

I. Overview of this time period (from Justo L. González, *The Story of Christianity*, Vol. 1)

Emperors	Bishops of Rome	Events
Constantine (306-337)	Sylvester (314-335)	Edict of Mila (313) Arian controversy begins Pachomius' first foundation (324) Council of Nicea (325) Constantinople founded (330)
Constantine II (337-340) Constantius II (337-361) Constans (337-350) Julian (361-363) Jovian (363-364) Valentinian I (364-375) Valens (364-378)	Marcus (335-336) Julius (337-352) Liberius (352-366) Felix II (353-365)	Arianism at its apex Augustine (b. 354) Pagan reaction
Gratian (375-383) Valentinian II (375-392)	Damasus (366-383) Ursinus (366-367) Siricius (384-399)	Eusebius of Caesarea and Athanasius d. 373) Battle of Adrianpole (378) Basil the Great (d. 379) Macrina (d. 380) Council of Constantinople (381)
Theodosius (379-395)		
Maximus (383-388)		
Eugenius (392-394) Arcadius (395-408) Honorius (395-423)	Anastasius (399-401) Innocent (401-417)	Gregory of Nazianzus (d. 389) Gregory of Nyssa (d. 395?) Martin of Tours and Ambrose (d. 397)
Theodosius II (408-450)		John Chrysostom (d. 407)
	Zosimus (417-418)	Fall of Rome (410)
		Jerome (d. 420) Augustine (d. 430)

II. The Church begins to take shape

Most Christians... reacted to the new situation [of Rome having a Christian emperor] with neither total acceptance nor total rejection. Most church leaders saw the new circumstances as offering unexpected opportunities, but also great dangers. Thus, while affirming their loyalty to the Emperor, as most Christians had always done, they insisted that their ultimate loyalty belonged only to God. Such was the attitude of the great “fathers” of the church—a misnomer, for there were also some “mothers” among them. Since both danger and opportunity were great, these leaders faced a difficult task. Perhaps not all their decisions and attitudes were correct; but, in any case, this was an age of giants who would shape the church for centuries to come (Justo L. González, *The Story of Christianity*, Vol. 1).

Notes

A. Corporate worship

1. Prior to Emperor Constantine

- a. Christian worship was relatively simple
- b. Christians met in private homes; met in cemeteries (ex. Roman catacombs) to avoid persecution
- c. By the third century there were structures specifically set up where Christians would meet (oldest known structure is a church in Dura-Europos dated from AD 232).

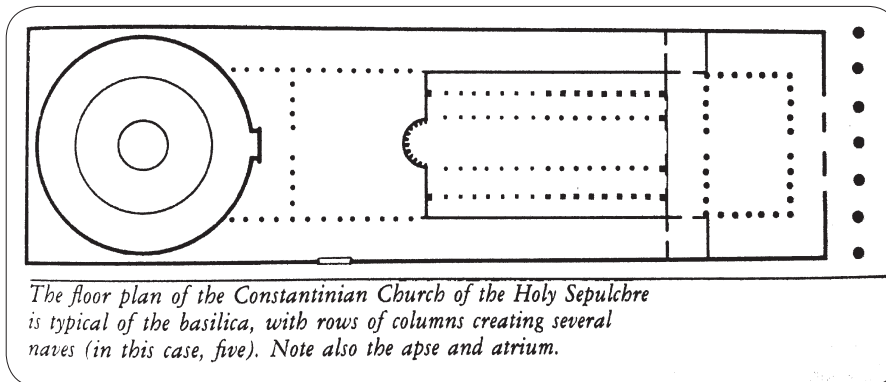
2. After Constantine's influence the church influenced by imperial protocol

- a. Incense: had been used as a sign of respect for the emperor; now incense began to be used in worship
- b. Officiating ministers began dressing in luxurious garments (up until this point they had worn normal clothing)
- c. Other cultural gestures made before the emperor now began being expressed in worship services
 - Beginning services with a processional
 - Adding a choir (to enhance the processionals)
 - The congregation came to have a less active role in worship
 - Churches built around tombs of famous Christians (worship was thought to be more valid if communion was celebrated at the grave of a martyred Believer)
 - The veneration of relics (bones of martyrs or supposed pieces of Christ's cross): thought to possess miraculous powers
- d. Elaborate churches (basilicas)
 - By imperial decree, many churches were built in strategic locations
 - Constantine's Saint Irene (Holy Peace) built in Constantinople
 - Constantine's mother, Helena, had churches built in the Holy Land the Church of the Nativity and a church on the Mount of Olives
 - Christian art take off (mostly used to decorate churches: mosaics, statues, paintings,
 - Basic structure for all the basilicas



The oldest Christian church that archaeologists have discovered – in Dura-Europos (modern day Syria).

Notes



B. The need for recognized leaders in the church

1. Growing heresies and rampant confusion on matters of theology led the church to seek (and trust in) true Believers who could trace their authority back to the Apostles

2. Bishops were those who had been brought up under the teachings of the disciples of the original Apostles and therefore these bishops were recognized as those having theological credibility and weight
 1. Several of the oldest churches maintained lists (records) linking their bishops to the original Apostles (Church in Rome, Church in Antioch, Church in Ephesus)
 2. The Apostolic link thinking paved the way for the justification of a central Bishop (Pope of Rome). Pope comes from the Greek word for father (*pappa*)

III. Key figures in the Nicene and Post-Nicene era

A. Lactantius (c. AD 240-320)

1. Places of ministry: Italy and Gaul (France)
2. Representative writings: *Divine Institutes*
3. Notable facts
 - a. Born in a pagan household
 - b. Became a Christian as an adult
 - c. Served as a tutor to Constantine's son

B. Eusebius (c. AD 262-339)

1. Places of ministry: Caesarea (Cappadocia, now in modern Turkey)
2. Representative writings: *Ecclesiastical History, Chronicle, Life of Constantine*
3. Notable facts
 - a. Born in Palestine and lived through the years of The Great Persecution
 - b. Taught at a theological school in Caesarea (and eventually became bishop there)
 - c. Was a friend and advisor to Constantine
 - Wrote many flattering speeches for Constantine
 - Helped create the Christian Empire of Byzantium (Constantinople)
 - d. Known as the "Father of Church History"
Eusebius dealt mainly with the succession of Christian bishops and teachers from apostolic times, heresies, the sufferings of the Jews, and persecution and martyrdom of Christians. He also recounted traditions about the New Testament writers and details about the canon of Scripture... His book is priceless since it preserves extracts from otherwise lost works. Much of his history is told by means of long quotations from previous writers... He was the first to attempt a history on a grand, comprehensive scale. Eusebius both set the pattern for future church historians, and was used extensively by later writers, for example, Jerome and Bede (Michael A. Smith, *Eerdmans' Handbook to the History of Christianity*).
 - e. Eusebius' own theology was questionable since he sought a compromise in the Arian controversy, opposing both Arius and Athanasius

C. Athanasius (c. AD 296-373)

1. Places of ministry: Alexandria (northern port city in Egypt founded by Alexander the Great)
2. Representative writings: *On the Incarnation of the Divine Word, Orations against the Arians, Against Apollinarius*
3. Notable facts
 - a. Most noted defender of Trinitarian orthodoxy. In *On the Incarnation*, he wrote the famous line: Christ was made man that we might be made divine.
 - b. Became secretary to Alexander, the bishop of Alexandria (succeeded him as bishop in 328)
 - c. A key figure at the Council of Nicea
 - d. Exiled 5 times
 - e. Lived an ascetic life

Succession of Popes

St. Peter (32-67)
 St. Linus (67-76)
 St. Anacletus (Cletus) (76-88)
 St. Clement I (88-97)
 St. Evaristus (97-105)
 St. Alexander I (105-115)
 St. Sixtus I (115-125) Also called Xystus I
 St. Telesphorus (125-136)
 St. Hyginus (136-140)
 St. Pius I (140-155)
 St. Anicetus (155-166)
 St. Soter (166-175)
 St. Eleutherius (175-189)
 St. Victor I (189-199)
 St. Zephyrinus (199-217)
 St. Callistus I (217-22) Callistus and the following three popes were opposed by St. Hippolytus, antipope (217-236)
 St. Urban I (222-30)
 St. Pontian (230-35)
 St. Anterus (235-36)
 St. Fabian (236-50)
 St. Cornelius (251-53) Opposed by Novatian, antipope (251)
 St. Lucius I (253-54)
 St. Stephen I (254-257)
 St. Sixtus II (257-258)
 St. Dionysius (260-268)
 St. Felix I (269-274)
 St. Eutychian (275-283)
 St. Caius (283-296) Also called Gaius
 St. Marcellinus (296-304)
 St. Marcellus I (308-309)
 St. Eusebius (309 or 310)
 St. Miltiades (311-14)

Constantine recognizes

St. Sylvester I (314-35)
 St. Marcus (336)
 St. Julius I (337-52)
 St. Liberius (352-66) Opposed by Felix II, antipope (355-365)
 St. Damasus I (366-84) Opposed by Ursicinus, antipope (366-367)
 St. Siricius (384-99)
 St. Anastasius I (399-401)
 St. Innocent I (401-17)
 St. Zosimus (417-18)
 St. Boniface I (418-22) Opposed by Eulalius, antipope (418-419)
 St. Celestine I (422-32)
 St. Sixtus III (432-40)
 St. Leo I (the Great) (440-61)
 St. Hilarius (461-68)
 St. Simplicius (468-83)
 St. Felix III (II) (483-92)
 St. Gelasius I (492-96)
 St. Anastasius II (496-98)

- f. Athanatius... did much to promote monasticism by praising the life of the desert ascetics. Athanatius found echoes of his own experiences and emotions in the psalms (*Letter to Marcellinus*) and helped to introduce the personal devotional use of the psalms which Christians have ever since adopted. His *Easter Letter 39* (AD 376) is the earliest witness to the twenty-seven-book New Testament canon (Everett Ferguson, *Eerdmans' Handbook to the History of Christianity*).

D. **Basil the Great** (c. AD 329-379)

1. Places of ministry: Cappadocia (modern day Turkey)
2. Notable facts
 - a. Born into a wealthy and distinguished Christian family
 - b. Educated in both Constantinople and Athens
 - c. A gifted public speaker with a sharp theological insight
 - d. Continually concerned about the poor and social issues
 - e. Became an ascetic on his family's estate in Pontus (357)
 - Loved to study the Bible
 - Worked with Gregory of Nazianzus to compile an anthology of Origen's works
 - f. Ordained a presbyter (364) and succeeded Eusebius as Bishop of Caesarea (370)
 - g. With his own funds he founded a monastery surrounded by a hospital and hostels (having a great concern for the sick and needy)
 - h. Basil's writings on the monastic life have had an enormous influence in eastern Christianity. No one before had laid so much stress on community and love in the monastic life... By giving precise meanings to the terms used in talking about the Trinity, Basil paved the way for the work of the Council of Constantinople in 381. He was the first to fix the accepted formula for the Trinity: One substance (*ousia*) and three persons (*hypostaseis*) (H. Dermot McDonald, *Eerdmans' Handbook to the History of Christianity*).

E. **Ambrose** (c. AD 340-397)

1. Places of ministry: Milan (northern Italy)
2. Notable facts
 - a. Born to a prestigious Roman family; received a classical education
 - b. In 374 Ambrose elected as Bishop of Milan (replaced an Arian Bishop)
 - c. Widely read and loved to study the Greek theologians
 - d. Became famous as a preacher and church administrator
 - e. Ambrose was also an influential politician and wasn't afraid to get involved in civil affairs (ex. he organized a sit-in against Justina, mother of Emperor Valentinian II when she tried to take over one of the churches in Milan for Arian worship. The sit-in worked, and she gave up her quest).
 - f. Strongly opposed Arianism and helped bring it to an end in the west
 - g. Became a close advisor to Emperor Theodosius and was the first Christian leader to confront the emperor after the emperor sanctioned a massacre of civilians in Thessalonica. Ambrose forced the emperor to issue a public confession (which he did!).
 - h. Ambrose did much to bless the church
 - Encouraged monasticism
 - Responsible for helping lead Augustine to Christ (and baptized him in Milan in 387)
 - Ambrose the first to introduce congregational hymn-singing in the church

F. **Jerome** (c. AD 345-420)

1. Places of ministry: Rome, Antioch, Bethlehem
2. Notable facts

- a. Grew up under the influence of a Christian family in north-east Italy; was well-educated and baptized in Rome
- b. Said to have had a vision of being accused of being more of a follower of Cicero than of Christ (meaning he had an unhealthy preoccupation with secular learning)
- c. Retreated to the deserts of Syria to live an ascetic life
- d. Became a linguistic genius who mastered the Hebrew language
- e. After being ordained in Antioch, Jerome traveled to Constantinople to study with Gregory of Nazianzus; later moved to Rome where he became the secretary to Pope Damasus
- f. The Pope commissioned Jerome to create an authorized Latin version of the whole Bible
 - Up until this point, the Bible existed in Greek texts (Septuagint for the OT) and various faulty Latin versions
 - Jerome translated directly from the Hebrew for the OT and from the best available extant copies of the NT (Greek)
 - Final version produced around 405 called the Vulgate Bible
- g. In addition to the Vulgate, Jerome translated many Greek theological works into Latin
- h. As a true biblical scholar, Jerome wrote commentaries on most of the books of the Bible

V. Why this segment of history matters (or *should matter*) to me

- A. How does this lesson enhance your knowledge of God?
- B. In what new ways are you challenged in your own walk with Christ?
- C. How might knowing this information help you to flourish further in the grace of God?