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Early Heresies



Church History - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg discusses early Christian heresies in this talk. He explains that some people defected from the faith, and contemporary apostles who lived in the later centuries and died early on. He mentions several early Christian figures such as Hermas, Ignatius, Polycarp, and Papias. Steve delves into the heretical ideas that began to spread in the second century, including variations of Gnosticism and the modalistic theology of Li's cult. He explores key texts and doctrines, and highlights the various controversies that arose in the early Christian church.

Transcript

In our last session, I gave you a handout which had the names of some of the early church fathers who've left writings for us, and I was talking about some of them in detail last time. I did not finish, however, because we ran out of tape, and I would like to talk a little bit about some of the early church fathers who have left writings for us. And I would like to talk a little bit about those that we did not discuss at the time.

I don't have much more to say about each of these than what is printed on the handout that I gave you last time. I've also given you a handout for tonight about some of the early heresies, the very earliest ones that the church had to contend with. Last week, I was telling you how the persecution in the church was conducted officially by no fewer than ten emperors from approximately 95 AD until about 303 or later AD.

And, of course, that was very hard on the church. That was one way the devil attacked the church. Many of the church leaders were arrested.

Many of them were killed. Others were simply tortured. There were people who defected from the faith under such treatment.

When they did so, these were called lapses because they lapsed in their faith and denied the Lord. There were those who remained faithful under torture to death. We call those the martyrs.

And there were others that remained faithful under torture, but for some reason or

another were not sentenced to death. And under the same kinds of tortures that had caused others to lapse, these ones remained stalwart and faithful and did not have to die as martyrs, but we call those confessors. Some of the controversies that arose in the 2nd century and the 3rd century had to do with what to do, what the church should do about those who had lapsed during times of persecution, but who had, since the persecution died down, they had had a change of heart and decided they wanted to be back in the church.

It was not a light matter for consideration and there was great division in the church over it. But before we get to that, I want to discuss a little further some of the very earliest writings that have come down to us from the early 2nd century and even the late 1st century. Some of these overlap the times of the apostles, in particular Clement of Rome, which we talked about last time.

He was contemporary with the later apostles, that is, those who lived later into the century than those who died early on. The Epistle of Barnabas is a fairly early document. It was either written as early as 70 A.D. or it could have been as late as 130 A.D. Obviously, it appeared right around the turn of the 1st century.

Barnabas, who wrote it, was not in all likelihood the same Barnabas that we read of in the Scripture. It was written too late to come from his pen, in all likelihood. We were talking about the shepherd of Hermas last time.

Hermas was a slave in Rome and he was set free by the woman who owned him. He married and had a family and became well-to-do. Then, during a time of persecution, his property was seized.

His children turned on him and renounced him. But later still, Hermas and his family were reunited. His children repented.

They underwent something called penance, which of course later became a tradition in the Catholic Church but was not very well known or not a current practice in the days of Hermas. And yet, because he had visions that claimed to be inspired, many of the early Christians in the 2nd century believed the shepherd of Hermas belonged in the Scripture. It didn't make the final cut of the canon of the New Testament, but it was certainly considered to belong in the New Testament by many Christians in the 2nd century.

It does, of course, give evidence of an early emergence of a penitential system. If you're not familiar with the penance, one difference between Roman Catholics and Protestants today is that Protestants believe that upon repentance, a person is fully forgiven for sins and there's nothing really more that the sinner needs to do about that necessarily, unless of course there is restitution to be made. If you've robbed somebody, you should pay them back, for example.

But in the Roman system, it is thought useful, at least, for a person to do some penance when they've done severe sins. And this would just mean to subject themselves to some kind of hard discipline or treatment, which is additional to repentance and restitution and it is sometimes thought to play a role in atonement. Now, that is not a system that is found in the New Testament and it is therefore rejected generally by non-Catholics, by Protestant churches.

But we see the beginnings of such a system already in the shepherd of Hermas. The Didache, which is the Greek word for teaching, and it is short for the longer title, which is the teaching of the Twelve Apostles, was not written by the Twelve Apostles, but it's a very early, authentic church document which all scholars believe to represent pretty much what the Apostles are believed to have taught. That is to say, at the end of the first century, the believers believed that the Apostles taught these things.

And whoever wrote it, we do not know. It was probably produced by a church. But it's a manual of church order and it talks about a number of things.

The first six chapters are about Christian ethics. And then in chapters 7-10, matters of baptism and fasting and the Eucharist, or the Lord's Supper, are discussed. And the remaining chapters, 11-15, are about the ministry and the church government and the Second Coming of Christ.

So this is a very early document. Some people believe it belongs to the late first century and may have been written even within the lifetime of John the Apostle. If it was not written quite that early, it is nonetheless agreed that it was written no later than the early second century.

So it's a very fascinating document. I've read it and it's very interesting about baptism there, because today there are disputes, of course, about baptism in the church. Some people believe that people should be immersed, some believe sprinkled, some poured.

And it's interesting to read that at that early date, pouring was suggested as an alternative method of baptism. It says that a person should be baptized in running water, if possible. And if none is available, then standing water will do.

And if cold water is not available, warm water will do. And it says if there's not enough water at all, just take some water in a cup and pour it over someone's head and say, I baptize you in the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. And that'll do.

So one thing we see is that pouring and sprinkling were not what they consider to be the normative form of baptism. That's what was done if there wasn't enough water for whatever the normal method was. It doesn't actually state what the normal method was.

But obviously, if the normal method required more water than it takes to pour over the head, in all likelihood, the immersion mode of baptism was what was normally practiced.

But it's interesting, too, that they weren't hung up. They weren't legalistic about this.

They didn't apparently feel like dividing churches over whether baptism is by sprinkling or pouring or immersion. Anything will do. Just do it is basically what the Didache teaches.

It's a really interesting document. Another writing from the early church comes from about 110 A.D. This is the letter from Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch. Now, these are actually letters because Ignatius was arrested by the Emperor Trajan in Antioch when Trajan was visiting that city.

And he was taken back to Rome and sentenced to be thrown to the wild beasts to be killed. And as he was being transported to Rome, he wrote seven letters and he sent them to various churches, encouraging them. And one of the things he actually requested in his letters is that the Christians... he actually wrote one of his letters to Rome.

He told the Roman Christians, do not try to intervene. Don't try to appeal for me. Don't try to get the Emperor not to kill me.

Don't deprive me of the privilege of dying for Jesus. He says, bring on the wild beasts. Bring on the lions and the leopards.

He says, let them tear me. Bring on the breaking of bones and the tearing of flesh. He says that I might gain Christ.

And you can see already that in his day, martyrdom was beginning to be revered as something that was a high privilege for the sake of Christ. And another thing, and this is what Ignatius probably is even more significant for, is that he was the first to suggest, at least in writing that we know of, that the bishops should be one bishop in each church and that they would be above the presbyters, which is the elders, and above the deacons. Now this was certainly different than what the New Testament teaches.

In the New Testament, the word bishop and the word presbyter or elder are interchangeable terms. They are used interchangeably. Paul told the elders from Ephesus in Acts chapter 20, take heed to the flock over which God has made you overseers.

The word overseers there is the word episkopoi, which is the plural for bishops. And so he says to the elders, God has made you bishops over the church. Paul tells Timothy, these are the qualifications for elders.

And he starts to give the qualifications and he says, because a bishop must be blameless. Obviously talking the same thing. An elder is a bishop.

Likewise, Peter in 1 Peter chapter 5 said to the elders, he says, the elders who are among you, I exhort whom also an elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ and a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed. Feed the flock of God, actually taking the oversight of them. The word oversight there is the verb or the noun form.

It's a cognate of an overseer and overseer is bishop, the same Greek word. So we can see that the overseeing or the bishoping of the church was done by the elders in the days of the apostles. However, by the time of Ignatius, there was already the idea of a monarchical bishop, one bishop who is above all others in the church.

And the presbyters, the elders were below him and the deacons below them. So we see this hierarchy beginning to develop in his day. And he also urged that nothing should be done in the church of any significance without the bishop present.

No baptisms, no taking of the Lord's Supper, no marriages could be performed without the bishop present. Now it's interesting that he had to say this because apparently the church didn't have that view before that. And he urged submission to the bishop.

Now that the fact that he required bishops be present at every meeting of believers where they'd take the Lord's Supper or where there'd be a baptism or whatever suggested that a bishop in those days didn't mean a leader over several churches because he probably couldn't be at all the church services if he was over several churches in those days. And in all likelihood, what this was, was one of the elders or one of the bishops had been elevated above the others in the church so that each church had one monarchical bishop. This probably is in germ form where the idea of a parish priest came from or a pastor of a church.

Because in the New Testament you find neither. You don't find priests in the churches and you don't find a pastor in the church. You find elders.

And the idea that one elder rises above the others to have more authority than the others begins with Ignatius in the year 110. Now he did that partly because there were some divisions in the churches and he thought the best way to rein in the divisive parties was to get them all to submit to one bishop. And that was no doubt well-intentioned.

And he was a heroic Christian and died a martyr. But although he intended well, I have a feeling he started something that became bad later on. And that was the whole institutionalization of church leadership rather than having spiritual leadership.

It began to be hierarchical sort of like the rulers of the pagans had. And that of course we know did develop later on into such a thing. Polycarp is another church father I want you to know something about.

He died in the year 155 or 156 A.D. We don't know exactly when he was born, but at the time he died he testified that he had served Christ for 86 years. And we don't know

whether that had been from his childhood or whether he was converted in adult life. But if he had served Christ for 86 years and died in 156, it's clear that he would have been born as early as 70 A.D. And that's assuming that he was converted as soon as he was born.

He must have been actually born earlier than 70 A.D. So he goes way back and his life overlaps the lives of the apostles. In fact, it is well known that Polycarp was a disciple of the apostle John himself and had spent time with John. It is thought that Ignatius may also have known John as well as the next one we're going to consider whose name is Papias.

These three men lived early enough and it is believed at least that Ignatius and Polycarp were disciples of John and Papias is questionable. But Polycarp became the bishop of the church in Smyrna. That church at an earlier time received a letter from Jesus in the book of Revelation.

The church of Smyrna was a suffering church and it's one of the few churches in Revelation that Jesus gave no rebukes to and didn't call to repentance because it was a good church. It was certainly at a later date than that that Polycarp was bishop there and he was a notable martyr. He probably was not more notable than other martyrs in his day.

The reason he's more notable to us in memory is because the story of his martyrdom was written up by the church of Smyrna within a year after he died and has survived. We have the story in writing so it's the earliest record of Christian martyrdom that has survived other than of course the book of Acts itself. And so the martyrdom of Polycarp can be read today and it was written within a year after his death by his church.

Now according to the story, Polycarp, well what happened was there was a coliseum where some Christians were being killed in Smyrna and the Christians courage as they faced death was so inspiring. This is how at least Fox tells the story in Fox's book of martyrs. The crowd was so inspired by the courage of the Christians as they were fed to the wild beasts that many people in the audience converted on the spot and professed Christianity.

And this really enraged the pagan leaders and they began to say well that's enough of this Christianity and let's destroy death to the Christians. And they began chanting death to the Christians and eventually they said let Polycarp be sought for because he was the leader of the church in Smyrna. And so they brought news to Polycarp that he would probably be arrested, that his friends did.

So he fled from his home to another home where he was in hiding. And a child discovered his hiding place and reported him. And so he had a chance, when he knew that his hiding place had been discovered, he had a chance to escape again.

But he had a dream one night that his bed was consumed in flames. And he woke up the next morning deducing that God wanted him to die a martyr and to be burned. So he stayed there and waited for the soldiers to come who were to arrest him.

And when they arrived he served them food and then he asked them if they could have just one hour to pray. And they granted it to him. And so he prayed in their presence so fervently it says that the soldiers regretted that they had come for him.

And then they took him away to be burned at the stake in the Coliseum there. I don't know if they called it the Coliseum but the stadium of some kind. And ordinarily when people were burned at the stake they were tied to the stake.

But he refused to be tied to the stake. He said that's okay I'll just stand here. I won't need to be tied.

And the governor of the city actually tried to persuade him to recant because he was a very old man. Even the pagans were not really eager to kill him. He was a nice guy.

I mean he was a sweet old guy. And everyone thought it was a great tragedy for this man to die. And so the actual governor came down and personally tried to persuade him to recant.

And just asked him to say death to the atheists. Because Christians were called atheists because the Romans believed that any real god you could see and touch and feel like the idols they worshiped. And since the Christians didn't believe in any of those kinds of gods they were accused of being atheists.

And it is said that when he was told to say death to the atheists he waved his hand at the crowd and said death to the atheists. Or away with the atheists. And that made everybody really mad at him so they piled up the wood around him to burn him.

And they kept trying to persuade him to deny Christ. And he made a memorable quote. He said for 86 years I've served Christ and he has never done me wrong.

How can I blaspheme my savior and my God? And so they lit the fire around him and according to the story the fire wouldn't touch him. The flames leaped up around him and he was standing on the fire and the flames were leaping around his body and his body remained untouched by the flames. And he was singing hymns with his hands in the air.

And it got very frustrating to the executioners because he wouldn't burn. And so they stabbed him with a spear and his blood poured out and the flame was partially put out by his blood. He bled to death and then they were able to burn his body after he was dead.

But his story is recounted in detail by those who witnessed it. And as I say it is one of the

earliest martyr stories that has survived from antiquity. And Polycarp is particularly famous for his martyrdom although he was by no means the only martyr at the time.

There were many others but we just don't have the details of their martyrdom quite so clearly preserved as we do for his. And then I want to talk to you about Papias. Papias lived, he was born sometime in the first century and he wrote his books around 125 AD.

His books have not survived. We don't have them. But we know of them and we know some of the things he said because in 325 AD when his books were still around there was another writer named Eusebius who is sometimes called the father of church history because he wrote the first, at least the earliest surviving history of the church other than the book of Acts.

And it's called Ecclesiastical History. It's the name of his book. And you can read that today if you'd like.

But he quotes from Papias. Although Papias works have perished since the time of Eusebius we do have some fragments of Papias preserved in the works of Eusebius. And the value of Papias' work is that he said that he went around talking to everyone he could.

He was himself a bishop. He was a bishop of Hierapolis in Phrygia. But he went around and talked to anyone he could who had known the apostle.

And he inquired as to the exact sayings of Jesus and what Jesus had said. And he specifically wanted to know how the books of the New Testament came to be written. And it is believed that Papias got the straight scoop from the people who knew best.

Now it is from Papias that we learn almost everything we know about how the gospels were written. It is Papias who tells us, for example, that Mark's gospel is really the gospel according to Peter. That Mark traveled with Peter and was Peter's interpreter.

And that Papias wrote the memoirs of Peter in the form that we now call the gospel according to Mark. And Peter may have preached in Aramaic and Mark may have translated into Greek. We don't know.

So we're not sure exactly to what extent the actual Greek words in the gospel of Mark were Mark's choice of words or Peter's. But the fact of the matter is the story according to Mark is really the story according to Peter. And so in Mark we have, of course, firsthand information about Jesus.

It's also the case that Papias tells us that Matthew, before any of the gospels were written apparently, wrote down something that Papias called the Logion, which means the saying. And it is believed that this writing of Matthew was possibly an earlier work, earlier than the gospel of Matthew, written by Matthew. And Papias says it was written in

Hebrew.

Well, none of our gospels were written in Hebrew. They were all written in Greek. So it sounds like before Matthew even wrote the gospel of Matthew, he wrote an earlier book that just had the sayings of Jesus in the original language that Jesus spoke, which is Aramaic.

Papias called it Hebrew, but Aramaic is called Hebrew in those days. It was a dialect of Hebrew. And so we know that Matthew actually did preserve the sayings of Jesus and that they are later found in the gospel of Matthew as well as other New Testament books.

It makes you wonder how people living in the 20th century calling themselves the Jesus Seminar can claim that Jesus didn't say 80 percent of the things that are in the gospels when Papias, who lived early enough to have known Matthew, or at least to know people who knew Matthew, said that Matthew wrote down those things as he heard them in the original language even. And yet we're supposed to believe that the gospels really don't reflect an early tradition if we believe the liberal scholars today on the subject. Papias also wrote some theology.

He was the first writer whose works have been in any sense preserved who was premillennial as far as we know. Now you might say, well, no, the first premillennial writer was John who wrote the book of Revelation. But we don't know that John was premillennial.

He wrote the book of Revelation, but he never told us whether he interpreted it in a premillennial fashion or not. The earliest record we have from somebody interpreting John was John's own disciple, Papias, and he was premillennial. In fact, this is one of the strongest arguments given in favor of premillennialism.

In fact, there's hardly any other good reasons to believe in premillennialism except that Papias believed in it. And according to Eusebius, whose works alone preserve those of Papias, and we don't know Papias except by the quotes in Eusebius, but according to Eusebius, Papias, of course, Eusebius is a non-millennialist, but he didn't have much respect for Papias when it came to his eschatology. He said Papias was a man of very little intelligence, and he said very little understanding.

He didn't say intelligence. He said very little understanding. And he says he didn't understand that John's visions were to be interpreted spiritually.

But there was a little bit of cattiness there, I think, on the part of Eusebius toward his venerable patriarch, Papias, on that subject because Eusebius believed that premillennialism was a heresy and said so very plainly, as did the whole church in his day. Premillennialism was judged a heresy from about in the late 200s on, in Alexandria

at least, and then became considered a heresy from 400 in the days of Augustine for centuries after premillennialism was called a heresy. But, of course, today premillennialism is more popular than any other brand of eschatology.

In any case, it first appears in the writings of church fathers very early on from an important source, by the way, one who knew John. It doesn't mean, however, that he understood the revelation any better than Eusebius did. He may or may not have.

We need to remember that even the Old Testament prophets, it is said of them in 1 Peter 1, that they didn't understand their own writings. And it's hard to know exactly to what extent John understood his own writings. He's seen visions and writing them down.

No one has understood them since his time. Maybe he didn't understand them either. We don't know.

All we know is he wrote them under inspiration and the prophets of the Old Testament didn't understand their writings. Whether John understood the book of Revelation, we don't know. Whether ever taught on it, we don't know.

That's an interesting thing. We don't have any record of John ever teaching about the subject of the book of Revelation. Maybe he never did.

Maybe he just published it and said, you make what you can of it. We don't know what he did with it. And that means we can't be sure that Papias was right in his understanding of it.

We don't know if he was right or wrong, except by comparison of scripture to scripture. Now, there were, in addition to these very early men, whose lives overlapped the lives of the apostles practically, there were in the early 2nd century, that's the 100's A.D., men of importance who were called apologists. Now, during the time that the emperors were persecuting the churches, there were men who rose up to write their critiques of that policy.

They registered their protest and argued that this was a very bad policy for the emperors to follow. Justin Martyr was one of them. He was actually born in Samaria, which as you know is in Palestine.

And he was a Gentile though. He was a Gentile born in that region. And he was converted by an older Christian man after he had studied philosophy a long time.

He had studied all the philosophers and had determined to become a philosopher himself. But he became disillusioned with the emptiness and unsatisfying conclusions of the philosophers, the pagan philosophers. So he met an old Christian man who led him to the Lord.

And he became a Christian philosopher. And Justin traveled around in a philosopher's robe, a philosopher's garment, and philosophically defended Christianity in the Roman world. He was an apologist.

That means somebody who gave apologetics, which means a defense for the faith. And he wrote defenses of Christianity to a couple of emperors, Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius, both of whom were persecutors of the church. But Justin wrote to them rebuking them for that, protesting it, and explaining that Christianity was not properly understood by them and did not deserve to be persecuted.

He also wrote a dialogue with a Jew named Trifo. By the way, I mentioned that Papias was the earliest known premillennialist. Justin Martyr was a premillennialist also, as were Tertullian and Irenaeus, who came along shortly afterwards.

At least five of the known church fathers were premillennial. And on that basis, many premillennialists today say that the whole early church was originally premillennial. But that is far from established.

And Justin Martyr actually wrote an argumentative dialogue with a Jew named Trifo. And in it, he lays out for Trifo his own premillennial viewpoint. And he tells Trifo that he believes there is going to be a future millennium and so forth.

But he says, I have stated to you, Trifo, that this is what I firmly believe to be true. He says, however, there are many of the true and pious Christian faith who are true brethren who believe otherwise. And that's one of the earliest statements we have in the writing of an early father to let us know there were more than one view on the subject.

Because the premillennialists sometimes will say, well, the whole early church was uniformly premillennial. Well, that simply isn't true. Justin was, but he said that many were not.

And he said that many who were not were of the true and pious faith and were true Christians. So we have from his witness, and that's early second century, that the church was divided on the subject. He knew of many in the church who were not premillennial, and he did not think that badly of them.

He thought they were true Christians of the pure faith. So we would have to say that millennialism did not become a controversy that divided the church early on, although there was difference of opinion about it right from the earliest days. He got himself into trouble engaging in public debate with a pagan philosopher in Rome named Crescens.

And Crescens was very influential, and it was probably because of making this philosopher his enemy that he got himself martyred under Emperor Marcus Aurelius. And that's why he's called Justin Martyr. I've never known why it is that he alone bears the word martyr as if it were his last name.

That certainly was not his last name. He was just called Justin in his lifetime. But when he got martyred, they called him Justin Martyr.

But many people were martyred. I don't know why we don't talk about Polycarp martyr and Origen martyr and so forth. But somehow this man, maybe to distinguish him from other Justins who didn't die as martyrs.

I don't know, but he is called Justin Martyr, and that is because he died a martyr. He was one of the first to try to defend Christianity in philosophical arguments, philosophical terms. In modern times, people like C.S. Lewis and Francis Schaeffer and others have done similar things.

But they simply continue in the tradition of Justin Martyr in terms of that strategy for defending the faith. There was a lesser known fellow named Tatian who was actually converted by Justin Martyr in Rome. He was a native of Assyria, though.

And he wrote the first harmony of the Gospels, which is what he is largely remembered for. A book called the Diatessaron. And the Diatessaron actually put the four Gospels in four columns.

You can still buy books like this, although they are not by him. Modern scholars have done the same thing and sometimes arranged it a little differently than he did. But he was the first writer that we know of who attempted to put the four Gospels side by side in four columns and somehow harmonized the four accounts of the life of Christ.

The book was called the Diatessaron. After Justin died, Tatian moved to Syria. And he founded a group that was extremely ascetic.

They were called the Encratites. And I don't know much more about them, but they were very ascetic. Now, we're going to talk a lot about ascetic Christians.

And in case you're not familiar with the word ascetic, when someone is said to be ascetic, it means that they believe in punishment of the body. It means that they usually subscribe to a lifestyle of severe self-discipline, usually with extreme fasting and maybe an extremely simple diet. Some of the more extreme ascetics might sleep on a bed of nails in Hindu lands, or Hindu ascetics, of course.

The ascetics basically denied the flesh, the body, that is, of all pleasures because they thought that would make them more spiritual. And a lot of the groups, in fact, quite a few of the heresies that arose were very ascetic in that sense. Now, I need to introduce you to Tertullian.

And then I want to talk to you from the handout that I've given you about the early heresies in the Church. Tertullian, he was born in 160 A.D. and he lived to 220 A.D. So, of the men we're considering, he's the first whose lifespan spanned into the beginning of

the third century. Remember, third century means the 200s.

And Tertullian was born in Carthage, which is a city of North Africa, part of the Roman Empire. And he is thought to have been a lawyer. That apparently is not certain, but almost all Church histories seem to agree that Tertullian, before his conversion, was a lawyer.

And he converted to Christianity probably around 197 A.D. And he wrote quite a few works. He wrote both in Latin and in Greek. And these were all apologetic works.

Well, not all of them. He wrote many apologetic works. Some works he wrote were theological, too.

But in 197, he wrote the book *Apologeticus*, where he addressed the Roman governor of Carthage. In that book, he argued that Christians should not be persecuted because they were loyal citizens of the empire. They paid their taxes.

Jesus told them to pay their taxes, and they paid them, he said. They didn't break the laws. Paul had told them to be subject to governmental authorities, and they were.

They were some of the empire's best citizens. Besides, he said, persecuting them is counterproductive because if you want to stamp out Christianity, persecution is not the way to do it. It is Tertullian who coined the phrase, the blood of martyrs is seed.

That quote is usually expanded in popular use to say the blood of martyrs is the seed of the Church. Tertullian said the blood of martyrs is seed, and he's the one who coined that idea. The idea being that you can crush a martyr, crush a Christian, but his splattered blood, when it hits the ground, grows up new Christians.

And that was perhaps a bit of an overstatement, a bit of an exaggeration in Tertullian's own day. At a later time, it was really true that some of the later persecutions just caused spectators to flock into the Church. And the blood of the martyrs definitely impressed the Romans.

In Tertullian's day, it was probably not so much so, but it was enough so for him to say so. What he's pointing out is the Church survived in spite of persecution, and if anything, it grows as a result of it. He is considered the founder of Latin or Roman Catholic theology because he believed in the Episcopal authority and in apostolic succession.

Now, Episcopal authority means that the bishops rule like monarchs in the Church. And that, of course, became very much a Roman Catholic doctrine as time went on. He also believed in the apostolic succession.

Now, that is a Roman Catholic doctrine also. The Roman Catholic doctrine believes that in order to have bishops today and leaders in the Churches, you need to have them

appointed with apostolic authority. Now, since the apostles died 2,000 years ago, where do you find somebody with apostolic authority to appoint bishops in the 20th century? Well, they say, no problem.

The bishops who exist are the spiritual descendants of the apostles. Not physically descended by any means, but because they hold the office of bishop, they stand in the position that the apostles once stood in. And in particular, the Bishop of Rome sits in the seat that was once occupied they say by Peter, who they believe is the chief of the apostles.

Therefore, it is their belief that in every generation, whoever sits as Bishop in Rome, and we call that person today the Pope, that person is the successor of Peter spiritually and has Peter's authority. And the bishops of the Church or worldwide what's called the College of Bishops is like the other apostles in terms of their authority, so that in every generation there is apostolic authority just succeeds from generation to generation passed down by the institution of the Church. Unfortunately, Tertullian believed this.

It certainly is not a biblical doctrine, but it managed to turn the Church into a self-perpetuating institution rather than a spiritual movement that would need spiritual men to arise and spiritual people to people it. Every generation, instead, it turned it into a machine that's self-perpetuating. People say, well, when did the Roman Catholic Church begin? Well, the Roman Catholic Church really didn't begin any time really.

It was sort of a development. What we consider to be the doctrines associated with Roman Catholicism came a little here and a little there kind of over as early as the second century some of these were there. As early as the time of the Shepherd of Hermas in the early second century, we've got the penitential system beginning to develop in Tertullian and in Ignatius.

We have the idea of monarchical bishops and in Tertullian we have the idea of apostolic succession. These are the things that basically give credence to the papacy today, to the popes. Of course, these people were not what we'd really call Roman Catholics because the actual papacy as it came to be recognized really didn't begin probably until about the year 600.

That was when the Bishop of Rome actually gained political authority over the state, actually over the empire in the year 600. We'll talk about that of course some weeks hence from now. But it wasn't until the Roman bishops became the political rulers of Europe, that is until the popes became the political rulers of Europe that we really have something akin to what we now call the papacy.

But before that time, the bishops of Rome were growing and eventually the other bishops of the other churches were looking to Rome for answers and for opinions to be, disputes to be settled and so forth. Now, when the Roman Catholics tell you that they

have church tradition on their side, they have truth on their side in saying so. But their problem is they think church tradition has the same way to scripture.

And that is where of course classically Protestants and Catholics diverge. Protestants believe that the scripture stands in a higher position of authority over any human opinion including the opinion of a bunch of bishops. But to the Roman Catholic, the early teachings of these early church fathers are like, you know, almost like scripture.

And especially the decisions of the college of bishops at the various councils. Those are as good as scripture and that's where there's a difference between Roman Catholics and Protestants. We need to remember too that although we read of these opinions arising early in these particular documents, we don't know because there's such a scarcity of documents surviving from that period.

We don't know whether Tertullian and Ignatius and Hermas were alone in their day in thinking what they said. They might have been sort of on the fringe. They might have been, you know, that might have been their opinion alone.

We don't have any way of knowing whether the whole church thought the way they did at these times. All we have is these few writings and we can see where some of these ideas were beginning. Now we can turn to the handout that I've given you for tonight.

I hope this won't take very long to go through. I've written down so much we can practically probably read it. In addition to persecution, the church faced serious problems internally.

The devil was seeking to destroy the kingdom of God right from its inception. And there were two ploys that the devil used then and still uses today in the world. One is outward persecution from the world and the emperors were doing that.

But the church kept growing through that. The other is corruption of the pure life and teachings of the church. The testimony of the church corrupted by error coming in.

And of course the devil still does that. A.W. Tozer expressed the opinion once that the devil probably isn't all that concerned about killing Christians. I mean he kills quite a few of them if he has no better way to get rid of them.

But he would much rather corrupt them because a Christian who dies faithful becomes an inspiration to other Christians. Whereas a Christian that gets corrupted is a stumbling block to other Christians. And so the devil really has much more to gain by corrupting the church than by violently attacking it and creating martyrs.

Now the devil still does both because some people can't be corrupted so they've got to be killed. And sometimes the threat of death is what the devil uses to tempt to corruption. Many people did defect from Christianity.

They did deny Christ when they were threatened with death. So I mean it's not as if the devil doesn't still get some mileage out of this use of martyrdom. But false doctrine and what we call heresies began to arise very early in the church as well.

Even in the days of the apostles. And there were at least two heresies in the days of the apostles that were just in germ form in the days of the apostles but in the second century they became full-blown heresies that really troubled the church. One of those was Ebionism.

And Ebionism was really it was really just a continuation of the Judaizing heresy that Paul confronted frequently and he wrote the book of Galatians for example to refute it. And much of what Paul says in Romans and in Colossians and in Ephesians no doubt is directed toward Judaizers to critique them. In fact it was because of Paul's and Barnabas's conflicts with the Judaizers that the council of Jerusalem was held to decide whether the apostles would stand in general with Paul or whether they'd go with the Judaizers.

Now the Judaizers were teaching that it is necessary to keep the law of Moses the Jewish law in order to be saved. They were actually requiring that Gentiles who were converted to Christianity also convert to Judaism. Now before Jesus came there were Gentiles who did convert to Judaism.

They were called proselyte. And they were accepted by the Jews as Jews or you know almost as good as Jews if they became proselytes. And to become a proselyte a Gentile would have to you know profess faith in the Jewish God renounce his paganism.

He'd also have to be circumcised. It was a requirement. Anyone who was going to relate to God in the terms of the Sinaitic Covenant had to be circumcised.

And so Gentiles unlike Jews typically were not circumcised at birth. And so when a person became a proselyte to Judaism he had to be circumcised. Well you might not be surprised to learn that there were more female proselytes than males.

The idea of joining the Jewish faith had greater appeal to the females than to the men for some reason. But there were some men who joined too. And they did so because they you know after after the Christian gospel began to be preached among the Gentiles and many began to respond there were those in the church who believed that Christianity is only for Jews.

That Jesus was the Jewish Messiah not for the Gentiles. Unless of course those Gentiles wanted to become Jews. In which case they can be circumcised and become proselytes and then of course they can receive the benefits of salvation in Jesus like the rest of the original Jewish disciples did.

And we know from the book of Acts in chapter 15 that there were in Jerusalem at least a

large number of Pharisees who had come to believe. They were actually still part of the Pharisee party but they were now part of the church too. Amazingly.

It's interesting by the way it's a side note that during Jesus' lifetime in the gospels the Pharisees were Jesus' chief opponents. Whereas the Sadducees hardly ever encountered him. Whereas in the book of Acts it's the Sadducees that are most opposed to the Apostles and the Pharisees sometimes get converted in large numbers there.

And one of the reasons is because Pharisees believed in the resurrection of the dead and that kind of justified and vindicated their belief in the resurrection. They were attracted to the gospel. The Sadducees didn't believe in the resurrection and after Jesus was proclaimed as risen from the dead the Sadducees who had never paid much attention to Jesus when he was on the earth they suddenly became great opponents of his disciples who were spreading the message.

But many of the Pharisees who had come to believe apparently were still fairly Pharisaical and believed that it was necessary for these Gentiles who were converted to be circumcised and become as it were proselytes before they could be accepted as full-blooded Christians. And the pressure was on pretty big time because even Peter was intimidated by these people according to Galatians chapter 2. Peter knew better. Peter knew that Gentiles didn't have to be circumcised and when there were no people from Jerusalem around when he was in a Gentile church in Antioch Peter would eat with the Gentiles who were uncircumcised and have no problem.

Although Jews were not supposed to have table fellowship with Gentiles Peter knew it was no problem but when the people from Jerusalem church came up to visit Antioch Peter withdrew and wouldn't hang out with the Gentiles anymore not because he changed his opinion but because he was intimidated. The strength of this movement in Jerusalem was really something. It even intimidated Peter.

And Paul was not intimidated. He stood up and rebuked Peter and the Judaizers right in front of them all. But Paul made it a lifelong campaign to not allow Jewish law to infiltrate the gospel.

Yet after Paul's death this heresy continued probably without the same kind of resistance that it had had in Paul. And it flourished in some areas. It started in Palestine in Israel and it spread out.

But there were two kinds of Ebionites. There were those who were kind of straight on what the gospel was. They believed that salvation was through faith in Christ and they believed in the basic Christian doctrines but they simply differed from other Christians in that they believed that to live a Christian life you keep the Jewish law.

Not to be saved but just that now that you're a Christian you're supposed to do

something different than you did before you were a Christian. What is it? Well they said keep the law. And so they interpreted Christian living and the duty of the Christian life to be in terms of the Jewish law.

Those kinds of Ebionites are not too offensive. Those would be very much like today's Seventh-day Adventists who feel exactly the same way. They're saved by faith in Christ.

They hold true doctrines about Christ. They are not, properly speaking, cultists but they do believe that the keeping of Jewish law the Jewish dietary law and the Sabbath and all that is important. I actually don't know I don't think that they teach that you have to be circumcised so they're not exactly the same.

I could be wrong about that. But the Ebionites emphasize circumcision and Sabbath keeping. And some of them were even in the Roman church it would appear because when Paul wrote to the Roman church in Romans chapter 14 he mentioned that some of the people in the church were still keeping one day special above the others whereas others observed every day alike.

Apparently there were some in the church who still felt they had to keep the Sabbath and were doing so. Others were more liberated and knew that that was not necessary. In any case there was another branch of Ebionites and they were more numerous and they were more heretical.

They denied the virgin birth of Christ. They denied the deity of Christ. They denied the atoning work of Christ.

In other words they denied just about everything that makes Christians Christian. And the reason they did so is because they felt that the affirmation of Jesus' deity was a challenge to good old Jewish monotheism. Monotheism is the belief that there is one God.

And if Jesus is the Son of God how could He be God? And the doctrine of the Trinity had not ever been formulated clearly by any church council at this time. And of course that doctrine is an attempt to try to answer this question. How can there be Father, Son, Holy Spirit, three persons but all God and still be one God? That had not been decided.

It had not been sorted out this early. And so in order to preserve monotheism the Ebionites denied that Jesus was God. And that was their big mistake.

They tended not to like Paul's writings very much. And you can imagine why. Because Paul was the great opponent of the Judaizers in his lifetime and his writings continued to be the great opponents of the Judaizers after his death.

And they did kind of venerate Peter though because he was the apostle of the circumcision. Although I can hardly believe that they got their theology from Peter. Peter

only wrote two letters and he didn't say anything in them that would support their theology.

But maybe they imagined that he would agree with them since he was the apostle of the circumcision after all. In any case, that was one early heresy. It disappeared in the 5th century.

That would be the 400's A.D. and it was not around anymore. Although we do have modern counterparts as I say very similar to that in groups like the Seventh-day Adventists. Okay, a second heresy Okay, and this was a very much worse heresy.

Well, not worse than the worst kind of Ebionism but it was worse in the sense that it was more prevalent. It posed more of a threat to the purity of the church doctrine. That was called Gnosticism spelled with a G at the beginning.

And Gnosticism comes from the Greek word *gnosis* which means knowledge. And Gnostics were those who claimed to know something. And in fact, they claimed that salvation was to be had by knowing something.

This heresy also existed in its seminal form in the days of the apostles. You can see that John is writing to refute Gnostics. When you look at his arguments in the epistle of 1st John, there would appear to be some Gnostic tendencies that Paul was writing to refute in Colossians.

So Gnosticism was already around somewhat but it became a full-blown heresy of serious concern to the church in the 2nd century. Gnostics are around today somewhat. Not really the exact teachings of the Gnostics but the modern New Age movement is very, very similar in its thinking to the old Gnostic movement.

Gnostic mixed together elements of Judaism and Christianity and Greek philosophy and Oriental mysticism. Actually, it was sort of like a parasite that attached itself to different existing religious systems like Judaism and Christianity. There were Jewish Gnostics and there were Christian Gnostics.

But the ones who were called Christian Gnostics weren't really Christian, they were heretics. But they had mixed elements of Christianity in with Oriental mysticism and especially with Greek philosophy. Greek philosophy taught, and so did Gnosticism, that matter is always evil and spirit is always good.

Therefore, Gnostics believed that even demons were good because they were spirit. And anything spirit is good. But everything physical is bad.

And that would mean the world is bad and you're bad, your body is bad. Food is bad. Money is bad.

Everything is bad that's physical. Plants, animals, they're all bad because they're physical. Anything physical is evil according to Gnosticism.

Now, by the way, that does not agree with Scripture. It is the case, I have to tell you that, because some Christians actually say, well, what's wrong with that belief? I think my body is pretty bad too. You know? Well, the fact of the matter is the physical world is not evil according to Scripture.

As a result of the Fall, it has been corrupted and has been infused with an element of sin. But physicalness is not evil in itself. The Bible says that God in six days created the physical world and every physical thing in it.

And when it was all over, what did God say about it? He said it's very good. He didn't say there was anything wrong with it, even though it was all physical. And so there's nothing wrong with the physical world.

But the Gnostics, following Greek thought, following Plato really, believe that physical things must by virtue of being physical be evil. Spiritual things are good. Now, the question arose, and the Gnostics tried to solve it.

How could God, who is all spirit, pure spirit, create something as evil as the natural physical universe? How could God have any kind of direct contact with the physical without being corrupted by it? Well, their thought was He didn't. They believed that God didn't create the universe. They believed that there were a series, a chain of emanations from God.

Each was a being in its own right. The ones closest to God were more pure, and the further they got from God as they emanated downward, the more corrupt they were. And at the very bottom of that chain was the most corrupt of all the emanations from God, and it was called the Demiurge.

And the Demiurge was said to be the God of the Old Testament, Jehovah. And the Gnostics believed that He created the heavens, the earth, and everything in it, and that God, the good God, did not do so. So this is a weird doctrine, to say the least.

Obviously not at all Christian. Now, they believed that out of pity for man, the good God sent Christ down to bring us light and dispel our spiritual darkness, because they believed that salvation comes through a realization or a knowledge. That's why they're called Gnostics, Salvation comes from knowing the secrets and the mysteries of the Gnostic philosophy.

Now, on their view, since matter is evil, Jesus could not have been physical. At least the Christ, who is good, who is the highest emanation from God, they believed, Christ was sent down, but He couldn't be physical because that would make Him evil. So there were two lines of thought among the Gnostics.

There were the Docetists, practicing Docetism, which believed that Jesus was only apparently physical, that He was really a phantom creature. The Docetists actually taught that when Jesus walked, He didn't leave footprints because He was just a spirit being who looked like a physical being. And that's how they got around the idea that, you know, matter being evil and Jesus being good, how could He be physical? Well, they say He isn't physical.

He just looked like He was. And that's one reason, no doubt, why John, in the beginning of 1 John, described Jesus as that which we've seen and heard, which we've looked upon, which we've heard of others, which we've handled and our hands have handled. Now, he's trying to emphasize that Jesus was indeed physical, and John knew it, had seen Him and touched Him and knew it.

And therefore, the Gnostics were wrong. At least the Docetists were wrong. There were another branch of the Gnostics, the Valentinians, following a man named Valentinus, who was a Gnostic who taught that the Christ emanation came down upon a normal man named Jesus at His baptism and left Him just prior to His crucifixion.

And Jesus was a good man, and He was not Himself the Christ, they say, but the Christ was something that came upon Him at His baptism and left Him at His death. By the way, New Agers say the same thing today. I don't know if you've ever talked to New Agers about this, but that's basically the teaching of New Age today.

It's the Gnostic heresy that the Christ is something that came upon Christ. Now, sometimes they say, the New Agers sometimes say, Christ is in every man, and Jesus just at His baptism realized that He was the Christ, and we have to do the same thing, realize that we're the Christ, and all that. But, of course, all of these heresies fail to realize that Christ is not an essence.

Christ is a title for an individual. It means the Anointed One, and it refers to one person, Jesus. And at His birth, the angel said, Unto us is born this day in the city of David a Savior who is Christ, the Lord.

He was born, so He's physical, and He was Christ at His birth. Christ the Lord. He didn't become Christ as baptism.

Anyway, that was what Gnosticism taught. Salvation to the Gnostics could only be attained through knowledge of the good God, and this would be enhanced by being initiated into mystical rites and rituals, like baptism and marriage to Jesus. I'm not sure what those involve.

They're too mystical. We don't have much record of that. They believe that most people could not be true Gnostics, that a real Gnostic was someone born with a high degree of intuitive knowledge that other people don't know.

But ordinary people could also be saved, they said, by faith and good works. They would just have a lesser position in salvation. Now, since our bodies are evil, according to them, and physical, they believed... There are two different kinds of Gnostics approach to this.

One group of Gnostics believed that since the body was evil, you need to punish it with ascetic practices and just hurt your body as much as you can because it's evil and that will make you spiritual. Another group thought, well, the body is irrecoverably evil. What's the sense of trying to reform it? Just give vent to its desires and just let it all hang out and just grab all the gusto you can because the body is corrupt irretrievably anyway and your spirit is disattached from that.

Your spirit's salvation is something separate. So there were Epicurean Gnostics who actually just believed in doing your own thing and they were what we call antinomian. They believed there were no restrictions upon people because they had the higher gnosis.

They realized that the body doesn't matter at all and therefore what it does cannot be considered significant. So you might as well just indulge it and don't resist it. At death, they believed that the soul is freed from the body, the body being a prison during lifetime and it goes and becomes part of the pleroma, the world soul, sort of like the Hindu concept, I guess, of becoming part of Brahma or something like that.

Very New Age kind of stuff. And Gnosticism spread very rapidly throughout the early church and it was a very big problem. Many of the people in the church were bought into it and were corrupted by it and fell away.

Now, there was a man named Marcion who was a Gnostic, but he had his own brand of Gnosticism so much so that there's a cult named after him, Marcionism. Marcion was the son of one of the bishops of the church in Pontus, but he was excommunicated formally from the church by his own father because of charges of immorality that he was engaged in. So he left the church and developed his own theology and set up his own communities throughout much of the ancient world, really.

There were a lot of Marcionites or Marcionists and he taught sort of like the Gnostics did that God did not create the universe, but the Demiurge did and that the Demiurge was the God of the Old Testament, that he was a wicked and mean God, but Jesus came to reveal the true God, the good God, who was different than that God of the Old Testament. And that means, of course, that Marcion rejected the God of and the book of the Old Testament. He just felt the Old Testament was not for us.

And he also rejected much of the New Testament. Any part of it that sounded like, you know, we should respect the God of the Old Testament, he essentially, you know, excised from his canon. And one of the first canons of Scripture of the New Testament that has survived is called the Marcionite canon.

In fact, it was because he formed his own canon of the New Testament that the real church had to come up with the real canon. And they really hadn't set about to decide which books were the real ones or not until Marcion came along and published his canon of the New Testament. And it was so deficient that eventually the councils of the churches decided they better decide on what the real canon is.

Marcion's canon only allowed one of the Gospels to be included. That was the Gospel of Luke. And that had to be greatly edited to leave out anything that might sound like it supported anything in the Old Testament.

And also, ten of the letters of Paul he accepted. He didn't accept 1 and 2 Timothy or Titus. But he did accept the first ten epistles of Paul, although he had to edit some things out of those too.

He believed that Paul alone knew the true Gospel, although no one really understood Paul except Marcion. And that the other apostles were deceived into thinking that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah who had come to fulfill Old Testament prophecy. So Marcion rejected all of that.

By the third century, most of Marcionite communities had been absorbed into another heresy called Manicheanism, which we'll talk about below. But Marcion was a significant heretic in the second century. Now we'll talk about Montanism.

By the way, Marcionism, you know, it has its advocates today. They don't call themselves Marcionites. They're called hyper-dispensationalists or ultra-dispensationalists.

Now, when I say that, that is not a slam against dispensationalists per se, because most dispensationalists would not agree with the hyper-dispensationalists. The hyper-dispensationalists follow the teachings of a man named E. W. Bollinger. They have actually a school east of Salem.

I forget the name of the town, but it's also some riding stables and some Greek classes they teach out there, well-reputed for Greek classes out there. Anyone know where that place is? I've never been out there. I think it's in Silverton or somewhere.

I don't remember where it is exactly. Anyway, it's a Bollingerite work. Bollinger is kind of the big guy in the hyper-dispensational movement.

He believed that none of the apostles preached the true gospel until Paul, and that only Paul preached the true gospel. The other apostles were too wrapped up in their Judaism and their Jewish ideas. So to a large extent, although the hyper-dispensationalists don't re-canonize the scripture, they do have this tendency.

You can see that Marcionism was just the opposite of Ebionism. Ebionism was rejecting Paul and bringing in the law almost instead of the gospel. Marcion kept all the Old

Testament out and just allowed Paul and what he wrote, and some of the things he wrote, to be authoritative.

Now we've got to move on to Montanism. Montanism arose in 156 A.D. in Phrygia, which is in Central Asia Minor. It is a cult that was named after Montanus who was recently converted from a career as a pagan priest, but he was converted to Christianity, but he got kind of weird.

He claimed that he was the paraclete that Jesus promised he would send the disciples in John 14. We know the paraclete is the Holy Spirit, and he claimed that he was the Holy Spirit. He believed that the New Jerusalem and the Millennium were going to be established immediately and that he was the herald of a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the last days, a new prophetic movement, that the spirit of prophecy, which had basically kind of dwindled from activity in the church by this time because the apostles having died, there was still prophecy somewhat, but it was rare in the churches.

He felt that they needed to recover the charismatic emphasis of the early church, and this was largely a reaction against the institutionalism and formalism and the worldliness in the church. It was an attempt to, with some corruptions in belief, it was an attempt to return to some of the earlier spiritual vitality of the early church. It was indeed a charismatic movement.

In North Africa, the movement took on an ascetic form and emphasized celibacy, fasting, and self-discipline and so forth, where in Asia Minor, where it originated, montanism was more of a charismatic movement, and among the things that they believed were that martyrdom actually has some synatonic power, so that if you had some sins that actually weren't fully covered by the blood of Jesus, you could possibly get those covered by dying as a martyr yourself. You know, it's your own blood, but atone for your sins. There were a series of synods which are gatherings of bishops in Asia Minor, and one of the bishops of Rome condemned montanism, but one of the early church fathers that we mentioned earlier, Tertullian, became a montanist in his later life, and in his later years, he belonged to that movement.

And although that is considered to be a heresy, Tertullian is still considered to be the father of Roman Catholic theology. It's interesting, because much of what Tertullian wrote was the beginnings of some Roman Catholic ideas, and really promoted the institutional concept of the church. Perhaps his reverting to montanism later on was his own reaction to the deadness of what he had taught earlier about the church being all institutionalized, and he realized that they lost the whole spiritual character of it, and was attracted more to a charismatic kind of thing.

I don't have to tell you we have the counterpart of montanism today. Then there is a doctrine. It wasn't so much a movement under a particular leader, but it was just a theological position that was a problem in the early church, and it was as a result of it

that Trinitarian theology tended to get hammered out in the councils and defined.

It was called monarchinism. Monarchinism. From the word monarch, which means the rule of one.

This was an emphasis on the oneness of God, and basically it was a denial of the Trinity. It arose in Asia Minor, and some of the monarchians, like some other later groups, the Sassanians and the Unitarians, taught that only the father possesses true personality, and the Son and the Spirit are simply impersonal attributes of the Godhead. That is to say, there is only one person who is God.

That's the Father. But the Son and the Spirit simply reflect different aspects of Him. That was taught by Paul of Samasata, who was a bishop of Antioch, but he was condemned and deposed for his heresy in 268.

This view was also called adoptionism, because it held that Jesus was a mere man, and that the influence and the power of God came upon Him, but He was not God Himself. That He was adopted, as it were, by God in His lifetime to be called the Son of God. That was the doctrine of Paul of Samasata, and he was, as I say, deposed from his position as bishop of Antioch for teaching such a doctrine.

Other monarchians were like modern modalists. They were also called Sibelius, Noetius, and Praxeus were three men who taught this, and there were movements named after them. Sibelianism is one of the best known of those movements.

They believed also in only one person, the Godhead, but they believed that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were different modes of expression or different ways in which God manifested Himself. In other words, they would say that in the Old Testament times, God was the Father. In the New Testament, He was in a different mode.

He was Jesus. And since Jesus' time, God is in a different mode. He's the Holy Spirit, but there's only one person at a time.

There's only one God. These are not three persons coexisting, but one God who changes modes or ways of expressing Himself. This view today is called modalism.

It is the view of Witness Lee and the local church. Witness Lee is a disciple of Watchman Nee, a Chinese martyr in recent times, martyred to the Communists in China. And Witness Lee, one of his early disciples, came over to this country and started a cult called the local church, which is modalistic in its theology.

Also, although I don't want to misrepresent them, I believe it's very similar to the doctrine of what we call the Jesus-only, the oneness Pentecostals today. And so that would be monarchianism. Both of these ways of looking at it are really reactions and rejections of Trinitarianism.

And it was as a result of the rise of monarchianism that Trinitarianism developed. That is to say that the church got together and tried to decide on what the Bible really does teach on the subject of the Trinity and hammered out the formulations that we now know, especially that of the Nicene Creed, which we'll study some other time. Now, Novationism... I'm sure that some of you are saying, these names, who needs them? Well, they're still around.

They just have different names now. There's no new thing under the sun. The devil doesn't really have anything original.

He just kind of recycles old errors. But Novationism was named after a man named Novation who was a presbyter in Rome. And he was a defender of the doctrine of the Trinity against the monarchians.

But after the Vesian persecutions, that's when Emperor Decius persecuted the church in 249 and 250 AD... By the way, there were a lot of people lapsed during that particular persecution. That was one of the most disastrous persecutions for the church of them all. Many people lapsed and denied the faith under that persecution.

But the church afterwards had to decide what to do with those who, after the persecution was over, wanted to come back. Novation took a harder line on that than the official leadership in Rome did. The official leadership in Rome wanted to say that the church has the power to grant absolution of sins.

That is to say, the church can stand in the place of God and say, I forgive you. I forgive you. I mean, this is basically what the Roman Catholic Church claims the ability to do now.

And that was a developing doctrine already in the leading party in the Roman Church at the time. Novation disagreed with that. Now, he took a stricter line.

He didn't believe that lapses should be restored at all under any conditions. But he wasn't excommunicated for that reason. He was excommunicated because he taught that the church didn't have the right to grant absolution of sins.

That was only God's prerogative to do. In that case, we might not think of him so much as a heretic, but we might tend to believe more like he did. It may have been more of a political thing in the church that caused him to be branded as a heretic.

He was legalistic. He taught that a person could not be restored after they denied Christ. That is not a position I would agree with.

But at the same time, I could imagine a true Christian holding that view. I wouldn't call someone who had that view necessarily a heretic. I'd just say I disagree with that.

He actually hoped that he would be elected as Bishop of Rome, or as the Pope, essentially, in the election of the Pope in 251. But his more lenient rival, Cornelius, who took a more lenient view of the lapses, he got the position instead. So, Novation accepted the nomination as Bishop of a rival church in Rome.

And there was a rival or dissenting party from the major party in Rome. And they asked Novation to be their Bishop. And he was consecrated as their Bishop and caused a schism in the Church of Rome.

Until the 6th century, until the 500s A.D., there were these two churches in Rome, the Novationists and, of course, the Roman Catholic. And later on, when Diocletian persecuted the church and there were some lapses and that persecution ended, there was a group called the Donatists who arose in North Africa who were very much like Novation in saying that the lapses could not be restored to the church after they'd lapsed. And they were later kind of merged into the Novations in later centuries.

The last cult or heresy I want to discuss is called Manichaeism. This is actually, I think I left an N out of that. Maybe it's Manichaeism.

I guess it's Manichaeism after all. Manichaeism is what a person was who believed it. This cult was named after a guy named Mani.

And it was founded in southern Babylonia in the year 240 A.D. It had a lot of adherents throughout the Eastern Church in Persia, India, China, and Egypt, and North Africa, but also in the Western Church in Italy there were some who were Manichaeans. Among those who were converted to it was Augustine of Hippo before he was a Christian. Augustine was later known as Saint Augustine and became one of the leading theologians in church history.

In fact, most people consider him to be the greatest theologian who ever lived, although some of his theology stunk. But anyway, he really is the one, I mean, Augustine really is the one most guilty of all of instituting the whole pathos concept in the Roman Catholic doctrines that salvation is only in the church and so forth. I mean, Augustine really is to be blamed for all that, although in many ways he did a good job refuting certain heresies.

But before his conversion to Christianity, Augustine was a Manichaean. And Mani was mostly gnostic in his viewpoint. He was dualistic, believed that matter was evil, spirit was good.

He believed that the creation is a mixture of light and darkness due to an attack by the kingdom of darkness upon the kingdom of light. And the kingdom of light is engaged currently in a campaign of gradual purification in which Christ came to help people overcome the kingdom of darkness. This almost sounds humorous, but it was soberly

taught that Satan had stolen particles of light from the kingdom of light and imprisoned them in man's brain.

And Jesus, Buddha, and the prophets and Mani were sent by God to release these particles of light in man's brain. And the system recognized two classes of people, the elect and the auditors. Only the elect were admitted to the secret rites of baptism and the Lord's Supper.

The elect were very ascetic and occupied themselves with religious rituals and exercises. Those who were auditors were not involved in these rituals and they derived their holiness by transference from the elect. The auditor's job was to provide for all the necessities of life for the elect.

So I guess they'd feed them and clothe them and house them and so forth, and by doing so they got to be participants in their holiness and be saved that way. And this is one of the mentalities that gave rise to the priesthood later on in the church, that some people are clergy. Some people just occupy themselves with religious duties.

And they're the ones who have to be holy. They're the ones who have to be religious. They have to be ascetic.

But others, simply by supporting them with their tithes and offerings, that's where they get their connection with God, through the clergy. That is not usually an official doctrine of Protestantism, although sometimes that mentality exists in Protestantism. It is an official doctrine in Catholicism.

That's about... I just mentioned St. Augustine, father of Roman Catholicism, was a Manichean prior to his conversion to Christianity. I want to introduce you real quickly in the last few minutes we have here to three important men whose writings have survived. They were all writers in the 2nd and 3rd century.

Irenaeus lived from 130 to 200 A.D. and he was the Bishop of Lyon, France. And he wrote, among other things, a work called *Against Heresies*. He was himself a disciple of Polycarp, who was a disciple of John.

So Irenaeus goes back... has roots that go pretty deep into church history. Principally, his book *Against Heresies* was addressing Gnosticism and refuting that heresy. He is sometimes called the father of church dogmatics because he's the first to really write systematic defenses of the Christian faith.

Now, the earlier apologists that I mentioned earlier, they were not writing about Christian doctrine against heresy. They were writing supporting Christianity against paganism. They were appealing to the pagan mind and saying that Christianity is a good thing to adopt.

But the polemicists were not writing to the pagans. They were writing against heresies. They were writing to the church about what the true doctrine is as opposed to the heretical doctrines.

And that's church dogmatics. And Irenaeus is called the father of church dogmatics. His writings contributed to the authority of the monarchical bishop, unfortunately, and to reverence for church tradition as an authority in teaching, which later, of course, was elevated by the Catholic Church to the same level as Scripture.

But he also was instrumental in the rise of the true canon of Scripture. He quoted from so many of the New Testament books as Scripture that he provided a very early witness to the canonicity of a lot of those books. We will have a separate talk about how the canon of Scripture came together maybe next week.

I'm not sure. Okay. In addition to Irenaeus, I'd like to mention something about Hippolytus.

I don't know what years his life spanned. His writing was done in the year 200 A.D. He is considered to be the most important third-century theologian because his book, *Apostolic Tradition*, provides a picture of Roman church order and worship around the year 200. Hippolytus also attacked Gnosticism.

Along with Gnosticism, he attacked other errors that were in the church in his book, *Refutation of All Heresies*. He criticized the dominant party of the Roman church because he said they were too lax in discipline and in doctrinal soundness. They were not shining.

He felt like their doctrines were bad. Interesting thought when later Roman Catholics believed that the Roman church's opinions are definitive of orthodoxy, and yet here an early church theologian and polemicist felt like the church of Rome had very bad theology. He accused an important pastor named Calixtus of having Sabelian and Noidian links, and that would make him, of course, what, a Gnostic or a Monarchian? Monarchian, right.

He also opposed forgiving those who were guilty of serious sins committed after baptism, including fornication, adultery, idolatry, lapsing in times of persecution, murder, and a few other things like that. He said that anyone who did those things after they were baptized should never be forgiven. Now you might say, well, these guys, you know, they were kind of legalistic.

Well, they kind of were. Remember, they hadn't read our modern books. They only had the Scriptures.

And because they only had the Scriptures, they had to come up with their own interpretations of the Scriptures. Sometimes they were probably right, and sometimes they were almost certainly wrong, just like our modern writers are. But they were true

Christians.

People can be wrong about some of these things and be true Christians. I think these writings reflect a tendency in the early church in the 2nd and 3rd century to equate baptism with the forgiveness of sins. And once a person was baptized, it was questionable whether they could be forgiven of any sins committed after baptism.

They figured that once you're baptized, that takes care of all the sins you've committed before. But if you sin after that, it was a toss-up. No one was quite sure whether people could be forgiven of those or not.

And so we find people in those days were waiting to be baptized on their deathbed. They were converting and becoming part of the church at whatever time in their life they did, but they would postpone baptism until the last possible minute because they believed that only sins committed before baptism could be forgiven. And so they wanted to be baptized just before they died to make sure they didn't sin after baptism.

That might be one reason why Constantine, although he professed Christianity in his youth and became a sponsor of Christianity in the Roman Empire, he didn't get baptized until his deathbed. But Hippolytus was one of those guys who took a real hard line on people who sin after they've been baptized. His commentary on the book of Daniel and on part of the Song of Solomon are still available and constitute the earliest surviving Bible commentaries from the early church.

There are no earlier commentaries known to be in existence. One other fellow I want to mention is Cyprian, who was bishop from 248 to 258 A.D. in Carthage. Now he condemned Novatian.

Remember, Novatian was the one who thought he was going to be made the pope, but he wasn't, and so he became the bishop of the opposing party in Rome. Cyprian was the bishop in Carthage who condemned him because he denied that the church had the power to grant absolution from sins to those who had lapsed during the times of persecution. Now, Cyprian was a great defender of the church's right to absolve sins.

In fact, Cyprian is famous for the great quote, Outside the church there is no salvation, which statement I do not believe can be supported scripturally, unless by church we're going to use the term to mean everyone who loves the Lord. Now, that is the right way to use the term, but that's not the way Cyprian used it. In Cyprian's day, the church was an institution that was governed by a hierarchy, and if you were not on good terms with the institution is what he means.

If you're outside the church, if you're excommunicated, if you're a heretic, if you're not on the team, there's no salvation for you. And Cyprian did a lot to propel forward some of the more Roman Catholic ideas with this notion that you had to be on good terms with

the institutional church in order to be saved. Cyprian laid the foundation for the development of Roman Catholic hierarchy.

He supported the College of Bishops, the Episcopate, as the authority in the church universal. He taught that the bishops answer only to God and that criticism of a bishop was rebellion against God. Does that sound like anything you've ever heard in modern times? Back in the 70s in the Charismatic Movement there was a big movement called the Shepherding Movement and still exists in some backwater churches that didn't hear about it being renounced a decade ago.

It's the heresy that, you know, the elders of the church are practically next to God and they have to answer only to God, not to you. And if you criticize them, you're a rebel against God. I mean, this view I found in a church I was attending in 1975 in California.

It was a big thing in some of the Charismatic churches back then. But it was renounced even by most of its leaders in the early 80s. But it's still around by those who haven't heard the news that it's a heresy.

He also recognized the preeminence of Rome, that is, the Church of Rome, and of the Roman bishop over the other bishops. He didn't say that the Roman bishop was really above the other bishops. He just said he was first among equals, whatever that means.

Sounds to me like if one is first among equals, that either means he enters the room first or was born first or else he's above them. What else does first mean? I don't know. First in authority.

But this began to... You begin to see creeping in this idea that the Church of Rome, that's the church that's sort of the federal headquarters of the worldwide church. And the bishop there is the guy that all the other bishops have to answer to. Obviously, that was highly developed later on.

Cyprian and some of these early guys contributed to it. Inadvertently, they didn't know what they were getting into. Father, forgive them.

They knew not what they did. But Tertullian also was an early polemicist. In addition to being an apologist, he also wrote against heresies.

And he did a lot of writing on various subjects. That brings us to the end of our study today. Next time, I think we'll actually see how the church conquered the Roman Empire or one could interpret it otherwise that the paganism conquered the church.

But one way or another, the Roman Empire stopped pursuing the church. And the Roman Empire began to define itself as Christian. But we'll talk about how that came about next time.