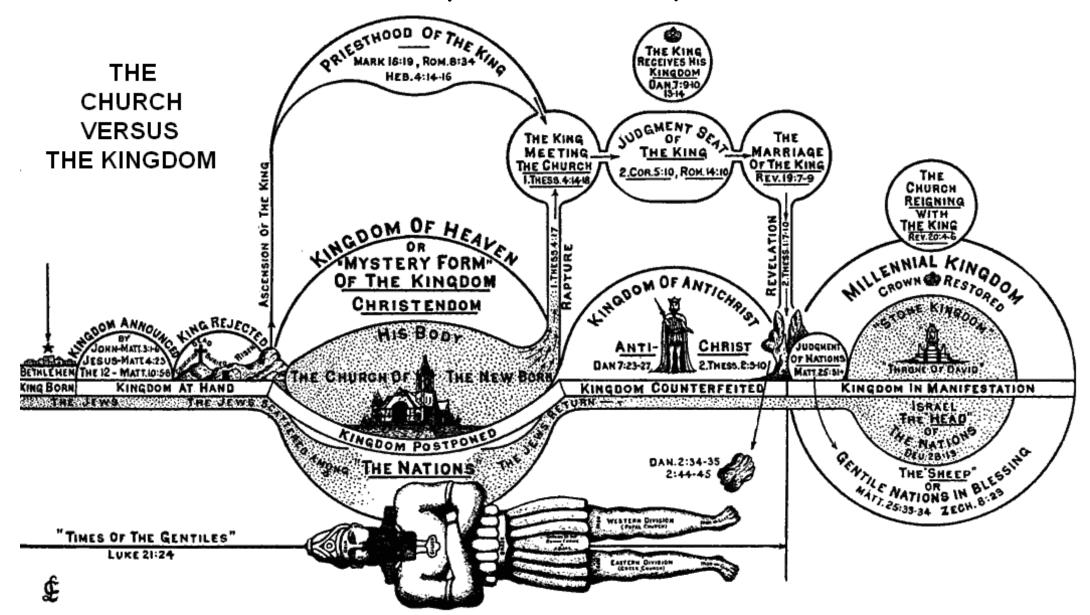


- □ We saw last time how Jesus offered the kingdom to the Jews, they rejected the offer, and so, instead of establishing the kingdom, He postponed it until the Second Coming. In the meantime, He established the 'mystery form' of the kingdom known as 'the Church'.
- ☐ Here is Clarence Larkin's depiction of this sequence.



Overview

In this study we'll cover:

1) The 7 kingdom parables (7 Church Ages)

PARABLE 2: The Wheat & Tares

- □ The Tares
 - a) Legalism & Grace-only
 - b) Anti-Trinitarian heresy
 - c) Gnosticism
 - d) Greek Philosophy & syncretism
 - e) Primacy of Rome, Primacy of Peter & Apostolic succession
 - f) Infant baptism
- ☐ The Wheat
 - a) Christianity challenges Paganism
 - b) Church growth
 - c) The gifts of the Holy Spirit

2) The Wheat & Tares

- □ We also saw how Jesus predicted, not only that he would build His Church (ecclesia - 'called out ones'), but that there would be 7 church ages.
- We looked at the first age of the Apostolic Church (1st century) when the Sower (Jesus) sowed the seed (the Word). Despite the different responses to the gospel and terrible persecution, the good seed produced "a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown", resulting in around 1 million Christians by 100 AD.

1	The Sower	The kingdom is sown and experiences rapid growth – the enemy seeks to steal the seed or destroy the crop through persecution.
2	The Wheat and Weeds	The enemy sows a counterfeit seed. Persecution intensifies.

No.	PARABLE	+/- PERIOD	CHURCH AGE
1	The Sower	AD 33 – 100	Apostolic Church
2	The Wheat and Weeds	AD 100 – 300	Persecuted Church

2) The Wheat & Tares

□ Matthew 13:24 Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. ²⁵ But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. ²⁶ When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. ²⁷ The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?' ²⁸ "An enemy did this,' he replied. "The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?' ²⁹ "No,' he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. 30 Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn."



The Parable of the Weeds explained

☐ Matthew 13:36 Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field."

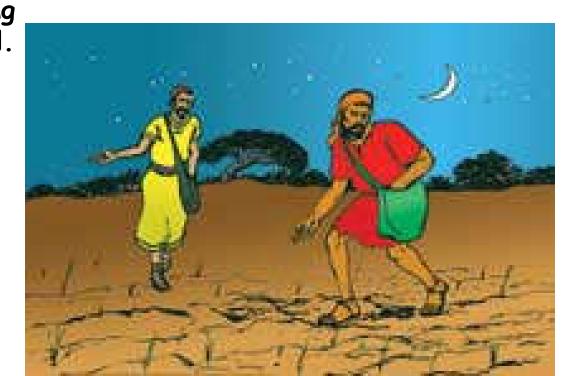
³⁷ He answered, "The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. ³⁸ The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, ³⁹ and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.

⁴⁰ "As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. ⁴¹ The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will

weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil.

They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.



The Parable of the Weeds explained

☐ Like the parable of the Sower, Jesus also explains this parable.

Sower	Jesus	Matt 13:37 He answered, "The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. 38 The field	
Field	World	is the world	
Good seed	Sons of the kingdom	Matt 13:38 and the good seed stands for the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one.	
Weeds	Sons of the evil one		
Enemy	Satan	Matt 13:39 and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the	
Harvest	The end of the age		
Harvesters	Angels	harvesters are angels.	
The fire	The fiery furnace	Matt 13:42 They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.	

- ☐ First let's look at the tares.
- ☐ In the first parable (the Sower) only good seed is sown but it falls on different types of ground which illustrate the different responses to the gospel. In this second parable, a bad 'counterfeit' seed is now sown.

- ☐ A farmer sowed his field with wheat seeds. An enemy maliciously oversowed the same field with tare seed.
- Tares may be bearded darnel, a weed similar to rye grass. Since both wheat and tares are in the grass family, they look similar shortly after germination. But as soon as the wheat begins to form grains, the difference becomes very obvious. Known by the scientific name "lolium temulentum" the seed is not poisonous but it is often infected by a fungus which is very toxic. If eaten by humans or animals, it will cause dizziness, vomiting and sometimes even death.
- □ The servants wanted to pull the tares out because they sap nutrients and are vulnerable to parasites. But the farmer wisely forbade this. The solution was to wait until harvest time and then separate them, storing the wheat and burning the tares.



Lolium temulentum

- As the seed in the first parable represents "the word of God" it must be consistently interpreted here. It produces "the sons of the kingdom". Thus the false seed is the opposite of God's Word i.e. false doctrine or heresy which produces "the sons of the evil one".
- □ Tares are difficult to distinguish from genuine wheat (until harvest time), so the <u>heresy is often subtle</u>. However, as we have noted, they are poisonous and can cause sickness or death.
- Although the true sower (Jesus) and his servants (angels) are aware of this counterfeit seed, this condition is permitted to continue until the end of the age (the harvest). Thus these church ages are not strictly consecutive, but overlapping.
- \square Based on Jesus' prophetic parable, this age (2nd to 3rd century) is characterized by the enemy (Satan) counter-sowing bad seed.
 - In addition to continued and intensified persecution, where Satan tries to destroy the church, we now see a <u>proliferation of heresy</u> in this period.
 - While persecution poses <u>danger from without</u> the church, heresies pose a <u>danger from within</u>.

- □ To counteract these heresies, we have the rise of the first Christian apologists, A who defended the faith against (1) Judaism (2) Gnosticism and (3) Paganism:
 - Aristides and Quadratus of Athens, writing in the early 2nd century, were two of the first Christians to write apologetics treatises. Other 2nd century apologetics writings of note included the 'Epistle of Mathetes to Diognetus' (a response to the accusation that Christians were a danger to Rome), further more: Athenagoras, Tatian, Theophilos of Antioch and Minucius Felix.
 - > The great Christian apologists of this era were:
 - Justin Martyr First & Second Apology (defense against paganism) & Dialogue with Trypho (defense against Judaism).
 - ❖ Irenaeus who wrote 'Against Heresies' (defense against Gnosticism).
 - Hippolytus of Rome who wrote "Refutation of all Heresies".
- Apologists wrote to defend the faith against attacks made by other people or to properly explain the faith. The term comes from the Greek word apologia $(a\pi o\lambda o\gamma ia)$, meaning defense of a position against an attack.

- One of the greatest apologists was Tertullian (c. 155-230 AD), a Romanized African from Carthage, A (modern Tunisia) who was the son of a centurion in the proconsular service.
- According to Jerome and Eusebius, Tertullian <u>trained as a lawyer</u> in Rome.
 Following his conversion he became an elder in the Carthaginian church.
- □ Tertullian was a prolific author. Among his writings are 'Apologeticum' (a defense against paganism) and 'An Answer to the Jews'. He also wrote many defenses against Gnosticism (e.g. 'The Prescription against Heretics', 'Against Marcion' & 'Against the Valentinians').
- ☐ Tertullian's writing is <u>brilliant</u>, <u>aggressive</u>, <u>sarcastic</u>, <u>and at times</u> <u>very funny even after 2000 years</u>. He was deeply conscious of his own failings, and had a burning desire for truth and integrity.

A Carthage was founded on the north coast of Africa by the Phoenicians of Tyre in 814 BC.



- □ Tertullian makes this exact connection between the numerous 2nd & 3rd century heresies and the tares.
 - BEFORE THE USELESS TARES.

 Let me ... discuss the priority of truth, and the comparative lateness of falsehood, deriving support for my argument even from that parable which puts in the first place the sowing by the Lord of the good seed of the wheat, but introduces at a later stage the adulteration of the crop by its enemy the devil with the useless weed of the wild oats. For herein is figuratively described the difference of doctrines, since in other passages also the word of God is likened unto seed. From the actual order, therefore, it becomes clear, that that which was first delivered is of the Lord and is true, whilst that is strange and false which was afterwards introduced." A

The Tares: Legalism

The Ebionites

- Writing of the Ebionites in 'Against Heresies' Irenaeus says "They use the Gospel according to Matthew only, and repudiate the Apostle Paul, maintaining that he was an apostate from the law."
- Tertullian writes, "Paul... Writing also to the Galatians, he inveighs against such men as observed and <u>defend</u> <u>circumcision and the (Mosaic) law.</u> Thus runs Hebion's heresy." A
- Paul writes in Ephesians 2:8-9 "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God not by works, so that no one can boast."



The Tares: Grace only

□ Marcionism

- Then we have the error that goes to the other extreme of Legalism, with the emphasis on <u>Grace only</u>, without <u>God's righteous judgment</u>. Marcion believed that the <u>God</u> of the OT was different from the Father of whom Jesus spoke. He adopted the <u>Gnostic idea</u> of 'Demiurge' (the evil <u>God</u> of the Jews versus the good <u>God</u> who sent Jesus as Saviour).
- Marcion wanted to remove Christianity's Jewish roots and so did not include the OT in his canon. In contrast to the Ebionites, Marcion only accepted Paul's writings. His canon consisted only of the Gospel of Luke and 10 epistles by Paul, all of which he also had to 'edit' to remove any positive references to Judaism or the OT. We see much of Marcion's anti-OT thought in modern liberation theology.
- Like some today, Marcion resorted to cutting up the Scripture to support his beliefs. However look at these 2 passages from Luke:
 - ❖ Jesus: "Everything must be fulfilled that is <u>written about me in</u> the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms." (Luke 24:44)
 - Jesus: "It is easier for heaven and earth to disappear than for the least stroke of a pen to drop out of the Law." (Luke 16:17),

The Tares: Grace only

- This view of God's love only without his justice reminds me of the many televangelists who preach a <u>"feel good" message about our need for selfesteem</u>, but neglect the doctrines of sin, repentance and judgment.
- ☐ In response to Marcion's <u>God of love who doesn't judge</u>, Tertullian shows the <u>logical conclusion</u>:
 - When you express approval of a god who is no judge, it is not the God who is a judge whom you express disapproval of: you will be forced, no question of it, to lay accusation against justice itself for this it is that causes any man to be a judge classing it as one of the varieties of evil: which means you will have to include injustice among the subheadings of goodness. Justice is an evil thing only if injustice is a good one. A
 - For by the fear of vengeance all iniquity is curbed. But if license is allowed to it without discrimination, it will get the mastery-it will put out (a man's) both eyes; it will knock out every tooth in the safety of its impunity. This, however, is (the principle) of your good and simply beneficent god to do a wrong to patience, to open the door to violence, to leave the righteous undefended, and the wicked unrestrained! A

The Tares: Anti-Trinitarian heresies

☐ Tertullian was the first
Church Father to write in
Latin instead of Greek. He
used many terms that have
since become standard in
Christian theology like 'vetus
testamentum' (Old testament)
and 'novum testamentum'
(New testament).

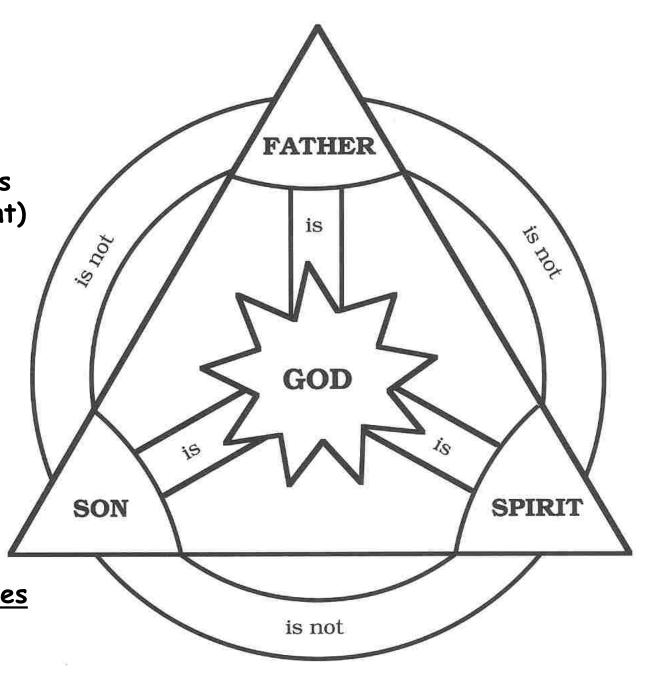
☐ He also <u>coined the</u>
<u>word 'trinity'</u> (Latin 'trinitas') to explain the
Biblical viewpoint on God's
'three-in-one' nature.

☐ In this period several Anti-Trinitarian heresies arose.

<u>As the tares remain until</u>

<u>the harvest so these heresies</u>

<u>are still present today.</u>



The Tares: Anti-Trinitarian heresies

- ☐ <u>Tritheism</u> believes that there are three Gods, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Present day <u>Mormonism</u> is tritheistic.
- Monarchians believe that God the Father and God the Son were one and the same person. The word 'Monarchian' was first used by Tertullian as a nickname for a group of heretics known as Patripassionists in the West and Sabellians in the East. Present day groups in this category are the Unitarians and Christadelphians.
- Modalism states that God is a single person who, throughout history, has revealed Himself in three consecutive modes, or forms. Thus, God first manifested himself in the mode of the Father in OT times. At the incarnation, the mode was the Son. After Jesus' ascension, the mode is the Holy Spirit. These modes are consecutive and never simultaneous. Present day groups that hold to this error are the United Pentecostal and United Apostolic Churches.
- □ The Watchtower (JW's) belong to the later 4th century Anti-Trinitarian heresy of Arianism. Arius taught that the Son was created (not eternal) and inferior to the Father. The Father, working through the Son, created the Holy Spirit, who was subservient to the Son as the Son was to the Father.

The Tares: Gnostic heresy

- ☐ Pre-Gnostics include followers of Simon Magus and Cerinthus, as well as the Nicolaitans and Marcionites.
- Gnostics include Theudas and his disciple Valentinus, Carpocrates, Basilides and the Sethians.
- □ By the 3rd century we have the Syriac Gnostic Bardaisan. We also have the Babylonian Mani who forged Manicheanism, a kind of Gnosticism which is debatably Christian.^A
- □ The Gnostics derived their convoluted beliefs by 'borrowing' from everything including Greek philosophy, paganism, the occult, Judaism and Christianity.
- ☐ As their beliefs were varied, we will examine <u>common errors</u> in Gnosticism.
- ☐ All of the Gnostic heresies also contained <u>element of truths</u>. Hence the analogy to tares is apt, as <u>truth and heresy intermingled pose a greater deceptive threat than a blatant lie.</u>

^A Manicheanism muddled the teachings of Zoroaster, Buddha and Jesus.

- □ John ^A (in Ephesus), Paul ^B (in Colosse) and Jude seem to have <u>encountered</u> <u>early stages of these Gnostic beliefs</u> (stemming from Greek philosophy), or what Tertullian describes as the 'seedlings of the tares':
 - Besides all this, I add a review of the doctrines themselves, which, existing as they did in the days of the apostles, were both <u>exposed</u> and <u>denounced by the said apostles</u>. For by this method they will be more easily reprobated, when they are detected to have been <u>even</u> then in existence, or at any rate to have been seedlings of the (tares) which then were. C
- □ Let's examine how John, Paul and Jude address heresies that later became core to 2nd and 3rd century Gnostic belief.
- In the book of Revelation John refers to the Nicolaitans, who were a Gnostic cult. Also Cerinthus was a Gnostic heretic that John opposed in Ephesus. According to Irenaeus (the disciple of Polycarp, who in turn was a disciple of John), the latter prompted John to write his Gospel in the late 1st Century.
- Many believe that some of Paul's teaching in the book of Colossians was directed at early stages of Gnosticism.
- ^c The Prescription against Heretics

Although there were many 'flavours' of Gnosticism, in general they:

- 1) Denied that God became flesh.
 - Tertullian wrote of John, "But in his epistle he especially designates those as 'Antichrists' who 'denied that Christ was come in the flesh,' and who refused to think that Jesus was the Son of God. The one dogma Marcion maintained; the other, Hebion." A
 - John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word... and the Word was God. 14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.
 - > 1 John 4:1 Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. 2 This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, 3 but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist...
 - 2 John ⁷ Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist.
- A The Prescription against Heretics

- 2) Denied the bodily resurrection of Jesus.
 - In an epistle to Polycarp, Ignatius warned of the danger of a new heresy, later named <u>Docetism</u>. It is the Gnostic <u>belief that Jesus' physical body was an illusion, as was his crucifixion</u> ^A; i.e. Jesus only seemed to have a physical body and to physically die, but in reality he was a pure spirit, and hence could not physically die. Gnostics believed that <u>matter was evil</u>, and hence God would not take on a <u>material body</u>.
 - Basilides denied the resurrection of the body, and believed that Simon of Cyrene was crucified in place of Christ who had returned to His Father unharmed.
 - Modern JW's adapt a variant of this heresy by asserting that Jesus rose as a spirit only. There is of course the problem of the empty tomb, but they claim that his material body was taken away by God the Father.
- Later on, <u>Islam would incorporate this 2nd century Gnostic heresy by asserting that Jesus' crucifixion was an illusion</u>. The Qur'an says, "They did not kill him and they did not crucify him, but it was made to seem so to them..." (Qur'an 4:157). In fact, Islam is more influenced by Gnostic heresy than by the NT writings.

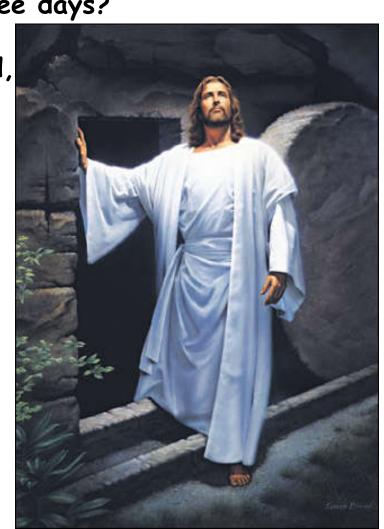
Jesus told his enemies that his body would be raised:

John 2:19 Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days."

The Jews replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?"

21 But the temple he had spoken of was his body. 22 After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said.

- ☐ Jesus pointed out his 'flesh and bones' after his resurrection:
 - Jesus tells his disciples, "Touch me and see; <u>a ghost does not have flesh and</u> <u>bones</u>, <u>as you see I have</u>." (Luke 24:39)



- 3) Denied the resurrection of our bodies.
 - Tertullian writes, "Paul, in his first epistle to the Corinthians, sets his mark on certain who denied and doubted the resurrection. This opinion was the especial property of the Sadducees. A part of it, however, is maintained by <u>Marcion</u> and <u>Apelles</u> and <u>Valentinus</u>, and all other impugners of the resurrection."
 - ☐ In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul defends the resurrection of the body.
 - > 1 Cor 15:12 But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?
 - > 1 Cor 15:42 So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable.

- 4) According to Gnostic thought, there is a hierarchy of gods. The greatest of these is good and loving, but <u>unknowable</u>, being completely detached <u>from the world</u>.
 - Responding to the allegation, not only from Gnostics, that the supreme God is not involved or interested in human affairs, Tertullian states, "Still let us not, as the Gentiles do, flatter ourselves with thinking that God is merely a Creator, not likewise a Downlooker on His own creatures." A
 - ☐ In fact the Bible teaches us that, far from being detached from his creation, our Creator loved us so much, he personally redeemed us by becoming a man.
 - John 1:10 He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him... 14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.
 - > John 3:16 "For God so loved the world..."
 - Acts 20:28 Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.

- 5) Many Gnostics (especially Valentinius) taught that <u>from this one original god emanated 'aeons'</u>, who were lesser beings. The aeons <u>often came in male/female pairs</u> and among these pairs were Sophia ('wisdom' in Greek) and Christ. Sophia 'sinned' by seeking to know the unknowable god, and as a consequence of her sin the Demiurge came into being. The Demiurge is thus an even lower being and is the actual creator of the world. A
- Tertullian quoting Paul says, "When again he mentions 'endless genealogies,' one also recognises Valentinus..." B
 - Let, however, any man approach the subject from a knowledge of the faith which he has otherwise learned, as soon as he finds so many names of Aeons, so many marriages, so many offsprings... of a dispersed and mutilated Deity, will that man hesitate at once to pronounce that these are "the fables and endless genealogies" which the inspired apostle by anticipation condemned, whilst these seeds of heresy were even then shooting forth? ^C

A If this convoluted pantheon of aeons seems bizarre, consider that the popular 'Da Vinici Code' embodies neo-Gnostic belief.

^B The Prescription against Heretics

^C Against the Valentinians

- 6) Denied that the Creator God in the OT was the same as the Father referred to by Jesus. The believed that the material world was evil and thus they identified the Creator God as an evil god named 'the Demiurge'. A
 - ☐ John had explicitly stressed that <u>Jesus was the Creator God</u>:
 - John 1:1 ... the Word was God... 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.
 - ☐ As does Paul:
 - Colossians 1:15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.

Like the Greek philosopher Plato, Gnosticism presents a distinction between the highest, unknowable "alien God" and the demiurgic "creator" of the material world. However, in contrast to Plato, several systems of Gnostic thought present the Demiurge as antagonistic to the will of the Supreme God. Cerinthus cited the demiurge as creating the material world but his demiurge was holy. Others like Carpoerates and Basilides maintained that the world was created by angels.

- 7) The Gnostics believed that the <u>most important doctrines were reserved for a select few.</u> Because the evil Demiurge created the world, matter is low and morally suspect. One could only be 'saved' by possessing some secret knowledge or 'gnosis'. The human soul is a 'spark of divinity' imprisoned in the sphere of matter, and Christ was sent to earth to give men the secret knowledge needed to rescue them from the material prison back into the sphere of divinity.
 - In 'Against the Valentinians' Tertullian jokes, "If you propose to them inquiries sincere and honest, they answer you with stern look and contracted brow, and say, 'The subject is profound'."
 - Paul warns Timothy, "Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge (gnosis), which some have professed and in so doing have wandered from the faith."

 (1 Tim 6:20-21)
 - ☐ The orthodox belief was that the Gospel was for the entire human race.
 - For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

- 8) Essentially, Gnostics taught that the supreme God was pure energy, that he emitted pure thought, life, love, light, knowledge and existed in a sphere of this abstract energy. This was called 'the Pleroma', A the Greek word for 'fullness'. Remember also that the Gnostics saw 'Sophia' as a separate being and 'gnosis' as the means of salvation.
- ☐ In Colossians 2 Paul wrecks most of Gnostic 'theology' and they certainly shouldn't draw on him as support for their garbled beliefs:
 - a) Christ has all wisdom and knowledge in him,
 - Col 2:2 ... so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom (sophia) and knowledge (gnosis).
 - b) Philosophy and human tradition are not the basis for truth.
 - ⁴ I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments ... ⁸ See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.
- A Pleroma (Greek $\pi\lambda\eta\rho\omega\mu\alpha$) generally refers to the totality of God's powers.

- c) Double blow: (1) All the fullness ('pleroma') is in Christ and (2) the fullness exists in bodily form (flesh):
 - Col 2:9 For in Christ all the fullness (pleroma) of the Deity (theotes) lives in bodily form
- d) Christ is not some demi-god way down the food chain. Besides having the fullness of the Godhead, he is "the head over <u>every</u> power and authority".
 - Col 2:10 and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority.

- 9) The <u>worship of angels</u> is a heresy that has gained some popularity again today, where people pray to angels rather than God.
 - □ Tertullian writes, "The doctrine, however, of Simon's ^A sorcery, which inculcated the <u>worship of angels</u>, was itself actually reckoned amongst idolatries and condemned by the Apostle Peter in Simon's own person."^B
 - □ Tertullian again references Paul, "Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the <u>worship of angels</u> disqualify you for the prize." ^B (Col 2:18)
 - John records the rebuke he himself had received from an angel, "... I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had been showing them to me. But he said to me, 'Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers the prophets and of all who keep the words of this book. Worship God!' " (Rev 22:9)
 - And when the fallen angel Satan had tempted Jesus saying, "All this I will give you if you will bow down and worship me", Jesus had replied, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.' " (Matt 4:9-10)
- Irenaeus said that <u>Simon Magus</u>, who was mentioned in the Book of Acts, <u>was the progenitor of all the later Gnostic sects</u>. Menander of Antioch was a disciple of Simon, active in the late 1st century.

 B The Prescription against Heretics

- 10) Because the flesh was 'unimportant' Gnostics went to 2 extremes, either:
 - a) Asceticism (abstinence from worldly pleasures)
 - □ Tertullian referring to Paul states, "Such also as '<u>forbid to</u> <u>marry</u>' A he reproaches in his instructions to Timothy. B Now, this is the teaching of Marcion and his follower Apelles." C
 - Because Marcion rejected any idea of bodily resurrection, he preached against procreation, against the production of more bodies in which spirit would continue to be entrapped. His followers, even married ones, had to forego sexual relations. Description to anyone who was not virgin, unmarried, widowed, or divorced.

A heresy carried today with the celibacy of priests, monks and nuns.

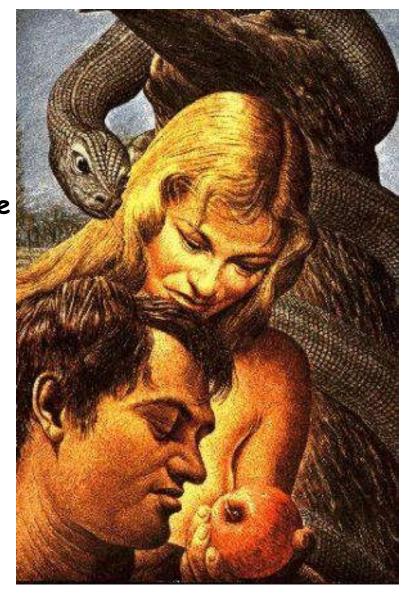
^B 1 Tim 4: 1 ... some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons... 3 They forbid people to marry...

The Prescription against Heretics D This of course has the unfortunate side-effect of causing your cult not to continue into a second generation.

^E Tertullian wrote that the heretic's homeland, Pontus, was a barbarous land where people shamelessly copulated in the open and men practiced cannibalism, but "the most barbarous and melancholy thing about Pontus is that Marcion was born there."

- b) Hedonism (i.e. promiscuity if it feels good, do it)
 - ☐ Followers of Carpoerates <u>advocated the practice of immorality as a</u> <u>means of union with God.</u>
 - ☐ The Cainites believed that indulgence in sin was the key to salvation because since the body is evil, one must defile it through immoral activity.
 - ☐ Irenaeus wrote that the Nicolaitans "are the followers of that Nicolas who was one of the seven first ordained to the diaconate by the apostles. They lead lives of unrestrained indulgence."
 - Jude cautions us against this, "For certain men whose condemnation was written about a long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality..." (Jude 4)

- 11) Because the Gnostics saw the OT God as an evil god, the villains of the OT were often their heroes. For example:
 - a) The Ophites worshipped the <u>serpent</u> of Genesis as the giver of knowledge. A
 - ☐ As the OT is supposedly bad, let's see what the NT says about the serpent:
 - > 2 Cor 11:3 ... Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning...
 - Rev 12:9 ... that <u>ancient serpent</u> called the devil, or Satan, <u>who</u> <u>leads the whole world astray</u>.
 - □ Sounds to me to be pretty consistent with what was said of the serpent in the OT?



A Remember it was the serpent who convinced mankind to eat of the tree of knowledge (of good and evil).

b) The Cainites, as the term implies, venerated <u>Cain</u>, as well as <u>Esau</u>, <u>Korah</u>, and the <u>Sodomites</u>.

Again, let's examine NT passages on these characters:

- Ijohn 3:12 Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous.
- Jude ¹¹ Woe to them! They have taken the way of Cain; they have rushed for profit into <u>Balaam's error</u>; they have been destroyed in <u>Korah's rebellion</u>.
- Heb 12:16 See that no one is <u>sexually immoral</u>, or is godless like <u>Esau</u>, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son.
- > 2 Pet 2:6 ... if he condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly...

The Apostles' Creed vs. Gnosticism

☐ The Apostles' Creed - "The Old Roman Creed"

I believe in God Almighty Maker of Heaven and Earth And in Christ Jesus, His only Son, our Lord Who was born of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary Who was crucified under Pontius Pilate and was buried And on the third day rose from the dead Who ascended into heaven And sits on the right hand of the Father From where he comes to judge the living and the dead And in the Holy Spirit The holy church The remission of sins The resurrection of the flesh The life everlasting.

The Apostles' Creed, believed to have been drawn up in the 2nd century, seems to be a refutation of Gnosticism, emphasizing the truths that it denied. This can be seen in almost every phrase.

The Apostles' Creed vs. Gnosticism

- 1) I believe in God Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth
 - Gnostics held that the universe is evil and that God didn't make it.
- 2) And in <u>Jesus Christ</u>, <u>His only Son</u>, Our Lord <u>Who was born</u> of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary
 - Gnostics didn't believe God had taken a human body. Some distinguished between Christ, whom they acknowledged was divine, and the man Jesus, who was an instrument through whom the Christ spoke. Apparently the Spirit only descended upon Jesus at his baptism, and then left him before the crucifixion, allowing the Spirit only a brief association with matter (which was, of course, evil). Others affirmed that there wasn't a man Jesus at all, but only the appearance of a man, through which wise teachings were given. A
 - > In the creed, orthodox Christians affirmed that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit (thus refuting that the Spirit had nothing to do with Jesus until his baptism), that he was born (i.e. he had a real physical body, not just 'an appearance') of a virgin (implying that he was special from the beginning of his life, not just since his baptism).

The Apostles' Creed vs. Gnosticism

3) Who was crucified under Pontius Pilate and was buried And the third day rose from the dead

Here the creed emphasizes that <u>he was really dead</u>. He was nailed to a cross and died. He had a real body, a corpse, that was placed in a tomb. Contrary to Gnostic belief, he 'rose from the dead'.

4) The holy church

The church had no place in Gnostic theology. Each man had to find God on his own. Other people were irrelevant, except those precious few with magical secrets to teach.

5) The remission of sins

The Gnostics considered that what men needed was not forgiveness, but enlightenment. <u>Ignorance</u>, not sin, was the problem. The notion of forgiveness was alien to them.

6) The <u>resurrection of the flesh</u>, The life everlasting.

The chief goal of Gnostics was to become free forever from the shackles of the body, and to return to the heavenly realm as pure spirit. In line with Greek philosophy, they <u>rejected any idea of the resurrection of the body.</u>

The 2 Christian theological schools

- ☐ We find a further sowing of doctrinal 'tares' through the teaching of the Christian school at Alexandria.
- 1) Founded in about 180 AD by Pantaenus (a former Stoic philosopher), the theological <u>School of Alexandria</u> in Egypt was the first-known organized Christian institution of higher learning. It became a leading centre of the <u>allegorical method</u> of Scripture interpretation.
 - Under such leaders as Clement (c. 150-215) and Origen (c. 185-254), the theological school of Alexandria endorsed a reestablishment of relations between Christian faith and Greek culture (including the Platonic philosophical tradition). The Alexandrians typically found allegory in most passages of Scripture.
- 2) Although there is no record of a formal school such as existed at Alexandria, the <u>School of Antioch</u> A in Syria represented a group of theologians that shared similar doctrinal characteristics. Starting with Lucian in the 3rd century this 'school' rejected the Alexandrian approach in favour of a more <u>literal interpretation</u> of the Bible.
- Antioch was where Jesus' followers were first called "Christians" and was the first missionary church responsible for sending Paul, Barnabas, Silas and John Mark out.

- ☐ The influence of Greek Philosophy on Biblical interpretation was seen mainly in the Alexandrian School:
 - Clement succeeded Pantaenus as head of the Alexandrian school. He believed in the divine origin of Greek philosophy, and openly propounded that all Scripture must be allegorically understood.
 - In his 'Stromateis' he tried to prove that Christianity, instead, was actually the 'true philosophy'. The Greeks had absorbed some elements of truth, but their knowledge was mostly constrained in comparison to the light that Christians have been presented with.
 - Freek thought, Clement claimed, was actually 'stolen' from the Old Testament. He concluded that Greek philosophy was inferior to the perfection of the Christian faith. Even then, it was still very useful for the Christians, who could find it to be an excellent preparation to study Christian doctrines.



Clement



Plato

- The <u>Platonic</u> A <u>Jews of Egypt</u> began, in the 1st century, in imitation of the heathen Greeks, to interpret the OT allegorically. The Alexandrian Jew, Philo was distinguished among those who practiced this method.
- At the young age of 18, Origen succeeded Clement as head of the Alexandrian school. He was the first to lay down a formal theory of interpretation based on the <u>allegorical method</u> of Philo, who in turn had borrowed this technique from Greek philosophy.



Philo

A Platonism regarded the universe as the work of a Supreme Spirit, in which man possesses a 'spark of divinity' that would ultimately purify him and elevate him to a higher life. Virtue would accelerate and sin retard his upward progress. Basically a 'good works' doctrine.



- Though a brilliant man, Origen had many distorted teachings that were far from Biblical Christianity, but seem to have been derived from Greek philosophy, including his belief in 2 creations. A He borrowed from Greek philosophy the belief in the pre-existence of souls and the rejection of the idea of physical resurrection. Universalism presents another controversial issue; he deduced that since God is Love, everyone, even Satan, will ultimately be saved.
- Origen concluded that there were 2 creation accounts in Genesis. The first creation was of spirits without bodies, possessing free will, but some strayed away and fell. The second creation, of the material universe, thus followed. The souls who fell most remotely became demons, the others were made human. The reason we possess human bodies and experience suffering is due to our sin during preexistence. Origen claims this notion is supported by the Bible, while it is actually derived from Neo-Platonic philosophy.
- Plato had written about the concept of pre-existent souls in a state of perfection prior to taking on a mortal body on the earth.
- ^c Greek philosophers since Plato believed only in the immortality of the soul.
- The Gnostics advocated the final salvation of all souls. The generally accepted view was that while the good would at death ascend to dwell with the Father, the wicked would pass through transformations until purified.

- On the other hand, Tertullian of Carthage perceptively identifies Greek philosophy as "the parent of heresies" and the root cause of Gnosticism. Platonic philosophy saw the material world (flesh) as evil and believed only in a spiritual resurrection, which are chief tenets in Gnosticism.
 - > 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 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 known 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 tranquility; 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... The same subject-matter is discussed over and over again by the heretics and the philosophers; the same arguments are involved. A

- ☐ Tertullian then recalls Paul's warning against Greek philosophy:
 - > 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 A 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 B 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 ^c Christianity of Stoic, <u>Platonic</u>, and <u>dialectic</u> ^D <u>composition!</u> We want no curious disputation ^E after possessing Christ Jesus, no inquisition f after enjoying the gospel! With our faith, we desire no further belief. For this is our palmary 6

faith, that there is nothing which we ought to believe besides. H

A Deceive B Agreement C Spotted or blotched with different shades or colours D The practice of arriving at the truth by the exchange of logical arguments The presentation of a stated proposition in a public debate & the opposition to it

F A rigorous, harsh interrogation ⁶ Principal H The Prescription against Heretics

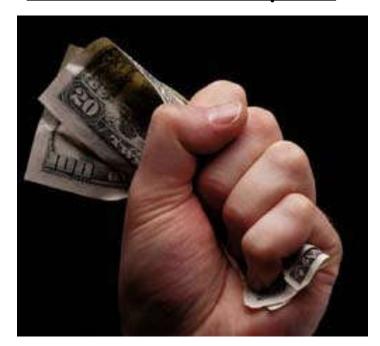
The dangers of modern Syncretism

- Of course <u>if we had lived in those days</u>, we wouldn't have been swayed by <u>all this</u>. However we see <u>in our own age attempts to make Jesus more</u> "acceptable" by synthesizing Christianity with contemporary culture.
- Similar modern parallels of heresy being introduced, by trying to synthesize ^A Christianity with modern philosophies are:
 - Attempts to harmonize <u>evolutionary philosophy</u> with the Bible. This has led some to allegorize the Creation account. B
 - Attempts to <u>integrate secular humanistic psychology with Christianity</u>. The Bible teaches that man has a sinful nature; psychology shifts the blame to others i.e. parents, upbringing & environment thereby undermining the Biblical doctrine of 'original sin'. ^C
- This is called 'syncretism'. Syncretism is the attempt to reconcile disparate or contradictory beliefs, thus achieving an underlying unity and allowing for an 'inclusive' approach to other faiths. Effectively it constitutes compromise.
- Interestingly this dates back to a heretic in Paul's time. Says Tertullian, "The same apostle, when disapproving of those who are 'in bondage to elements,' points us to some dogma of Hermogenes, who introduces matter as having no beginning..."
- Original sin refers to both: (1) the sin that Adam committed; and (2) the consequence of this first sin, the <u>hereditary sinful nature</u> with which we are born on account of our descent from Adam.

The dangers of modern Syncretism

An example in our own country is the Zion Christian Church (a blend of Christianity and indigenous ancestral worship). Members of the ZCC generally believe that a person may contact God through direct prayer, or through intercession by Christ, bishops of the ZCC and the ancestor spirits.

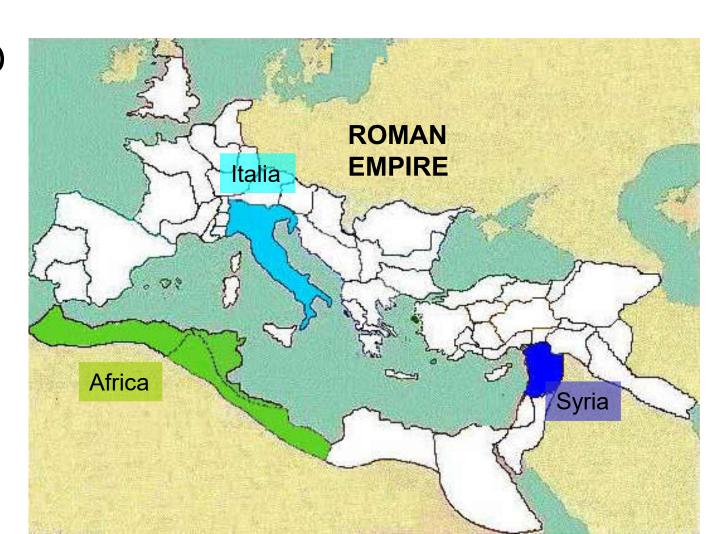




Another example of modern syncretism is the prosperity doctrine, which tries to synthesize Western materialism with the Gospel - in an attempt to justify and Christianize our greed and opulent lifestyles.

The Tares: Primacy of Rome

- □ With the dispersion after the Jerusalem persecution and the gospel going to the Gentiles, the centre of gravity in Christianity slowly started to shift from Jerusalem to:
 - 1) Africa: Alexandria (Egypt) & Carthage (Tunisia)
 - 2) Middle East:
 Antioch (Syria)
 - 3) Europe: Rome (Italy)



The Tares: Primacy of Rome

- Hippolytus of Rome (the disciple of Irenaeus) was a contemporary of a man called Callistus who also lived in Rome. In "Refutation of all Heresies", Hippolytus relates that when Callistus, as a young slave was put in charge of a bank by his master, Carpophorus, he 'lost' the money deposited by other Christians (including widows). Callistus then fled from Rome, but was caught near Portus. He jumped overboard to avoid capture, but was rescued and taken back to his master. He was released at the request of the creditors, who hoped he might be able to recover some of the money, but was rearrested for fighting in a synagogue when he tried to borrow or collect debts from some Jews. Denounced as a Christian, Callistus was sentenced to work in the mines of Sardinia. Finally, he was released with other Christians at the request of Marcia, a mistress of Emperor Commodus.
- ☐ Hippolytus exposes Callistus as an unscrupulous character who worked himself into the favour of Zephyrinus, the bishop of Rome, and after his death, actually became bishop.
- Callistus was the first to makes claims for special importance of the Roman bishop and <u>awarded himself the title 'Pontifex Maximus'</u> which was the <u>title of the Emperor as High Priest of the pagan religion of Rome!</u>
 The title is still used by the popes of Rome today.

The Tares: Primacy of Rome

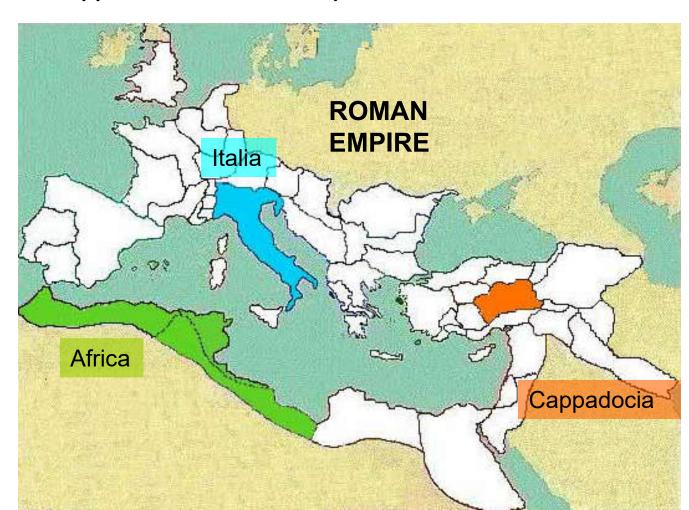
- In 'De Pudicitia' Tertullian added his own testimony to Hippolytus' criticism of the Roman church. While criticising the decision of Callistus to show leniency to those in the church who committed adultery and fornication, he sarcastically uses Callistus' new self-claimed title:
 - For now I hear a thing so horrible, that I could never be silent in the face of it... our good Pontifex Maximus, as the bishop of the bishops solemnly declares: "We do forgive even the cords of adultery and fornication."
 - On the <u>attempt by the Roman bishop to gain dominance over other bishops</u>, Tertullian writes that "the church is the <u>spiritual assembly</u> of spiritual men, <u>not a conclave of bishops</u>." (21:17)
- Without any scriptural or historical basis, the Roman bishops already started to <u>claim Peter as the first bishop in Rome</u>, along with the unbiblical doctrine of 'apostolic succession' i.e. <u>the office of apostleship is passed down unbroken lines of bishops beginning with the original Apostles</u>. Callistus was the first to assume the prerogatives of Peter.

Primacy of Peter & apostolic succession

- □ Later Cyprian, bishop of Carthage quarreled with the bishop of Rome, Stephen (254-257). Stephen acted arrogantly against all who differed from him even assuming to lay down the law to the churches in Asia. He 'excommunicated' Firmilian, bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, together with his congregation, because they rebaptised those who came from heretical fringe churches.
- Cyprian stood out against such action because he asserted the absolute independence of other regional churches, and their right to resist the encroachments of Rome. Cyprian had the support of Firmilian who, in a letter to him in 256 AD wrote, "I am justly indignant at this so open and manifest folly of Stephen who thus glories about the place of his episcopate, and maintains that he holds the succession of Peter."
- □ Writing in the name of 80 bishops, Cyprian declares quite clearly: "None of us regards himself as the Bishop of Bishops or seeks by tyrannical threats to compel his colleagues to obey him."

Primacy of Peter & apostolic succession

- □ Thus we see opposition in the 3rd Century from all the major Church centres to these early attempts of certain Roman bishops to dominate the church:
 - 1) Africa: Carthage (Tunisia) Tertullian & Cyprian
 - 2) Middle East: Caesarea (Cappadocia i.e. Turkey) Firmilian
 - 3) Europe: Rome (Italy) - Hippolytus



The Tares: Infant baptism

- \Box By the 3rd century we hear the first reports of infant baptism.
- □ The NT teaches 'believers baptism' with repentance as a prerequisite, which infants are incapable of doing:
 - Matt 28:19 ... make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
 - Mark 16:16 Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved...
 - > Acts 2:38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized..."
 - > Acts 19:8 ... (many) who heard him believed and were baptized.
- Tertullian opposed infant baptism.
- Follows that <u>deferment of baptism is more profitable</u>, in accordance with each person's character and attitude, and even age: and especially so as regards children ... <u>let them be made Christians when they have become competent to know Christ</u>. Why should innocent infancy come with haste to the remission of sins? Shall we take less cautious action in this than we take in worldly matters? Shall one who is not trusted with earthly property be entrusted with heavenly? <u>Let them first learn how to ask for salvation</u>, so that you may be seen to have given to one that asks.
- A On Baptism



This period was characterized by an <u>even more intense persecution</u> than the 1^{st} century (which we'll cover in more detail in a later study). Let's have a brief look at Tertullian and his famous comments on the effect of this persecution.

Tertullian was born a member of the educated classes and clearly gained a good education. He indulged his passions as he saw fit, and like everyone else attended the games where gladiators killed each other and criminals were eaten alive, for the enjoyment of the spectators.

But among the sights he saw, was that of Christians being executed this way. He was struck with the courage with which simple slave men and little slave girls faced a hideous death, against all nature; and after investigating, became a Christian himself, and used his talents in writing to defend this despised and victimized group.

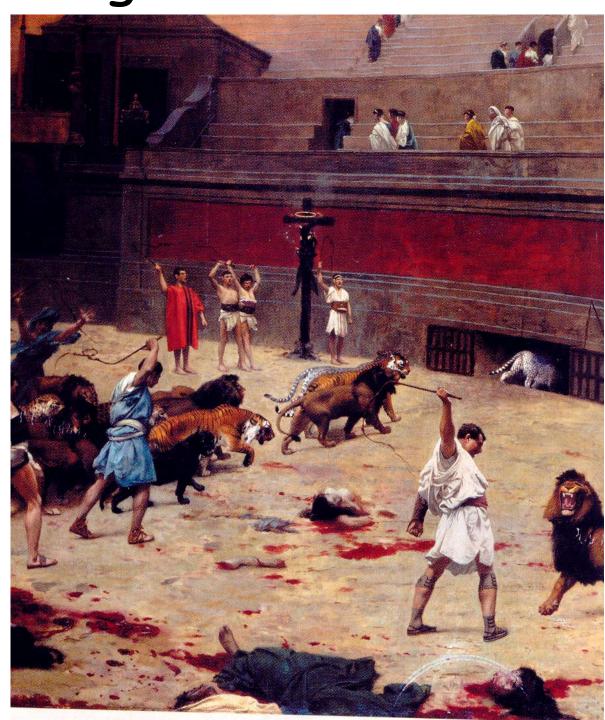
The 2nd kingdom age - Persecution

□ Tertullian declares, "We are not a new philosophy but a divine revelation.

That's why you can't just exterminate us; the more you kill the more we are.

The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church...

And you frustrate your purpose. Because those who see us die, wonder why we do, for we die like the men you revere, not like slaves or criminals. And when they find out, they join us." A



It's interesting to see the similarities between the issues Tertullian had with paganism and our modern neo-pagan society.

Tertullian (paraphrased) on:

☐ Brotherly love

The meetings of the Christians are described, and how the Christians love one another. Yet the unbelievers sneer at the way Christians call each other 'Brothers' ... We share everything except our wives - you share nothing except your wives. A

□ Revenge

> Tertullian explains that in addition to loving their enemies, Christians are forbidden to retaliate if they are injured lest they become as bad themselves. Thus who can suffer from their hands? He asked if anyone could point to a single act of Christian vengeance.

☐ Tertullian on Abortion

To us murder is once for all forbidden; so even the child in the womb, while yet the mother's blood is still being drawn on to form the human being, it is not lawful for us to destroy. To forbid birth is only quicker murder. It makes no difference whether one takes away the life once born or destroy it as it comes to birth. He is a man, who is to be a man; the fruit is always present in the seed. A

☐ On infanticide & incest

> ... you know that infant sacrifice to Cronos was still going on until very recently, right here in Africa. Maybe you remember that it is quite legal to drown an unwanted baby, or expose it. Do you suppose that these stern magistrates, baying for the blood of the Christians, might know something of infanticide and abortion? How cruel to snuff out a child in the womb, or in water... Ritual murder is already part of pagan religion, in specially convened games. As for incest, since you unbelievers sleep around so much, and abandon your children to an unknown fate, incest for you must be a inevitable although unknown event! A

A Apologeticum

☐ The theatre

- The <u>theatre</u> is especially the shrine of <u>Venus</u> [goddess of lust]. It is also <u>the house of Bacchus</u> [god of wine].

 Christian, <u>you must hate these things.</u> A
- There is no public entertainment which does not inflict spiritual damage. A
- Wonder what Tertullian would say about the TV, movies & tabloids if he were here today?



□ On Greed

> It is not consistent with truth that a man should sacrifice half of his stomach only to God - that he should be sober in drinking, but intemperate in eating. Your belly is your God, your liver is your temple, your paunch is your altar, the cook is your priest...

- □ Like the 1st kingdom age, despite the terrible persecution, the Church grows. Tertullian, trained as a Roman lawyer, defends Christianity against persecution, and tackles the pagans head-on, ridiculing their beliefs.

 <u>Justifying his use of sarcasm and wit on the subject</u>, he says:
 - What I have now done is only a little sport before the real combat. I have rather indicated the wounds that might be given you than inflicted any. If the reader has met with passages which have excited his risibility, A he must ascribe this to the subjects themselves. There are many things which deserve to be held up in this way to ridicule and mockery, lest, by a serious refutation, we should attach a weight to them which they do not deserve. Nothing is more due to vanity than laughter; and it is the Truth properly that has a right to laugh, because she is cheerful, and to make sport of her enemies, because she is sure of the victory. Care must be taken, indeed, that the raillery B is not too low, and unworthy of the truth; but, keeping this in view, when ridicule may be employed with effect, it is a duty to avail ourselves of it... To treat them seriously would be to sanction them." C

A Appreciation of what is laughable or ridiculous

C Blaise Pascal (The Provincial Letters) quoting Tertullian

^B Teasing

- In his defiant open letter to the Roman magistrates in 197 AD he defends Christians against the charge that they endangered the Empire by refusing to worship the pagan gods (who supposedly defended the Roman world):
 - But you tell me that the Romans rule the world because of the gods, and we endanger state security by our failure to worship them, risking their anger. Well, since you captured those gods from foreigners, whom they failed signally to defend, it doesn't seem as if their help is worth much! So our refusal to worship them doesn't hurt you. On the contrary, we ask the Creator to help the empire. A real God is rather more useful than a fake one.
- ☐ He also comments that "gods are selected like onions" B and asks "does the status of each god really depend on a vote of the senate?" A
- ☐ Tertullian calls for freedom of worship arguing:
 - Surely every man is entitled to worship as he pleases. After all, noone, not even a man wants unwilling worship. A

- No, we don't worship your fake gods. We don't worship men, and you admit that your gods were all just that once. So how did they become gods? What did they do, that made them divine? They certainly didn't make the world, or anything that is in it. Nor do the whoring, raping, murderous crew you describe as gods deserve anything more than imprisonment in Tartarus, since that is where you would assign any man who behaved like that. A If they don't deserve that, why do you condemn in your courts men who do the same sorts of things? B
- But you don't worship them either. Not unless being impious and sacrilegious constitutes worship. You buy and sell your little household gods like pots, and tax your temples. You charge admittance one may not know the gods for nothing; they are for sale. You give your gods the useless bits of dead animals. In fact you do nothing for your gods that you don't for your dead the same altars, statues, emblems. You retail the vilest stories of your gods of their tantrums and adulteries. You allow the public theatres to display your gods as entertainment, played by the shameful wretches you have as actors. You allow the temples to act as brothels, and priests as panders. Even the temple-robbers are always of your faith! B

^A Greeks, Romans and indeed all pagans worshipped the Nephilim or fallen angels of Genesis 6, accurately described here.

B Apologeticum

- On the charge that some pagans made that the Christians worshipped a donkey-headed god, the cross or the sun, Tertullian has this to say:
 - But a few more lies to dispose of. We don't worship an ass-headed god we leave that to you, and your Anubis cult. A
 - This, perhaps, is your grievance against us, that, when surrounded by cattle-worshippers of every kind we are simply devoted to asses! B
 - Let us then see whether you are not here also found in our company ... You have amongst you gods with a dog's head, and a lion's head, with the horns of a cow, and a ram, and a goat, goat-shaped or serpentshaped, and winged in foot, head, and back. Why therefore brand our one God so conspicuously? B
 - We don't worship the cross, a bit of wood. Worshipping bits of wood idols is your trick. In fact the trophies of victory you adore all hang off cross-shaped bits of wood, so that's you, not us, once again. A
 - A few of the more refined of you think we worship the sun. Again, that is your practice, not ours. Instead we worship the one God, the creator. He gave us books to allow us to know him, unknowable as the infinite is of itself, and sent men to tell us about him. A

- □ And on the charge that Christians were treasonous because they didn't worship Caesar, Tertullian argues that Christians are more loyal citizens than the pagans and that, in accordance with the NT teachings, they prayed for their government.
 - The second charge is more serious, apparently treason against Caesar. Truly a living man is more important than a fake god, even to you! But we ask the real God to help him, not the fakes and demons. Of course we're just lying to you, but look in our holy books, which we don't conceal. And since the Roman empire holds off the end of the world, naturally we wish it to be preserved. But not by false honours, and dishonest applause, which Augustus himself rejected. Moreover your religion is of such a nature that frankly Caesar is dishonoured by being included in it, with its impious way of worship being positively

disrespectful to him.

But be serious - is it
really the Christians who
assassinate the emperors?

And wasn't every one of the
assassins worshipping the
emperor, right up until they
stabbed him; and even giving
the Christians the name of
public enemies while they
themselves plotted?

Church growth

Century	% Christian	Non- white	White	Evangelization of world	Scripture languages
1 st	0.6%	70%	30%	28%	6
2 nd	3.5%	68%	32%	32%	7
3 rd	10.4%	66.4%	33.6%	35%	10

- Around 200 AD, Tertullian, in his letter to the Roman magistrates opposing persecution of Christians, could boast that "nearly all the citizens of all the cities are Christians". A This statement, we suspect, is something of an exaggeration made for rhetorical effect, but it does show that the number of Christians was large.
- And with his typical sarcasm Tertullian says, "Of course we aren't treasonous - if we were, we are so numerous in even your own estimate that we outnumber your soldiers! If you killed us all, who would be left for you to rule?" A

Church growth

By AD 198 Tertullian could write, A "For upon whom else have the universal nations believed, but upon the Christ who is already come? ... Parthians, B Medes, B Elamites, B and they who inhabit Mesopotamia, C Armenia, Phrygia, ^D Cappadocia, ^D and they who dwell in Pontus, ^D and Asia, ^D and Pamphylia, D tarriers in Egypt, and inhabiters of the region of Africa which is beyond Cyrene, E Romans and sojourners, yes, and in Jerusalem Jews, and all other nations; as, for instance, by this time, the varied races of the Gaetulians, F and manifold confines of the Moors, G all the limits of the Spains, and the diverse nations of the Gauls, H and the haunts of the Britons - inaccessible to the Romans, but subjugated to Christ, and of the Sarmatians, B and Dacians, I and Germans, and Scythians, I and of many remote nations, and of provinces and islands many, to us unknown, and which we can scarce enumerate? In all which places the name of the Christ who is already come reigns, as of Him before whom the gates of all cities have been opened, and to whom none are closed, before whom iron bars have been crumbled, and brazen gates opened."

Answer to the Jews

Barran

Carraq

Data Turkey

Falgeria

African people

African people

Modern Romania & Moldova, and parts of Hungary, Bulgaria & Ukraine

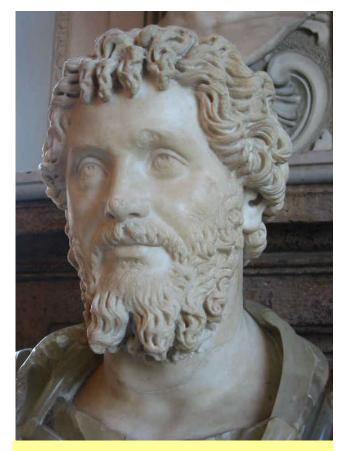
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Russia

Church growth

- ☐ At the beginning of the 3rd century, <u>Edessa (Urfa in Turkey)</u> <u>became the first Christian state.</u>
- □ Emperor Septimus Severus (202-211) persecuted and forbade conversion to Christianity. Then a generation of peace came for the church. <u>Amazing</u> growth and spread of faith continued and church buildings began to be <u>built</u>.
- □ North Africa was a key Christian center. <u>Egypt</u> alone had a million Christians by the end of the 3rd century.



Septimus Severus

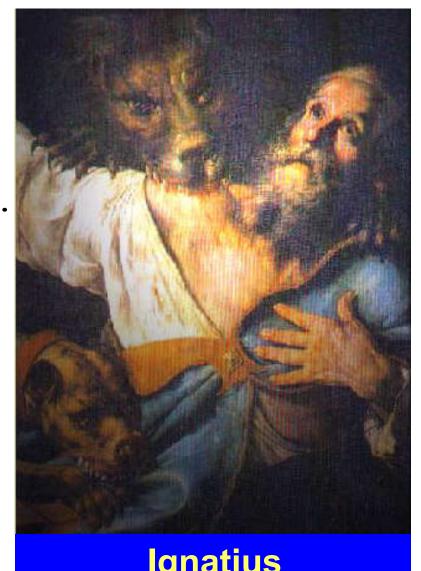
- Some people claim today that supernatural gifts ceased after the completion of the New Testament as they were no longer required. They claim that this is supported by a study of Church History.
- □ It's one thing to make a claim. We'll examine the evidence in each period of Church History starting with the 2nd & 3rd centuries which was after the last book of the NT (Revelation) was written.
- ☐ Justin Martyr (AD 100-165) says:

For the prophetic gifts remain with us even to the present time," and "Now it is possible to see among us women and men who possess gifts of the Spirit of God." A

For <u>numberless demoniacs throughout the</u>
<u>whole world</u>, and in your city, <u>many of our</u>
<u>Christians men exorcising them in the name</u>
<u>of Jesus Christ</u>, who was crucified under
Pontius Pilate, have healed and do heal,
rendering helpless and driving the possessing
devils out of the men." B

Justin Martyr

- \square Ignatius (AD 35-107), as the Bishop of Antioch and student of the apostle John, wrote "To the Philadelphians" just after AD 100. In the letter he makes reference to a prophetic message he spoke to them when he last visited them.
- ☐ The Didache, a brief early Christian treatise written somewhere between AD 50-200, contains instructions for Christian communities, and also acknowledged the legitimacy of apostolic and prophetic ministries, giving instruction regarding recognizing false prophets.
- ☐ The Shepherd of Hermes, written after the time of the first 12 apostles, depicts supernatural revelations and visions of the author.



Ignatius

- Irenaeus (~AD 125-200) was bishop (overseer) of Lugdunum in Gaul, which is now Lyon, France. He was born in Smyrna and a disciple of Polycarp, who was a disciple of the Apostle John. He laments those who "set aside at once both the Gospel and the prophetic Spirit," emphasizing that Paul, "expressly speaks of prophetical gifts, and recognizes men and women prophesying in the Church." A
- He states: "For some do certainly and truly drive out devils, so that those who have been thus cleansed from evil spirits frequently both believe, and join themselves to the Church. Others have foreknowledge of things to come: they see visions and utter prophetic expressions. Others still heal the sick by laying their hands upon them, and they are made whole. Yea, moreover, as I have said, the dead even have been raised up, and remained among us for many years. And what shall I more say? It is not possible to name the number of gifts which the Church throughout the whole world has received from God in the name of Jesus Christ...In like manner we do also hear many brethren in the Church who possess prophetic gifts and who through the Spirit speak all kinds of languages, and bring to light for the general benefit the hidden things of men, and declare the mysteries of God." A

- Tertullian states, "For seeing that <u>we acknowledge the spiritual charismata</u>, or gifts, we too have merited the attainment of <u>the prophetic gift</u>." He speaks of a woman in the congregation, "whose lot it has been to be favored with sundry <u>gifts of revelation</u>," experiencing visitations from angels and the Lord Himself. She <u>knew the secrets of peoples' hearts</u> and was able to give answer to some of their deepest needs, including <u>physical healing</u>.
 - These divine gifts did not go unchecked as Tertullian says, "All her communications are examined with the most scrupulous care in order that their truth may be probed." A
- He gives this advice for newly baptized converts, "Therefore, you blessed ones, for whom the grace of God is waiting, when you come up from that most sacred washing of the new birth... ask of your Lord, that special grants of grace and apportionments of spiritual gifts be yours. Ask, he says, and ye shall receive. So now, you have sought, and have found: you have knocked, and it has been opened to you. This only I pray, that as you ask you also have in mind Tertullian, a sinner." B

- He challenges the Marcionite heretics, stating, "Let Marcion then exhibit, as gifts of his god, some prophets such as have not spoken by human sense, but with the Spirit of God, such as have predicted things to come and have made manifest the secrets of the heart; let him produce a psalm, a vision, a prayer only let it be by the spirit, in an ecstasy, that is, in a rapture, whenever an interpretation of tongues has occurred to him. Now all these signs are forthcoming from my side without any difficulty." A
- □ Tertullian also refers to the continued practice of the 1st Century Church, of the laying-on of hands: "the hand is laid on us, invoking and inviting the Holy Spirit through benediction." B

A Against Marcion

^B On Baptism

- □ And of deliverance from demons he writes:
 - And heaven knows how many distinguished men, to say nothing of the common people, have been cured either of devils or of their sicknesses. A
 - You say we are just another spin-off of philosophy, then. Well why don't you persecute your philosophers, then, when they say the gods are fake, or bark against the emperors. Perhaps it is because the name of 'philosopher' does not drive out demons like 'Christian' does. A
 - Your own writers pay plenty of testimony to other spiritual natures. The books of Moses make clear their nature they are corrupt angels, demons... They cause disease, which they are kind enough then to heal! You know how magicians are imagine what evils the powers they draw upon are like. And such are your gods. Produce one of your 'inspired' men, with his demon, and let any Christian you please talk to him. The demon will soon confess that he is a demon! Try it, and if he doesn't, hang the impudent Christian forthwith. The name of Christ will compel them to talk true, and what then is left of your 'gods', if they admit themselves they are demons? A

- Origen (AD 185-284) writes, "Some give evidence of their having received through this faith a marvelous power by the cures which they perform, invoking no other name over those who need their help than that of the God of all things, and of Jesus, along with a mention of His history. For by these means we too have seen many persons freed from grievous calamities, and from distractions of mind, and madness, and countless other ills, which could not be cured neither by men nor devils." He also comments that any diminuendo of signs and miracles are the result of a lack of holiness and purity among the Christians in his day. A
- Novatian (AD 210-280) was an elder of the early church in Rome. He writes, "This is he [the Holy Spirit] who places prophets in the Church, instructs teachers, directs tongues, gives power and healings, does wonderful works, offers discrimination of spirits, affords powers of government, suggests counsels, and orders and arranges whatever other gifts there are of charismata; and thus making the Lord's Church everywhere, and in all, perfected and completed." B

A Origen: Against Celsus

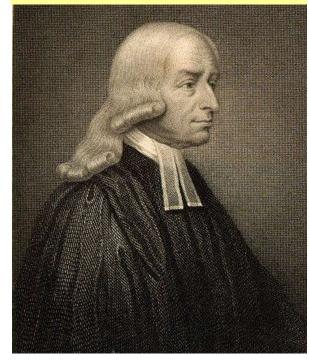
B Novation: The Trinity

- Cyprian (AD 195-258), a bishop in Carthage, relates, "For besides the visions of the night, by day also, the innocent age of boys is among us filled with the Holy Spirit, seeing in an ecstasy with their eyes, and hearing and speaking those things whereby the Lord condescends to warn and instruct us." A
- Anthony the Great (c. 251-356) healed sick people and cast out demons. Athanasius writes of him, "Through him the Lord healed the bodily ailments of many present, and cleansed others from evil spirits." B

- A The Epistles of Cyprian
- B Life of Anthony

- Montanus ministered during the 2nd Century. He and his followers affirmed the gift of prophecy and speaking in tongues under the 'possession' of the Holy Spirit. Many list Montanism under the heresies of this period, but it appears to me to be a Pentecostal movement.
- Despite the grim picture portrayed by their enemies, Montanism was nonetheless defended by Tertullian, who later joined their ranks. Largely due to this, he was not canonised (i.e. the later Catholic church never declared him a 'saint'), something that wouldn't have bothered him.
- In later history John Wesley (the founder of Methodism) also defended Montanus, "I was fully convinced of what I had once suspected: 1) That the Montanists, in the second and third centuries, were real Scriptural Christians; and 2) That the grand reason why the miraculous gifts were so soon withdrawn was not only that faith and holiness were well nigh lost, but that dry, formal orthodox men began even then to ridicule whatever gifts they had not themselves, and to decry them all as either madness or imposture." A

John Wesley



Nehemiah Curnack, ed., vol.3 of "The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley A.M."



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