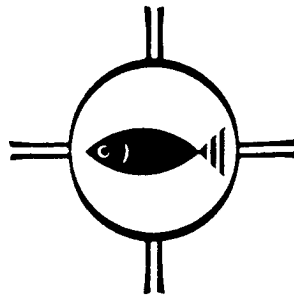


THE LIBERAL CATHOLIC INSTITUTE OF  
STUDIES



CHURCH HISTORY

THE EARLY CHURCH  
(FROM THE BEGINNING TO THE COUNCIL OF NICAEA)

VOLUME II OF II

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THE LIBERAL CATHOLIC INSTITUTE OF STUDIES

CHURCH HISTORY TO NICAEA

VOLUME II

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## VOLUME II

### CHAPTER 10 THE RISE OF DOGMATISM

We now enter upon a period of the Christian Faith which shows the rise of a formulated doctrine of theology. This development was hastened on the one hand by the attacks and persecutions from a hostile world which necessitated the writing of apologies refuting the accusations and falsehoods and stating what beliefs the Christians held in reality, and on the other hand by the *haeresiologies* which in refuting the heresies or false doctrines also had to state what the true doctrine or orthodoxy was.

Thus Christianity for the first time was forced to crystallize its doctrines and formulate its belief intellectually. As long as the new faith was not attacked a vague belief in the teachings of the Christ was sufficient, but where enemies began to ask why these beliefs were held and what they really were, each man who took his religion seriously had to come to some sort of definition with regard to it. Attacks always lead to consolidation and definition of belief and the persecutions, which the Christians had to suffer not only strengthened the Church and the faith of its members but also gave rise to a Christian theology.

In some respects this was a doubtful advantage, for with the birth of theology and dogma came intolerance and sectarianism--the worship of form instead of spirit. This was even more the case with regard to the *haeresiologies* in which the upholders of orthodoxy enumerated and refuted all the so-called heresies. Where the attacks from without only necessitated a general statement as to what Christianity was and what it was not and what teachings Christ had given to men, the refutation of heresies gave birth to abstruse theological arguments and subtleties of metaphysical definition. The pity was that this part of Christian theology was not born of inspiration but of refutation; it was negative and defensive in character, and lacked that constructive element which could have made it a living teaching.

#### IRENÆUS

It is interesting to read what Irenaeus, a pupil of St. Polycarp, and himself Bishop of Lyons, writes in his *Overthrow of Science (Gnosticism), falsely so-called*; and which, in its way, forms one of the earliest creeds of Christianity. He says:

*The Church, though dispersed throughout the whole world, even to the ends of the earth, has received from the Apostles and their disciples this faith: In One God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth and the sea and all things that are in them; and in one Christ Jesus, the Son of God, who became incarnate for our salvation; and in the Holy Spirit, who proclaimed through the prophets the dispensations of God, and the advent, and birth from a virgin, and the passion, and the resurrection from the dead, and the ascension into heaven in the flesh of the beloved Christ Jesus our Lord, and His manifestation from heaven in the glory of the Father, to gather all things into one, and to raise up anew all flesh of the whole human race.*

In these words of Irenaeus we can see how already in the second century the essentials of Christ's teaching were obscured by dogmatic non-essentials - belief in

which Christ Himself never demanded of any man. Irenaeus writes as if this statement of Christian belief were the original teaching of Christ and the universal belief of the Church wherever it existed. The truth of the matter was very different; far from holding one and the same doctrine the different Churches held views differing according to the spiritual soil in which the Christian seed had been sown.

### TERTULLIAN

Nor was Irenaeus the only one who indulged in the fancy of an established orthodoxy as the original teaching of Christ. Tertullian, one of the great lights of the North African Church, wrote a work called *On the Prescription of Heretics*, the very title of which is as far from Christ's teaching of love and tolerance as anything could be. Yet the works of Tertullian had a profound influence upon Christianity; so much indeed that he has been termed the Father of Latin Christianity. He not only defined the orthodox views as opposed to the heretical doctrines, but in doing so he coined the words which were to become the vocabulary of Latin theology in future times.

*Tertullian, Irenaeus and the latter's pupil Hippolytus, were the chief exponents of this defensive and sometimes offensive dogmatism which in refuting heresies lost sight of the living teachings of Christ and laid the foundation of an intolerant orthodoxy which was destined to obscure the living truth of Christian inspiration for centuries to come. Yet, in studying the origin of defensive theology we can understand how the three causes which brought it about; (a) the failing of inspired teaching, (b) the apologies against attacks from without, and, (c) the refutation of heresies from within were inevitable in the history of the Church, and a necessary phase of the great drama of the Christian faith.*

It seems a strange anticlimax that Tertullian, whose keen legal mind should have taken so much trouble in refuting the gnostic heresies and denying their right to interfere in any way with the Christian scriptures, should himself finally have landed in the Montanist heresy, but this may have been due rather to grievances against his own church than to a real sympathy with Montanism.

## CHAPTER 11 THE SCHOOL OF ALEXANDRIA

It is with relief that we turn from this defensive theology to the constructive theology of the School of Alexandria. Alexandria has always been one of the most remarkable of the Christian churches; here Egypt, Greece, Israel, Rome and the Orient met, not only in commerce, but also in intellectual and spiritual intercourse. Nowhere did the new faith find a richer ground in which to develop. It was here that Philo of Alexandria had given his spiritual interpretation of the Jewish scriptures and taught his Logos-doctrine which afterwards was to prove such a useful receptacle for the doctrine about Christ. It was here that the *Therapeuts* had had their communities, which might have been taken for early Christian monastic settlements, so strong was their resemblance to the new religion in doctrine and in practice. Here again in Alexandria the famous library had been a centre of learning, the like of which could not be found anywhere in the civilized world of those days, the Museum had become the leading Greek university and the main centre of philosophical learning in the Roman Empire. Naturally the Christian Church in Alexandria became, with Rome, the leading Church of the Christian religion. Here, from the earliest days, the instruction of members in the Christian doctrine was organized better than

anywhere else; here for the first time we find a critical study and arrangement of the Christian scriptures.

#### CLEMENT (ST. CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA)

The first head of the catechetical school of Alexandria was one Pantaeus, a Sicilian by birth, who after having travelled through India and become acquainted with the doctrines of Indian religious philosophy, returned to Alexandria and became the principal exponent of Christianity in that Church. His greatest pupil, greater indeed than his master, was Clement of Alexandria, an Athenian by birth, who had been converted to Christianity, and thus combined within himself the nobility of Greek culture with the depth of Christian faith. Many had thus passed through Greek philosophy to Christianity, but few were able, like Clement, to make a synthesis of Greek philosophy and culture with the doctrines and ethics of the Christian church. His enthusiasm for the new religion did not impair his width of vision and philosophical tolerance. To him truth could never be exteriorised and crystallized; as he himself expressed it: *The way of Truth is therefore one, but into it, as into a perennial river, streams flow from every side.*

Such a man could not be a heresy hunter; the theology that he built up was a living structure born of faith and inspiration, neither as a defence against attacks nor as a refutation of heresy, but as a revelation of living truth. He considered Greek philosophy and Jewish law to be the Paedagogues meant to lead man to Christ, and believed that the Logos directed and inspired the philosophy of Greece until He could be fully manifested in Christ.

Thus, Christianity was shown as the natural and necessary consummation of Greek and Jewish culture, and in his writings Clement does not so much ask his countrymen to give up their culture in favour of Christianity, as to find in the latter the necessary complement to the former. The picture he paints in his *Stromateis* of the true Gnostic or ideal Christian is one of the noblest ideals ever conceived by man. To Clement, the true wisdom, or gnosis, was that inner illumination to which the true Christian could attain if he lived the life of purity and love which our Lord Christ taught. Thus man entered into the Mysteries of the Kingdom of God, which were for the few, willing to bring the necessary sacrifices and capable of making the effort.

Many have doubted the existence of the Mysteries of the Kingdom that Christ delivered to His disciples in secret and to which so many of the leading Christians in the early Church testified. Clement himself was an initiate of these Mysteries and speaks of them repeatedly in his writings. Thus he says in his *Stromateis*, book 1, chapter 28:

*The Mysteries are delivered mystically, and what is spoken may be in the mouth of the speaker; rather not in his voice, but in his understanding... The writing of these memoranda of mine, I well know, is weak when compared with that spirit, full of grace, which I was privileged to hear. But it will be an image to recall the archetype to him who was struck with the Thyrsus.<sup>1</sup>*

The theological writings of Clement were the outcome of this inner spiritual

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<sup>1</sup> *The Thyrsus was the wand with which the candidate was touched during the ceremony of initiation in the Mysteries – S. von Krusenstierna.*

experience, and are far above the intellectual subtleties or defensive arguments of those theologians whose dogmatism was born not of inspiration, but of irritation. The result is that they are free of the man-made dogmas which defensive theology substituted for the living teachings of Christ, and which, by their lack of commonsense and inner reality, have done so much to estrange thinking men from the Church.

Thus Clement teaches that it is not God's wrath that is to be appeased, but man's impurity which is to be overcome, so that unity with the divine may be attained. Ignorance, to Clement, is the cause of sin, and as man grows in inner wisdom he emerges from the darkness of ignorance and sin into the light of the spiritual world. This victory, which Christ attained in His resurrection, is the goal to which every Christian should aspire; and it is to the Risen Christ and not to the crucified Christ that Clement bids us look. The message, which Christ brought to man, was not that life meant a crucifixion, but that through the crucifixion of our earthly self the spirit within could attain to the new birth. Joy therefore should be the hallmark of the Church as well as of its members, for Christianity essentially brought a message of gladness.

Most Christians in Clement's time looked upon joy, beauty and wisdom as essentially sinful and as leading man away from God. Primitive Christianity in opposition to Christ's own teaching was bowed down under an intense feeling of sinfulness and evil from which alone God's pardon could bring release. Clement taught that God was the Fount not of pardon but of Life, and that it was through wisdom, love and beauty that man grew nearer to God. His scheme of training was one in which he led his pupils through science, dialectics, ethics and philosophy to theology as the crown of all, thus giving them a wide range of knowledge, culminating in the Christian tradition and scriptures in which all found their unity.

The life of Clement was essentially a life of harmony and beauty; his character was noble and gentle and showed that perfect balance and sense of proportion that was the precious heritage of Greece. His commonsense prevented him from allowing himself to be martyred during the persecution of Severus while he could preserve his life by flight; and, though less heroic, his way was certainly the more useful one. Until his flight in the year 202 he was the head of the catechetical school, though he lived until 215, leaving behind him a number of works of which the *Stromateis* were the most important. He was acknowledged as one of the Saints of the Church till the time of Benedict XIV, who struck his name off the calendar as a result of the hostile opinions of Photius, the reading of which brought Benedict to his unjust decision.

If ever a man deserved to be termed a Saint it was Clement, whose life of truly Christian virtue and wisdom together with the greatness and nobility of his character make him a true disciple of the living Christ, following in the footsteps of the Master in a time when the message of Christ was but too often obscured by the doctrines of his followers.

## ORIGEN

When Clement of Alexandria fled in order to escape the persecutions under Septimius Severus, a successor had to be appointed as head of the catechetical school, and the choice fell on a young pupil of Clement called Origen. Though only seventeen years old at the time of his appointment, such was already his reputation for purity of

life and depth of learning that he was considered worthy to be the head of this most famous school of Christian instruction. Never yet in the history of the Church had the mind of a genius, the devotion and piety of a saint, the fiery zeal of an apostle, and the iron will of a reformer, been combined in one personality.

The years between his appointment as head of the catechetical school and his temporary absence from Alexandria during the persecution of Caracalla were years of great activity in all directions. So many came to hear his lectures that he was forced to hand over the elementary instruction to Heraclas, one of his pupils who in later years was to become his successor and Bishop of Alexandria. Even so, his teaching was but a part of his work; his studies were deep and varied. Thus he attended the lectures of Ammonius Saccas, the father of Neo-Platonism, and made a study of Plato, Numenius, the Stoics and the Pythagoreans, so that he might understand non-Christian thought and be better able to expound the Christian teachings to the followers of these different philosophies. Then again he learnt Hebrew, so as to be able to study the Old Testament in the original, the result of which studies appeared in the *Hexapla*, his magnum opus, in which he compared the Hebrew text with the Greek version and tried to bring out a reliable text of the Septuagint, a labour that took over twenty years to complete.

But it was not alone Origen's literary activity and his fame as a teacher which made him one of the leaders of the Church; his great intellect combined with a profound sympathy and understanding of human nature made him the unofficial arbiter in all quarrels and difficulties in the Eastern Church.

Having been forced to leave Alexandria, Origen, with some of his devoted disciples, settled at Caesarea in the year 231, and there resumed his many activities; building up a flourishing school. Among his pupils was Gregory Thaumaturgos, later Bishop of Neo-Caesarea in Pontus, who afterwards extolled the greatness of Origen as a teacher in his *Oratio Panegyrica*. It was by such pupils that Origen's influence became so far-reaching and permeated the Church as much by his writings.

Where the writings of Origen are so many in number (at one time they were said to number six thousand!) it is not easy to determine what his main contribution to Christian theology was. His accomplishments are so varied and in many he was a practically a pioneer. Thus he was not only the first theologian worthy of that name, but at the same time, the first biblical scholar; the first real commentator; the first to make a sound textual criticism in his *Hexapla*, and at the same time the first systematic teacher of Christian doctrine – being greater in this respect even than his master, Origen.

#### SCRIPTURAL INTERPRETATION

In his exposition of the Scriptures, Origen boldly faced the fact that when read literally passages often contradicted each other; and, furthermore, that some of them were obviously impossible.

Origen's conception of the Scriptures was that they could be interpreted in *three* different ways. The first being according to the letter or the body of the Scriptures, the second according to the soul, giving the allegorical meaning of the different passages, and the third according to the spirit, giving the esoteric interpretation.

Thus to Origen the Scriptures were a means to reach the living truth within, *the heavenly and true things of the law* as he calls it, which man experiences when *he ascends to the spirit*" Origen had made this ascent to the spirit and had come to the experience of the hidden mysteries which to him are the consummation of a Christian life. He, like Clement, held that the Church had a dual function: On the one hand it had to give ethical precepts to those whose lives needed purification, that is to say, it taught man to be good; but on the other hand it had a higher mission for those who were already good. As Origen expresses it: *God the Word was sent, indeed, as a physician to sinners, but as a teacher of divine mysteries to those who are already pure and who sin no more* (*Contra Celsum* III, 62). He explains this standpoint in his refutation of the attack of a certain Celsus on Christianity.

*... whoever is pure not only from all defilement, but from what are regarded as lesser transgressions, let him be boldly initiated in the mysteries of Jesus, which properly are made known only to the holy and pure. The initiated of Celsus accordingly says, 'Let him whose soul is conscious of no evil come.' But he who acts as initiator, according to the precepts of Jesus, will say to those who have been purified in heart, 'He whose soul has, for a long time, been conscious of no evil, and especially since he yielded himself to the healing of the word, let such a one hear the doctrines which were spoken in private by Jesus to His genuine disciples.*

(*Contra Celsum* III., 60)

#### THE CHRISTIAN MYSTERIES

From all this it is clear that Origen not merely believed in the existence of the Christian mysteries, but that he knew and spoke of them with the authority of one who had been initiated into them. Thus he held with Clement that the Church had not only an outer teaching for the many but also an inner teaching for the few. It was and is this doctrine of "Reserve", maintaining that only the outer teachings were given out by the Church, whereas the inner mysteries could only be experienced by them who were fit to receive them, that has always aroused the indignation of those who would see in Christianity a teaching of such divine simplicity that even the most ignorant could respond to it and take it in. This is certainly true with regard to the ethics of Christianity; the teachings of Christ with regard to the life man should live are certainly of a divine simplicity and such as all men can understand.

But ethics, far from being the end of Christ's message, are only the beginning of it; the ethical life is the path along which man can travel to illumination, the inner experience of the mysteries of the Kingdom, and to union with the divine as the highest consummation. In this inner experience the living truths of which the exoteric doctrines are but a symbol are revealed to man and henceforth he can speak as one who knows. Even in Origen's time this existence of the Mystery-teachings was resented by some, and in his *Contra Celsum* he says:

*... That there should be certain doctrines, not made known to the multitude, which are (revealed) after the exoteric ones have been taught, is not a peculiarity of Christianity alone, but also of philosophic systems, in which certain truths are exoteric and others esoteric. Some of the hearers of Pythagoras were content with his ipso dixit; while others were taught in secret those doctrines which were not deemed fit to be communicated to profane and insufficiently prepared ears. Moreover, all the mysteries that are celebrated everywhere throughout Greece and barbarous countries,*



*although held in secret, have no discredit thrown upon them, so that it is in vain that he endeavours to calumniate the secret doctrines of Christianity, seeing he does not correctly understand its nature.*

The important fact emerging from this controversy with Celsus is that in it we find indubitable proof that at the time of Origen there existed an inner school called *the Mysteries of Jesus* which was looked upon by its initiates, of whom Origen certainly was one, as the real Christianity and the heart of the Church. In them those who had been trained sufficiently in the precepts and doctrines of the Outer Church could attain to that spiritual awakening which gave them immediate experience of the living truth - the mysteries of the kingdom of God. Many, besides Origen, have borne witness to the existence and inspiration of these Christian Mysteries, and it was only when intolerance and dogmatism rejected the Mysteries that Christianity began to lose its hold on those who desired more than the Church with its exoteric teaching can give.

The fact that his writings lent themselves to unorthodox interpretations finally led to their condemnation by Pope Anastasius in 400 and finally to Origen's condemnation in the edict of Justinian of 543, and in the eleventh canon of the fifth Ecumenical Council at Constantinople in 543. Thus one of the greatest lights of the Christian Church was denied the place to which his greatness so fully entitled him: that of being one of the founders of constructive Christian theology.

The work of Clement and of Origen marked the birth of Christian philosophy, and the history of the school of Alexandria as it existed under their leadership will ever form one of the noblest chapters in the history of the Christian Church. It is to them that we must look for a truly constructive and inspired theology, a theology born, not of refutation of heresy or slander, but of an inner participation of the Mysteries of the Kingdom which were and are the only source of Christian Truth, the Truth of which Christ was the embodiment on earth, the truth of which He is still the living Fount to those who seek the living Christ behind the doctrines of the Church.

For further information about some of the teachings of Clement and Origen the student should read Chapter 3 of *Esoteric Christianity* by Annie Besant.

## CHAPTER 12 PLOTINUS: THE FATHER OF CHRISTIAN MYSTICISM

While Origen was head of the Catechetical School of Alexandria he made it his custom to visit the lectures of non-Christian philosophers so that he might be the better able to explain Christianity to them and, if necessary, refute their doctrines. Thus at one time he attended the lectures of one Ammonius Saccas, a man of humble origin (the surname Saccas refers to his former occupation as a porter).

Little could he have thought that the seed sown by this humble philosopher was to flower forth into a philosophy, which in times to come would serve some of the greatest of Christians as a vehicle for their own mystical experiences. Yet such was the case; from the teachings of Ammonius Saccas grew that magnificent school of philosophy known as Neo-Platonism, which deeply influenced St. Augustine, the (pseudo) Dionysius the Aeropagite, and a number of others whose writings, permeated with the spirit of Neo-Platonism, carried the teachings of Ammonius Saccas and his disciples into the very tissue of Christian theology.

Ammonius Saccas, like so many other great teachers, committed nothing to writing and if it had not been for Porphyry, the systematic and understanding pupil of Plotinus, the teachings of this greatest disciple of Ammonius would have been lost to posterity also.

When Plotinus was twenty-eight years of age he determined to devote himself entirely to philosophy. But, though he went to the most famous lecturers of his time, none of them could satisfy him. It was not until one of his friends led him to Ammonius that he found satisfaction and exclaimed: *This is the man I was looking for*. The next ten years Plotinus spent with Ammonius and so great became his eagerness to study deeper the philosophy of his master that he decided to attach himself to an expedition of the Emperor Gordian against the Persians in order to learn their philosophy and that of the Hindus. There must have been a connection between the teachings of Ammonius and the oriental philosophies, for why should Plotinus desire to study oriental philosophy unless his teacher himself had told him, or Plotinus had found out, that the source of his teaching was to be found in the East?

Since Alexandria was a place where Egypt, Greece, Rome and the Orient met, it is evident that with the traders the philosophies and religions of nations whence they came must have reached Alexandria and become known to its philosophers, who were ever eager to study new things. We have already seen how Pantaenus, the first head of the Catechetical school, travelled through India before settling down in Alexandria and we cannot imagine that an eager student like Pantaenus should have travelled through a deeply religious and philosophical country such as India without learning something of its beliefs and doctrines. The attempt of Plotinus was not a success; the Emperor was killed and it was only with difficulty that Plotinus managed to save himself at Antioch. He finally settled in Rome, and it was there that he began to teach regularly and gathered around himself a group of devoted pupils, able to carry on his philosophy.

Porphyry says that Plotinus used to meditate about a subject on which he intended to write and then do the actual writing as if he were copying from a book, evidently having the entire discourse clear in his mind. He seemed to live a double life, of inner concentration on the one hand and of intercourse with those around him on the other. As Porphyry expresses it, *he was able simultaneously to live with others and with himself*.

In all his discourses Plotinus showed a spirit of extreme gentleness and humility. Yet his fame grew constantly and not only did many entrust their children to his care but he would often be called in to solve disputes and became recognized not only as an irreproachable trustee but also as a just and wise arbitrator.

For twenty-six years Plotinus thus lived and taught in Rome and later near Rome at the estate that had belonged to one of his friends, Zethus. Here he died in the year 270.

The philosophy of mysticism that we find in Plotinus was not his only contribution to Christian religious philosophy. In many ways Christian theology is indebted to this prince of mystics, who yet would have scorned the name of Christian. To give but a few examples, it is in Plotinus that we first find an intelligible exposition of the Trinity, in him we read of the Son coming forth from the Father and yet being of one

substance with the Father. The theological discussions at the Council of Nicaea certainly derived depth and clarity from the teachings of Plotinus.

Through many different channels did Neo-Platonism reach the Christian Church and become part of Christian theology. Through the Alexandrian branch of the school we find the doctrines of Plotinus expounded by the great woman-philosopher Hypatia and her disciple the Christian Bishop Synesius; the Athenian school was to bring forth the genius of Proclus who, through his writings and those of his follower Dionysius the Areopagite, was to influence Christian theology for times to come. But most important of all perhaps was the introduction of Neo-Platonic ideas through the work of St. Augustine. It was in Neo-Platonic writings that St. Augustine first found satisfaction and, though later Christianity became to him the supreme Truth, the Neo-Platonic influence in his writings remains.

At this stage the student should read Appendix 4: *Eja Milites Christi*, which, though short, gives an idea of church practices in the third century.

### CHAPTER 13 CONSTANTINE AND THE TRIUMPH OF CHRISTIANITY

It was a great moment in the history of Christianity when the Emperor Galerius, who had been largely responsible for the Diocletian persecution, found himself forced, when on his death-bed, to put forth an Edict in which it was said *that Christians may exist again and set up their meetings*.

Soon after having issued the Edict, which, once again, made Christianity a *religio licita*, Galerius died and was succeeded by Maximian in his Asiatic dominions, Licinius in Eastern Europe, while in the West Constantine ruled Gaul and Britain and Maxentius maintained a tyranny in Italy, Africa and Spain. Of these four, Constantine was the only one who was really favourable to Christianity, while Licinius for a while shared his attitude but afterwards became hostile, and Maximian and Maxentius were frankly antagonistic, pursuing, though in vain, the old policy of persecution. Christianity from this time onwards became more and more a political factor; the Christians had become a party to be reckoned with and their support made it worthwhile for an Emperor to espouse their cause.

It was while he was marching against the tyrant Maxentius in Italy that Constantine before the battle of Saxa Rubra had seen the famous vision in the sky of a flaming Cross with the accompanying words *by this sign thou shalt conquer*. Whether or not the vision of Constantine is a historical fact (and there seems no reason to doubt it), it is certain that from this moment onwards Constantine, though not himself a member of the Christian Church, took the Cross for his standard and became the greatest champion Christianity had ever known.

As long as Constantine and Licinius had common rivals in Maximian and Maxentius, they were united in their efforts for Christianity. Thus it was by their joint action that, after Constantine's victory over Maxentius, the two *Augusti* issued the famous Edict of Milan in March, 313. This Edict was more than a recognition of Christianity, it was a document of religious freedom, the like of which had not been known before.

The Edict was many centuries ahead of the times; the very Christians whom it was to benefit were as yet unable to allow one another to worship God each according to his own choice.

The second part of the Edict concerned the Christians only. It recognized the Church as a corporate body and declared that all property which had been confiscated during the persecutions was to be restored, while proper indemnity was to be paid to present owners. Thus the places of worship that had been taken from Christian communities during the persecutions were returned and henceforth there was to be no impediment in the way of the Christian religion. That Christianity was to enter upon one of the most tumultuous periods of its existence was due to the blindness of its followers only, not to opposition from outside.

With the death of Licinius in 323 Constantine had become the sole and undisputed ruler of the Roman Empire. Even during his ten years' struggle with Licinius Constantine had enacted a number of measures, part of which put Christianity on a level of equality with Pagan religions, whereas the later measures go beyond equality and show a distinct preference for the Christian Faith. It was Constantine's aim to make the Christian worship fully as magnificent as that of the Pagan religions, and to that end he built great Churches endowed at public expense, furnished with copies of the Scriptures and opened with splendid ceremonies of dedication. Thus in Constantinople the famous Church of St. Sophia was built by him, and in all great Christian centres like Jerusalem, Antioch and Rome traces of his architectural activity are to be found. Many of Constantine's measures show the influence of Christian morals. Thus the lot of slaves was improved, the poor and destitute provided for, cruelty to children and to animals was mitigated and respect for human life increased.

When finally in 323 Constantine had made the Roman Empire safe for Christianity he was justified in looking forward to an era of peace. In so far as his love for Christianity was inspired by political considerations he looked to Christianity as to a sound basis of unity for the Empire. Constantine was farsighted enough to recognize that a common ideal is necessary for unity. His predecessors had tried to find that unity in the worship of the Emperor as divine, but where the divinity of some of the Emperors was of such a very doubtful character this did not prove a sure basis of imperial unity. The struggle with Christianity had largely centred round the question: Christ or Emperor, and in this struggle Christ had been triumphant. It is only when we fully understand Constantine's expectations of Christianity as a unifying influence in the Empire that we can appreciate his disappointment and impatience when, instead of the unity he had contemplated, he was met with a series of controversies and schisms, which made Christian unity seem but a far-off dream.

#### THE ARIAN CONTROVERSY

The most serious of these controversies was that which centred round a priest of Alexandria named Arius. This Arius had been implicated, when a Deacon, in the Meletian schism, and had consequently been deposed from the diaconate. The next Bishop of Alexandria, Achillas, though a worthy and able man, made the fatal mistake, in the three months of his short rule, of restoring Arius not only to the diaconate, but to advance him to the priesthood and to put him in charge of one of the most important Churches in Alexandria, the famous parish Church of Baucalis. Without this ill-advised action of Achillas the Arian controversy would never have

been possible, though possibly the discussions as to the true nature of Christ would have taken place in any case.

According to Socrates the historian, the beginning of the controversy is to be placed circa 318. Alexander had succeeded Achilles as Bishop of Alexandria and one day as Socrates has it *in the presence of the presbyters and the rest of his clergy, he was discussing too ambitiously the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, teaching that there was a unity in the Trinity.* But Arius, one of the presbyters under his jurisdiction, a man of no inconsiderable logical acumen, imagining that the Bishop was subtly introducing the doctrine of Sabellius<sup>1</sup> the Libyan, from the love of controversy took the opposite opinion to that of the Libyan, and, as he thought, vigorously responded to the things said by the Bishop. *If, said he, the Father begat the Son, He that was begotten had the beginning of existence; and from this it is evident that there was a time when the Son was not. It follows necessarily that He had His subsistence (hypostasis) from nothing.*

Having once started, his intellectual pride led Arius to gain adherents for his idea and, being a popular priest, he soon made himself a considerable following. Now that persecutions were over, life in the Christian Church was becoming somewhat dull for the more sensational of its members and here, in the points raised by Arius, a rich field of acrimonious discussion was opened up. We can thus understand why the population of Alexandria took up the fight with such unholy joy, and why it soon spread over the entire Christian Church.

Alexander felt that he could not allow a teaching so confusing as that of Arius to continue, and about 320 he took action in the matter. First he discussed the question with Arius in a private meeting, and after that it was considered at a conference of the clergy. The first meeting was without results; at the second it was decided to send a letter to Arius and his followers *exhorting them to renounce his impiety and to submit themselves to the sound Catholic faith.* The letter had no effect and in 321 Alexander called a synod of Bishops of Egypt and Libya, who consequently met in Alexandria to the number of about one hundred. On finding that Arius taught that *God was not always Father, that the Son was a creature and a work, foreign from the essence of the Father,* and that possessing freewill He was originally capable of vice no less than of virtue, they excommunicated Arius and his followers.

Arius now began to seek support in Palestine where he found shelter with Eusebius of Caesarea, the well known church historian. Afterwards he took up his abode with the other Eusebius, Bishop of Nicomedia, afterwards Bishop of Constantinople. Both associations were of great importance in the Arian controversy; Eusebius the historian was the one who was to present the baptismal formula of his Church as a creed to the Council of Nicaea. He never joined the ranks of the Arians proper, but always assumed a conciliating attitude.

It soon became necessary for Alexander to restate his case in encyclical letters. The most important of these, which was signed by a great number of Priests and Deacons, is too concise and carefully worded to be the work of Alexander; in language and thought it is clearly the work of his secretary Athanasius, a young man destined to

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<sup>1</sup> Sabellianism was a form of Monarchianism, a third century movement which emphasised the unity (monarchy) of the Trinity at the expense of the independence of the three 'persons'. S. von Krusenstierna

become the main exponent of the Catholic doctrine concerning the Christ.

It was at this stage of the proceedings that Constantine found it necessary to intervene. One can well imagine how annoyed he was to find the imperial unity of which he had dreamt disturbed over a matter which, to him, naturally seemed very trivial. He decided to send his ecclesiastical adviser Hosius, Bishop of Corduba, to Alexandria. Hosius carried with him a letter from Constantine to Alexander and Arius.

Constantine's letter was the letter of a statesman, a very tolerant and broadminded statesman too, but betrayed an entire ignorance of the point in question. The mission of Hosius could not be anything but a failure, and on his return to Nicomedia, where he reported to the Emperor, Constantine decided, perhaps advised by Hosius, to call together a council of the entire Christian Church to meet at Nicaea in the coming spring. It is possible that the matter had gone too far to be ignored, but on the other hand nothing could be better calculated to make the controversy a universal one than this convocation of a general council.

## CHAPTER 14 THE COUNCIL OF NICAEA

The Council of Nicaea began to gather in May, 325. More than three hundred Bishops from the East and West arrived, attended by their Priests and Deacons. The largest number of representatives came from the Eastern Church, while there were but comparatively few Bishops from Latin-speaking countries. There was a Bishop from Gaul, one from Italy (the Bishop of Rome did not attend in person but sent two legates), and naturally there was Hosius of Corduba who thus represented Spain. Many of those present had suffered under the persecutions, Hosius himself under Maximian, and this naturally lent great authority to the Council.

It was the first time in the history of Christianity that a council of Bishops of the entire Church was called together, and it was a significant fact that the descendant of Pagan Emperors, himself Pontifex Maximus of Paganism, was the first to call a general council of the Church.

The whole gathering must have presented a very motley effect; from the rough ascetics from Egypt to the polished prelates of Constantine's court, all types of Christians were to be found. The Bishops assembled in the large hall of the Imperial Palace; and when all were present Constantine himself entered, tall and resplendent with diadem and precious purple robe. It is said that he blushed when he entered. It may have been that he felt shy in the presence of so august a gathering; possibly however, he remembered the recriminations, which had been handed to him when he arrived and which certainly formed a sad testimony of unchristian spirits. After an opening address in which he discoursed in Latin on the necessity of peace and unity he produced a bundle of accusations which he had received and, reminding all present of the duty of forgiveness, he burnt the lot. After that the debates began.

First Arius expounded his views, so frankly indeed that *the Bishops stopped their ears*. After that it was decided to examine the Scriptures with regard to the points in question. This however proved useless as each party explained the texts according to their own point of view. Thus it was finally resolved that a formula or creed should be

made up as a test of authority.

In trying to understand the proceedings of the Council we must be well aware of the fact that the majority of those present were simple-minded men to whom the entire controversy was strange and who were ready to be convinced by those whose views were definite. The leader of this large section was Eusebius of Caesarea the historian, who would have wielded an even greater influence had he been as great in theology as he was in literary and scholarly attainments. On the one side of this central block were Alexander and his followers, the Catholics or Nicenes, some thirty only in number, but mostly men of knowledge and authority.

The Western Bishops, including Hosius, belonged to this group. The main figure in it however was Alexander's young Deacon Athanasius who, though not a constituent member of the synod, was the mouthpiece of the Catholic group. On the other side of the central group was Arius himself with his immediate followers, a small group, but very determined; and a second group with Eusebius of Nicomedia as their leader, who sympathized with Arius but were careful not to risk themselves too far.

It has often been represented as if the controversy raged over the minute difference between that standpoint which looked upon Christ as of the same substance as the Father, and the opposite standpoint, which considered Him to be of like substance, which difference is expressed by the two Greek words *homoousios* (of the same substance) and *homoiousios* (of like substance). This view is erroneous, the term *homoiousios* did not arise till much later in the controversy, while the word *homoousios* was only introduced by Hosius towards the end of the Council. The latter term certainly expressed the view of the Catholic party, which taught that God the Father and Christ the Son were of the same substance, but the doctrine of the Arian opposition could only be expressed by the term *anomoios*, unlike or foreign (to the Father).

The same doctrine was expressed in the formula presented by Eusebius of Nicomedia and his effort was torn to shreds in the presence of the assembly and rejected as heretical. It was then that Eusebius of Caesarea came forward with a formula consisting mainly of the baptismal creed of his own Church<sup>1</sup> with an addition directed against the Sabellian heresy. It was decided to accept this creed with the addition (proposed by Constantine on the advice of Hosius) of the term *homoousios*, so that the Council might express its definite opinion with regard to the nature of Christ. Constantine's proposal was accepted and thus the Nicene Creed<sup>2</sup> (not to be confused with its later version, now generally called the Nicene Creed) was produced.

After the Creed had been read out in the Council all present signed it with the exception of only a few. Some, like Eusebius of Caesarea, hesitated for awhile, afraid of the possible consequences of the term *homoousios*, but they ended by signing with the exception of only Secundus and Theonas. The Council anathematized these two, together with Arius, who naturally opposed the formula. Though Constantine, at the banquet which ended the Council meetings, had congratulated the Bishops on

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<sup>1</sup> Some scholars believe this to have been the Baptismal Creed of Jerusalem.

<sup>2</sup> The student should read *The Christian Creeds* by C.W. Leadbeater, chapters 1 and 2 for more detailed information on the Creeds.

the success of their proceedings, time was to prove that the Arian controversy was far from settled.



The Council of Nicaea forms a watershed in the history of the Church. After having been divided and persecuted by the authorities, the Church now emerges as the main religion of the Empire. Nicaea was the first ecumenical council and was to be followed by several others. These councils proved essential to maintain the unity of the Church and to settle the many doctrinal disputes which arose in the centuries to come, particularly concerning the nature of Christ.

Nicaea also marks the beginning of the linking of the Church to the secular power, a situation which, on the one hand made the Church rich and powerful, but on the other hand brought much corruption and misuse of power in the centuries to come.

## CHAPTER 15 CONCLUSION

We find that at the end of the first quarter of the fourth century, at the time when the Christian Church was being established as the dominant religion in the Roman Empire, most, if not all, of the elements for its development had been thrown into the melting pot:

- The Jewish/Essene background
- The teaching of the Great Teacher a) for the multitude; b) for the few
- The Sacraments established by Him
- Various Mystery cult aspects (the Mysteries of Jesus)
- The influence of Gnosticism (esotericism)
- The influence of Greek philosophy (Platonism and Stoicism)
- The influence of Neo-Platonism (later led to Christian mysticism)
- Theology – the negative approach; dogmatism (Irenaeus & Tertullian)
- Theology – the positive approach; liberalism (Clement & Origen)
- The Roman State and its political and legal system

All these factors (and others not mentioned) have left their imprint on the Christian religion.

Christianity, perhaps to a greater degree than any other religion save Hinduism, is 'syncretistic'; it has borrowed from the right and from the left. That it has absorbed and made its own what it has borrowed... is true; but we must not on that account refuse to see that its growth, like the growth of any living organism was accomplished by taking in from outside. Starting as a Jewish sect, with the simplest of organisations, and a plain, if lofty, morality, and much of Jewish superstition, it gradually built up for itself a metaphysic by selecting from Gnosticism elements that it could assimilate, and rejecting others. It then added other elements from the Hellenic thought and modified its cosmological ideas in harmony with both Hellenic and Oriental modes of thought, which, after long struggles, it wrought into something like a coherent whole.

E.E. Kelleet: *Short History of Religions*, p.276

That this process has continued down the ages, and still continues, we shall see in the



following papers on Church History and Theology.

Some unorthodox views have been expressed in this paper. The Liberal Catholic student should be careful not to offend by expressing some of these viewpoints too openly, especially when speaking to people who are still emotionally strongly attached to the historicity of the Gospels. Though the great majority of theologians today have abandoned the view of the Gospels as history, it has recently been said that the average person in the pew is usually at least 50 years behind the times in this respect. S. von Krusenstierna

## APPENDIX 1 THE DATE OF THE MINISTRY AND THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

Extracts from a series of articles in *The Liberal Catholic*, October 1956 - June 1957  
by The Rev. G. Nevin Drinkwater, B.Sc., F.M.A.

### INTRODUCTION

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in and after 1947 has given evidence for an unnamed Palestinian Teacher of Righteousness, who led a sect which has considerable points of contact with the early Church. As the Teacher is placed in the first century B.C. by a preponderance of writers, questions have been asked by Liberal Catholics as to whether this is contributory evidence for placing the Ministry of our Lord Himself about a century before the accepted date. Such a dating, at first so fantastic, is found to explain some curious points in Church history. It was advanced many years ago by Bishop Leadbeater and various Theosophical writers<sup>1</sup>, but it was not discussed as a historical problem until G.R.S. Mead published his book *Did Jesus Live 100 B.C.?* in 1909. Mead did not deal with the New Testament evidence in much detail and for this reason perhaps his work received little attention among historians. He did discuss various traditions in the Talmud. The Talmud, which incidentally, never suggests that the Romans had anything to do with the death of Christ, makes Jesus a contemporary of Simeon ben Shetah and Joshua ben Perchayah, prominent Rabbis at the beginning of the first century B.C., and of Salome Alexandra, who was queen of Judea 78-69 B.C.

Mead pointed out that the Christian Father Epiphanius was aware of the Salome Alexandra tradition and had attempted the impossible task of harmonizing it with the orthodox date. He also drew attention to the Jewish anti-Christian polemical work, the *Toldoth Jeshu*, which also puts Jesus at the earlier date.

In 1926 Professor Strömholm of Upsala University, independently of Mead, argued that the Master was several generations before Paul, and that there were two parties in the early Church; one which maintained that Christ was crucified, and the other that He was stoned. Strömholm suggested that originally there were records of some of the disciples of Paul's day, who had, like himself, held communion with the Risen Christ. These records were misunderstood by the compiler of the earliest Gospel, that attributed to Mark, as implying that the disciples in question were in

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<sup>1</sup>E.O.' 1883; cf. *Eliphas Levi*, *Paradoxes of the Highest Science*, T.P.H. ed., 1922, pp xi; 53 H.P. Blavatsky, *The Theosophist*, V, 173 (1883); A. Besant, *Esoteric Christianity*, p.111 (1901); C. Leadbeater, *The Inner Life*, I, 184-185 (1910) *Hidden Side of Christian Festivals*, 174 (1920).

touch with the Master in the flesh, so that they were recorded as taking part in the Ministry<sup>2</sup>. The error was perpetuated in the remaining Gospels because they all draw on Mark.

The fact that Jewish, Manichaeic, and Arabic tradition, not to mention Christian sources as represented by Epiphanius and the Sibylline material should independently preserve traditions of an earlier date for Christ deserves attention, even if some of it is late and of legendary character. Several legends, if from differing sources, and showing no signs of literary dependence, should be given weight if all point to the same conclusion.

## ACTS

Acts purports to give the history of the early Church from just before the Ascension. The argument cannot be presented fully here, but it is suggested that Acts is made up from at least two early sources. The first forms the basis of the early chapters. It deals with the activities of the Twelve, but has been edited so as to place the historical setting in the time of Pilate. The second source, now represented by Acts VI, 7; VIII, 3; IX, 1 to end, has been very little edited and is substantially based on an eye-witness to Paul's mission, presumably Luke. In fact however, it is dealing with events about a century later than those related in the earlier chapters. One support for this view is the contrast between the position of Peter in the earlier chapters and his position in the later. At the time of Paul, it is the James Paul knew, i.e., James Justus, not Peter, who is the head of the Church, a fact which commentators have never adequately explained.

Thus Paul places James before Peter in Gal II, 9, and Peter's vacillation at Antioch on the question of Gentile converts is attributed to messengers from James; while at the Council at Jerusalem held on this matter, it is James, not Peter, who makes the final decision<sup>1</sup>. When in later years Paul visits Jerusalem for the last time, it is again clear that James is at the head<sup>2</sup>. On the other hand, in Acts I & II, it is Peter (in this case the original Peter, not the one known to St. Paul) who is at the head of affairs<sup>3</sup>, and James Justus, as is to be expected on the present argument, is not so much as named.

Another piece of evidence for the hidden gap of a century between certain sections of Acts is the story of Philip, who visits in *the city of Samaria*, and later is bidden by an angel to go down *from Jerusalem unto Gaza, the same is desert*.<sup>4</sup>

At the beginning of the first century B.C. the city of Samaria belonged to the Jewish kingdom. After Pompey captured Jerusalem in 63 B.C., it became part of the newly formed province of Samaria. About 57-58 B.C. the inhabitants of the City of Samaria renamed it Gabiniopolis, or something of that sort, in honour of Gabinius who allowed them to rebuild their walls and so protect themselves from marauding bands of Jews still moving up and down the country after the Roman invasion. In 30 B.C. it was given to Herod the Great by Augustus who renamed it

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<sup>2</sup>D. Strömholm, Hibbert Journal (1926-1927)

<sup>1</sup>Acts XV, 19

<sup>2</sup>Acts XXI, 18

<sup>3</sup>Acts I, 15; II, 14 ff; also Matt. XVI, 18

<sup>4</sup>Acts VIII, 4, 26-40

Sebaste(Augustus), the name which still clings to it<sup>5</sup>. Gaza was destroyed in 96 B.C. by Alexander Jannaeus and thus became a desert, but after the Roman invasion it was restored by Gabinius and renamed Minoa. Later Augustus presented it to Herod, and after the death of the latter it was attached by Syria. In 56 A.D., the Jews again destroyed it<sup>6</sup>.

Thus the mention of the *City of Samaria* - the only time this city is referred to in the New Testament - together with the reference to Gaza being desert, both point to Philip's visit having been paid prior to the time of Gabinius, i.e., prior to the middle of the first century B.C. Hence Philip was the original apostle of that name, and not the later evangelist known to St. Paul. Note that it is not assumed that there were two Philips, since Acts agrees that there were two.

#### FIRST CENTURY B. C. DOCUMENTS:

In addition to the evidence for the earlier date of the Ministry from the New Testament and later sources, there is also evidence from documents prior to those in the New Testament, and written in the first century B.C. Foremost among these are the Dead Sea Scrolls from the caves at Qumran; but before discussing these, mention should be made of the *Therapeuts*, the *Book of Enoch*, the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, and the *Damascus Fragments* or *Zadokite Work*.

The *Therapeuts* were a monastic order that lived near Alexandria. Their life, as described in considerable detail by Philo, bore so strong a resemblance to Christianity that Eusebius thought they were the Christian Church in Egypt, a conclusion followed for centuries by ecclesiastical writers. In modern times this view has been abandoned with the realisation that Philo wrote about them c. 25 A.D., and that they were then already old<sup>7</sup>.

The (Ethiopic) *Book of Enoch* and the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* are acknowledged by all competent scholars to have exerted considerable influence on the New Testament writers. When first rediscovered in modern times they were in fact regarded in some quarters as of Christian origin until it was realized that they must be dated to pre-Christian times. Of the many examples of this influence which could be cited, the *Epistle of Jude* actually names the *Book of Enoch* and quotes from it<sup>1</sup>, while there are verses in the Sermon on the Mount which have a strong resemblance to verses in the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*<sup>2</sup>. Portions of both Enoch and the Testaments have been found in the Qumran caves.

The *Damascus Fragments* or *Zadokite Work*, comprises two lengthy fragments of a work discovered in 1896. The *Zadokite Work* refers to the (unnamed) Teacher of Righteousness, and also to a *Man of Untruth* and a *Prophet of Untruth*. These last two may or may not be one individual. Margoliouth, in 1911, suggested that this work was Christian and of the second century A.D., but his suggestions received no support owing to the difficulty in fitting the various allusions to the second century Church. Most writers saw in it a first or perhaps second century B.C. text, though the identity

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<sup>5</sup> *Samaria – Sabaste*, 1942, p.31; *Camb. Anc. Hist. X*, p.328

<sup>6</sup> *Camb. Anc. Hist. IX*, p.399; article 'Gaza' *Enc. Bib.*

<sup>7</sup> Article, 'Therapeuts', *Enc. Britt. Cf Mead, Did Jesus live 100BC?*

<sup>1</sup> *Jude 14.*

<sup>2</sup> R.H. Charles, *Test. of the Twelve Patriarchs*. 1947, p.xxvi

of the Teacher remained unsolved. When the Scrolls came to light in and after 1947, it was soon recognized that the *Zadokite Work* belonged to the same people as those at Qumran, since the *Habakkuk Commentary*, one of the Scrolls found in the Cave, mentions the Teacher of Righteousness and the *Man and Prophet of Untruth*, and also a *Wicked Priest* opposed to the Teacher. This was further confirmed by the later discovery of several fragments of the *Zadokite Work* in the caves.

#### THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

The Jewish authorities persecuted the primitive Church<sup>3</sup> and the high priest expressly forbade the original Apostles to preach in the Name of Jesus<sup>4</sup>. This would explain why the Dead Sea Scrolls do not mention their leader by name, if they are of proto-Christian origin. The high priest under Salome Alexandra was her son, Hyrcanus II. He managed to retain considerable power under the Roman occupation of 63 B.C., until the Parthian invasion of 40 B.C. Upon the subsequent rise to power of Herod the Great, from 37 B.C., the high priests became mere puppets. The *wicked priest* of the Scrolls who opposes the Teacher is unnamed in order to avoid persecution, just as the Apocalypse later did not name the symbolic beast, which stands for the Emperor.

The available archaeological evidence shows that the Dead Sea Scrolls formed part of a large library in the caves which was abandoned at the time of the terrible catastrophe of A.D. 70, when the Temple was destroyed and the Romans killed thousands of Jews, or they were sold into slavery. If the Dead Sea sect were Christians this might well have involved the loss to the Church of important historical records, while the customary omission of surnames in some of the surviving records might have led to later misunderstandings. It is noticeable how few of the New Testament documents are of Palestinian origin.

Concerning the early destruction of Christian literature, it may be noted that under Diocletian in the fourth century, the Church was heavily persecuted and a determined attempt was made to burn all Christian books. Later, under Constantine, and again under Theodosius and Valentinian, not to mention later still under the Inquisition, the Christian authorities in their turn burnt large numbers of unorthodox books. That an alternative tradition to the dating of the Ministry should survive at all may quite well be evidence for a once rich deposit.

This supposition has been, as it were, heavily underlined by the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Recovered in and after 1947, and still in process of publication, these new sources present an astonishing picture of a 'pre-Christian' Messiah who with his followers presents remarkable analogies to Christ and the primitive Church. This movement was called by its disciples *the New Covenant*, a claim made nowhere else except by the Church. Professor A. Dupont-Sommer of the Sorbonne, whose views have received wide attention, holds that this Messiah and his followers were Essenes, that the Messiah lived about a century before Jesus Christ, and the early Church was heavily indebted for its Messianic and other ideas to this Essene movement, hitherto unknown. His views have been summarized as follows:

*Everything in the Jewish New Covenant heralds and prepares the way for the Christian New*

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<sup>3</sup> John XX, 19; Acts IV, 3; VIII, 1. *Christians, alas, have persecuted Jews ever since.*

<sup>4</sup> Acts IV, 17; V, 28.

Covenant. The Galilean Master, as He is presented to us in the writings of the New Testament, appears in many respects as an astonishing reincarnation of the Teacher of Righteousness. Like the latter He preached penitence, poverty, humility, love of one's neighbour, chastity. Like him, He prescribed the observance of the Law of Moses, the whole Law, but the Law finished and perfected, thanks to His own revelations. Like him He was the Elect and the Messiah of God. Like him He was the object of the hostility of the priests, the party of the Sadducees. Like him He was condemned to death and put to death. Like him He pronounced judgement on Jerusalem, which was taken and destroyed by the Romans for having put Him to death. Like him, at the end of time, He will be the supreme judge. Like him He founded a Church whose adherents fervently waited His glorious return. In the Christian Church, just as in the Essene Church, the essential rite is the sacred meal, whose ministers are priests. Here and there at the head of the community there is the overseer, the 'bishop'. And the ideal of both Churches is essentially that of unity, communion in love - even going so far as the sharing of common property. All these similarities - and here I only touch on the subject - together constitute a very impressive whole<sup>1</sup>.

After a minute comparison and analysis of the texts, Dr. Teicher of Cambridge has concluded that the Dead Sea Scrolls represent the pre-Pauline teaching of the Church. He summarizes his views as follows:

*The Scrolls are of Christian origin. The following points leave no room for doubt or hesitation on this score; the exact parallels between the New Testament literature and passages in the Scrolls, the doctrine of 'original sin', 'predestination' and 'election'; the teaching concerning the 'Holy Spirit' in its two manifestations as the 'Spirit of Truth' (the 'Helper') and as the 'Holy Spirit' in the eschatological period; and indeed, the whole 'eschatological' conception as such. All these points, taken singly or together are incontrovertible evidence of the Christian content of the Dead Sea Scrolls. The statement in the Discipline Scroll that the 'Holy Spirit' will cleanse 'flesh' from sin, in itself stamps the Scrolls with an absolutely clear mark of Christianity.*<sup>2</sup>

The Dead Sea sect upheld the Law like the pre-Pauline Church. As Teicher accepts the Pilate date, like all other modern scholars, and since the Scrolls were in existence prior to 68 A.D., the latest date for their deposit in the caves near the Dead Sea, he identifies the Sect with the Ebionites who would not accept St. Paul's repudiation of the Law.

Jesus is also called very frequently Master or Teacher (*didaskalos*) and occasionally the Just or Righteous One<sup>3</sup>, a title given as we have seen to the Son of Man in *Enoch*, and probably also to the Teacher of Righteousness in the *Zadokite Work*, though here the reference may be to the Just Man in general. Thus the different variants accord with the Teacher of Righteousness, the *Moreh ha-Zedekh* of the Scrolls, which is translatable as the True, Righteous, or Just Teacher or Master. Compare Mark XII, 14 (and John VII, 33-40):

*Master (or Teacher) we know that thou art true...for thou... teachest the way of God in truth.*

The Covenanters called themselves the 'anointed', i.e., Christians. There are also

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<sup>1</sup> A. Dupont-Sommer, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, 1952, p.99. English translation by Margaret Rowley

<sup>2</sup> Teicher, *Journ. Of Jewish Studies*, 1952, III, 4

<sup>3</sup> Acts III, 14; VII, 52; XXII, 14; James V, 6; I John II, 1

references to the Anointed One, i.e., the Messiah or Christ. Some writers distinguish two Messiahs, and consider that the Teacher of Righteousness was not a Messiah. Others regard them as one individual. This last seems to the present writer the most natural interpretation, though other views are possible on the existing allusive and probably deliberately ambiguous texts. Another verse refers to God, 'His Messiah', and 'His Holy Spirit who is the Truth', which as Teicher justly remarks, seems to contain the germ of the doctrine of the Trinity. It is comparable to the latent Trinitarianism implicit in the New Testament<sup>1</sup>.

Some writers have identified the Covenanters with the Essenes, notably Dupont-Sommer, who has pointed out many Essene parallels, particularly in the *Manual of Discipline*<sup>2</sup>. On the other hand, the early Church too had many points of contact with Esseneism.

For various reasons the *Manual of Discipline* is regarded as earlier than the *Habakkuk Commentary* and the *Zadokite Work*. Unlike these last two it does not mention the Teacher. It uses the term 'Covenant' for the Community, but not 'New Covenant'. Like the Essenes, the manual provides that all property shall be vested in the Community. In contrast, the *Zadokite Work* permits private property, but a share must be given to the community. It states that the Community was in existence before the coming of the Teacher, but alludes to 'about forty years' having elapsed since his departure. According to Acts II, 44; IV, 32, the primitive Church at first held all possessions in common, but this was eventually found unworkable.

The *Manual* recognizes only three classes in the community; Priests, Levites, and 'the Many'. The *Zadokite Work* recognizes four; Priests, Levites, 'the Many', and Proselytes.

Now one of the great differences between the Essenes and the early Church was that while the Essenes made no provision for missionary work, so far as available records go, Our Lord and His disciples were of course very active in that way.

A view which harmonizes all the data is that the *Manual* originated from the Essenes or an Essene-like group, of the second century B.C., if not earlier, and that when the Teacher appeared the group was divided, some accepting him and some not. Needless to say this is compatible with identifying him with Christ<sup>3</sup>. A considerable change in the ethical outlook of the two periods is shown. The *Manual* laid it down that the good man was to be loved but the bad man was to be hated. At the admission of a new member, evil men as a class were to be formally cursed. The *Zadokite Work* however, in accordance with the Sermon on the Mount, charges the community not to hate even evil men<sup>4</sup>.

The head of each community was called the *mebhakker* or overseer. The duties of this official were extensive. He gave instructions and admitted new members, assigning to each his place according to his qualifications; he also regulated controversies and administered funds. In particular his duty to the people was *to take pity on them, like a father upon his sons, and to bring back all that have strayed*, a phrase borrowed from Ezekiel

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<sup>1</sup> e.g. Romans VIII, 9; I Corinthians II, 14-16

<sup>2</sup> *The Jewish Sect at Qmran and the Essenes, chapters IV & V*

<sup>3</sup> Cp. John VI, 66; John II, 19

<sup>4</sup> *Zadokite Work, X (IX, 2-8)*

XXXIV, 16 and used to describe a Bishop's duties in the *Apostolic Constitutions* II, 6,7. *Like a shepherd with his flock, he shall loosen all fetters that bind them, that there be not one oppressed and broken among the congregation.* This certainly invites comparison with the powers conferred upon the disciples by the Lord. It may be remarked that while the officials among the Essenes held, to some extent, similar functions, they are nowhere called by the same name.

The root from which *mebhakker* is derived, means cut or laid open, and its derivatives include to watch, to look or to search, as in Ezekiel XXXIV, 12, where God searches for the sheep of the flock. A number of writers have compared the *mebhakker* in his functions and in the meaning of the word with the Greek *episcopus* or overseer, and thence with the Bishops of the Church. It must be remembered that the Scrolls under discussion are in Hebrew, whilst the New Testament is entirely in Greek.

That the Levites of the community correspond with the Deacon is suggested by the following apt quotation by Teicher from the second or third century *Syriac Didascalia Apostolorum*:

The Apostles have also decreed that there shall be Elders in the Church like the Holy Priests, the sons of Aaron; and deacons, like the Levites; and Subdeacons, like those who carry the vessels in the courts of the sanctuary of the Lord; and an Overseer, who should be the leader of the people, like Aaron the High Priest, chief and leader of all the Levites and Priests and of all the camp.

Note the reference here to *all the camp*, and compare with the chief *mebhakker* in the Scrolls who is called the *mebhakker over all the camps*. It seems to follow that the *mebhakker*, Priest, and Levite of the Scrolls correspond to the Bishop, Priest and Deacon of the Church. Whether the *mebhakker*, the Priest, and Levite, were set apart by a laying on of hands is unknown. Perhaps evidence will be forthcoming when the fragments of liturgical works found in the caves are published. At any rate, to this extent the Catholic claim that Bishops were separate as an Order from Priests as from the beginning, is vindicated against the Protestant view (influence no doubt by certain ambiguities in the New Testament meaning of the word 'elder'), that they were not distinguished until sub-apostolic times.

Some literature leads to a consideration of the esoteric character of the New Covenant. Such words as *mysteries* and *knowledge* – equivalent to the Greek *gnosis*, occur so often that a number of writers see in the Sect an element of gnosticism. This, however, in the general sense only. There is no trace of an elaborate doctrine of *Aeons* and of the great myth of the descent of *Sophia*, the human soul, into matter and of her rescue by Christ, which so characteristic of second century Gnosticism.

The Covenanters held a ritual meal of bread and wine. This was held in secret, but as the writer has tried to show in a booklet<sup>1</sup>, the Apostolic Eucharist Rite was also secret.

It has already been remarked that the doctrine of the Teacher of Righteousness is known only by inference from the teachings of the Covenant, his specific sayings

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<sup>1</sup> *Food in the Early Church, The Saint Alban Press*

being nowhere recorded in the documents so far available, whilst what little is known of his career is given above. Accordingly, since the Pilate date at first sight seems well established by the New Testament, no scholar today, so far as the writer is aware, supposes that the Pilate date is threatened: If, like Teicher, the Teacher is identified with Christ, the impossible task is attempted of fitting the allusions in the Scrolls to the first century A.D. Nearly all others, however, distinguish between the Teacher and Christ because they regard the evidence that the Teacher lived in the first century B.C. (if not earlier) as decisive. Hence it is being said that the primitive Church was heavily indebted to an earlier Messianic Movement, and much more so than was previously known or suspected.

On the other hand, it seems fair to claim that on examination there is now much more to be said in favour of the earlier date for Christ than was available in Mead's or Strömholm's day, and there is a remarkable promise of more to come.

If eventually incontestable proof should be found that the 100 B.C. date for the birth of Christ is approximately correct, then obviously the orthodox claim for inerrancy in the Scripture and in the Credal *suffered under Pontius Pilate*<sup>2</sup> would be untenable, not to mention the Primacy of the St. Peter who was Bishop of Rome in the time of St. Paul. Yet, significantly enough, it may well be that the essentials of (Liberal) Catholic sacramental doctrine, notably Baptism, Eucharist, and Orders, may receive an even firmer historical support than they do now. *It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing.*

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<sup>2</sup> "Suffered under Pontius Pilate" is found in the Nicaeano-Constantinopolitan Creed of 381, but not in the original Nicene Creed of 325.



APPENDIX II  
CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE  
(from *The Lost Century*)

Dates, unless in bold, are approximate. It may be that the order of events should be transposed slightly in some cases.

B.C. 2 <sup>nd</sup> & 3 <sup>rd</sup> centuries	Foundation of the <i>Sons of Zadok</i> . These <i>may</i> have been original Essenes, the slight differences from those known to <i>Josephus</i> and <i>Philo</i> being due to time. <i>Book of Jubilees</i> , <i>Manual of Discipline</i> , <i>Wars of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness</i> , written, according to some authorities.
108 - 102	Birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. Visit of Jesus to Jerusalem as a boy of twelve (Luke 11, 40-51)
90	Jannaeus defeated by Nabatean Arabs (Josephus)
88	Jannaeus defeated by Jewish insurgents with the aid of Seleucid prince.
87	Appearance of Halley's Comet. Visit by wise men to Jannaeus and to Jesus. Many Jews go over to Jannaeus, who overcomes the Pharisees, slaying some of them with their families. Joshua ben Perachaya flees to Egypt accompanied by his disciple Jesus, then a youth.
78 - 76	Death of Jannaeus. The throne passes to his widow, Salome Alexandra, who makes peace with the Pharisees. John Hyrcanus II, the queen's son is the High Priest. Joshua ben Parachaya and Jesus return to Judaea. They separate.
	The Ministry. Jesus the acknowledged <i>Messiah</i> and <i>Teacher of Righteousness</i> by the <i>Sons of Zadok</i> (who may have been Essenes. Those who did not accept Him from among the original <i>Sons of Zadok</i> were the forerunners of the Essenes as known to <i>Josephus</i> and <i>Philo</i> a century, or more, later, but this point is not essential to the theory). Exile to the lands of the North.
75 - 73	Arrest and trial of Jesus by Hyrcanus II and Jewish authorities. Jesus stoned to death. His body is hung on the judicial tree. It is removed before nightfall in accordance with Jewish Law. Resurrection appearances to the Apostles in Galilee and then in Jerusalem (cf. Gospels; 1 Cor. XV, 5; also <i>Habakkuk Commentary</i> )
69 - 67	Death of Queen Salome ( <i>Jospelus</i> ). Hyrcanus and Aristobulus contend for the throne. Apostles in controversy with the Jews at Jerusalem. The Apostle Philip visits Samaria and baptises the eunuch.
	<i>Similitudes of Enoch</i> written by a Christian seer. Added to older material to form <i>Book of Enoch</i> . Primitive <i>Jerusalem Source</i> written.
63	Hyrcanus II, Nicodemus (representing Aristobulus II) and Zadokite Christians approach Pompey at Damascus. Invasion of Judaea by Pompey, fall of Jerusalem and Temple.
	<i>Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs</i> written, possibly on groundwork of an older source by a Christian writer identified as Matthew ( <i>Levi</i> )

- 42 - 41 Herod (the Great) appointed Tetrarch of Galilee by Antony. Lysanias Tetrarch of Abilene (*Josephus*). Matthew slain by Hyrcanus.
- 40 Parthian invasion of Judaea. Hyrcanus flees (*Josephus*). *Zadokite Work* written.
- 37 Herod the Great established as king by defeating Parthians (*Josephus*). At about this time, very approximately Peter (Symeon) is succeeded by Zacchaeus. The names of the Palestine succession of Bishops (*Mebhakker*) up to the time of James Justus are given below in brackets – it being understood that the dates are purely schematic.  
(Zacchaeus)
- 30 (Tobias) Death of Hyrcanus II (*Josephus*).  
  
(Benjamin) *Habakkuk Commentary* written? Early Christian Sibylline Oracles.  
  
(John) I John written? Memoirs of John written? Death of the Beloved Disciple.  
  
(Matthias) ‘Q’ compiled by Matthias, who was not an eye-witness. *Didache* written?
- 4 (Philip) Death of Herod the Great. Herod Antipas Tetrarch of Galilee.
- A.D.  
26 (Seneca) Pontius Pilate appointed Procurator of Judaea. Herod Antipas still Tetrarch of Galilee.  
  
(James Justus) Preaching of John the Baptist compiled, based on ‘Q’. during the time from Symeon to James Justus, the Church reached Damascus, Lydda, Rome, Tarsus, Alexandria (*Therapeuts*), etc. James, the so-called *Brother of the Lord* heads the Church. Epistle of James written by James now or later.  
  
Jesus Barrabas, the revolutionary robber, is brought to trial before Pilate. The Church is persecuted by Saul and others. Death of Stephen. Christ appears to Paul (Acts VI, 8-1x, 22; Gal 1, 11-17, etc). Paul’s ministry begins.
- 36-37 Pilate recalled to Rome. Herod Antipas banished and succeeded by Herod Agrippa (*Josephus*). Pauline ministry continues – see Acts. Pauline epistles are written.
- 62 James Justus martyred at Jerusalem (*Josephus* and *Eusebius*)
- 63 Peter (the second) writes I Peter at Rome, where also Mark compiles his material, which a later hand used for the Gospel according to St. Mark.
- 64 Peter and Paul martyred at Rome, according to tradition.  
Epistle to the Hebrews written by an unknown hand in Palestine.  
Epistle of Barnabus written in Egypt (Alexandria?)
- 70 Sack of Jerusalem and destruction of the Temple by Titus (*Josephus*). Profound disruption of life in Palestine. Covenant literature sealed in Dead Sea caves.

APPENDIX 3  
JESUS AND CHRISTIANITY  
by E. L. Gardner

Research into the historical period of two centuries, from 100 B.C. to A.D. 100, has been intensified in recent years. This period covers the time ascribed to the birth of the Christian religion and recent discoveries have added much to an understanding of what really occurred. Space is not available here for documenting the statements made beyond naming the books that give the sources and references adequately, indeed abundantly.

The Scrolls of the Dead Sea cave containing a commentary on *The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see*, together with Dr. Eisler's work on an uncensored copy of Josephus' narrative relating to the crucial time of Pontius Pilate's governorship, throw light, at last, on the actual happenings. It will be to the relief and solace of many that the truth not only reveals Jesus as one of the greatest of men but presents a view that is free from the trammels of superstition with which the spirit and ethics of Christianity have been encumbered so long.

The following is a brief summary of the evidence that is contained in six books, namely, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* by Albert Schweitzer, *The Rise of Christianity* by Bishop Barnes, *The Fall of Jerusalem* by Dr. Brandon, *The Dead Sea Scrolls* by Dupont-Sommer, *The Other Side of the Story* by H. Furneaux, and *The Lost Century* by Nevin Drinkwater (last named shortly to be published).

**THREE OUTSTANDING FIGURES**

**JESUS, THE GREAT TEACHER:** Born about 105 B.C. Became Head of an Essene Fraternity in Palestine. Was known as *Master of Justice*, the *Elect of God*, and the *Anointed One*.

*He criticized the Jewish authorities in Jerusalem for observing the letter of the law only - and not living it!*

He condemned especially the animal sacrifices in the Temple and the exploitation of the people by the Priests.

After a short ministry, the authorities in Jerusalem accused Jesus of violating the Mosaic Law and of blasphemy. He was tried, condemned and put to death by stoning.

**JOHN, KNOWN AS THE BAPTIST:** Born about 8 B.C. A militant patriot who sought to incite the Jews against the Roman occupation (the Romans had taken possession of Jerusalem and put a Governor in charge in the year 63 B.C. This was some time after the death of Jesus, the Head of the Essene community).

John baptized many, presumably pledging them to his cause. Hearing of the reputation of Jesus the son of Abba (Barabbas), John acclaimed him as greater than

himself and well qualified to liberate the Jewish people.

John became disaffected later because of the reluctance of Jesus Barabbas to use force. Was put to death by Herod, though very questionable if the cause was as given in Matthew XIV.

The Romans had allowed the Jews to retain Herod as their king though, as a vassal, the title was little more than nominal.

**JESUS BARABBAS:** Born about 4 B.C. A patriot and revolutionary - but not militant. He sought to persuade the Jews to withdraw entirely to the "desert" and thus renew their former nomadic life.

He is described as a strong personality, of commanding presence though short of stature, one who was a powerful and compelling leader. He had a numerous following and was urged to lead a revolt against the Roman occupation. There is evidence that he was a man of about middle age<sup>1</sup>.

Pontius Pilate was the Governor, and a disturbance in Caesaria led him to take his guards there to quell it - a not infrequent happening in Judea at that time.

The Jews in Jerusalem, taking advantage of the Governor's absence and seizing the chance, organized a triumphal march through the city proclaiming Jesus Barabbas as their deliverer. It is possible that this was regarded as a demonstration only, by him, but whether so or that he actually accepted the opportunity is not clear. Receiving news of the uprising, Pontius Pilate hurried back to Jerusalem with his guards and took vigorous action. Being informed as to the reputed leader he issued a description and an order for his arrest. This was speedily effective.

Jesus Barabbas was tried, condemned to death and executed by crucifixion. According to Roman custom this consisted of being fettered to a post and left to die of exposure, hunger and thirst.



The fragmentary narratives of the synoptic gospels are all that we have of much later attempts to record events from memories and tradition. The lives of Jesus the Master of Justice and of Jesus Barabbas, though actually separated by about a hundred years, became blended and confused. Probably the association was quite intentional. It avoided the stigma of ascribing the Great Teacher's death solely to the Jews and allowed a dramatic conclusion to the ministry.

Judged by the conventions of the period this treatment need not be considered fraudulent. The mystical was much more important than the literal. Very similarly, much later, the same records and those of St. Paul's writings were *edited* by the *Correctores* of the Christian Church, with suppression and interpolation in order to

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<sup>1</sup> The second Jesus referred to here (Jesus, Jehoshua or Joshua was a common name in Palestine) appears to be the same person as referred to by CW Leadbeater in *The Inner Life Vol 1*, and quoted in *Chapter I*.

safeguard the orthodox views of the time and sustain the faithful<sup>2</sup>.

The early Essene community, suffering severely from the death of their Great Teacher, nevertheless continued and there is evidence that a later generation came under the influence of St. Paul.

If the occult record of Annie Besant's *Esoteric Christianity* be included, together with the historical evidence submitted in G.R.S. Mead's book of fifty years ago, *Did Jesus Live 100 B.C.?*, then the date given above for the Great Teacher's birth is further confirmed. Also there is some justification for the gospel "resurrection" story in the statement that, after his physical death by stoning, Jesus the Teacher appeared to some of his followers, in the subtle body, and instructed them from time to time for several years.

Apart from this, the salient incidents in the gospel narratives relating to a virgin birth, a temptation, betrayal, crucifixion and resurrection, must all be regarded as lifted from the allegorical drama of the Mysteries. They appear similarly in the background of most religions and apply to humanity as a whole.

Nothing of the research work epitomised above detracts by an iota from the truth of a mighty spiritual inspiration imparted by the great Teacher, and inspiration continuing in full measure to this day. This was so well expressed by Albert Schweitzer in the conclusion of his book, *The Quest for the Historical Jesus* (and published *before* the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls), that the statement is repeated here:

*The historical foundation of Christianity, as built up by rationalistic, by liberal, by modern theology, no longer exists – but that does not mean that Christianity has lost its historical foundation. Jesus means something to our world because a mighty spiritual force streams forth from Him and flows through our time also. This fact can neither be shaken nor confirmed by any historical discovery. It is the solid foundation of Christianity.*

#### APPENDIX 4 EJA MILITES CHRISTI ! By the Rev. Jan Vreeswyk

*Onward, soldiers of Christ...!*

Thus went out the call of the Bishop in the basilica of the early Church on the great moment of Easter night when the *competentes*, the candidates for Baptism, prepared themselves to move in procession towards the baptismal font. They had just finished reciting the Creed, and now the solemn moment of baptism had arrived.

About the year 300 A.D., it was not so simple to become a member of the Church.

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<sup>2</sup> *After the Council of Nicaea in 325, the Mss of the New Testament were considerably tampered with. Prof. Nestlé tells us that certain scholars called 'correctores' were appointed by the ecclesiastical authorities, and were actually commissioned to correct the text of Scripture in the interest of what was considered orthodoxy – Archdeacon Wilberforce, After Death, What?*

First, one had to apply to the Bishop to be accepted as a Catechumen. On that occasion, the Bishop would point out the duties of those who were accepted into the Christian faith without, however, referring to the Creed or the mysteries of the initiation. These hidden mysteries were only revealed after the baptism.

Many remained Catechumens and often postponed baptism until the hour of death. Gradually this stage of Catechumens became the stage of Christians-in-name. They were ashamed to be called heathens, yet could not bring themselves to accept the baptism. As Catechumens, they were considered to be Christians and belonging to the Church, but were not permitted to partake in the Rites of the Faithful. That could only happen after one had applied for baptism. One then became a *competent* – a candidate for baptism.

The formal application was made before the beginning of Lent and the seven Passion weeks were a severe testing. The applicants had to abstain from many things, not partake in heathen enjoyments and constantly had to fight against sin. During the church services they had to stand at the gate dressed in rags, with bare feet or in animal skins; a symbol of the shedding of the old personality. With the un-baptised and those who were doing penance, they had to leave the church after the Gospel when the *ite missa est* (meaning, go, you are dismissed) had been pronounced, because after this began the *Missa Fidelium* – the Mass of the Faithful. But towards the end of Lent, they would be taught the Creed, word by word. This formula was never written down, but was only communicated by word of mouth.

Then came Easter Night. After the reading of the Gospel and the sermon, the *competentes*, one by one, had to recite the Creed by heart. With their faces turned West, they swore off all sin, and then, during the singing of Psalm 42, the procession of *competentes* moved towards the baptismal font containing running water, outside the church. There they received baptism just as described in Romans 6: 3-10.

After the baptism followed the anointing and the laying on of hands with the prayer that they may receive the Holy Ghost, and the sign of the cross was made on the forehead of each candidate; the mark of the *Militia Christi* – of the Soldiers of Christ. These acts were referred to by the name of Confirmation, that is, making firm or strong by the gift of the Holy Ghost. Only after Confirmation was one permitted to take part in the Holy Eucharist and was one a full member of the Church.

It is obvious from all this that it was considered a very serious step to join the body of Christ's Church. The emphasis was on an inner re-birth, a making holy, the fundamental decision to give oneself to Christ and fight under His banner.

During the following decades, however, much changed. In the year 380 the Church became a state-Church. All Roman subjects had to be Christians, and to be a Christian became commonplace. Baptism in childhood soon became common, and it gradually became separated from Confirmation. During the Synod of Florence in 1439, Confirmation was officially proclaimed as a separate, second Sacrament and the rule made that it could not be administered before the baptised child was seven years of age. Through the Sacrament of Confirmation one attained spiritual maturity.