsus was very critical of Christianity and he described it as a philosophy for the masses and the uneducated. He considered the writings poorly written, saying the authors didn't know how to write and they didn't know the principals of rhetoric's or how to write in an elaborate way.
- Christian side: Tertullian (educated Christian) - what does Athens (philosophy and philosophical thought) have to do with Jerusalem (Christian thought). "How come we need philosophy?"
- Many protestant groups still ask this question about the relevance of philosophy also.
- The early Christian's spoke about philosophy because Christianity was born in this environment. It was born in the Greek environment and in the environment of the Greek Schools.
- By adopting the language and way of thinking of Hellenism, Christianity was able to spread its message so in the end, this was probably a good thing.

READING:

- A consensus developed then that Hellenistic Judaism, both in Palestine and in the Diaspora, exercised the greatest influence on the rise of the church.

- Hellenism: this is a historical period, or the Hellenistic age lead by the Macedonian leader Alexander the Great (his tutor was Aristotle) that extended from 332 B.C.E. onward. Alexander's empire basically universalized Greek Culture throughout India to Spain and including Persian, Semitic, and Egyptian tracts.
- Three ruling realms after his death: The Antigonids in Macedonia were of little import; the Ptolemies (304-230) ruled from Egypt and its recent foundation, Alexandria; the Seleucids (312-295) governed Babylonia, Syria, and Palestine from their main center, Antioch.
- Ptolemies and Seleucids were most often at swords point with each other.
- For two and a half centuries, there was said to have been at least 200 campaigns fought in or across Palestine because of the rivalries between Egypt (Ptolemies) and Syria (Seleucids). These rivalries gave the native religious parties a distinctly political slant.
- Hellenistic culture was dominated by two figures: Alexander the Great who dreamed it and Augustus who Hellenized the most important regions of the realm and made Romans the patrons of Greek culture.
- The prestige of Greek culture in second-century society is well illustrated by the gesture of the Roman Emperor Hadrian who dedicated the temple of Zeus Olympios at Athens as a symbol of the religious and cultural unity of the Greco-Roman world (done on his grand imperial tour in 131/132 C.E.).
- From 250 on, all Judaism must be called Hellenistic.
- Movement appearing around 175 B.C.E.: symbolized by the construction of a gymnasium at the foot of the Temple mount, it sought to transform the largely international Jerusalem into a Greek polis, to alter the way of life, and to bring about what was perceived by some as an excessive Hellenization of the land, or even an attempt to abolish Torah.
- Maccabees revolt (168-164) and lead a movement of self-assertions to overcome cultural and religious assimilation and to counter to policy of alienation sponsored by the Jewish reform party.
- Paul: he was known as one of the better educated members of the community. He was educated in Hellenized Semitic Tarsus and in Jerusalem also included training in the rhetoric and pharisaic exegesis, sprinkled with some highly apocalyptic views. However, his education ill prepared him for an encounter with the "real Gentiles" who had strong Greek education from birth and a strong knowledge of the philosophical tradition.
- Judaism itself had been referred to by the Jew Aristobulus (ca. 175 B.C.E.) as "our school of philosophy"
- Cynics - dogged critics of those received ideas and customs that encouraged falsity in society and religion. They had nothing to do with our popular label cynical but they were deeply concerned with how to live a better life. They insisted on conduct based on frugality, simple demeanor, simple demeanor, and personal decision. They were also strong believers in the notion of world-citizenship. Ex: life-style, coarse cloak, long and ill-kempt beard.
- Stoics - recommended a virtuous life and life according to nature, an ideal wrought by mental discipline and *apatheia* (a kind of active indifference), and they insisted that one's worth is to be judged by the canons of virtue, not by one's descent. This way of being came close to being a religion. They seeked to liberate humans from fate and from dependence and reliance on externals.

- Epicureans - They sought to liberate humans from fate and from dependence and reliance on externals. They were well known for their unrelenting critique of religious fear. They formed highly organized communities, taking an oath of obedience to their founders and teachers. Their ideals in ethics were summarized by tranquility and expressing oneself in the concern to free oneself from illusory anxieties and false needs. With the Christians they were to share the same suspicions of presumed atheism, misanthropy, social irresponsibility, and sexual immorality.
- Cicero - was an eclectic who was hard pressed to decide between Plato and Stoic Cleanthes; and soon came up with his own blend of disparate wisdom and then reverted to the traditional religion of the ancient Gods, as he was a true Roman. Eclecticism is a conceptual approach that does not hold rigidly to a single paradigm or set of assumptions, but instead draws upon multiple theories, styles, or ideas to gain complementary insights into a subject, or applies different theories in particular cases.
- Hairesis - means school and sect (schools were like sects).
- "Clement of Alexandria proclaimed Christianity to be the best hairesis"
- Justin Martyr was eminent among them and shows eloquently the kind of problems the Apologists had to wrestle with. Apologists often described Christianity as a philosophy and were often inclined to see a convergence between the Bible and Greek philosophy.
- Justin Martyr was born in Palestine, a descendant of Greek or Roman colonists settled in Samaria in 72 C.E.. He embarked on a spiritual pilgrimage in search of "the knowledge of reality and a clear understanding of truth". This search took him through the main philosophical schools of that time: Stoic, Peripatetic, Pythagorean, Platonist. After completely having exhausted all philosophies and still not having found what he was looking for, he came in contact with the writings of the Jewish prophets and finally those of the Christian church. After this he was convinced that Christianity was the true philosophy. He converted and then became a philosophy teacher in Rome. He was martyred for his faith around 165, after having repeatedly confessed that as a Christian he was atheist so far as gods of this sort (i.e., pagan gods) are concerned, but not with respect to the most true God." Justin hoped to win over more cultured Jews, encouraged by the fact that around 155 there were still a good number of Jews in the Christian ranks. Later Justin wrote an Apology addressed to the emperor Antoninus Pius, the Roman senate, and the Roman people on behalf of the maligned Christians whose civic loyalty and reliability he wishes to vouch for that Justin conducts the most searching interpretation of Greek philosophy from a Christian perspective so far, and thereby offers what might be the first instance of a real encounter with Pagan culture.
- **Justin's three theories: PG 54 & 55 in Vallee.**
- A recurrent criticism of Paul that as he turned to the Gentiles he succumbed to Hellenism and that he was rightly censured for his presumed apostasy to Hellenistic Syncretism.
- **Christianity was Hellenized and Hellenism was Christianized.**

Justin Martyr (100-165 CE)- The First Apology, addressed to the emperor

Chapter 6 – The charge of atheism is refuted. Christians were accused of being atheists and Justin is refuting this. He says that if they are pagans then they are atheists (don't believe in Pagan gods) but if they are Christians then they are not atheists. The divine persons of Christianity: the father (himself), the son (those who came forth from him), the prophetic spirit... We worship and adore these three.

Chapter 7 – Christians must be judged individually based on their crimes

Chapter 8 – Christians aren't afraid to confess their faith in God because they have a higher hope that in the after world (the kingdom of God) they will live in a world where there is no sin that would cause disturbance; there in a more just world

Chapter 46 – what happened before the coming of JC, before the incarnation of the word of God into the historical person of name Jesus? The people that lived before had a knowledge of this. Theory of Locust – important principle that Greek philosophy had, in the historical person known as Jesus when the locust becomes a person and incarnate and palpable.

Chapter 49 – Jesus's rejection by the Jewish people, foretold by the prophets. Justin reflects attention that already existed between the Jewish religion and Christianity. This tension existed because there were prophecies and scholars who spoke about this rejection and social tensions.

SLIDES

Hellenism

Hellenism is the blend of Greece and the Orient that arose in the wake of Alexander's conquests and embraced all aspects of life.

Alexander the Great (356-323 BCE)

- King of Macedonia (Southeastern Europe) 336-323
- Overthrew the Persian Empire, carried Macedonian arms to India, and laid the foundations for the Hellenistic world of territorial kingdoms
- Educated by the philosopher Aristotle

The Generals

Some of Alexander's generals founded the dynasties of the:

- Antigonids
(ruled over Macedonia)
- Ptolemies
(ruled over Egypt)
- Seleucids
(ruled over Babylonia, Syria and Palestine)

They all contributed to the spread of Greek culture.

The Spread of Hellenism

- Hellenism included Greek education, ideals of administration, warfare, trade, commerce, sport, rhetoric, literature and philosophy.
- Hellenism was effectively spread by Roman emperor Augustus, who made Romans the patrons of Hellenism.
- There was a mixture of Roman and Greek unity after Augustus.

Hellenism and Judaism

- In Palestine, Hellenism was introduced as early as 332 BCE, when Alexander conquered the territory

- Palestinian Judaism was faced with either accepting or rejecting the Hellenistic way of life
- Antiochus IV Epiphanes Hellenized Judaism to the point of placing a statue of Zeus in the temple in Jerusalem
- The Maccabean Revolt (168-164 BCE) ensued and attempted to re-establish the Jewish way
- Jerusalem was a highly Hellenized city, with many of its inhabitants being conversant in Greek
- Actual rejection of Hellenism in Palestine took place after 50 BCE and was completed in the Jewish wars of 66 and 135 CE
- In the diaspora, however, Hellenism was not rejected by Jews
- Philo of Alexandria (20 BCE-50 CE) is an example of a Hellenized Jew who did not speak Hebrew, but did speak Greek, lived in Egypt and was an admirer of Hellenism

Christianity and Hellenism

- Unlike Palestinian Judaism, the first Christians (with some exceptions) did not reject Hellenism
- Many early Christian converts made by Apostle Paul were Greek-speaking Jews from the diaspora
- The Koine dialect of Greek was the natural vehicle for Christian proclamation
- The New Testament (NT) books were written in Greek
- Paul was not adequately prepared philosophically to engage in dialogue with the real Gentiles (non-Jews)

Greek Philosophy: Unlike Greek and Roman religions, Greek philosophy promoted ethical teachings. It was similar to the teachings of Judaism and Christianity in this regard. It promoted virtue and happiness and spoke of dissatisfaction with the actual human condition. ***Christianity ended up allied with Greek thought.***

Justin Martyr (100-165 CE)

3 Main Arguments regarding Greek Philosophy:

1. **The Loan/theft Theory:**

The philosophers read or borrowed from Moses - hence the similarities between Christianity and philosophy. [Plato/Aristotle \(stoics\) read or borrowed from Moses. They had access to the Hebrew bible \(pentateuch = first five books or the Hebrew bible\). Justin was basically borrowing arguments from Philo because he found them convincing. In reality, Moses's writing were probably never come across and barely put together at this time however it was still an interesting argument that related the similarity between Christianity and Greek philosophy.](#)

2. **The Demon Theory:**

Distortions of the truth in Greek mythology are the works of demons. [Says that distortion of the truth in Greek mythology was due to the demon. The truth in Greek mythology and Greek religion was said to be distorted because spiritual beings that are smarter than humans and somehow more capable of cheating were interested in distorting the truth.](#)

3. **The LogosTheory** (logos spermatikos):

The whole of the Logos (Word/Reason of God) is present in Jesus Christ, but portions (or seeds) of it are found among Jews and Greeks as well. **Logos is a Greek word that generally can be translated as word or reason or discourse or principal, also used in theology and sociology...** The concept of the Logos is that the word or reason of the God is present in Jesus Christ and also among the Greeks and Jews as well. Logos was present in fullness in Jesus Christ. This is the way that Justin said that Greek philosophy and Christianity have quite a few things in common however they are still different. There was some of the truth in Greek Philosophy and the full truth in Christianity.

Recording:

Justin Martyr - one of the earliest Christian writers who lived in the second century (100 years after Jesus) he was originally a philosopher who defended the Christian life in front of the Roman authorities until he was killed for his own belief. He represented early Christianity and embraced Hellenism. He was trying to harmonize it with Christianity to show that it wasn't a weird religion or superstition. Christianity embraced the "lingua-franca". They embraced Jesus and the message of salvation. Majority Jewish people rejected the message of Jesus and the fact that his disciples considered him to be the Messiah. Christian decided to put their message in Greek to extend it to all other people. Justin was one of the people who was proud of both the Greek and Christian legacies within him. He tried to work out the relationships between both. Christianity should not be persecuted as it was not a superstition or a revolutionary movement. Justin later apologized on paper to the emperor for the differences amongst Christianity. The writing probably helped others find strength in their belief in the religion.

Lesson 5

Intro Video: Gnosticism and proto-orthodox Christianity. Gnosticism is a movement that developed for several centuries. By the second century it was very strong and widespread. Proto-orthodox Christianity was very similarly related to Gnosticism. It set the standard for what is acceptable in Christianity. Proto-orthodox meant "first orthodox" as the norms had not yet been established in Christianity. The Da Vinci code - book about Gnosticism written by Dan Brown that was highly repressed by the church because of its teachings and writings. The church was said to be part of some conspiracy to hide the truth from the people. Dan Brown was wrong because he was mixing the historical truth with fiction. His claims were said to be not accurate. Gnosticism presented a major challenge to early Christianity because it said what really was the bible and what wasn't with its Gnostic features, what books were part of the scriptures. Took at least 30-40 years until the first books of the new testaments started being written. The Bible - Paul wrote his first letters in the years 50, and then some of the gospels (first 4 books of the news testament) started being written in the years 60 or 70. Then gospel of John was written towards end of the first century. Transmission of writing after a certain times raised issues about the accuracy of the account. It was said to be like the telephone game.

Vallee Recording:

Varieties of Syncretism:

Syncretism – a phenomenon present today that brings together doctrines (especially heretical) and presents them as a whole.

3 syncretic groups

Mystery cults:

Gnosticism:

Manicheism: late manifestation of late Gnosticism

Orthodoxy vs Heresiology

- Ecclesiastical (proto-orthodox) those who ended up being embraced by the church and late defined the church, also known as church fathers. [Irenaeus of Lyons](#), second century proto-orthodox writer, spoke about Valentia Gnosticism. When he was writing, the environment was a lot more fluid than what Christians believed in.
- Heresiologist: Hippolatus of Rome, Turtolian, Greeks: Alexandrias, Clement
- The ability to distinguish between these two forms was only brought about during the actual debates of both religions.

The Dwindling of Tolerance:

Wallter Bower – book written in German in the 1930s that was disregarded due to the World War. Translated into English in the 19th century. He said Orthodoxy was the winner of the battle of Heresy in the early Christian battle. His arguments drew attention to the notion that there was a rich and complex picture in early Christianity that although was disagree between groups, the crystallization between the doctrine was still argued. The winners were really the ones who took the time to understand what they believed in and whether or not they agreed with what was said in these writings.

The Gospel of Judas:

Coctic – ancient Egyptian language used in the ancient manuscript of the Gospel of Judas.

At first in the translation, Judas was presented as the good guy. Later on he was more seen as the bad guy. The Gospel of Judas was not written by Judas; it was written in Gnostic circles (connected to study of Gnosticism) and it dates back to the middle or late 2nd century. It presents Jesus as a Gnostic figure that comes to bring secret knowledge to the world. His 12 disciples/apostles do not understand this secret knowledge that he brings. Jesus of the Gnostics is not really the Jesus of the church. This Jesus is some sort of God who is not a supreme God like the real Jesus of the church, but rather one who brings knowledge to people that they are coming from a different realm that their spirit is a spark of divinity that needs to be released in order for those in the “know” to be able to go back to that spiritual realm. Gnostic figures: Barbelo and Circlas, Wisdom and Sophia. Sophia is the one who led to an accident that eventually lead to the creation of this material world that started trapping sparks of the divine in it. This is basically what humans are according to Gnostic religion and it was because of Sophia. The 12 apostles don't understand the Gospel of Judas so rather do things of the others Gods. PG. 33 = Jesus tells the Judas not that you will go there in this kingdom but rather that you will grieve a great deal. Laughter – Jesus laughs several times and his apostles view this as reprimanding them. Jesus explains it was because they don't understand or because they will be the ones who behave in a very unspiritual manner.

SLIDES:

Common Traits of Gnosticism

Esoteric religious movement that flourished during the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD and presented a major challenge to Christianity.

The circular, harmonic cross was an emblem used most notably by the Cathars, a medieval group that was associated with Gnosticism:

| | |
|------------------|--|
| The World | The physical world itself is inherently evil, in opposition to the world of the spirit (which is good) |
| The Divine Realm | The good God generated other divine offspring These offspring, in pairs, reproduced An accident occurred when one divine being (Sophia, a feminine deity) separated from the rest and spontaneously generated another being The latter, born outside the divine realm, was evil This latter being created the evil world |



For Humanity

- Sophia was captured and imprisoned in the material world in the bodies of humans
- Many humans (though not all) have this spark of divinity in them

For Salvation

- The divine spark within humans can escape only by learning through knowledge (Gk. Gnosis) where it came from and how it can return

For the Church

- Gnostics admit that Christians who have faith in Christ and do good can experience some salvation, but the real afterlife is only available to the Gnostics
- Gnostics come to the full knowledge of the secrets of salvation

The Divine Redeemer for Christian Gnostics

- The salvific knowledge comes from outside the world
- It is brought by a divine redeemer
- Christ is the one who brings this knowledge from above
- Some Gnostics (docetists, Gk. Dokeo - to seem, to appear) thought that Christ came to earth seemingly as a human
- He did not suffer because he was not flesh and blood
- Other Gnostics, believed that the divine Christ entered the body of a man named Jesus when he was baptized
- Christ then left Jesus prior to his death (hence Jesus' cry on the cross reported by Mt 27:46 "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?")

Major Canadian Scholarly project on Gnosticism:

[La bibliotheque copte de Nag Hammadi](#)

The Bibliothèque copte de Nag Hammadi website is the only critical edition and French translation of the Coptic manuscript collection discovered in 1945 near the town of Nag Hammadi in Egypt.

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Pro-Orthodox Christianity

Proto-orthodox" refers to those commonly known as the early "church fathers" (for example, Justin Martyr and Irenaeus of Lyon), who ended up defining what exactly should be "orthodox" (or correct) belief.

- Orthodox Christianity - non-dualistic, salvation through faith, non-elitistic, yet open to all.
- Irenaeus of Lyons, 2nd-century author of, *Against all the Heresies*.

Against the Gnostics, Irenaeus emphasizes:

- Apostolic succession (the fact that the bishops of proto-orthodox Christianity can trace their appointments back to the apostles)
- Rule of faith (proto-orthodox Christians hold certain basic beliefs that differ from Gnostic beliefs)
- Unity of belief (all proto-orthodox Christians hold the same beliefs, unlike the Gnostics, who hold a multitude of competing beliefs)

Criteria for Scriptural Canoncity:

Ancient - a sacred authority had to date back to near the time of Jesus. The more ancient, the more likely to be included.

Apostolic - an authority had to be written by an apostle or at least by a companion of the apostles. Ex: Matthew, Mark and Luke, who all had contact with the apostles.

Catholic (universal) - books had to have widespread acceptance among established churches (e.g., the Gospel of Peter in the Muratorian canon)

Orthodox - *the most important criterion* - the views set forth in a book had to conform with the views in already accepted books (e.g. docetic Christology is unacceptable)

Inspiration - *also very important* - books accepted as canonical ended up being regarded as inspired by God

*Codex Sinaiticus - Copy of the New Testament by Constantine who established the city as a Christian city. He ordered them from a bishop who said that even though we have these 27 books, we have more than some consider scriptures and some don't.

Codex Sinaiticus is one of the most important books in the world. Handwritten well over 1600 years ago, the manuscript contains the Christian Bible in Greek, including the oldest complete copy of the New Testament. Its heavily corrected text is of outstanding importance for the history of the Bible and the manuscript - the oldest substantial book to survive Antiquity - is of supreme importance for the history of the book.

1. **When people talk about Gnosticism, there is talk of a "secret knowledge" and that's what fascinates a lot of people today. What kind of knowledge are we talking about and why is it "secret"?**
Gnotiscism perspective, referring to knowledge not based on observation but intuition, spiritual knowledge of true spiritual origin.

Secrecy: knowledge only accessible to the Gnostics themselves only, because they inherited from great unknowable a divine spark which allowed them to understand the kingdom of heaven and more in depth interpretation of scripture, which Christians understood literally the mystery of god in universe.

2. **Why do you think most of the Gnostic writings were lost to the world for at least 1500 years?** Orthodoxy bearers suppressed writing of Gnostics.
3. **How strong of a competition was there between Gnosticism and proto-orthodox (or ecclesial) Christianity?** Proto are their own selection of books in response to Marinas list of books (he disregarded the OT). Only the Gospel of Luke, (he had a problem of old testament god (evil entity)) he believed that Jesus presented the real God, over Marsian had limited canon of scripture which totally disregarded the OT. It focused on specifics of the letter from Paul (10) and mostly like gospel OT God was evil, evil and sin. The problem was how can god create such evil world? So, Jesus was a revealer of true God greater than the one that created the world. PROTO ORTHODOX will themselves start their list, so Judaea Christians took OT into account, for them Gnostic Christ is different from Jesus, he inhabited Jesus, and when Jesus was crucified the Christ left (never suffered). It devaluates the incarnation (unacceptable for church) so in their treatises, they characterized Gnostics as vicious individuals perverted and evil.

Can you explain why the Gospel of Judas has been such a major discovery in recent years? The Gospel of Judas tries to explain true nature of Judas' betrayal of Jesus, it doesn't give us additional info about what happened but gives us glimpse of Gnostic and proto-orthodox view. Gnosticism in this gospel is Sethian (Seth 3rd son of Adam). Seth was revealer and savior, inherited from Adam, secret revelation about world and kingdom of god (Sethians believe to be descendants of Seth). Gospel of Judas reflects Sethian's primary trinity:

- Father (invisible spirit)
- Mother (barbell)
- Son (otogenes, human one)

This Gospel also has a reference to Barbelo, also, Judas shows world of Sethians debate and the frustration on scholars. The majority didn't have access to it made public, those who had access (selected team of editors) so there was a preliminary translation problem with the way that some of the terms were translated. The problems with translation = changed interpretation of figure of Judas; initially he was the chosen disciple, gave Jesus service by deliberating him from body, but then realized that the picture isn't that positive...

- Different conclusions about image of Judas (good bad guy?)
- Debate: between traditional image of Judas (bad betrayer) and second image about him being good guy (from 1st translation)

*in gospel of Jon, Jesus calls Judas a demon, Judas was a puppet for evil god... Jesus shows him and gives him revelation that he ail not be part of holy

generation of those who will be saved
13th demon

"you will exceed them all by.." so they thought Jesus was asking Judas to give him in but then realized that he is the evil god, sacrifices made to Saclas, so it's a negative thing to do sacrifices like Sethians says: you don't need to sacrifice for your faith, so Jesus meant you will exceed them by sacrificing me, you are doing more evil problem that not all had access.

Lesson 6

Conversion of the Empire

Vallee:

Roman Empire (pagan) becomes Christian Empire in the 4th Century.

- Edict of Milan 313
- Culminate in 319 when Christianity is claimed official religion of the Empire

Persecutions: painful reality that the church had to face, mostly targeted at Christians by the Roman authorities. Christians (Martyr's) were being killed and therefore abandoning their faith in the face of persecution. Humans are unpredictable therefore it is unfair to condemn those who collaborated during the persecutions. The church had to further decide what to do with those who abandoned their faith during the time of persecution. These people were considered sinners (Donado).

During this time,

Church vs. Empire: Very tense relationship. Some people believed that these should have nothing to do with each other.

476 - Rome is being conquered by Barbarian Kings

SLIDES

Christianity in the Roman World - 4th Century

This lesson overlaps somewhat with, but also complements, the lesson on Christianity in the Roman World. In Christianity in the Roman World, you learned about the Roman Empire. In this lesson, we return to the social and historical context of the Roman Empire in order to understand how Christianity grew to eventually become the official Roman religion by the end of the 4th century.

Therefore, this lesson complements Christianity in the Roman World in at least two significant ways:

- First, this lesson focuses on the persecutions of Christianity in a way in which Christianity in the Roman World did not. Christianity in the Roman World introduced some theory from the sociology of religion to explain the persecutions. Lesson 6 applies that theory to the actual persecutions and provides details about the major persecutions
- Second, this lesson takes you to the 4th century and beyond, when Christianity was legalized and then became the official religion of the empire

Roman Religion

- The Roman Empire was the object of the manifested care of the gods such as Jupiter.
- In order to satisfy the gods, cultic intentions developed. This aimed to keep the PAX DEORUM "the peace of the gods".

- The Roman religion was complex for it included borrowing traditions and elements - including Oriental Cults.
- This suggests tolerance for other religions that have ancient roots.

Religious Tolerance

- Roman Rule:
 - was more than secular. It included mandatory participation in public ceremonies and securing the gods' protection for the emperor.
- Roman Religion:
 - had no particular interest in binding doctrines.
 - Nonetheless, observance was mandatory for everyone.
- Judaism (and the Jews):
 - were tolerated for they were a sect with old roots.

Persecution

Disloyal to the State

- The name Christian evoked an inherited disloyalty to the state.
- Christians were considered a sect that sprung out of Judaism.

According to Porphyry:

- Christians were denounced as having turned away from the recognized god. They were accused of being atheists, to which they responded by saying they were "atheist to all those [pagan] gods".
- Christians were considered dangerous not only because of "their crude practices" (ritual murder, cannibalism, incest and magic were some of the false accusations brought against them), but also because they belonged to an antisocial organization that neglected the gods and the ceremonies.

The Colosseum in Rome, Italy, where many Christians were persecuted.

PLINY THE YOUNGER (112 AD emperor's personal legate)

He observed that Christians were accused of:

- Riots
- Subversion of public order
- Neglecting temple worship
- Non-compliance with traditional religious ceremonies

Therefore, in his eyes, and according to the mob, the application of capital punishment was justified. The victims of this oppression were seen as "martyrs" (witnesses) by fellow co-religionists.

Intense persecution took place under emperors:

- Decius 250- 251 AD
- Valerian 257- 259 AD

This targeted bishops to demoralize the community and was a setback for the Church

260-302 AD - complete tolerance:

- This was a crucial time of growth for the Church

Then came the “Great Persecution” of 303-313 AD

- The need for pagan revival
- This persecution involved:
 - Destruction of churches and scriptures
 - Confiscation of property
 - Prohibition of worship
 - Cancellation of legal and civil rights
 - Arrests of clergy, torture, execution
 - Orders to sacrifice to the gods on pain of death

Yet the unflinching courage of the Christians influenced the future course of events

AFTER 312 AD

Eusebius

- Born 265, died 340
- Was the first church historian
- He enthusiastically celebrated Constantine and his conversion after the battle at the Milvian Bridge.

Constantine

- Was very sympathetic to Christians after claiming to have had a vision of a cross superimposed against the sun
- He was raised a monotheist (Sun God worshipper), but after his conversion introduced and mixed Christian monotheism with Sun cult worship.
- In 313, Constantine and his co-emperor of the East, Licinius, granted universal religious freedom by the Edict of Milan

Council of Nicaea, 325 AD

- Important step in establishing orthodoxy within the Church.
- Christianity experienced an almost steady progress throughout the fourth century.

324 AD

- Constantine founded Constantinople, “the New Rome”, on the site of ancient Byzantium.
- This conquered the hearts of the Eastern provinces and brought Christianity, which was in many ways still pagan, into Asia Minor.

391-392 AD

Under the pressure of the Church and in order to enforce imperial unity through religious uniformity and orthodoxy, Emperor Theodosius I declares paganism illegal. Christianity becomes the official religion of the Roman Empire and Judaism is only tolerated.

Paganism is banned.