

**A Collection of Primary Source Texts Related to the History of Christianity:
The Early Church**

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Jewish Authorities and the Apostles

Questions to Consider: What is the relationship between the Apostles and the Jewish authorities as described in this passage from the Book of Acts? What is the outcome of this meeting? Think about when this was written and by whom it was written.

And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest asked them, [28] saying, We strictly charged you not to teach in this name: and behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us. [29] But Peter and the apostles answered and said, We must obey God rather than men. [30] The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew, hanging him on a tree. [31] Him did God exalt with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins. [32] And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God hath given to them that obey him.

[33] But they, when they heard this, were cut to the heart, and were minded to slay them. [34] But there stood up one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in honor of all the people, and commanded to put the men forth a little while. [35] And he said unto them, Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves as touching these men, what ye are about to do. [36] For before these days rose up Theudas, giving himself out to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were dispersed, and came to nought. [37] After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the enrolment, and drew away some of the people after him: he also perished; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered abroad. [38] And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will be overthrown: [39] but if it is of God, ye will not be able to overthrow them; lest haply ye be found even to be fighting against God. [40] And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles unto them, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. [41] They therefore departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the Name. [42] And every day, in the temple and at home, they ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus as the Christ.

Acts 5: 27-42 (American Standard Version)

The Council at Jerusalem

Questions to Consider: What were the issues at the Council of Jerusalem? How were these issues resolved? What are the differences between the two accounts and what could explain those differences?

Compare with the instructions given in Matthew 10:1-15 in the following reading.

And certain men came down from Judaea and taught the brethren, saying, Except ye be circumcised after the custom of Moses, ye cannot be saved. [2] And when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and questioning with them, the brethren appointed that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question. [3] They therefore, being brought on their way by the church, passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren. [4] And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church and the apostles and the elders, and they rehearsed all things that God had done with them. [5] But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees who believed, saying, It is needful to circumcise them, and to charge them to keep the law of Moses.

[6] And the apostles and the elders were gathered together to consider of this matter. [7] And when there had been much questioning, Peter rose up, and said unto them,

Brethren, ye know that a good while ago God made choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. [8] And God, who knoweth the heart, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Spirit, even as he did unto us; [9] and he made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith. [10] Now therefore why make ye trial of God, that ye should put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? [11] But we believe that we shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in like manner as they.

[12] And all the multitude kept silence; and they hearkened unto Barnabas and Paul rehearsing what signs and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles through them. [13] And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying,

Brethren, hearken unto me: [14] Symeon hath rehearsed how first God visited the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. [15] And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written,

[16] After these things I will return,
And I will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen;
And I will build again the ruins thereof,
And I will set it up:

[17] That the residue of men may seek after the Lord,
And all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called,

[18] Saith the Lord, who maketh these things known from of old.

[19] Wherefore my judgment is, that we trouble not them that from among the Gentiles turn to God; [20] but that we write unto them, that they abstain from the pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from what is strangled, and from blood. [21] For Moses from generations of old hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath.

Acts 15: 1-21 (American Standard Version)

Then after the space of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus also with me. [2] And I went up by revelation; and I laid before them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles but privately before them who were of repute, lest by any means I should be running, or had run, in vain. [3] But not even Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised: [4] and that because of the false brethren privily brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: [5] to whom we gave place in the way of subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you. [6] But from those who were reputed to be somewhat (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth not man's person)—they, I say, who were of repute imparted nothing to me: [7] but contrariwise, when they saw that I had been intrusted with the gospel of the uncircumcision, even as Peter with the gospel of the circumcision [8] (for he that wrought for Peter unto the apostleship of the circumcision wrought for me also unto the Gentiles); [9] and when they perceived the grace that was given unto me, James and Cephas and John, they who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship, that we should go unto the Gentiles, and they unto the circumcision; [10] only *they would* that we should remember the poor; which very thing I was also zealous to do.

Galatians 2: 1-20 (American Standard Version)

The Mission of the Twelve Apostles

Questions to Consider: What does this passage tell us about early Christianity and the mission of the apostles?

And he called unto him his twelve disciples, and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of disease and all manner of sickness.

[2] Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; [3] Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; [4] Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him.

[5] These twelve Jesus sent forth, and charged them, saying, Go not into any way of the Gentiles, and enter not into any city of the Samaritans: [6] but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. [7] And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. [8] Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons: freely ye received, freely give. [9] Get you no gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses; [10] no wallet for your journey, neither two coats, nor shoes, nor staff: for the laborer is worthy of his food. [11] And into whatsoever city or village ye shall enter, search out who in it is worthy; and there abide till ye go forth. [12] And as ye enter into the house, salute it. [13] And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you. [14] And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, as ye go forth out of that house or that city, shake off the dust of your feet. [15] Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city.

Matthew 10: 1-15 (American Standard Version)

Paul and Judaism

Questions to Consider: In this letter by the Apostle Paul, how does he view the relationship between Christianity and Judaism?

But if thou bearest the name of a Jew, and retest upon the law, and gloriest in God, [18] and knowest his will, and approvest the things that are excellent, being instructed out of the law, [19] and art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them that are in darkness, [20] a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of babes, having in the law the form of knowledge and of the truth; [21] thou therefore that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? [22] thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou rob temples? [23] thou who gloriest in the law, through thy transgression of the law dishonorest thou God? [24] For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you, even as it is written. [25] For circumcision indeed profiteth, if thou be a doer of the law: but if thou be a transgressor of the law, thy circumcision is become uncircumcision. [26] If therefore the uncircumcision keep the ordinances of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be reckoned for circumcision? [27] and shall not the uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who with the letter and circumcision art a transgressor of the law? [28] For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: [29] but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

[3:1] What advantage then hath the Jew? or what is the profit of circumcision? [2] Much every way: first of all, that they were intrusted with the oracles of God. [3] For what if some were without faith? shall their want of faith make of none effect the faithfulness of God? [4] God forbid: yea, let God be found true, but every man a liar; as it is written,

That thou mightest be justified in thy words,
And mightest prevail when thou comest into judgment.

Romans 2:17 – 3:4 (American Standard Version)

Paul's and Leadership in the Church

Questions to Consider: What kind of leadership positions does Paul describe in these two passages? Do they change? What are Paul's views on the role of women in leadership positions in the Church. Why does it seem like Paul's views change?

I commend unto you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant [or *deaconess*] of the church that is at Cenchreae: [2] that ye receive her in the Lord, worthily of the saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever matter she may have need of you: for she herself also hath been a helper of many, and of mine own self.

[3] Salute Prisca and Aquila my fellow-workers in Christ Jesus, [4] who for my life laid down their own necks; unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles: [5] and salute the church that is in their house. Salute Epænetus my beloved, who is the first-fruits of Asia unto Christ. [6] Salute Mary, who bestowed much labor on you. [7] Salute Andronicus and Junias [or *Junia*], my kinsmen, and my fellow-prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also have been in Christ before me. [8] Salute Ampliatus my beloved in the Lord. [9] Salute Urbanus our fellow-worker in Christ, and Stachys my beloved. [10] Salute Apelles the approved in Christ. Salute them that are of the household of Aristobulus. [11] Salute Herodion my kinsman. Salute them of the household of Narcissus, that are in the Lord. [12] Salute Tryphaena and Tryphosa, who labor in the Lord. Salute Persis the beloved, who labored much in the Lord. [13] Salute Rufus the chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine. [14] Salute Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the brethren that are with them. [15] Salute Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints that are with them. [16] Salute one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ salute you.

Romans 16: 1-16 (American Standard Version)

Faithful is the saying, If a man seeketh the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. [2] The bishop [or overseer] therefore must be without reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, orderly, given to hospitality, apt to teach; [3] no brawler [or *not quarrelsome over wine*], no striker; but gentle, not contentious, no lover of money; [4] one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; [5] (but if a man knoweth not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) [6] not a novice, lest being puffed up he fall into the condemnation [*judgement*] of the devil. [7] Moreover he must have good testimony from them that are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. [8] Deacons in like manner must be grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; [9] holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. [10] And let these also first be proved; then let them serve as deacons, if they be blameless. [11] Women in like manner must be grave, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things. [12] Let deacons be husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. [13]

For they that have served well as deacons gain to themselves a good standing, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

1 Timothy 3: 1-13 (American Standard Version)

Women's Roles in the Church

Questions to Consider: How are women described in the early Church in these passages? What accounts for the different roles women have in the church? Think in terms of who is writing, when, and why?

Now as they went on their way, he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. [39] And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at the Lord's feet, and heard his word. [40] But Martha was [I]cumbered about much serving; and she came up to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister did leave me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me. [41] But the Lord answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art anxious and troubled about many things: [42] but one thing is needful: for Mary hath chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

Luke 10: 28-42 (American Standard Version)

Now I praise you that ye remember me in all things, and hold fast the traditions, even as I delivered them to you. [3] But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God. [4] Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoreth his head. [5] But every woman praying or prophesying with her head unveiled dishonoreth her head; for it is one and the same thing as if she were shaven. [6] For if a woman is not veiled, let her also be shorn: but if it is a shame to a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be veiled. [7] For a man indeed ought not to have his head veiled, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. [8] For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man: [9] for neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man: [10] for this cause ought the woman to have a sign of authority on her head, because of the angels. [11] Nevertheless, neither is the woman without the man, nor the man without the woman, in the Lord. [12] For as the woman is of the man, so is the man also by the woman; but all things are of God. [13] Judge ye [a]in yourselves: is it seemly that a woman pray unto God unveiled? [14] Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a dishonor to him? [15] But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering. [16] But if any man seemeth to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.

1 Corinthians 11: 2-16 (American Standard Version)

For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ. [28] There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female; for ye all are one man in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 3: 27-28 (American Standard Version)

I desire therefore that the men pray in every place, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and disputing. [9] In like manner, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefastness and sobriety; not with braided hair, and gold or pearls or costly raiment; [10] but (which becometh women professing godliness) through good works. [11] Let a woman learn in quietness with all subjection. [12] But I permit not a woman to teach, nor to have dominion over a man, but to be in quietness. [13] For Adam was first formed, then Eve; [14] and Adam was not beguiled, but the woman being beguiled hath fallen into transgression: [15] but she shall be saved through her child-bearing, if they continue in faith and love and sanctification with sobriety.

1 Timothy 2: 8-15 (American Standard Version)

Early Christian Views of Secular Government

Questions to Consider: Based on these two readings from the New Testament, how do Christians view government? Why do these two writings differ? Again, think in terms of who is writing, when, and why?

Let every soul be in subjection to the higher powers: for there is no power but of God; and the powers that be are ordained of God. [2] Therefore he that resisteth the power, withstandeth the ordinance of God: and they that withstand shall receive to themselves judgment. [3] For rulers are not a terror to the good work, but to the evil. And wouldest thou have no fear of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise from the same: [4] for he is a minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is a minister of God, an avenger for wrath to him that doeth evil. [5] Wherefore ye must needs be in subjection, not only because of the wrath, but also for conscience' sake. [6] For for this cause ye pay tribute also; for they are ministers of God's service, attending continually upon this very thing. [7] Render to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.

[8] Owe no man anything, save to love one another: for he that loveth [d]his neighbor hath fulfilled the law. [9] For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not covet, and if there be any other commandment, it is summed up in this word, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. [10] Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: love therefore is the fulfilment of the law.

Romans 13: 1-10 (American Standard Version)

And there came one of the seven angels that had the seven bowls, and spake with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the judgment of the great harlot that sitteth upon many waters; [2] with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and they that dwell in the earth were made drunken with the wine of her fornication. [3] And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness: and I saw a woman sitting upon a scarlet-colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. [4] And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and decked with gold and precious stone and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations, even the unclean things of her fornication, [5] and upon her forehead a name written, Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of the Harlots and of the Abominations of the Earth. [6] And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I wondered with a great wonder. [7] And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou wonder? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and the ten horns. [8] The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and is about to come up out of the abyss, and to go into perdition. And they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, they whose name hath not

been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast, how that he was, and is not, and shall come.

[18: 1] After these things I saw another angel coming down out of heaven, having great authority; and the earth was lightened with his glory. [2] And he cried with a mighty voice, saying, Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, and is become a habitation of demons, and a hold of every unclean spirit, and a hold of every unclean and hateful bird. [3] For by the wine of the wrath of her fornication all the nations are fallen; and the kings of the earth committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth waxed rich by the power of her wantonness.

[4] And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come forth, my people, out of her, that ye have no fellowship with her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues: [5] for her sins have reached even unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.

Revelation 17: 1-8, 18: 1-5 (American Standard Version)

Martyrdoms of Peter and Paul

Questions to Consider: How are the martyrdoms of these two early Christians viewed in this letter by Clement?

Clement, First Epistle to the Corinthians 5

But not to dwell upon ancient examples, let us come to the most recent spiritual heroes. Let us take the noble examples furnished in our own generation. Through envy and jealousy, the greatest and most righteous pillars [of the church] have been persecuted and put to death. Let us set before our eyes the illustrious apostles. Peter, through unrighteous envy, endured not one or two, but numerous labours and when he had at length suffered martyrdom, departed to the place of glory due to him. Owing to envy, Paul also obtained the reward of patient endurance, after being seven times thrown into captivity, compelled to flee, and stoned. After preaching both in the east and west, he gained the illustrious reputation due to his faith, having taught righteousness to the whole world, and come to the extreme limit of the west, and suffered martyrdom under the prefects. Thus was he removed from the world, and went into the holy place, having proved himself a striking example of patience.

Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 9, ed. Allan Menzies. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1896.) p. 230-231.

Pliny the Younger's Investigation of Christians

Questions to Consider: What does Pliny know about Christians? What are Christians guilty of? What is Trajan's reply?

Pliny, Letters 10.96, 97.

XCVIII. – To Trajan.

It is my custom, Sir, to refer to you in all cases where I do not feel sure, for who can better direct my doubts or inform my ignorance? I have never been present at any legal examination of the Christians, and I do not know, therefore, what are the usual penalties passed upon them, or the limits of those penalties, or how searching an inquiry should be made. I have hesitated a great deal in considering whether any distinctions should be drawn according to the ages of the accused; whether the weak should be punished as severely as the more robust; whether if they renounce their faith they should be pardoned, or whether the man who has once been a Christian should gain nothing by recanting; whether the name itself, even though otherwise innocent of crime, should be punished, or only the crimes that gather round it.

In the meantime, this is the plan which I have adopted in the case of those Christians who have been brought before me. I ask them whether they are Christians; if they say yes, then I repeat the question a second and a third time, warning them of the penalties it entails, and if they still persist, I order them to be taken away to prison. For I do not doubt that, whatever the character of the crime may be which they confess, their pertinacity and inflexible obstinacy certainly ought to be punished. There were others who showed similar mad folly whom I reserved to be sent to Rome, as they were Roman citizens. Subsequently, as is usually the way, the very fact of my taking up this question led to a great increase of accusations, and a variety of cases were brought before me. A pamphlet was issued anonymously, containing the names of a number of people. Those who denied that they were or had been Christians and called upon the gods in the usual formula, reciting the words after me, those who offered incense and wine before your image, which I had given orders to be brought forward for this purpose, together with the statues of the deities - all such I considered should be discharged, especially as they cursed the name of Christ, which, it is said, those who are really Christians cannot be induced to do. Others, whose names were given me by an informer, first said that they were Christians and afterwards denied it, declaring that they had been but were so no longer, some of them having recanted many years before, and more than one so long as twenty years back. They all worshipped your image and the statues of the deities, and cursed the name of Christ. But they declared that the sum of their guilt or their error only amounted to this, that on a stated day they had been accustomed to meet before daybreak and to recite a hymn among themselves to Christ, as though he were a god, and that so far from binding themselves by oath to commit any crime, their oath was to abstain from theft, robbery, adultery, and from breach of faith, and not to deny trust money placed in their keeping when called upon to

deliver it. When this ceremony was concluded, it had been their custom to depart and meet again to take food, but it was of no special character and quite harmless, and they had ceased this practice after the edict in which, in accordance with your orders, I had forbidden all secret societies. I thought it the more necessary, therefore, to find out what truth there was in these statements by submitting two women, who were called deaconesses, to the torture, but I found nothing but a debased superstition carried to great lengths. So I postponed my examination, and immediately consulted you. The matter seems to me worthy of your consideration, especially as there are so many people involved in the danger. Many persons of all ages, and of both sexes alike, are being brought into peril of their lives by their accusers, and the process will go on. For the contagion of this superstition has spread not only through the free cities, but into the villages and the rural districts, and yet it seems to me that it can be checked and set right. It is beyond doubt that the temples, which have been almost deserted, are beginning again to be thronged with worshippers, that the sacred rites which have for a long time been allowed to lapse are now being renewed, and that the food for the sacrificial victims is once more finding a sale, whereas, up to recently, a buyer was hardly to be found. From this it is easy to infer what vast numbers of people might be reclaimed, if only they were given an opportunity of repentance.

XCIX. – Trajan to Pliny.

You have adopted the proper course, my dear Pliny, in examining into the cases of those who have been denounced to you as Christians, for no hard and fast rule can be laid down to meet a question of such wide extent. The Christians are not to be hunted out ; if they are brought before you and the offence is proved, they are to be punished, but with this reservation - that if any one denies that he is a Christian and makes it clear that he is not, by offering prayers to our deities, then he is to be pardoned because of his recantation, however suspicious his past conduct may have been. But pamphlets published anonymously must not carry any weight whatever, no matter what the charge may be, for they are not only a precedent of the very worst type, but they are not in consonance with the spirit of our age.

Letters of the Younger Pliny, trans. John B. Firth (London, Walter Scott, Ltd. [1900]), 270-273.

Christianity and Greek Philosophy

Questions to Consider: How do Clement of Alexandria and Tertulian view the relationship between Christianity and Greek Philosophy?

Clement of Alexandria, *The Stromata, Or Miscellanies*, Book 1

CHAPTER V -- PHILOSOPHY THE HANDMAID OF THEOLOGY.

Accordingly, before the advent of the Lord, philosophy was necessary to the Greeks for righteousness. And now it becomes conducive to piety; being a kind of preparatory training to those who attain to faith through demonstration. "For thy foot," it is said, "will not stumble, if thou refer what is good, whether belonging to the Greeks or to us, to Providence." For God is the cause of all good things; but of some primarily, as of the Old and the New Testament; and of others by consequence, as philosophy. Perchance, too, philosophy was given to the Greeks directly and primarily, till the Lord should call the Greeks. For this was a schoolmaster to bring "the Hellenic mind," as the law, the Hebrews, "to Christ." Philosophy, therefore, was a preparation, paving the way for him who is perfected in Christ.

Ante-Nicene Fathers. Volume 2: Fathers of the Second Century: Hermes, Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus, and Clement of Alexandria, ed. A. Cleveland Coxe (New York: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885), 305.

Tertullian, *The Prescription Against Heretics*

Chapter VII.-Pagan Philosophy the Parent of Heresies. The Connection Between Deflections from Christian Faith and the Old Systems of Pagan Philosophy.

These are "the doctrines" of men and "of demons" produced for itching ears of the spirit of this world's wisdom: this the Lord called "foolishness," and "chose the foolish things of the world" to confound even philosophy itself. For (philosophy) it is which is the material of the world's wisdom, the rash interpreter of the nature and the dispensation of God. Indeed heresies are themselves instigated by philosophy. From this source came the Aeons, and I know not what infinite forms, and the trinity of man in the system of Valentinus, who was of Plato's school. From the same source came Marcion's better god, with all his tranquillity; he came of the Stoics. Then, again, the opinion that the soul dies is held by the Epicureans; while the denial of the restoration of the body is taken from the aggregate school of all the philosophers; also, when matter is made equal to God, then you have the teaching of Zeno; and when any doctrine is alleged touching a god of fire, then Heraclitus comes in. The same subject-matter is discussed over and over again⁶⁸ by the heretics and the philosophers; the same arguments are involved. Whence comes evil? Why is it permitted? What is the origin of man? and in what way does he come? Besides the question which Valentinus has very lately proposed—

Whence comes God? Which he settles with the answer: From enthymesis and ectroma. Unhappy Aristotle! who invented for these men dialectics, the art of building up and pulling down; an art so evasive in its propositions, so far-fetched in its conjectures, so harsh, in its arguments, so productive of contentions—embarrassing even to itself, retracting everything, and really treating of nothing!

Whence spring those "fables and endless genealogies," and "unprofitable questions," and "words which spread like a cancer?" From all these, when the apostle would restrain us, he expressly names philosophy as that which he would have us be on our guard against. Writing to the Colossians, he says, "See that no one beguile you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, and contrary to the wisdom of the Holy Ghost." He had been at Athens, and had in his interviews (with its philosophers) become acquainted with that human wisdom which pretends to know the truth, whilst it only corrupts it, and is itself divided into its own manifold heresies, by the variety of its mutually repugnant sects. What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What concord is there between the Academy and the Church? what between heretics and Christians? Our instruction comes from "the porch of Solomon," who had himself taught that "the Lord should be sought in simplicity of heart." Away with all attempts to produce a mottled Christianity of Stoic, Platonic, and dialectic composition! We want no curious disputation after possessing Christ Jesus, no inquisition after enjoying the gospel! With our faith, we desire no further belief. For this is our palmary faith, that there is nothing which we ought to believe besides.

Ante-Nicene Fathers. Volume 3: Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian. I. Apologetic; II. Anti-Marcion; III. Ethical, ed. A. Cleveland Coxe (New York: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885), 246.

Papal Primacy

Questions to Consider: What is the basis for Pope Leo I's argument for primacy in the Church?

Although, then, beloved, out partaking in that gift (of unity) be a great subject for common joy, yet it were a better and more excellent course of rejoicing, if ye rest not in the consideration of our humility; more profitable and more worthy by far it is to raise the mind's eye unto the contemplation of the most blessed Apostle Peter's glory, and to celebrate this day chiefly in the honour of him *who was watered with streams so copious from the very fountain of all grace, that while nothing has passed to others without his participation, yet he received many special privileges of his own.* The Word made flesh already was dwelling in us, and Christ had given up Himself whole to restore the race of man. Nothing was unordered to His wisdom; nothing difficult to His power. Elements were obeying, spirits ministering, angels serving; it was impossible that mystery could fail of its effect, in which the Unity and the Trinity of the Godhead itself was at once working. *And yet out of the whole world Peter alone is chosen to preside over the calling of all the Gentiles, and over all the Apostles and the collected Fathers of the Church; so that, though there be among the people of God many priests and many shepherds, yet Peter rules all by immediate commission, whom Christ also rules by sovereign power. Beloved, it is a great and wonderful participation of His own power which the Divine condescendence gave to this man; and if He willed that other rulers should enjoy aught together with him, yet never did He give, save through him, what He denied not to others.* In fine, the Lord asks all the Apostles what men think of Him; and they answer in common so long as they set forth the doubtfulness of human ignorance.

But when what the disciples think is required, he who is first in Apostolic dignity is first also in confession of the Lord. And when he had said, 'Thou art Christ the Son of the living God,' Jesus answered him 'Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona, because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but My Father which is in heaven'" – that is, Thou art blessed, because My Father hath taught thee; nor hath opinion of the earth deceived thee, but inspiration from heaven instructed thee; and not flesh and blood hath shown Me to thee, but He, whose only-begotten Son I am. 'And I,' saith He, 'say unto thee," – that is, as My Father hath manifested to thee My Godhead, so I too make known unto thee thine own pre-eminence, - 'For thou art Peter,' that is, whilst I am the immutable Rock; I the Corner-Stone who make both one; I the Foundation beside which no one can lay another; *yet thou also art a Rock, because by My virtue thou art firmly planted, so that whatever is peculiar to Me by power, is to thee by participation common with Me,* - 'and upon this Rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it;' – on this strength, saith He, I will build an eternal temple, and My Church, which in its height shall reach the heave, shall rise upon the firmness of this faith.

Thomas William Allies, *The see of St. Peter, the rock of the church, the source of jurisdiction, and the centre of unity* (Dublin: James Duffy, 1855), 22-24.

The Development of the Canon of the New Testament

Questions to Consider: What impulses led to the development of scriptural canon? How was the canon decided?

Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1.27 2 (book 1, chapter 27 2)

Marcion of Pontus succeeded him [Cerdon, an early gnostic theologian], and developed his doctrine. In so doing, he advanced the most daring blasphemy against Him who is proclaimed as God by the law and the prophets, declaring Him to be the author of evils, to take delight in war, to be infirm of purpose, and even to be contrary to Himself. But Jesus being derived from the father who is above the God that made the world, and coming into Judaea in the times of Pontius Pilate the governor, who was the procurator of Tiberius Caesar, was manifested in the form of a man to those who were in Judaea, abolishing the prophets and the law, and all the works of that God who made the world, whom also he calls Cosmocrator. Besides this, he mutilates the Gospel which is according to Luke, removing all that is written respecting the generation of the Lord, and setting aside a great deal of the teaching of the Lord, in which the Lord is recorded as most clearly confessing that the Maker of this universe is His Father. He likewise persuaded his disciples that he himself was more worthy of credit than are those apostles who have handed down the Gospel to us, furnishing them not with the Gospel, but merely a fragment of it. In like manner, too, he dismembered the Epistles of Paul, removing all that is said by the apostle respecting that God who made the world, to the effect that He is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and also those passages from the prophetic writings which the apostle quotes, in order to teach us that they announced beforehand the coming of the Lord.

Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325. Volume 1: The Apostolic Fathers, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, ed. A. Cleveland Coxe (New York: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885) p. 352.

III.-Canon Muratorianus.22 (In Muratori, V. C. *Antiq. Ital. Med. oev.*, vol. iii. col. 854.)

[Fragment begins] ...those things at which he was present he placed thus. The third book of the Gospel, that according to Luke, the well-known physician Luke wrote in his own name in order after the ascension of Christ, and when Paul had associated him with himself as one studious of right. Nor did he himself see the Lord in the flesh; and he, according as he was able to accomplish it, began his narrative with the nativity of John. The fourth Gospel is that of John, one of the disciples. When his fellow-disciples and bishops entreated him, he said, "Fast ye now with me for the space of three days, and let us recount to each other whatever may be revealed to each of us." On the same night it was revealed to Andrew, one of the apostles, that John should narrate all things in his own name as they called them to mind. And hence, although different points are taught us in the several books of the Gospels, there is no difference as regards the faith

of believers, inasmuch as in all of them all things are related under one imperial Spirit, which concern the Lord's nativity, His passion, His resurrection, His conversation with His disciples, and His twofold advent,-the first in the humiliation of rejection, which is now past, and the second in the glory of royal power, which is yet in the future. What marvel is it, then, that John brings forward these several things so constantly in his epistles also, saying in his own person, "What we have seen with our eyes, and heard with our ears, and our hands have handled, that have we written." For thus he professes himself to be not only the eye-witness, but also the hearer; and besides that, the historian of all the wondrous facts concerning the Lord in their order.

Moreover, the Acts of all the Apostles are comprised by Luke in one book, and addressed to the most excellent Theophilus, because these different events took place when he was present himself; and he shows this clearly-i.e., that the principle on which he wrote was, to give only what fell under his own notice-by the omission of the passion of Peter, and also of the journey of Paul, when he went from the city-Rome-to Spain.

As to the epistles of Paul, again, to those who will understand the matter, they indicate of themselves what they are, and from what place or with what object they were directed. He wrote first of all, and at considerable length, to the Corinthians, to check the schism of heresy; and then to the Galatians, to forbid circumcision; and then to the Romans on the rule of the Old Testament Scriptures, and also to show them that Christ is the first object in these;-which it is needful for us to discuss severally, as the blessed Apostle Paul, following the rule of his predecessor John, writes to no more than seven churches by name, in this order: the first to the Corinthians, the second to the Ephesians, the third to the Philippians, the fourth to the Colossians, the fifth to the Galatians, the sixth to the Thessalonians, the seventh to the Romans. Moreover, though he writes twice to the Corinthians and Thessalonians for their correction, it is yet shown-i.e., by this sevenfold writing-that there is one Church spread abroad through the whole world. And John too, indeed, in the Apocalypse, although he writes only to seven churches, yet addresses all. He wrote, besides these, one to Philemon, and one to Titus, and two to Timothy, in simple personal affection and love indeed; but yet these are hallowed in the esteem of the Catholic Church, and in the regulation of ecclesiastical discipline. There are also in circulation one to the Laodiceans, and another to the Alexandrians, forged under the name of Paul, and addressed against the heresy of Marcion; and there are also several others which cannot be received into the Catholic Church, for it is not suitable for gall to be mingled with honey.

The Epistle of Jude, indeed, and two belonging to the above-named John-or bearing the name of John-are reckoned among the Catholic epistles. And the book of Wisdom, written by the friends of Solomon in his honour. We receive also the Apocalypse of John and that of Peter, though some amongst us will not have this latter read in the Church. The Pastor, moreover, did Hermas write very recently in our times in the city of Rome, while his brother bishop Pius sat in the chair of the Church of Rome. And therefore it also ought to be read; but it cannot be made public in the Church to the people, nor placed among the prophets, as their number is complete, nor among the apostles to the end of time. Of the writings of Arsinous, called also Valentinus, or of Miltiades, we

receive nothing at all. Those are rejected too who wrote the new Book of Psalms for Marcion, together with Basilides and the founder of the Asian Cataphrygians. [Fragment ends]

Ante-Nicene Fathers. Volume 5: Hippolytus, Cyprian, Caius, Novatian, Appendix, ed. A. Cleveland Coxe (New York: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1886), 603.

Orthodox Christianity versus Gnostic Christianity

Questions to Consider: What are Irenaeus' criticisms of Gnostic Christianity?

Irenaeus, Against Heresies

BOOK I

PREFACE.

1. INASMUCH as certain men have set the truth aside, and bring in lying words and vain genealogies, which, as the apostle says, "minister questions rather than godly edifying which is in faith," and by means of their craftily-constructed plausibilities draw away the minds of the inexperienced and take them captive, [I have felt constrained, my dear friend, to compose the following treatise in order to expose and counteract their machinations.] These men falsify the oracles of God, and prove themselves evil interpreters of the good word of revelation. They also overthrow the faith of many, by drawing them away, under a pretence of [superior] knowledge, from Him who rounded and adorned the universe; as if, forsooth, they had something more excellent and sublime to reveal, than that God who created the heaven and the earth, and all things that are therein. By means of specious and plausible words, they cunningly allure the simple-minded to inquire into their system; but they nevertheless clumsily destroy them, while they initiate them into their blasphemous and impious opinions respecting the Demiurge; and these simple ones are unable, even in such a matter, to distinguish falsehood from truth.

2. Error, indeed, is never set forth in its naked deformity, lest, being thus exposed, it should at once be detected. But it is craftily decked out in an attractive dress, so as, by its outward form, to make it appear to the inexperienced (ridiculous as the expression may seem) more true than the truth itself. One far superior to me has well said, in reference to this point, "A clever imitation in glass casts contempt, as it were, on that precious jewel the emerald (which is most highly esteemed by some), unless it come under the eye of one able to test and expose the counterfeit. Or, again, what inexperienced person can with ease detect the presence of brass when it has been mixed up with silver?" Lest, therefore, through my neglect, some should be carried off, even as sheep are by wolves, while they perceive not the true character of these men, - because they outwardly are covered with sheep's clothing (against whom the Lord has enjoined us to be on our guard), and because their language resembles ours, while their sentiments are very different, -- I have deemed it my duty (after reading some of the Commentaries, as they call them, of the disciples of Valentinus, and after making myself acquainted with their tenets through personal intercourse with some of them) to unfold to thee, my friend, these portentous and profound mysteries, which do not fall within the range of every intellect, because all have not sufficiently purged their brains. I do this, in order that thou, obtaining an acquaintance with these things, mayest in turn explain them to all those with whom thou art connected, and exhort them to avoid such an

abyss of madness and of blasphemy against Christ. I intend, then, to the best of my ability, with brevity and clearness to set forth the opinions of those who are now promulgating heresy. I refer especially to the disciples of Ptolemaeus, whose school may be described as a bud from that of Valentinus. I shall also endeavour, according to my moderate ability, to furnish the means of overthrowing them, by showing how absurd and inconsistent with the truth are their statements. Not that I am practised either in composition or eloquence; but my feeling of affection prompts me to make known to thee and all thy companions those doctrines which have been kept in concealment until now, but which are at last, through the goodness of God, brought to light. "For there is nothing hidden which shall not be revealed, nor secret that shall not be made known."

Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325. Volume 1: The Apostolic Fathers, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, ed. A. Cleveland Coxe (New York: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885) p. 315.

Rule of Faith

Questions to Consider: How does this Orthodox Christian rule of faith conflict with Gnostic Christian belief?

Tertullian, *The Prescription against Heretics*

Chap. XIII. – SUMMARY OF THE CREED, OR RULE OF FAITH. NO QUESTIONS EVER RAISED ABOUT IT BY BELIEVERS. HERETICS ENCOURAGE AND PERPETUATE THOUGH INDEPENDENT OF CHRIST'S TEACHING.

Now, with regard to this rule of faith – the we may from this point acknowledge what is which we defend – it is, you must know, that which prescribes the belief that there is only one God, who is none other than the Creator of the world, who produced all things out of nothing through his Word, first of all sent forth; that this Word is called his Son, *and*, under the Name of God, was seen “in diverse manners” by the patriarchs, heard at all times in the prophets, at last brought down by the Spirit and the Power of the Father into the Virgin Mary, was made flesh in her womb, and, being born of her, went forth as Jesus Christ; thenceforth He preached the new law and the new promise of the kingdom of heaven, worked miracles; having been crucified, He rose again on the third day; (then) having ascended into the heavens, He sat at the right hand of the Father; sent instead of Himself the Power of the Holy Ghost to lead such as believe; will come with the glory to take the saints to the enjoyment of everlasting life and of the heavenly promises, and to condemn the wicked to everlasting fire, after the resurrection of both these classes shall have happened, together with the restoration of their flesh. This rules, as it will be proved, was taught by Christ, and raises amongst ourselves no other questions than those which heresies introduce, and which make men heretics.

Ante-Nicene Fathers. Volume 3: Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian. I. Apologetic; II. Anti-Marcion; III. Ethical, ed. A. Cleveland Coxe (New York: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885), 249.

Rule of Faith

Questions to Consider: How do these Orthodox Christian rules of faith conflict with Gnostic Christian belief? What is the difference between these two rules?

The Nicene Creed of 235

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of all things, visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father [the only begotten; that is, of the essence of the Father, God of God], Light of light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made [both things in heaven and things in earth]; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down and was incarnate and was made man; he suffered, and the third day he rose again, ascended into heaven; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

And in the Holy Ghost.

[But those who say, 'There was a time when He was not;' and 'He was not before he was made;' and 'He was made out of nothing,' or 'He is of another substance' or 'essence,' or 'The Son of God is created,;' or 'changeable,' or 'alterable' – they are condemned by the holy catholic and apostolic Church.]

The Constantinopolitan Creed of 381

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

An in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man; he was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered, and was buried, and the third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heave, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father; from thence he shall come again, with glory, to judge the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of life, who preceedeth from the Father, who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, who spake by the prophets. In one holy catholic and apostolic Church; we acknowledge one

baptism for the remission of sins; we look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

The creeds of Christendom, with a history and critical notes, ed. Philip Schaff (New York, London: Harper & brothers, 1919), 28-29.

Christian inscriptions

Questions to Consider: What do these inscriptions tell us about early Christianity?

Examples of Very Early Epitaphs, Mostly from the Cemetery of Priscilla (First to Third Century):

Tertius, my brother, be of good courage; no one is immortal.

O Father of all, Thou who hast made them, do Thou receive Eirene, Zoe, and Marcellus; Thine is the glory in Christ.

Various Epitaphs (Third and Fourth Centuries):

Ermaiscus, light, mayest thou live in God the Lord Christ; (he lived) ten years seven months.

Blessed Sozon gave back (his soul) aged nine years; may the true Christ (receive) thy spirit in peace and pray for us.

To dear Cyriacus our most sweet son; mayest thou live in the Holy Spirit.

Sweet Tyche lived one year ten months twenty-five days, received (grace) on the eighth day before the Kalends, gave up her soul on the same day.

Postumius Eutenion, a believer who gained holy grace the day before his birthday [here meaning the day of birth to a better life, or the day of death].

Gentianus, a believer, in peace, who lived twenty-one years eight months sixteen days, and in thy prayers ask for us, because we know thou art in Christ.

Eusebius, an infant going to the place of the saints, being without sin through his age rests in peace.

Pray for thy parents Matronata Matrona, who lived one year fifty-two days.

Atticus, sleep in peace secure in thy safety, and pray anxiously for our sins.

Septimus Praetextatus Caecilianus, the slave of God, having lived worthily. I do not repent that I have served Thee thus, and I give thanks to Thy name. He gave up his soul to God aged thirty-three years and six months.

Florentius erected this monument to his well-deserving son Appronianus, who lived one year nine months and five days. Since he was dearly loved by his grandmother, and she

saw that he was going to die, she asked of the Church that he should depart from the world a believer.

I, Petronia, the wife of a deacon, of modest countenance, lay down my bones in this place. Cease from weeping, my husband and my sweet children, and believe that it is not right to mourn for one that lives in God.

Divine offspring of the heavenly Fish, preserve a reverent mind when thou drinkest of the immortal fountain that springs up among mortals. Let thy soul be comforted, friend, with the ever-flowing fountains of wealth-giving wisdom. Take the honey-sweet food of the Saviour of saints and eat it hungrily, holding the Fish in thy hands.

Feed me with the Fish, I pray thee, my Lord and Saviour; may my mother sleep in peace, I beseech thee. Light of the dead. Aschandius, my father, beloved of my heart, with my sweet mother and my brethren be mindful of thy Pectorius, abiding in the peace of the Fish.

Christian Inscriptions, ed. H. P. V. Nunn, (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1920)

Polycarp, Letter to the Philippians

Questions to Consider: What instructions does Polycarp have for the Church at Philippi?

Chap. IV. – Various Exhortations.

“But the love of money is the root of all evils.” Knowing, therefore, that “as we brought nothing into the world, so we can carry nothing out,” let us arm ourselves with the armour of righteousness; and let us teach, first of all, ourselves to walk in the commandments of the Lord. Next, [teach] your wives [to walk] in the faith given to them, and in love and purity tenderly loving their own husbands in all truth, and loving all [others] equally in all chastity; and to train up their children in the knowledge and fear of God. Teach the widows to be discreet as respects the faith of the Lord, praying continually for all, being far from all slandering, evil-speaking, false-witnessing, love of money, and every kind of evil; knowing that they are the altar of God, that He clearly perceives all things, and that nothing is hid from Him, neither reasonings, nor reflections, nor any one of the secret things of the heart.

Chap. V. – The Duties of Deacons, Youths, and Virgins.

Knowing, then, that “God is not mocked,” we ought to walk worthy of His commandment and glory. In like manner should the deacons be blameless before the face of His righteousness, as being the servants of God and Christ, and not of men. They must not be slanderers, double-tongued, or lovers of money, but temperate in all things, compassionate, industrious, walking according to the truth of the Lord, who was the servant of all. If we please Him in this present world, we shall receive also the future world, according as He has promised to us that He will raise us again from the dead, and that if we live worthily of Him, “we shall also reign together with Him,” provided only we believe. In like manner, let the young men also be blameless in all things, being especially careful to preserve purity, and keeping themselves in, as with a bridle, from every kind of evil. For it is well that they should be cut off from the lusts that are in the world, since “every lust warreth against the spirit;” and “neither fornicators, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, shall inherit the kingdom of God,” nor those who do things inconsistent and unbecoming. Wherefore, it is needful to abstain from all these things, being subject to the presbyters and deacons, as unto God and Christ. The virgins also much walk in blameless and pure conscience.

Chap. VI. – The Duties of Presbyters and Others.

And let the presbyters be compassionate and merciful to all, bringing back those that wander, visiting all the sick, and not neglecting the widow, the orphan, or the poor, but always “providing for that which is becoming in the sight of God and man; abstaining from all wrath, respect of persons, and unjust judgment; keeping far off from all covetousness, not quickly crediting [and evil report] against any one, not severe in judgment, as knowing that we are all under a debt of sin. If then we entreat the Lord to

forgive us, we ought also ourselves to forgive; for we are before the eyes of our Lord and God, and “we must all appear at the judgment-seat of Christ, and must every one give an account of himself.” Let us then serve Him in fear, and with all reverence, even as He Himself has commanded us, and as the apostles who preached the Gospel unto us, and the prophets who proclaimed beforehand the coming of the Lord [have alike taught us]. Let us be zealous in the pursuit of that which is good, keeping ourselves from causes of offence, from false brethren, and from those who in hypocrisy bear the name of the Lord, and draw away vain men into error.

Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325. Volume 1: The Apostolic Fathers, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, ed. A. Cleveland Coxe (New York: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885), 34.

Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas

Questions to Consider: How are the events surrounding the deaths of Perpetua and Felicitas portrayed in this account? Why?

Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas, 1.1-2, 2.2, 6.1-4.

CHAP. 1. – ARGUMENT. – WHEN THE SAINTS WERE APPREHENDED, ST. PERPETUA SUCCESSFULLY RESISTED HER FATHER’S PLEADING, WAS BAPTIZED WITH THE OTHERS, WAS THRUST INTO A FILTHY DUNGEON. ANXIOUS ABOUT HER INFANT, BY A VISION GRANTED TO HER, SHE UNDERSTOOD THAT HER MARTYRDOM WOULD TAKE PLACE VERY SHORTLY.

1. The young catechumens, Revocatus and his fellow-servant Felicitas, Saturninus and Secundulus, were apprehended. And among them also was Vivia Perpetua, respectably born, liberally educated, a married matron, having a father and mother and two brothers, one of whom, like herself, was a catechumen, and a son an infant at the breast. She herself was about twenty-two years of age. From this point onward she shall herself narrate the whole course of her martyrdom, as she left it described by her own hand and with her own mind.

2. “While,” says she, “we were still with the persecutors, and my father, for the sake of his affection for me, was persisting in seeking to turn me away, and to cast me down from the faith, - ‘Father,’ said I, ‘do you see, let us say, this vessel lying here to be a little pitcher, or something else?’ And he said, ‘I see it to be so.’ And I replied to him, ‘Can it be called by any other name than what it is?’ And he said, ‘No.’ ‘Neither can I call myself anything else than what I am, a Christian.’ Then my father, provoked at this saying, threw himself upon me, as if he would tear my eyes out. But he only distressed me, and went away overcome by the devil’s arguments. Then, in a few days after I had been without my Father, I gave thanks to the Lord; and his absence became a source of consolation to me. In that same interval of a few days we were baptized, and to me the Spirit prescribed that in the water of baptism nothing else was to be sought for than bodily endurance. After a few days we are taken into the dungeon, and I was very much afraid, because I had never felt such darkness. O terrible day! O the fierce heat of the shock of the soldiery, because of the crowds! I was very unusually distressed by my anxiety for my infant. There were present there Tertius and Pomponius, the blessed deacons who ministered to us, and had arranged by means of a gratuity that we might be refreshed by being sent out for a few hours into a pleasanter part of the prison. Then going out of the dungeon, all attended to their own wants. I suckled my child, which was now enfeebled with hunger. In my anxiety for it, I addressed my mother and comforted my brother, and commended to their care my son. I was languishing because I had seen them languishing on my account. Such solicitude I suffered for many days, and I obtained leave for my infant to remain in the dungeon with me; and forthwith I grew strong and was relieved from distress and anxiety about my infant; and the dungeon became to me as it were a palace, so that I preferred being there to being elsewhere.

[The martyrdom vision takes place]

Chap. II. – Argument. Perpetua, when besieged by her Father, comforts him. When led with others to the Tribunal, she avows herself a Christian, and is condemned with the rest to the wild beasts. She prays for her brother Dinocrates, who was dead.

[1. Her father attempts again to dissuade her.]

2. “Another day, while we were at dinner, we were suddenly taken away to be heard, and we arrived at the town-hall. At once the rumour spread through the neighbourhood of the public place, and an immense number of people were gathered together. We mount the platform. The rest were interrogated, and confessed. Then they came to me, and my father immediately appeared with my boy, and withdrew me from the step, and said in a supplicating tone, ‘Have pity on your babe.’ And Hilarianus the procurator, who had just received the power of life and death in the place of the proconsul Minucius Timinianus, who was deceased, said, ‘Spare the grey hairs of your father, spare the infancy of your boy, offer sacrifice for the well-being of the emperors.’ And I replied, ‘I will not do so.’ Hilarianus said, ‘Are you a Christian?’ And I replied, ‘I am a Christian.’ And as my father stood there to case me down from the faith, he was ordered by Hilarianus to be thrown down, and was beaten with rods. And my father’s misfortune grieved me as if myself had been beaten, I so grieved for his wretched old age. The procurator then delivers judgement on all of us, and condemns us to the wild beasts, and we went down cheerfully to the dungeon. Then, because my child had been used to receive suck from me, and to stay with me in the prison, I send Pomponius the deacon to my father to ask for the infant, but my father would not give it him. And even as God willed it, the child no long desired the breast, nor did my breast cause me uneasiness, lest I should be tormented by care for my babe and by the pain of my breasts at once.

[There follows visions Perpetua has of her brother Dinocrates]

[Chapter III, a further attempt by Perpetua’s father to dissuade her and more visions.]

[Chapter IV, more visions.]

[Chapter V,

2. But respecting Felicitas (for to her also the Lord’s favour approached in the same way), when she had already gone eight months with child (for she had been pregnant when she was apprehended), as the day of the exhibition was drawing near, she was in great grief lest on account of her pregnancy she should be delayed, - because pregnant women are not allowed to be publicly punished, - and lest she should shed her sacred and guiltless blood among some who had been wicked subsequently. Moreover, also, her fellow-martyrs were painfully saddened lest they should leave so excellent a friend, and as it were companion, alone in the path of the same hope. Therefore, joining together their united cry, they poured forth their prayer to the Lord three days before the

exhibition. Immediately after their prayer her pains came upon her, and when, with the difficulty natural to an eight months' delivery, in the labour of bringing forth she was sorrowing, some one of the servants of the Cataractarii [the prison] said to her, "You who are in such suffering now, what will do you when you are thrown to the beasts, which you despised when you refused to sacrifice?" And she replied, "Now it is I that suffer what I suffer; but then there will be another in me, who will suffer for me, because I also am about to suffer for Him." Thus she brought forth a little girl, which a certain sister brought up as her daughter.

1. The day of their victory shone forth, and they proceeded from the prison into the amphitheatre, as if to an assembly, joyous and of brilliant countenances; if perchance shrinking, it was with joy, and not with fear. Perpetua followed with placid look, and with step and gait as a matron of Christ, beloved of God; casting down the luster of her eyes from the gaze of all. Moreover, Felicitas, rejoicing that she had safely brought forth, so that she might fight with the wild beasts; from the blood and from the midwife to the gladiator, to wash after childbirth with a second baptism. And when they were brought to the gate, and were constrained to put on the clothing – the men, that of the priests of Saturn, and the women, that of those who were consecrated to Ceres – the noble-minded woman resisted even to the end with constancy. For she said, "We have come thus far of our own accord, for this reason, that our liberty might not be restrained. For this reason we have yielded our minds, that we might not to any such thing as this: we have agreed on this with you." Injustice acknowledged the justice; the tribune yielded to their being brought as simply as they were. Perpetua sang psalms, already treading under foot the head of the Egyptian; Revocatus, and Saturninus, and Saturus uttered threatenings against the gazing people about this martyrdom. When they came within sight of Hilarianus, by gesture and nod, they began to say to Hilarianus, "Thou gudest us," say they, "but God will judge thee." At this the people, exasperated demanded that they should be tormented with scourges as they passed along the rank of the *venatores* [a row of men drawn up to scourge them as they passed along]. And they indeed rejoiced that they should have incurred any one of their Lord's passions.

2. But He who had said, "Ask, and ye shall receive," gave to them when they asked, that death which each one had wished for. For when at any time they had been discoursing among themselves about their with in respect of their martyrdom, Saturninus indeed had professed that he wished that he might be thrown to all the beasts; doubles that he might wear a more glorious crown. Therefore in the beginning of the exhibition, he and Revocatus made trial of the leopard, and moreover upon the scaffold they were harassed by the bear. Saturus, however, held nothing in greater abomination than a bear; but he imagined that he would be put an end to with one bite of a leopard. Therefore, when a wild boar was supplied, it was the huntsman rather who had supplied that boar who was gored by that same beast, and died the day after the shows. Saturus only was drawn out; and when he had been bound on the floor near to a bear, the bear would not come forth from his den. And so Saturus for the second time is recalled unharmed.

3. Moreover, for the young women the devil prepared a very fierce cow, provided especially for that purpose contrary to custom, rivalling their sex also in that of the beasts. And so, stripped and clothed with nets, they were led forth. The populace shuddered as they saw one young woman of a delicate frame, and another with breasts still dropping from her recent childbirth. So, being recalled, they are unbound. Perpetua is first led in. She was tossed, and fell on her loins; and when she saw her tunic torn from her side, she drew it over her as a veil for her middle, rather mindful of her modesty than her suffering. Then she was called for again, and bound up her disheveled hair; for it was not becoming for a martyr to suffer with disheveled hair, lest she should appear to be mourning in her glory. So she rose up; and when she saw Felicitas crushed, she approached and gave her her hand, and lifted her up. And both of them stood together; and the brutality of the populace being appeased, they were recalled to the Sanavivarian gate. Then Perpetua was received by a certain one who was still a catechumen, Rusticus by name, who kept close to her; and she, as if aroused from sleep, so deeply had she been in the Spirit and in an ecstasy, began to look round her, and to say to the amazement of all, "I cannot tell when we are to be led out to that cow." And when she had heard what had already happened, she did not believe it until she had perceived certain signs of injury in her body and in her dress, and had recognised the catechumen. Afterwards causing that catechumen and the brother to approach, she addressed them, saying, "Stand fast in the faith, and love one another, all of your, and be not offended at my sufferings."

4. The same Saturus at the other entrance exhorted the soldier Pudens, saying, "Assuredly here I am, as I have promised and foretold, for up to this moment I have felt no beast. And now believe with your whole heart. Lo, I am going forth to that beast, and I shall be destroyed with one bite of the leopard." And immediately at the conclusion of the exhibition he was thrown to the leopard; and with one bite of his he was bathed with such a quantity of blood, that the people shouted out to him as he was returning, the testimony of his second baptism, "Saved and washed, saved and washed." Manifestly he was assuredly saved who had been glorified in such a spectacle. Then to the soldier Pudens he said, "Farewell, and be mindful of my faith; and let not these things disturb, but confirm you." And at the same time he asked for a little ring from his finger, and returned it to him bathed in his wound, leaving to him an inherited token and the memory of his blood. And then lifeless he is cast down with the rest, to be slaughtered in the usual place. And when the populace called for them into the midst, that as the sword penetrated into their body they might make their eyes partners in the murder, they rose up of their own accord, and transferred themselves whither the people wished; but they first kissed one another, that they might consummate their martyrdom with the kiss of peace. The rest indeed, immovable and in silence, received the sword-thrust; much more Saturus, who also had first ascended the ladder, and first gave up his spirit, for he also was waiting for Perpetua. But Perpetua, that she might taste some pain, being pierced between the ribs, cried out loudly, and she herself placed the wavering right hand of the youthful gladiator to her throat. Possibly such a woman could not have been slain unless she herself had willed it, because she was feared by the impure spirit.

O most brave and blessed martyrs! O truly called and chosen unto the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ! whom whoever magnifies, and honours, and adores, assuredly ought to read these examples for the edification of the Church, not less than the ancient ones, so that new virtues also may testify that one and the same Holy Spirit is always operating even until now, and God the Father Omnipotent, and His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, whose is the glory and infinite power for ever and ever. Amen.

Ante-Nicene Fathers. Volume 3: Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian. I. Apologetic; II. Anti-Marcion; III. Ethical, ed. A. Cleveland Coxe (New York: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885), 699-706.

The Octavius of Marcus Minucius Felix

Questions to Consider: How does Minucius Felix defend Christianity? What is his argument?

Chap. IX.

“And now, as wicked things advance more fruitfully, and abandoned manners creep on day by day, those abominable shrines of an impious assembly are maturing themselves throughout the whole world. Assuredly this confederacy ought to be rooted out and execrated. They know one another by secret marks and insignia, and they love one another almost before they know one another. Everywhere also there is mingled among them a certain religion of lust, and they call one another promiscuously brothers and sisters, that even a not unusual debauchery may by the intervention of that sacred name become incestuous: it is thus that their vain and senseless superstition glories in crimes. Nor, concerning these things, would intelligent report speak of things so great and various, and requiring to be prefaced by an apology, unless truth were at the bottom of it. I hear that they adore the head of an ass, that basest of creatures, consecrated by I know not what silly persuasion,—a worthy and appropriate religion for such manners. Some say that they worship the virilia of their pontiff and priest, and adore the nature, as it were, of their common parent. I know not whether these things are false; certainly suspicion is applicable to secret and nocturnal rites; and he who explains their ceremonies by reference to a man punished by extreme suffering for his wickedness, and to the deadly wood of the cross, appropriates fitting altars for reprobate and wicked men, that they may worship what they deserve. Now the story about the initiation of young novices is as much to be detested as it is well known. An infant covered over with meal, that it may deceive the unwary, is placed before him who is to be stained with their rites: this infant is slain by the young pupil, who has been urged on as if to harmless blows on the surface of the meal, with dark and secret wounds. Thirstily—O horror!—they lick up its blood; eagerly they divide its limbs. By this victim they are pledged together; with this consciousness of wickedness they are covenanted to mutual silence. Such sacred rites as these are more foul than any sacrileges. And of their banqueting it is well known all men speak of it everywhere; even the speech of our Cirtensian testifies to it. On a solemn day they assemble at the feast, with all their children, sisters, mothers, people of every sex and of every age. There, after much feasting, when the fellowship has grown warm, and the fervour of incestuous lust has grown hot with drunkenness, a dog that has been tied to the chandelier is provoked, by throwing a small piece of offal beyond the length of a line by which he is bound, to rush and spring; and thus the conscious light being overturned and extinguished in the shameless darkness, the connections of abominable lust involve them in the uncertainty of fate. Although not all in fact, yet in consciousness all are alike incestuous, since by the desire of all of them everything is sought for which can happen in the act of each individual.”

Ante-Nicene Fathers. Volume 4: Tertullian, Part Fourth; Minucius Felix; Commodian; Origen, Part First and Second, ed. A. Cleveland Coxe (New York: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885), 177-178.

Roman Persecutions of Christians

Note: About 250 A.D., during the Emperor Decius' short but furious persecution, persons suspected of Christianity were evidently obliged to clear themselves by sacrificing to the old gods, then taking out a certificate to protect themselves against further legal proceedings. This example comes from a small village in Egypt.

Questions to Consider: How did one prove they were not Christians?

To the Commissioners of Sacrifice of the Village of Alexander's Island: from Aurelius Diogenes, the son of Satabus, of the Village of Alexander's Island, aged 72 years: --- scar on his right eyebrow.

I have always sacrificed regularly to the gods, and now, in your presence, in accordance with the edict, I have done sacrifice, and poured the drink offering, and tasted of the sacrifices, and I request you to certify the same. Farewell.

-----Handed in by me, Aurelius Diogenes.

-----I certify that I saw him sacrificing [the magistrate's signature is obliterated].

Done in the first year of the Emperor, Caesar Gaius Messius Quintus Trajanus Decius Pius Felix Augustus, second of the month Epith. [June 26, 250 A.D.]

Readings in Ancient History: Illustrative Extracts from the Sources, Vol. II: Rome and the West, ed. William Stearns Davis (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1912-1913), 289.

Church and State in the late Roman Period

Questions to Consider: How does Bishop Ambrose influence Emperor Theodosius?

Theodoret, "Ecclesiastical History," book V, chaps. 17 and 18. Bohn Translation

What vast power the Christian bishops and clergy were able to assume less than one hundred years after they ceased to be subject to dire persecution, is shown by the following story of the humiliation and penance St. Ambrose, the masterful bishop of Milan, inflicted upon Theodosius I, the last ruler of the undivided Empire.

Thessalonica is a large and populous city, in the province of Macedonia. [In consequence of a sedition there] the anger of the Emperor [Theodosius] rose to the highest pitch, and he gratified his vindictive desire for vengeance by unsheathing the sword most unjustly, and tyrannically against all, slaying the innocent and guilty alike. It is said 7000 perished without any forms of law, and without even having judicial sentence passed upon them; but that, like ears of corn in the time of harvest, they were alike cut down.

When Ambrose [Bishop of Milan] heard of this deplorable catastrophe, he went out to meet the Emperor, who on his return to Milan desired as usual to enter the holy church, but Ambrose prohibited his entrance, saying, "You do not reflect, it seems, Emperor, on the guilt you have incurred by that great massacre; but now that your fury is appeased, do you not perceive the enormity of your crime? You must not be dazzled by the splendor of the purple you wear, and be led to forget the weakness of the body which it clothes. Your subjects, Emperor, are of the same nature as yourself, and not only so, but are likewise your fellow servants; for there is one Lord and Ruler of all, and He is the Maker of all creatures, whether princes or people. How would you look upon the temple of the one Lord of all? How could you lift up in prayer hands steeped in the blood of so unjust a massacre? Depart then, and do not by a second crime add to the guilt of the first."

The Emperor, who had been brought up in the knowledge of Holy Writ, and who knew well the distinction between the ecclesiastical and the temporal power, submitted to the rebuke, and with many tears and groans returned to his palace. More than eight months after, occurred the festival of our Saviour's birth. The Emperor shut himself up in his palace . . . and shed floods of tears.

[After vain attempts by intermediaries to appease the bishop, Theodosius at last went to Ambrose privately and besought mercy, saying], "I beseech you, in consideration of the mercy of our common Lord, to unloose me from these bonds, and not to shut the door which is opened by the Lord to all that truly repent." [Ambrose stipulated that the Emperor should prove his repentance by recalling his unjust decrees, and especially by ordering] "that when sentence of death or of proscription has been signed against any one, thirty days are to elapse before execution, and on the expiration of that time the

case is to be brought again before you, for your resentment will then be calmed [and you can justly decide the issue]." The Emperor listened to this advice, and deeming it excellent, he at once ordered the law to be drawn up, and himself signed the document. St. Ambrose then unloosed his bonds.

The Emperor, who was full of faith, now took courage to enter holy church, [where] he prayed neither in a standing, nor in a kneeling posture, but throwing himself on the ground. He tore his hair, struck his forehead, and shed torrents of tears, as he implored forgiveness of God. [Ambrose restored him to favor, but forbade him to come inside the altar rail, ordering his deacon to say], "The priests alone, Emperor, are permitted to enter within the barriers by the altar. Retire then, and remain with the rest of the laity. A purple robe makes Emperors, but not priests." . . . [Theodosius uttered some excuses, and meekly obeyed, praising Ambrose for his spirit, and saying], "Ambrose alone deserves the title of 'Bishop'"

Readings in Ancient History: Rome and the West, ed. William S. Davis (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1913) 298-300.

Conversion of Constantine

Questions to Consider: According to Eusebius, what are the circumstances surrounding Constantine's conversion?

Eusebius, Life of Constantine, Book I

Chapter XXVII.—That after reflecting on the Downfall of those who had worshiped Idols, he made Choice of Christianity.

Being convinced, however, that he needed some more powerful aid than his military forces could afford him, on account of the wicked and magical enchantments which were so diligently practiced by the tyrant,[1] he sought Divine assistance, deeming the possession of arms and a numerous soldiery of secondary importance, but believing the co-operating power of Deity invincible and not to be shaken. He considered, therefore, on what God he might rely for protection and assistance. While engaged in this enquiry, the thought occurred to him, that, of the many emperors who had preceded him, those who had rested their hopes in a multitude of gods, and served them with sacrifices and offerings, had in the first place been deceived by flattering predictions, and oracles which promised them all prosperity, and at last had met with an unhappy end, while not one of their gods had stood by to warn them of the impending wrath of heaven; while one alone who had pursued an entirely opposite course, who had condemned their error, and honored the one Supreme God during his whole life, had found him to be the Saviour and Protector of his empire, and the Giver of every good thing. Reflecting on this, and well weighing the fact that they who had trusted in many gods had also fallen by manifold forms of death, without leaving behind them either family or offspring, stock, name, or memorial among men: while the God of his father had given to him, on the other hand, manifestations of his power and very many tokens: and considering farther that those who had already taken arms against the tyrant, and had marched to the battle-field under the protection of a multitude of gods, had met with a dishonorable end (for one of them[2] had shamefully retreated from the contest without a blow, and the other,[3] being slain in the midst of his own troops, became, as it were, the mere sport of death[4]); reviewing, I say, all these considerations, he judged it to be folly indeed to join in the idle worship of those who were no gods, and, after such convincing evidence, to err from the truth; and therefore felt it incumbent on him to honor his father's God alone.

Chapter XXVIII.—How, while he was praying, God sent him a Vision of a Cross of Light in the Heavens at Mid-day, with an Inscription admonishing him to conquer by that.

Accordingly he called on him with earnest prayer and supplications that he would reveal to him who he was, and stretch forth his right hand to help him in his present difficulties. And while he was thus praying with fervent entreaty, a most marvelous sign appeared to him from heaven, the account of which it might have been hard to believe had it been related by any other person. But since the victorious emperor himself long afterwards

declared it to the writer of this history,[1] when he was honored with his acquaintance and society, and confirmed his statement by an oath, who could hesitate to accredit the relation, especially since the testimony of after-time has established its truth? He said that about noon, when the day was already beginning to decline, he saw with his own eyes the trophy of a cross of light in the heavens, above the sun, and bearing the inscription, Conquer by this. At this sight he himself was struck with amazement, and his whole army also, which followed him on this expedition, and witnessed the miracle.[2]

Chapter XXIX.—How the Christ of God appeared to him in his Sleep, and commanded him to use in his Wars a Standard made in the Form of the Cross.

He said, moreover, that he doubted within himself what the import of this apparition could be. And while he continued to ponder and reason on its meaning, night suddenly came on; then in his sleep the Christ of God appeared to him with the same sign which he had seen in the heavens, and commanded him to make a likeness of that sign which he had seen in the heavens, and to use it as a safeguard in all engagements with his enemies.

Chapter XXX.—The Making of the Standard of the Cross.

At dawn of day he arose, and communicated the marvel to his friends: and then, calling together the workers in gold and precious stones, he sat in the midst of them, and described to them the figure of the sign he had seen, bidding them represent it in gold and precious stones. And this representation I myself have had an opportunity of seeing.

Chapter XXXI.—A Description of the Standard of the Cross, which the Romans now call the Labarum.[1]

Now it was made in the following manner. A long spear, overlaid with gold, formed the figure of the cross by means of a transverse bar laid over it. On the top of the whole was fixed a wreath of gold and precious stones; and within this,[2] the symbol of the Saviour's name, two letters indicating the name of Christ by means of its initial characters, the letter P being intersected by X in its centre:[3] and these letters the emperor was in the habit of wearing on his helmet at a later period. From the cross-bar of the spear was suspended a cloth,[4] a royal piece, covered with a profuse embroidery of most brilliant precious stones; and which, being also richly interlaced with gold, presented an indescribable degree of beauty to the beholder. This banner was of a square form, and the upright staff, whose lower section was of great length,[5] bore a golden half-length portrait[6] of the pious emperor and his children on its upper part, beneath the trophy of the cross, and immediately above the embroidered banner.

The emperor constantly made use of this sign of salvation as a safeguard against every adverse and hostile power, and commanded that others similar to it should be carried at the head of all his armies.

Chapter XXXII.—How Constantine received Instruction, and read the Sacred Scriptures.

These things were done shortly afterwards. But at the time above specified, being struck with amazement at the extraordinary vision, and resolving to worship no other God save Him who had appeared to him, he sent for those who were acquainted with the mysteries of His doctrines, and enquired who that God was, and what was intended by the sign of the vision he had seen. They affirmed that He was God, the only begotten Son of the one and only God: that the sign which had appeared was the symbol of immortality, and the trophy of that victory over death which He had gained in time past when sojourning on earth. They taught him also the causes of His advent, and explained to him the true account of His incarnation. Thus he was instructed in these matters, and was impressed with wonder at the divine manifestation which had been presented to his sight. Comparing, therefore, the heavenly vision with the interpretation given, he found his judgment confirmed; and, in the persuasion that the knowledge of these things had been imparted to him by Divine teaching, he determined thenceforth to devote himself to the reading of the Inspired writings.

Moreover, he made the priests of God his counselors, and deemed it incumbent on him to honor the God who had appeared to him with all devotion. And after this, being fortified by well-grounded hopes in Him, he hastened to quench the threatening fire of tyranny.

Library of Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers, Vol I, Church History from A.D. 1-324, Life of Constantine the Great, Oration in Praise of Constantine, ed. Philip Schaff (New York: Christian Literature Co., 1990), 489-91.

Edict of Milan

Questions to Consider: What changes for Christians with the Edict of Milan?

EDICT OF MILAN (313 A. D.)

When I, Constantino Augustus, as well as I, Licinius Augustus, had fortunately met near Mediolanum (Milan), and were considering everything that pertained to the public welfare and security, we thought that, among other things which we saw would be for the good of many, those regulations pertaining to the reverence of the Divinity ought certainly to be made first, so that we might grant to the Christians and to all others full authority to observe that religion which each preferred; whence any Divinity whatsoever in the seat of the heavens may be propitious and kindly disposed to us and all who are placed under our rule. And thus by this wholesome counsel and most upright provision we thought to arrange that no one whatsoever should be denied the opportunity to give his heart to the observance of the Christian religion, or of that religion which he should think best for himself, so that the supreme Deity, to whose worship we freely yield our hearts, may show in all things His usual favor and benevolence. Therefore, your Worship should know that it has pleased us to remove all conditions whatsoever, which were in the rescripts formerly given to you officially, concerning the Christians, and now any one of these who wishes to observe the Christian religion may do so freely and openly, without any disturbance or molestation. We thought it fit to commend these things most fully to your care that you may know that we have given to those Christians free and unrestricted opportunity of religious worship. When you see that this has been granted to them by us, your Worship will know that we have also conceded to other religions the right of open and free observance of their worship for the sake of the peace of our times, that each one may have the free opportunity to worship as he pleases; this regulation is made that we may not seem to detract ought from any dignity or any religion. Moreover, in the case of the Christians especially, we esteemed it best to order that if it happens that anyone heretofore has bought from our treasury or from anyone whatsoever, those places where they were previously accustomed to assemble, concerning which a certain decree had been made and a letter sent to you officially, the same shall be restored to the Christians without payment or any claim of recompense and without any kind of fraud or deception. Those, moreover, who have obtained the same by gift, are likewise to return them at once to the Christians. Besides, both those who have purchased and those who have secured them by gift, are to appeal to the vicar if they seek any recompense from our bounty, that they may be cared for through our clemency. All this property ought to be delivered at once to the community of the Christians through your intercession, and without delay. And since these Christians are known to have possessed not only those places in which they were accustomed to assemble, but also other property, namely the churches, belonging to them as a corporation and not as individuals, all these things which we have included under the above law, you will order to be restored, without any hesitation or controversy at all, to these Christians, that is to say to the corporations and their conventicles: providing, of course, that the above arrangements be followed so that those who return the same

without payment, as we have said, may hope for an indemnity from our bounty. In all these circumstances you ought to tender your most efficacious intervention to the community of the Christians, that our command may be carried into effect as quickly as possible, whereby, moreover, through our clemency, public order may be secured. Let this be done so that, as we have said above, Divine favor towards us, which, under the most important circumstances we have already experienced, may, for all time, preserve and prosper our successes together with the good of the state. Moreover, in order that the statement of this decree of our good will may come to the notice of all, this rescript, published by your decree, shall be announced everywhere and brought to the knowledge of all, so that the decree of this, our benevolence, cannot be concealed.

Lactantius, *De Mort. Pers.*, ch. 48. opera, ed. O. F. Fritzsche, II, p 288 sq. (Bibl Patr. Ecc. Lat. XI).

Translations and Reprints from the Original Sources of European history, vol 4, (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press [1897?-1907?]), 28-30.

Rule of St. Benedict

Note: The Rule of St. Benedict, composed in Italy about 530 but based on earlier compilations, came to define the cenobitic type monastic life that came to be accepted throughout the West.

Questions to Consider: What sort of life do the monks lead? Why does Benedict intend it to be this way? Why does Benedict think his way of life is the best way?

Prologue. ... [The few omissions made consist almost wholly of pious expressions and exhortations] We are about to found therefore a school for the Lord's service; in the organization of which we trust that we shall ordain nothing severe and nothing burdensome. But even if, the demands of justice dictating it, something a little irksome shall be the result, for the purpose of amending vices or preserving charity; - thou shalt not therefore, struck by fear, flee the way of salvation, which can not be entered upon except through a narrow entrance. But as one's way of life and one's faith progresses, the heart becomes broadened, and, with the unutterable sweetness of love, the way of the mandates of the Lord is traversed. Thus, never departing from His guidance, continuing in the monastery in his teaching until death, through patience we are made partakers in Christ's passion, in order that we may merit to be companions in His kingdom.

1. *Concerning the Kinds of Monks and Their Manner of Living.* It is manifest that there are four kinds of monks. The cenobites are the first kind; that is, those living in a monastery, serving under a rule or an abbot. Then the second kind is that of the anchorites; that is, the hermits-those who, not by the new fervour of a conversion but by the long probation of life in a monastery, have learned to fight against the devil, having already been taught by the solace of many. They, having been well prepared in the army of brothers for the solitary fight of the hermit, being secure now without the consolation of another, are able, God helping them, to fight with their own hand or arm against the vices of the flesh or of their thoughts.

But a third very bad kind of monks are the sarabaites, approved by no rule, experience being their teacher, as with the gold which is tried in the furnace. But, softened after the manner of lead, keeping faith with the world by their works, they are known through their tonsure to lie to God. These being shut up by twos or threes, or, indeed, alone, without a shepherd, not in the Lord's but in their own sheep-folds-their law is the satisfaction of their desires. For whatever they think good or choice, this they call holy; and what they do not wish, this they consider unlawful. But the fourth kind of we are about to found, therefore, a school for the monks is the kind which is called gyratory. During their whole life they are guests, for three or four days at a time, in the cells of the different monasteries, throughout the various provinces; always wandering and never stationary, given over to the service of their own pleasures and the joys of the palate, and in every way worse than the sarabaites. Concerning the most wretched way of living of all such

monks it is better to be silent than to speak. These things therefore being omitted, let us proceed, with the aid of God, to treat of the best kind, the cenobites.

22. *How the Monks Shall Sleep.* They shall sleep separately in separate beds. They shall receive positions for their beds, after the manner of their characters, according to the dispensation of their abbot. If it can be done, they shall all sleep in one place. If, however, their number do not permit it, they shall rest, by tens or twenties, with elders who will concern themselves about them. A candle shall always be burning in that same cell until early in the morning. They shall sleep clothed, and girt with belts or with ropes; and they shall not have their knives at their sides while they sleep, lest perchance in a dream they should wound the sleepers. And let the monks be always on the alert; and, when the signal is given, rising without delay, let them hasten to mutually prepare themselves for the service of God with all gravity and modesty, however. The younger brothers shall not have beds by themselves, but interspersed among those of the elder ones. And when they rise for the service of God, they shall exhort each other mutually with moderation on account of the excuses that those who are sleepy are inclined to make.

39. We believe, moreover, that, for the daily refecton of the sixth as well as of the ninth hour, two cooked dishes, on account of the infirmities of the different ones, are enough for all tables: so that whoever, perchance, can not eat of one may partake of the other. Therefore let two cooked dishes suffice for all the brothers: and, if it is possible to obtain apples or growing vegetables, a third may be added. One full pound of bread shall suffice for a day, whether there be one refecton, or a breakfast and a supper... But to younger boys the same quantity shall not be served, but less than that to the older ones; moderation being observed in all things. But the eating of the flesh of quadrupeds shall be abstained from altogether by every one, excepting alone the weak and the sick.

40. *Concerning the Amount of Drink.* Each one has his own gift from God, the one in this way, the other in that. Therefore it is with some hesitation that the amount of daily sustenance for others is fixed by us. Nevertheless, in view of the weakness of the infirm we believe that a hemina [just less than half a liter] of wine a day is enough for each one. Those moreover to whom God gives the ability of bearing abstinence shall know that they will have their own reward. But the prior shall judge if either the needs of the place, or labour or the heat of summer, requires more; considering in all things lest satiety or drunkenness creep in. Indeed we read that wine is not suitable for monks at all. But because, in our day, it is not possible to persuade the monks of this, let us agree at least as to the fact that we should not drink till we are sated, but sparingly...

55. Vestments shall be given to the brothers according to the quality of the places where they dwell, or the temperature of the air. For in cold regions more is required; but in warm, less. This, therefore, is a matter for the abbot to decide. We nevertheless consider that for ordinary places there suffices for the monks a cowl and a gown apiece—the cowl, in winter hairy, in summer plain or old—and a working garment, on account of their labours. As clothing for the feet, shoes and boots.

Select Historical Documents of the Middle Ages, trans. Ernest F. Henderson (London: George Bell and Sons, 1910), 274-302

Augustine of Hippo

Questions to Consider: Under what circumstances does Augustine convert to Christianity?

The Confession of St. Augustine, Book VIII, Chapter XII.

-Having Prayed to God, He Pours Forth a Shower of Tears, And, Admonished by a Voice, He Opens the Book and Reads the Words in Rom. XIII. 13; By Which, Being Changed in His Whole Soul, He Discloses the Divine Favour to His Friend and His Mother.

28. But when a profound reflection had, from the secret depths of my soul, drawn together and heaped up all my misery before the sight of my heart, there arose a mighty storm, accompanied by as mighty a shower of tears. Which, that I might pour forth fully, with its natural expressions, I stole away from Alypius; for it suggested itself to me that solitude was fitter for the business of weeping. So I retired to such a distance that even his presence could not be oppressive to me. Thus was it with me at that time, and he perceived it; for something, I believe, I had spoken, wherein the sound of my voice appeared choked with weeping, and in that state had I risen up. He then remained where we had been sitting, most completely astonished. I flung myself down, how, I know not, under a certain fig-tree, giving free course to my tears, and the streams of mine eyes gushed out, an acceptable sacrifice unto Thee. And, not indeed in these words, yet to this effect, spake I much unto Thee,—"But Thou, O Lord, how long?" "How long, Lord? Wilt Thou be angry for ever? Oh, remember not against us former iniquities;" for I felt that I was enthralled by them. I sent up these sorrowful cries,—"How long, how long? Tomorrow, and tomorrow? Why not now? Why is there not this hour an end to my uncleanness?"

29. I was saying these things and weeping in the most bitter contrition of my heart, when, lo, I heard the voice as of a boy or girl, I know not which, coming from a neighbouring house, chanting, and oft repeating, "Take up and read; take up and read." Immediately my countenance was changed, and I began most earnestly to consider whether it was usual for children in any kind of game to sing such words; nor could I remember ever to have heard the like. So, restraining the torrent of my tears, I rose up, interpreting it no other way than as a command to me from Heaven to open the book, and to read the first chapter I should light upon. For I had heard of Antony, that, accidentally coming in whilst the gospel was being read, he received the admonition as if what was read were addressed to him, "Go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come and follow me." And by such oracle was he forthwith converted unto Thee. So quickly I returned to the place where Alypius was sitting; for there had I put down the volume of the apostles, when I rose thence. I grasped, opened, and in silence read that paragraph on which my eyes first fell,—"Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying; but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh,

to fulfil the lusts thereof." No further would I read, nor did I need; for instantly, as the sentence ended,-by a light, as it were, of security infused into my heart,-all the gloom of doubt vanished away.

Nicene and post-Nicene fathers of the Christian church, ed. Philip Schaff (Buffalo: The Christian Literature Company, 1887), 127-128.

Augustine and the Fall of Rome

Questions to Consider: What is Augustine's explanation for the fall of Rome?

Augustine, City of God, Book II, Chapter 2.-Recapitulation of the Contents of the First Book.

In the foregoing book, having begun to speak of the city of God, to which I have resolved, Heaven helping me, to consecrate the whole of this work, it was my first endeavor to reply to those who attribute the wars by which the world is being devastated, and especially the recent sack of Rome by the barbarians, to the religion of Christ, which prohibits the offering of abominable sacrifices to devils. I have shown that they ought rather to attribute it to Christ, that for His name's sake the barbarians, in contravention of all custom and law of war, threw open as sanctuaries the largest churches, and in many instances showed such reverence to Christ, that not only His genuine servants, but even those who in their terror feigned themselves to be so, were exempted from all those hardships which by the custom of war may lawfully be inflicted.

Then out of this there arose the question, why wicked and ungrateful men were permitted to share in these benefits; and why, too, the hardships and calamities of war were inflicted on the godly as well as on the ungodly. And in giving a suitably full answer to this large question, I occupied some considerable space, partly that I might relieve the anxieties which disturb many when they observe that the blessings of God, and the common and daily human casualties, fall to the lot of bad men and good without distinction; but mainly that I might minister some consolation to those holy and chaste women who were outraged by the enemy. in such a way as to shock their modesty, though not to sully their purity, and that I might preserve them from being ashamed of life, though they have no guilt to be ashamed of. And then I briefly spoke against those who with a most shameless wantonness insult over those poor Christians who were subjected to those calamities, and especially over those broken-hearted and humiliated, though chaste and holy women; these fellows themselves being most depraved and unmanly profligates, quite degenerate from the genuine Romans, whose famous deeds are abundantly recorded in history, and everywhere celebrated, but who have found in their descendants the greatest enemies of their glory. In truth, Rome, which was founded and increased by the labors of these ancient heroes, was more shamefully ruined by their descendants, while its walls were still standing, than it is now by the razing of them. For in this ruin there fell stones and timbers; but in the ruin those profligates effected, there fell, not the mural, but the moral bulwarks and ornaments of the city, and their hearts burned with passions more destructive than the flames which consumed their houses. Thus I brought my first book to a close. And now I go on to speak of those calamities which that city itself, or its subject provinces, have suffered since its foundation; all of which they would equally have attributed to the Christian religion, if at that early period the doctrine of the gospel against their false and deceiving gods had been as largely and freely proclaimed as now.

Chapter 3.-That We Need Only to Read History in Order to See What Calamities the Romans Suffered Before the Religion of Christ Began to Compete with the Worship of the Gods.

But remember that, in recounting these things, I have still to address myself to ignorant men; so ignorant, indeed, as to give birth to the common saying, "Drought and Christianity go hand in hand." There are indeed some among them who are thoroughly well-educated men, and have a taste for history, in which the things I speak of are open to their observation; but in order to irritate the uneducated masses against us, they feign ignorance of these events, and do what they can to make the vulgar believe that those disasters, which in certain places and at certain times uniformly befall mankind, are the result of Christianity, which is being everywhere diffused, and is possessed of a renown and brilliancy which quite eclipse their own gods.

Let them then, along with us, call to mind with what various and repeated disasters the prosperity of Rome was blighted, before ever Christ had come in the flesh, and before His name had been blazoned among the nations with that glory which they vainly grudge. Let them, if they can, defend their gods in this article, since they maintain that they worship them in order to be preserved from these disasters, which they now impute to us if they suffer in the least degree. For why did these gods permit the disasters I am to speak of to fall on their worshippers before the preaching of Christ's name offended them, and put an end to their sacrifices?

Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Vol. 2, St. Augustin's City of God and Christian Doctrine, ed. Philip Schaff (Buffalo: The Christian Literature Company, 1887), 23-24.