Notes for *A History of Christian Thought* by Justo L. Gonzalez (Vol. 1)

**Introduction**

- History of Christian thought – necessarily a theological undertaking
- Historian must begin by selecting the material to be used; choose rules guiding this selection – subjectivity is inherent in the process
- Adolph von Harnack – the focus was not the person of Jesus – his teachings
- For him all the later doctrinal development marked a distortion of original Christianity
- Nygren – task of historian “investigative motifs” – establishes antithesis between Christian agape motif and Jewish law motif
- Presents a picture of Luther in which the Law had lost importance
- Roman Catholic historians – emphasized continuity
- Gonzales’s presuppositions – the truth found where the eternal unites with the historical; where God becomes flesh
- Truth exists only within the realm of the eternal
- This idea held by many Greek thinkers – but denied the incarnation; led to Docetism
- Truth is relative? Incompatible with the fundamental doctrine of Christianity
- This idea often coincides with Ebionite Christology
- Christianity – affirms the truth that is given in the concrete, historical, and the particular
- Truth of God is not limited to the references of history
- The relation between truth and history – serves as a starting point
- Also – the Scriptures must be seen as the measuring stick by which to judge doctrine
- Never has been unanimous agreement about how and when doctrine becomes dogma
- Hence Gonzalez chose to write a history of Christian thought – not a history of Christian dogma

**Chapter 2 – The Cradle of Christianity**

- Christianity born in a manger
- Christianity not an ethereal, eternal doctrine about God’s nature; it is the presence of God in the world
- Christianity arose in Israel; Israel always object of pagan greed; felt the force of Assyria, Babylon, Greece
- After Alexander – Seleucids and Ptolemies
- Threw off Syrian rule; 165 BC
- Next great empire – Rome 63 BC
- Jews difficult to govern – strict laws; strictly monotheistic
- The law – the center of their religion; both ceremonial and practical
- Impossible that the law could cover all areas of life – made experts of the law essential; showed how its precepts were to be applied
- Minutely detailed applications
- Pharisees – emphasized importance of personal religion
• Sadducees – accepted only Torah; denied resurrection, future life, angels and demons, predestination
• Essenes – eschatological; and purist; 3 important figures to them:
  1. Teacher of righteousness
  2. Messiah of Israel
  3. Messiah of Aaron
• Emphasized laws of ceremonial purity; withdrew from cities
• Part of wider circle of Judaism that was apocalyptic; this school of thought – probably originated in Zoroastrianism; cosmic dualism between good and evil
• Jewish thought – God will conquer evil and establish a new age
• Important apocalyptic books – Danie, I I Enoch, and Apocalypse of Baruch
• Title “Son of Man” – popular in such circles
• Note the essential unity of the Jewish religion; Temple and Law unity them – fundamental aspects of Judaism
• 2 principle tenets of Judaism:
  1. Ethical monotheism
  2. Messianic and eschatological hope
• All expected God to save Israel from her moral and political woes
• Kingdom of David to be restored;
• Son of Man – normally more universal; to establish a new heavens and earth
• Jews – a people of hope; incorrect to see their religion as simply legalistic
• Jews of Diaspora – not assimilated by their pagan neighbors
• Had certain zones in their cities; own laws, customs – cities within cities
• All united by the Law and the Temple
• Use of Hebrew everywhere was declining; OT translated into Aramaic
• Alexandrian Jews – wished to share and defend their religion – produced the LXX
• Not the product of a single effort – took more than a century
• Greeks read the OT – discussions with them meant Jews had to become familiar with Greek thought
• NT Greek – derives its religious thought from the LXX
• Jews argued that Judaism was superior to competing schools of thought – argued that Greek philosophy derived from their Scriptures (Moses)
• Philo – strove to interpret the OT in way that was compatible with the Academy
• Taught that Scripture teaches the same things as Plato – but uses allegory to do so
• Never denied the historical and literal meaning – saw allegorical meanings as well
• Philo’s conception of God influenced by the Greeks – God is impassible and transcendent
• Needs intermediate beings to influence the creation – one is logos
• This logos in some ways resembles Jesus – in some ways not (eg he is apart from and inferior to God)
• Philo – the body is ballast to the soul; reason opposes the senses – purification frees a person from sensual passions that enslave soul and body
• First Century Judaism – also proto-gnostic trends
• Greco-Roman World – political and cultural unity; because of widespread Greek thought
• Ancient Greek thought – aristocratic and racist; later Greek thought less exclusive
• Alexander put an end to exclusivism; Greek superiority to the barbarian – cultural not racial
• Alexander’s conquests – repressed local cultures for a time – they later emerged somewhat transformed and expanded greatly
• These revivals took place within first century – exact time of Christianity’s birth
• Plato – very influential; appealed to personal religious pursuits
• In time – people skeptical of the gods – philosophy turned to instead; Neo-Platonism became popular
• Plato – had great influence on early Christian thought; esp re:
  1. The two worlds
  2. Immortality of the soul
  3. Knowledge as reminiscence
  4. The idea of the Good
• Note differences – future life not a gift from God but natural outworking
• True knowledge claimed to come from ideas alone – not the senses
• The Good – similarities between Genesis and the Timaeus
• The latter established dichotomy between the Supreme Being and the creator
• Later custom arose in the church – speaking of God in same terms that Palato used for the Good (impassive, infinite, incomprehensible)
• Stoics – universal subject to universal reason (logos); all reason and energy found in the logos
• From universal reason comes universal order of things; this order called natural law; imprinted on our being
• Stoicism – one of the most popular philosophical systems in the empire
• Natural law they spoke about – the foundation of Christian ethics
• Epicureanism – lost its appeal before advent of Christianity
• Aristotle – philosophy still had appeal (eg the unmoved mover) – Plato was predominant in the church
• So – an eclectic spirit characterized the first centuries AD
• Schools influenced each other – graded into each other;
• Few could engage in strict philosophical studies; so few truly understood what the great philosophers actually taught;
• This contributed to the eclecticism of the period
• National religion – tied gods to the nation; cannot exist when nation loses its identity
• Explains the rise of the mystery cults – emphasize personal salvation
• Ancient fertility rites – based on yearly crop cycle (“death and resurrection”)
• In winter god withdrew – returned in the spring; such religions were individualistic – crossed cultural borders
Often featured a ceremonial meal – faithful ingested the god and became participants in divinity

Mystery religions – reached full development in 2nd – 3rd centuries – exactly when their similar features to Christianity appear

Obvious the borrowed from Christianity – but Christianity also borrowed from them;

Eg – Dec 25 a pagan holiday (connected with Mithra) turned into Christmas

Emperor worship – did not originate with Rome – common in other countries before

Originally in Rome – the great deified after death; Emperor worship began in the eastern Roman empire; took time to be adopted in the west

Hellenistic period – characterized by religious syncretism;

Every cult competed with the others to be the broadest – to include the most diverse doctrines

Wise administration of the Roman empire – left its mark on the organization of the church

Roman legal code served as canon law – Latin theological vocabulary drawn from it as well

Chapter 3 – The Theology of the Apostolic Fathers

8 Apostolic Fathers:
1. Clement of Rome
2. Didache
3. Ignatius
4. Polycarp
5. Papias
6. Epistle of Barnabas
7. Shepherd of Hermas
8. To Diognetus

Give us a glimpse into the problems faced by the church (persecution, conflicts with Judaism and Paganism)

Clement of Rome – bishop towards end of first century

Wrote epistle to Corinth – normally dated AD 96 [seems wrong to me – in his letter it sounds as though the Temple in Jerusalem is still operational JF]

Note the letter is from church to church – not from the bishop of Rome to another church

In Corinth – divisions; epistle to them is practical – appeals to unity

Draws from two sources – OT character studies and examples and stoic doctrine of natural harmony

Natural harmony – said to derive from the character of God

God: “sovereign of all things” – stoic phrase – shows their influence over Clement

His is nonetheless Trinitarian; Christ is pre-existent and Savior
• Calls bishops presbyters – wrote at a time when there was no fixed distinction between them
• 2nd Clement – not written by him (prob before AD 150) – to call believers to repentance
• Same theme found in the Shepherd of Hermas
• Christology of 2nd Clement confused and unclear – affirms Christ’s divinity and humanity – but confuses him with the HS
• Didache – no certain date; probably 1st century – if 2nd century then probably used older sources
• 2 main sections: 1) the two ways; 2) liturgical instructions
• The first section (the two ways) draws upon a document also used in the Epistle of Barnabas though modified
• Second section – covers baptism, distinguishes Christians from hypocrites
• Instructions on the Lord’s supper ordinance and the love feasts
• Followed by a manual on discipline – instructions on how to deal with false prophets
• Eucharist referred to as a sacrifice –
• Bishops and deacons – elected by the congregation –
• Last section – discussion on the end of the world – how to be prepared for it
• Written at a time when the agape and the Eucharist were not clearly distinguished
• Written when the prophets are highly esteemed – later hierarchy of the church will take their place

Ignatius of Antioch

• Early 2nd century – condemned to die – on route to Rome
• Wrote 7 letters. 4 from Smyrna:
  1. To Magnesia
  2. Tralles
  3. Ephesus
  4. Rome
• From Troas:
  1. To Smyrna
  2. To Polycarp
  3. To Philadelphia
• Concerned mostly about false doctrines and divisions in the church
• Attacked false doctrines – stressed the authority of the bishop
• 2 kinds of false doctrines:
  1. Denial of the physicality of Jesus; 2. Judaizing trends (turned Christ into a mere teacher)
• The reason why Ignatius opposed both the Docetists and Judaizers
• Ignatius is clear that Jesus is god made human; never explored how this union was possible
- He is closer to John than to Paul re: the work of Christ – the core of Christianity is revelation to him – God cannot be known apart from revelation in Christ
- Should not exaggerate the difference between Ignatius and Paul
- Christ’s victory over the devil – offers us victory over death and division
- This work of Christ comes to us through the church and the sacraments
- He is first to speak of the Catholic church
- Unity of the church – based upon its hierarchy - represents God the Father, Christ, the Apostles; parallel to the bishop, deacons, and presbyters
- He is the first witness to the existence of a monarchical episcopacy
- Re: the Eucharist – called it the flesh of Christ; medicine of immortality – not that he also referred to the Gospel and faith as the flesh of Christ and love as his blood
- Eucharist represents the passion of Christ – the believer is united to that passion
- Certain that he read the Gospel of Matthew and 1 Corinthians; his theology of closer John’s Gospel than of Paul
- May be that one influenced the other or that they were both of the same school
- Ignatius and the mystery religions – difficult to distinguish between elements that passed from mysteries to Ignatius or vice versa

Polycarp of Smyrna
- Theological outlook similar to John’s Gospel and Ignatius

Papias of Heriapolis
- Wrote Exposition of the Sayings of the Lord (5 volumes) – now lost
- Believed in a literal return of Christ and 1,000 year reign

Epistle of Barnabas
- Written in Alexandria c AD 135
- 2 parts – doctrinal and practical
- Doctrinal – allegorical interpretation of the OT; useful in linking the 2 Testaments
- Reason why Clement and Origen held this epistle in high regard
- Does not deny that the OT narratives are true – but sees them as pointing to Jesus as well
- Second part – repeats the teaching of the 2 ways; draws from the same source as the Didache
- Affirms the pre-existence of Christ as well as his participation in creation
- Christ will return as judge; saw the world as 6,000 years old – God created the world in six days (a day as a 1,000 years)

Shepherd of Hermas
- Lived end of 1st cent – beginning of 2nd – a prophet in the Roman church
- Main concern – lack of dedication and zeal in some believers
- Structure:
  - Five visions
• 12 mandates
• 10 parables
• 5 visions – exhortation to penance and steadfastness
• 12 mandates – summaries of the duties of a Christian
• Clear that no sin is unforgivable as long as there is opportunity to repent
• 10 parables – bring together the teachings of the mandates and the visions
• Especially concerned with practical of moral matters
• For Hermas – Christianity is a series of precepts that are to be followed
• Refers to the Savior as the Son of God – identifies him as the Holy Spirit
• Sees the church as pre-existent; the world created for her
• Mid 2nd cent – no mention of the monarchical episcopate in Rome
• Other Christian literature: Ancient Jewish texts – interpolated by Christians; Some works that claim apostolic origin
  • Ascension of Isaiah
  • Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs
  • Second Book of Enoch
  • Sibylline Oracles
  • Gospel of Peter
  • Revelation of Peter
  • Gospel According to the Hebrews
  • Epistle of the 12 Apostles
• General view – a basic unity behind this diversity
• Asia Minor and Syria – united in their theology; contrast with Rome and Alexandria
• Asia Minor – John, Ignatius, Polycarp, Papias – Christianity not principally a moral teaching but union with the Savior
• In Rome – Christianity takes moral and ethical direction – leads to moralism and legalism
• Jesus seen as the teacher of a new law; fundamental element of Christian life is unity
• Alexandria – ethical interest like Rome; less interested in the historical events of the OT
• All agree in the pre-existence of Christ, his divinity and humanity
• All see in baptism true power of purification
• Eucharist the center of Christian worship
• Distance between the theology of Paul and the apostolic fathers – the new faith becomes a new law

Chapter 4 – The Greek Apologists

• Christians in 2nd century – not sought out but punished if turned in
• Necessary to attack paganism and refute accusations against Christianity
• Popular accusations based on rumors – probably based on misunderstandings of Christian doctrine and ordinance
• More sophisticated attacks on Christianity – charge of incompetency of Christian teachers; Christian God unworthy; resurrection absurd; Christians accused of opposing the state – all answered by the 2nd cent apologists
Aristides
- Most ancient apologist – wrote to emperor before AD 138
- God described in negative terms mostly; the first mover of all things
- Claims Christians are the only ones who have found the truth
- Christians a new race with superior customs
- Eschatological expectations – a terrible judgment of the world when Christ returns

Justin Martyr
- The most important Greek apologist
- Saw Christianity as true philosophy
- First apology to emperor – argued that Christians should be understood before being condemned
- Therefore expositions the name Christian –
  - 2nd apology – explores relationship between Christianity and Pagan philosophy
  - Dialogue w Trypho – debate with a Jewish critic
  - Justin’s task – address problem of Christianity’s relationship between paganism and the OT
- His solution was the Logos doctrine – a concept/word that had meaning in both systems of thought
- His doctrine follows Philo – seems to be his main source
- Others knew the Word in part – Christians know him fully in Christ
- Pagan philosophers contradict each other – how to tell which is true?
- Christians alone can pronounce on this because they know the Truth incarnate
- OT refers to the NT in 2 ways: events that point to other events and prophecy
- Note that typological interpretation is not the same as allegory – the former accepts the literal, historical truth of an OT passage
- Justin middle Platonic – God is wholly other; in order to communicate with the world God has begotten the Logos
- Justin tendency to speak of the Father and Son as two gods; did not deny Christian monotheism;
  - Relationship between Father and Son like the sun and its light
  - The Eucharist – the flesh and blood of Jesus; still food that nourishes however
  - Stresses the doctrines of incarnation and resurrection
  - Insists that the soul is mortal (contra many Greek thinkers); Christians hope in the resurrection of the dead – not the idea that souls are universally immortal
  - Also affirmed a literal 1,000 year reign of Christ in New Jerusalem
  - Attempted a Christian interpretation of Hellenism and Judaism
  - Saw that only Christianity provided the correct vantage point to make these interpretations
Tatian

- Converted in Rome by Justin; after AD 165 founded his own school
- Founded the sect of the Encratites – little known about them
- Wrote *Address to the Greeks* – purpose to show Greek philosophy and conduct much inferior to Christianity
- Pointed out that Moses was earlier than Homer
- Center of his theology is God and the Word (Logos)
- Logos – the first begotten work of the Father – though the Logos is eternal
- Affirms human freewill – sees it as the root problem;
- Also affirms that the soul is not immortal

Athenagoras

- Contemp w/ tatian
- The most clear and correct of all 2nd cent Christian writers
- Answers the charge of atheism by pointing out that many pagans (not considered atheists) said things that are similar to Christian claims about God
- Saw the Logos as God’s reason; resided eternally in the mind of God
- Lays more emphasis on the unity of Father and Son than Justin did
- Rejects the charges of immorality against Christians
- Sees positive value in pagan philosophy – but sees Christianity much superior because its proponents are not led by the impulses of their souls
- This is why the pagans contradict one another

Theophilus of Antioch

- AD 180 – bishop of Antioch – wrote to persuade a friend
- 3 books to Autoclytus
- Interprets the OT; shows moral superiority of Christianity
- The first Christian author to use the term “Trinity”
- Draws distinction between:
  - Immanent Word – always existed in the mind or heart of God
  - Expressed Word – begotten before all things

Hermias

- Aimed to show the errors of pagan philosophy – showed how the philosophers contradicted each other
- Humorous treatment of the subject

Epistle to Diognetus
Beautiful and noble defense of the Christian faith
Refutes pagan religion and Jewish customs
Describes the nature of Christian faith in a positive and simple way
Christians are everywhere – living lives like others, get married, have jobs, etc; but morally superior – they do not destroy their offspring
Yet they are hated by many – “yet those who hate them are unable to assign any reason for their hatred.” (p. 117)

Melito of Sardis

Philosophical concept play no role in his apology
Same theology as others – Christ is pre-existent and divine; almost erases the distinction between Father and Son
But affirms clearly that Christ is by nature both God and man

General View

Apologists wanted to present their faith to the pagans – needed to systematize their thought
Used the concept of Logos to open the way to dialogue between faith and culture
Seem to look at Christianity as a doctrine – moral or philosophical
Christ is (above all) the teacher of a new morality or of the true philosophy

Chapter 5 – The Early Heresies: Challenge and Response

Converts made from several religious and cultural backgrounds
Influenced their interpretation of Christianity
At the same time – other religions incorporating Christian elements into their systems
Variety of doctrines arose – all claimed to be the correct understanding of Christianity

Judaizing

First doctrinal problem face by the church; needed to know the believer’s relationship to the OT law
Moderates – followed the law but did not compel others;
Extreme – followed the law and felt that Christians should do so
Some – even affirmed that Paul was an apostate
Also claimed that Christ was not the Son of God from the beginning; claimed he had been adopted (Ebionites – related to Essene Judaism)
Rejection of animal sacrifices – also saw good and evil principles
Good principle revealed in the world by prophets; accompanied by an evil messenger who opposes
The one who opposed Jesus was John the Baptist [!]
Jesus’ mission – call humankind to submission under the law
Saw all OT law as from the good principle – except those pertaining to animal sacrifices;
These from the evil principle
• Jesus set an example; Paul was a servant of the evil principle
• Ebionism – never a very widespread doctrine
• Still an important competitor – the uniqueness of Christ was a stake
• Some influenced by Gnosticism – Elxai – claimed to have had revelation from God;
• Jesus only a prophet; people must keep the law; various astrological speculations; numerology and dualistic tendencies

Gnosticism
• Main characteristic was syncretism
• Makes it hard to trace its exact origin
• Dualistic, mysteries, astrology, philosophy – and every other doctrine that circulated in the 2nd cent
• Above all – claimed to be a way of personal salvation; this was searched for after Alexander’s conquests – more than national religion
• Christianity, Mysteries and Gnosticism – all claimed to be the way of personal salvation
• Gnosticism – liberation of the spirit = salvation; spirit not part of this world – part of the divine substance;
• Goal to free the spirit through knowledge – mystical revelation of the eternal
• Need a messenger to bring liberating revelation – Christ is the messenger in Gnostic Christianity
• Initial monism – emanations until the physical world is reached – creation through an imperfect emanation
• Emanations (aeons) – produced IAW a specific numerical pattern
• Two approaches to the flesh:
  o Extreme asceticism
  o Extreme libertinism
• Opposed to Christian doctrine of creation
• Christians also affirmed that salvation included the physical body
• Gnostics denied that Christ came in the flesh – though he appeared to (Docetism)
• Ancient tradition – Simon Magus the founder of Gnosticism;
• Acts 8 – had an ample following; claimed he was God – baptized as a Christian – shows the syncretistic spirit of Gnosticism
• Menander – disciple of Simon – claimed he was a savior
• Cerinthus – first to interpret Christian Gospel IAW Gnostic presuppositions – end of 1rst cent
• Distinguished between Jesus and Christ; opposed by John
• Saturninus – disciple of Menander – world made by 7 angels; - one was the god of the Jews
• Sect of Carpocratians – Alexandria AD 130 – Neoplatonic; salvation achieved by recalled pre-existence
• Alexandria – also place where Basilides was active AD 120-140; claimed disciple of Matthias;
- Taught that the Father is the origin of all heavenly beings – several orders of beings emanate from him;
- A divine spark in man trapped in flesh – Father sent to the Son to liberate it; Son did not become man (as in orthodox Christianity); not crucified – Simon of Cyrene took his place
- Valentinus – early life in Alexandria; in Rome AD 155 expelled from the church; in him Gnosticism of Syria and Orient reached Rome;
- Taught there is an eternal principle (Bythos) – purely transcendent; unknown – complex mythology/theology – complicated pairs of aeons from Bythos; last is Sophia from whom the material world comes – a transgression
- Solution – Bythos created 2 new aeons – Christ and the HS – to re-establish order in the Pleroma
- More complicated mythology – Sophia created a Demiurge in order to give form to matter and soul;
- Christ descended on Jesus at baptism but left before his passion – His mission to bring gnosis
- Gnosticism in all its forms emphasizes personal salvation – well-adjusted to the syncretistic spirit of the time
- Marcion – expelled from the church AD 144; one of the most dangerous rivals to Christianity;
- Gnostics made schools – he made a church; claimed it was a restoration of true Christianity;
- His theology dualistic – god of this world worshipped by the Jews – not the God of the NT;
- OT god vindictive; NT God loving; may have seen the OT God as evil at first but later changed to view him as just – contrast became between justice and love;
- Supreme God – does not rule this world – high above it
- Marcion not a true Gnostic – did not believe that knowledge brought salvation;
- Believed in Paul’s writings and Luke (but altered to agree with his teachings);
- Shows no speculative interest – unlike Gnostic systems;
- Denied that Christ was truly human – otherwise would have been under the rule of the OT creator;
- His theology – an exaggerated Paulinism; called for a new discovery of the unmerited grace of God – good! Needed to combat the legalism that threatened the church
- Montanism – Montanus baptized AD 155 – claimed he was possessed by the HS; joined by two prophetesses – Priscilla and Maxilla; claimed they began a new dispensation;
- New revelation – did not really contradict NT – but new eschatological details and moral rigor;
- Claimed New Jerusalem was coming soon to Pepuzza – many moved there in expectation;
- Well-organized hierarchal structure – rapid spread; Tertullian became a convert
- Main problem was that it endangered the finality of the revelation given in Christ
- Monarchianism – originally used in defense of the doctrine of God’s unity (contrast with Gnostic doctrines of aeons or dualism of Marcion);
2 kinds of monarchianism:
1 – Dynamic – divinity in Christ was an impersonal power from God; held by Theodotus and Paul of Samosata
2 – Modalist - God is one being and one person (the Father); Father and Son were modes in which God appeared

Reaction of the True Church – surprisingly uniform; appealed to similar instruments:
  o Apostolic authority
  o Apostolic succession

Succession – appealed to by Clement of Rome; Ignatius emphasized the authority of the bishop (representatives of Christ)
Christians joined the ideas – uninterrupted chain of bishops = truth and authority
Canon – claimed first by Marcion; church reacted with her own canonical lists;
Already had in mind that a canon existed – eg. Justin (Memoirs of the Apostles = the Gospels)
NT canon – basic outline fixed by 2nd half of 2nd cent
Paul’s letters and Acts – enjoyed authority from the time of composition
Pastoral epistles written early 2nd cent to combat heresy [I total disagree JF]
Contrast – Gnostics claimed that secret knowledge passed down from some apostle or other; church appealed to claims of all the apostles – open history; all their successors taught the same things
Systematic summary of the faith needed – NT by itself too complex; complicated
Rule of Faith developed – grew out of list of questions asked to baptismal candidate
Later adapted to be an affirmation of faith; seen in Hippolytus, Tertullian;
Used traditional terms to refute the innovations of the heretics:
  o Father “almighty” – means he rules the physical world
  o “His” Son – relationship between Christ and the world’s ruler
  o “virgin” birth – refutes Ebionites, Gnostics, Docetists
So – the Creed; the Canon; and Succession – all reactions to the heretics
Also – great theological activity; churchmen began to think deeply about theological issues; sought understanding

Chapter 6 - Irenaeus

Earliest anti-heretical writer (whose writings extant)
Born Asia Minor AD 135 – knew Polycarp; became Bishop of Lyons;
Sought for peace and unity in the church – reconciled east and west in dispute over Easter
Died AD 202
Wrote Against Heresies (5 books)
Expounds doctrine of Gnostics; refutes them based on common sense; refutes them based on Scripture
Showed continuity between OT and NT –
Also wrote Demonstration of Apostolic Preaching (aka Epideixis) – confession of faith expounded systematically and historically; intended to strength the faith of believers
• Begins with God the Creator – created ex nihilo; stresses that the God of Creation is our Savior
• Subtle aspects of Trinitarian doctrine – God is Father, Son and HS – made no attempt to discuss their exact relationship
• The human creature itself not the image of God – this image not found in us; the direction in which we are to grow
• The future incarnation of the Word was the model
• Adam and Eve – not created perfect – designed to grow in that image of God which is the Son
• Adam and Eve – created like children; designed to grow and develop;
• Created free – possibility of fulfilling God’s purpose;
• Angels – also created free but without the purpose of growth
• This provoked Satan’s jealousy – tempted the first couple;
• They succumbed and broke the divine plan;
• Satan – really opposed to God’s plans – God will triumph in the end;
• God is Lord even of the instruments that the devil employs
• Adam – gave himself up to the devil – all humanity slaves of the devil
• So – the fall is an interruption of human development; very different understanding of the fall than in the West
• God’s plan is single – though made manifest in several covenants with/through:
  0 Adam
  0 Noah
  0 Moses
  0 Christ
• The Law – purpose to retrain our sinfulness
• Moral law – still demands our obedience
• Ancient rites of the ceremonial law – abolished
• Christ – the center of Irenaeus’ theology;
• Recapitulation – fundamental doctrine for him – Christ the head of a new humanity
• A new starting point – Christ the new Adam; in him the history of the first Adam is repeated – though in opposite direction
• Adam – from virgin soil; Christ from Mary the virgin
• Satan – managed to alienate humans from the image of God;
• In Christ – that image is united to us;
• Ireneus – does not discuss the union of divinity and humanity in Christ as though they were two opposed natures;
• Christ – lived the totality of human life – saves us from its servitude to the power of Satan
• The church – Christ’s body; In her Christ advances his work of recapitulation;
• Though baptism and Lord’s supper – by which we are united to Christ;
• Baptism – the start of the Christian life – when we become part of the new humanity;
• Eucharist – no detailed exposition by Irenaeus – stated that believers were nourished by the body and blood of Christ;
• Creation not to be despised – Christ used bread and wine (both part of creation) to nourish us
• Must preserve the unity of the body – why Irenaeus reacted to the heretics
• Introduces the doctrine of apostolic succession -
• His theology – grounded in the Bible;
• Among the first Christian writers to seek a theological meaning of history

Chapter 7 – Tertullian

• Born AD 150 - Lived in Rome after conversion;
• AD 207 – left the church in Carthage – became a Montanist
• Apology – AD 197; other works before he became a Montanist:
  o To the Gentiles
  o The Testimony of the Soul
  o To the Martyrs
  o Prescription Against Heretics
  o Against Praxeas
  o Against Marcion
  o On Penance
  o On Patience
  o To His Wife
  o On Fasting
  o On Modesty
  o Exhortation to Chastity
• Sources of his theology – Christian tradition (found in Greek apologists) and his legal training
• Saw the Gospel as a new law – his apologetic a legal argument;
• Often influenced by Stoicism
• Tertullian a practical and concrete thinker – argues that opponents of Christianity are out of order – proceedings should not continue
• His Prescription against heretics – not intended to discuss doctrines of heretics; designed to deny heretics the right to argue against the orthodox
• Tertullian not a blind irrationalist – does not promote unrestrained speculation;
• Actual revelation from God is primary -
• Core of Tertullian’s argument – heretics have no right to the Scripture – so discussion with them about the Bible is out of order
• Bible belongs to the church – also the Rule of Faith – given by the apostles to their successors; unanimity in the doctrines of the churches;
• Always made use of the Scriptures – they alone have the right to use and interpret the Scriptures
• Short time after writing his defense – became a Montanist;
• Praxeaus – almost nothing known about him; came to Rome – combatted Montanism
• Tertullian – monarchy = a government is one; applied to God – divine economy
• Two terms used:
  o Substance – legal sense (not metaphysical); the property of a person and their right to make use of it
  o Person – legal person; any one who has a substance; possible for several persons to have the same substance
• Father, Son, and HS – share a single and undivided substance
• Exact meaning of the terms used by Tertullian to describe the Trinity – ambiguous
• status, sunstantia, potestas – refers to unity of God
• gradus, forma, species – refer to diversity
• Tertullian – tends to overemphasize the distinction between the persons; actually states that there was a time when the Son did not exist (p. 180)
• Nevertheless – he foreshadowed the basic formula that the Western church would adopt
• His Christology – anti-Docetic;
• Just as Trinity – 3 persons with the same substance; in Christ – one person with two substances
• Saw the soul and God as corporeal beings – soul derived from parents (traducianism) – original sin inherited
• Baptism – washes away sin; admittance into eternal life
• Eucharist – not clear or detailed
• Tertullian’s work – important – created terminology capable of expressing the more refined theological issues
• Trinitarian formula – greatly anticipated the ulterior development of that doctrine

Chapter 8 – The School of Alexandria: Clement and Origen

• Alexandria – famous as a rich center of knowledge
• An eclectic mass of different doctrines – different doctrines from the East converged there
• Jews brought their Scriptures there; also –
• Babylonians brought astrology; Persians brought Dualism
• Also mystery religions
• Hellenistic period – characterized by individualism; syncretistic tendencies – eclectic doctrines
• **Plotinian Neo-Platonism** – Plotinus an eclectic – drew upon Plato, Aristotle, Stoicism;
• His thought begins with the One – emanation goes forth from the perfect One towards imperfection and multiplicity;
• Each of us a soul imprisoned in a body – task: overcome the bonds of our bodies and ascend to mystical union with the One
• **Pantaenus** – founded a private school in Alexandria; succeeded by Clement
• **Origen** – 18 yrs old – prepared candidates for baptism; later founded a new school
- **School of Alexandria** – does not refer to a particular institution; rather a theological school or tendency
- **Clement of Alexandria** – born in Athens; met Pantaenus in Alexandria
- Clement argued it was possible to be rich and still be saved; must be grateful and willing to share
- Affirms that truth is to be found also in ancient philosophers and poets
- Strove to lead believers to higher standards of behavior
- Places himself with Justin and Athenagoras; not with Tertullian and Tatian
- Sometimes affirms that the philosophers took best ideas from the Hebrews;
- Admits that they learned some philosophy directly from God
- Claims that philosophy given to the Greeks – same purpose the law was given to the Jews – a handmaid to lead to Christ
- Jews had their prophets – Greeks also (Homer, Pythagoras, Plato);
- Impossible to prove first principles – accepted only by an act of will – of faith
- Knowledge characterized by faith; the two are separable
- Clement – never doubts the Scriptures are God-inspired;
- Used allegorical interpretation – does not abandon totally the historical sense of Scripture
- Proposes doctrine of various senses of Scripture – related to Platonism (realities of the world represent eternal truths)
- Every text – 2 meanings – literal and spiritual; literal interpretation important – must affirm that God works in the world and fulfills promises
- Literal interpretation unless God’s character is lessoned in doing so – (eg anthropomorphisms)
- Claimed that dual meaning of the text flows from God's good and merciful character – text means something to both the learned and the simple
- His exegetical principles:
  - Must not discard the primary meaning of the text
  - Must be interpreted in light of the rest of Scripture
- Draws distinction between simple Christians and true gnostics – refers to ethics as well as knowledge
- Not just discovering higher intellectual truth – also living a life of a higher order
- Influenced by Neo-Platonism – describes God in negative terms;
- God has no attributes – beyond the category of substance
- Regarding the incarnation – some human characteristics were lost – close to Docetism
- Clearly affirms the Triune nature of God – the Triune God is the Creator;
- Saw hierarchal and numerical structure to the universe and of the heavenly hosts
- His anthropology – approaches Irenaeus’; Adam created with childlike innocence – was to grow into perfection
- Differs from Irenaeus – does not see Adam as the head of the race – sees him as a symbol for what happens in all of us individually
- We are subject to the devil – but human freedom is not completely obliterated
Can exercise faith – must be followed by fear and hope; supposed to lead to love and finally to true gnosis

Sees church with an important role – one must enter the church through baptism; baptism – washing of sin – the starting point for further growth

One is nourished by the Eucharist

Importance of his theology – his doctrine of the Word; a bridge between pagan philosophy and Scripture; His attempts do not always succeed

Origen – born to Christian parents; took on a teaching ministry; studied under Clement

Practiced an austere life; ascetic tendency – emasculated himself;

Founded new school of higher studies; became respected – even pagans interested in his philosophy

Took up residence in Caesarea in Palestine – founded theological school; spent approx. 20 yrs to writing and teaching theology

Held public dispute in Arabia with bishop Heraclides

Persecution broke out – Origen captured and tortured; died in Tyre – probably from his injuries

Wrote more than most people can read – only a fraction of his works are extant

6,000 works according to Epiphanius – only 800 titles survive; most of these works are lost

Hexapla – his attempt to establish the original text of the OT – work was a written in 6 columns (Hebrew, Greek translit., 4 Greek versions)

Scholia – short explanations of individual texts – their interpretation seemed difficult or interesting

Homilies or sermons – moral exhortations

Commentaries – Matthew, John, Romans, Song of Solomon

Contra Celsum – responding to charges against Christianity

On First Principles – AD 220 – 4 books

Exegesis – Origen’s main theological interest; saw biblical text as having 3 different but complementary meanings:
  - Literal or physical
  - Moral
  - Spiritual

Origen gives no clear distinction between meanings in particular texts

Some texts – he finds a spectrum of spiritual meanings – creates a scale of allegorical interpretations

Does not neglect the literal interpretation –

Claims that all texts have spiritual meanings – not all to be understood literally; eg – the Levitical laws

Typology – fundamental in Origen’s spiritual exegesis

Impossible to list all the exegetical principles Origen follows in his allegorical interpretation; discovers hidden meanings in even the most clear and simple words

Origen is restrained by the Rule of Faith – must submit to it – prevents unrestrained fanciful interpretation
• Theology proper – sees God as simple and intellectual nature – beyond every definition of essence
• God is absolute unity – the main attribute of God’s being; but God is also Trinity (Origen uses the term)
• Stressed the divinity and eternity of the Son; same essence of the Father – but sees the Son as eternally generated;
• Denies that this is anything like mere emanation –
• Will proceeds from understanding – Son proceeds from the Father in similar manner
• Father – absolute unity; Son – multiplicity – so able to relate with the world and humans
• Origen – influenced by Neo-Platonism – the Word an intermediary between the unspeakable One and the multiplicity of the world
• Seems to make the Son inferior or less divine than the Father – understandable since the great threat at the time was Modalistic Monarchianism
• Origen debated advocates of this view – went as far as affirming that the Father and Son were “two Gods” although one in power
• Unresolved tension – divided his disciples into 2 groups:
  o Emphasized the divinity of the Son (right wing group)
  o Emphasized distinction between Son and Father – result: Son became a subordinate being (left wing group)
• Same tension with respect to HS – though Origen affirms his divinity
• Static view of the Godhead – Father must always be Father;
• God eternally Creator – forces Origen to view the creation as eternal – but
• Does not believe in an eternal corporeal creation; the original creation is one of pure intellects – their purpose: constant contemplation of the image of God – some turned their gaze away – these became “souls”
• Not all went astray in the same measure – resulted in hierarchy: Men with corporeal bodies and demons – bodies coarser than our own
• Sees Genesis 1 and 2 as separate creation accounts: Gen 1 – original non-material creation; Gen 2 – physical world
• This world – a trial period; suggests a series of incarnations; sees all things returning to their original states as intellects focused on the Image of God (contemplation of the Word) – this includes even the Devil and demons
• Incarnation – the Word united to an unfallen intellect – through it – united to a fully human body
• Understood that the divine and human natures existed in a single Person – saw this as the greatest mystery of faith
• Difference between Clement and Origen:
  o Clement – focus on the Word as illuminator
  o Origen – theocentric (focus on the Father); God – characteristics determined more by Platonism than the Bible
• Review:
  o Three types of theology
  o Irenaeus – the oldest
Much of his theology found in Tertullian and Clement
- History: process to bring creation to its intended goal
- Tertullian: emphasis on divine law
- Alexandria: emphasis on truth – seen IAW Platonist tradition
- Tertullian’s theology – became normative in the West;
- Eastern theology – some elements from Irenaeus and Alexandria

Chapter 9 – Western Theology in the 3rd Century

- Marked difference between Western and Alexandrian theology
- West: Practical
- Alexandrian: Speculative

- Hippolytus of Rome – greatly respected – even Origen went to listen to him
  - Greatly influenced by Irenaeus; interprets the OT typologically;
  - Chilastic in his eschatology – follows tradition from apostolic fathers of Asia Minor
  - Hippolytus – moral rigorism; church should not forgive those guilty of murder, fornication or apostasy – the basis of the conflict between him and Callistus;
  - Callistus – dared to offer repentance and forgiveness to those guilty of fornication
  - Fundamental part of Hippolytus thought – penitential system; bishops forgive sin
  - Callistus – view not far from Monarchianism
  - Hippolytus – emphasized the distinction between divine persons; difficult for him to express their unity – seems to turn the Word into a secondary god;
  - Sees the generation of the Son as contingent on the will of the Father – though he denies that there are two Gods
  - Basic framework of his theology – from Irenaeus; on particularly important issues – closer to Tertullian

- Novatian – attitude parallel to Hippolytus – those that committed apostasy during persecution should not be forgiven; Roman church argued that they ought to be
  - Re: the divinity of Christ – argued for it based on soteriological reasons – only God can secure salvation for another – man is powerless to do this
  - His main interest is combatting Sabellianism – the Son is distinct from the Father;
  - Some see him as a forerunner to Arianism – Father is immutable and impassible – the Son capable of contacting as establishing relationship with man;
  - Does not seem to hold to the eternal generation of the Son;
  - Saw the Son as eternally present in the Father – until the Father’s will caused the Son to be with the Father

- Cyprian of Carthage – born in early 3rd cent.; converted at age 40 – baptized – then followed an austere life
  - AD 248-49 – elected bishop of Carthage – influenced by Tertullian; gave attention to moral, practical, and disciplinary matters
- AD 250 – persecution – forced to flee; conducted church life through correspondence
- AD 251 – returned to his flock; taught doctrine of penance;
- Controversy: was baptism by heretics sufficient or was re-baptism necessary?
- Rome – no; North Africa and Asia Minor – yes
- Cyprian – in favor of re-baptizing;
- Rome – exerted influence – 4th century – customary in Africa to accept the baptism of heretics
- Cyprian’s doctrine of the church – important for the history of Christian thought
- Sees the church as the indispensable ark of salvation;
- Bishops successors of the apostles; each bishop to govern his diocese independently of a monolithic hierarchy – no bishop has the right to dictate to other bishops
- He exalts the primacy of Peter – sees importance of the Roman church; Peter the source of apostolic unity; Rome and its bishops have a certain priority
- But – he refuses to grant bishop of Rome jurisdiction in internal matters of his diocese
- Each bishop has certain autonomy – but must listen to the recommendations of other bishops – must obey the decisions of a council
- So – the unity of the church is the episcopate; no bishop of bishops; but ought to be common faith, love, and communion between all bishops

Chapter 10 – Eastern Theology After Origen

- His imprint never erased from Eastern theology; main theological schools really factions within Origenism;

- **Paul of Samosata** – the only significant theologian totally independent of Origen
- Bishop of Antioch AD 260 – prideful and abused his power; Monarchianist tendencies
- Polemic against pagans – led him to emphasize the unity of God – but did not follow Modalism
- The Son is not God – nor is the Word or Wisdom of God – the Son only exists after incarnation
- God was in Christ – only in the sense that his power or wisdom was present
- Two church councils met and deposed Paul; second council condemned Paul’s use of the term hoomousias (consubstantial) – Paul used the term to deny that the Son has a subsistence of his own
- Term used at Nicea in a different sense – made some nervous that the council was returned to the heresy of Paul

- **Methodius of Olympus** – deposition of Paul – marked the end of theological thought independent of Origen in Eastern theology
- Methodius – martyred in AD 311 – inclined to asceticism;
- Admired and followed Origen – though disagreed with him on many points;
- Like Origen – made use of Plato; speaks of God as a Platonist
- Areas in which he disagreed with Origen:
• Eternity of the world
• Pre-existence of souls
• Spiritualistic eschatology
• Allegorical exegesis

• Favors typological interpretation; chiliastic, sees salvation in terms of recapitulation
• Trinitarian doctrine – similar to Origen but less precise
• Subordinationist terms – but never denies the eternity of the three persons
• Origenistic Theology – little known about Origenism immediately following his death;
• Later writings – contain references and quotes from 3rd cent Origenists
• These writings – after the Arian issue – may not be balanced;
• Main focus is Trinitarian issues –
• Outstanding Origenists:
• 1. Gregory of Neocaesaria – born into a pagan family; converted through the teachings of Origen
   • Many miracles attributed to him; became known as Gregory the Wonderworker
   • A right wing Origenist – focuses on the eternity of the Son

• 2. Dionysius of Alexandria – bishop of Alexandria; died AD 254 – feared extremes of Sabellianism; emphasized distinction between Father and Son
   • Seemed to imply that they had different substances; Synod called by Dionysius of Rome condemned his views
   • Western View: “substance” referred to common divinity; “person” to the individuals of the Trinity
   • Eastern View: this terminology unacceptable; seemed to lean towards Modalism – terms ousia and hupostasis both ambiguous;
   • Clarification in the 4th century

• 3. Lucian of Antioch – left-wing Origenist; considered the teacher of the Arians
   • Origenist in every other sense – but rejected allegorical interpretation
   • Held to grammatical/historical method – became the characteristic of the school of Antioch
   • When Arian controversy broke out – Arian leaders were former disciples of Lucian

Chapter 11 – The Arian Controversy and the Council of Nicea

• Constantine – put an end to persecution
• In the church – energy spent on preparing for martyrdom and refuting pagans – now turned to other activities
• Some substituted martyrdom for monasticism – hermits flocked to the Egyptian desert
• No more persecution – good; other consequences not so good:
  • Mass conversion = little depth of conviction
  • The powerful joined the church – sought to retain their influence now within the church
Theological controversies took a political dimension

- Arius – popular presbyter in Alexandria – clashed with the bishop (a right wing Origenist)
- Arius – Son has a beginning; created by the Father out of nothing; the Word = the reason of God (but does not refer to the Son – he was created later)
- Important to Arius that Jesus was adopted as Son – so we can follow him
- Early Arianism – same concern as Paul of Samosata – Jesus needed to be a genuine human in order save us
- Gained wide support; synod called – condemned and deposed Arius
- A schism developed – Constantine was made aware; called the council of Nicea
- AD 325 – more than 300 bishops – few had firm opinions on the matter
- Most feared Sabellisnism – caused them to be reluctant to condemn subordinationism in strong terms
- Eusebius of Nicomedia (Arian) made his statement – most offended by it
- Constantine suggested that Homoousias be used in a creed to describe the Son’s divinity
- Understood that the Son needn’t be a subordinate creature to be our savior
- Western bishops accepted this; many in the East as well
- Eustathius of Antioch – accepted the term – but saw such unity that the members of Trinity could not subsist as such
- Marcellus of Ancyra – saw Father, Son, HS – 3 modes of God’s action
- Many wished the term was more precise – many still more afraid of Sabellianism than of Arianism
- Arians interpreted the creed in various manners before signing it
- Summary – the Nicene creed had ambiguity; could be interpreted in a Sabellian sense
- 50 years until the Arian heresy was definitively condemned

Chapter 12 – The Arian Controversy after Nicea

- Nicea – thought to condemn Arianism – but did not say a word about Sabellianism
- Constantine – wanted to turn the church into the cement of the empire
- Reacted against those who appeared suborn in their own theological convictions
- Rome, Alexandria, Antioch – all had bishops who supported Nicea
- Arians – presented themselves to the emperor as flexible and conciliatory – accused the anti-Arians of being stubborn and rebellious
- Arians – did not attack Nicea – but the people who affirmed its creed:
  - Eustathius of Antioch – Arians had him condemned as a tyrant, adulterer, and heretic (accused of Sabellianism) in AD 330
  - Marcellus of Ancyra – accused of Monarchianism (the heresy of Paul of Samosata); banished by the emperor
  - Athanasius – exiled multiple times; made use of them – visited the West and made allies
- Summary – from AD 330 to death of Constantine – defenders of Nicea were repeatedly defeated
Situation made difficult for them – they had no way to show how their doctrine differed from Sabellianism
Constantine himself baptized on his deathbed by the Arian Eusebius of Nicomedia
Succeeded by:
- Constantine II
- Constans
- Constantius – defender of Arianism; close councilors were Arians; he became absolute ruler of the empire in AD 350

[This information is important for dialogue with the JW’s – they think that their view was squashed by Constantine – they have no idea that theirs was the popular view afterward and held by the emperor himself; they eventually lost the debate because they were wrong – not because they were oppressed and silenced by force – JF]

- Arians gained upper hand in the East; not in the West – never able to gain roots there because there was less fear of Sabellianism
- 4th century – opponents of homoousias – 3 trends:
  - Anomoeans – extreme Arians – the Son unlike the Father in all respects
  - Homoeans – political Arians – Son similar to the Father (ambiguous)
  - Homoiousians – Son and Father have a similar substance; disagreed with Nicea – sounded too Sabellian; proponents:
    - Cyril of Jerusalem
    - Meletius of Antioch
    - Both opposed to Arianism as well as Nicea
- Homoiousian party – officially born AD 358
- Constantius – sought middle way – endorsed this view
- West – fixed terminology; East – not the same precision – ousia and hupostasis synonyms
- So – East saw Nicea as a move towards Sabellianism
- Synod of Alexandria – verbal differences unimportant – as long as the meaning is the same
- Arianism – also denied the divinity of the HS –
- Synod of AD 362 – saw these positions as unacceptable – Arianism condemned;
- Prepared an alliance between the Niceans and the Homoiousians – widened the discussion – included the HS
- Arianism caused was lost from this point; Synod of AD 363 – declared itself in favor of the Nicene creed

More for the JW’s: “Before Julian, the emperors who supported Arianism in a sense, Constantine the Great, and most certainly his son Constantius turned out to be the most powerful, while those who supported the Nicean cause ruled only in the West, far from the center of the controversy and were certainly powerful than their counterparts.” (p. 286)

Final condemnation of Arianism – Council of Constantinople (AD 381)
Cappadocians – sought to define terms more clearly; drew distinction between ousia and hypostasis
Hypostasis – individual subsistence of a thing
Ousia – essence common to members of a species

- In God – 3 hypostases; 1 ousia – Western theologians objected – used Tertullian’s terminology; saw 3 divine hypostases as 3 divine substances = 3 Gods
- Cappadocians – Platonic presuppositions; saw the common essence of the Trinity more real than the particular subsistence of the individuals
- Emperor Theodosius – called council in 381 (Constantinople) – reaffirmed Nicene creed – condemned Arianism
- Arianism – no longer a big concern amongst theologians – but spread amongst the Barbarians
  - Vandals
  - Visigoths
  - Lombards
- All established Arian kingdoms; The Franks – only invaders to adopt orthodox Christianity
- At first – persecuted the orthodox – later adopted their position
- “The defeat of Arianism was due in part to the intellectual superiority of its adversaries; in part to the fact that, during the prolonged controversy, the West was always in favor of the Nicene party and in part to the divisions among the Arians having to do with subtle distinctions, while their opponents tended to unite and form ever wider alliances.” P. 289
- Arianism – rejected mainly because it introduced creature worship

Chapter 13 – the Theology of Athanasius

- Athanasius – symbol of the Nicene faith – most remarkable bishop of Alexandria; a pastor more than a speculative thinker;
- His theology developed IAW the needs of the moment – his works are pastoral, polemical, exegetical
- Concerned with religious matters; not those speculative in nature
- Truth or falsehood – determined by their agreement with the basic principles Christian religion:
  - Monotheism
  - Christian doctrine of salvation
- Discusses how God can be known; through the human soul – God is within us; can be found by ourselves;
- Can learn about God by studying the human soul – both are invisible and immortal
- The soul – like a mirror; image of God – though tarnished by sin
- Also possible to know God by looking at the created order; - speaks of a single, all-powerful God – not the pagan deities
- The Word – the source of illumination and order in the universe
- Convinced that the savior must be God – central in his thinking; the Word must be God in the strictest sense
• God created man according to the divine image – by communicating with the Word – we can participate in being and reason
• Sin – an element of disintegration; leads to destruction – can only be expelled by re-creation
• So – only God can save humankind; we have lost the image of God – only God can restore it
• Main arguments against Arianism
  1. Leads back to pagan polytheism –
  2. Word as an intermediate solves nothing – still the creator/creation gap to close
  3. If the Son is mutable it is impossible to see the Father in him
  4. A being who is not God cannot restore creation
  5. Divinization – part of salvation – can only be granted by God
• So – Athanasius despised Arianism because it meant polytheism and that salvation comes from a creature
• Argued that God does not need an intermediary – God created the word; upholds and sustains it - is in contact with it
• Weak point in his Trinitarian theology – lack of fixed terminology
• Cappadoceans completed his work; without him their work would have been impossible
• Without them his work never would have come to completion
• Athanasius and Arians – both understood union of divine and human in Christ in a similar way
• No human rational soul in Jesus – just the Word; took the place of the soul – aka “Apollinarianism” – later condemned
• Affirmed doctrine of communication of properties – eg 1– proper to worship Jesus the man even though worship to be directed to God alone; eg 2 – proper to refer to Mary as the mother of God
• Conclusion – Athanasius typically Alexandrine in theology; but free of excess speculation
• Uses basic principles of Christianity to judge all else

Chapter 14 – The Great Cappadocians

• Name commonly given to 3 bishops:
  o Basil the Great (300?-379) – administrator and statesmen;
  o His (younger) brother Gregory Nyssa (335?-394) – foremost exponent of mysticism
    o Their friend Gregory Nazianzus (329?-389?) – eloquent orator
• All worked in close collaboration – achieved victory of the Nicene faith
• Must mention Macrina (sister of Basil and Gregory) – influential but little remains of her teachings

Basil (the Great) of Caesarea
• Dogmatic works – refuted the errors of the time;
• Argues that the essence of God cannot be defined as “not being begotten” – mere negation;
• Essence is not a negation – rather God’s being itself
• Affirmed eternal generation; but not as in human generation – “impassible, w/o parts, nor division, nor time
• No contradiction with the Son being eternally begotten; - cannot be understood by finite minds – no surprise
• Arguments based on logical arguments and fideistic tendency; Athanasius’ soteriological concerns abandoned
• Cappadocian solution – one ousia; three hypostases;
• This understanding taken up by Gregory Nazianzus and Gregory Nyssa – led to its final victory
• Basil – attempted to show consubstantiality of HS with Father and Son; explicit in his epistles
• Turned the Arian controversy into a Trinitarian one

Gregory of Nazianzus
• Orator and poet; quiet and peaceful nature – inclined to follow life of monastic retreat – sense of responsibility led him to become a bishop
• His sermons – deal with most theological and moral problems
• Attacks custom of the Arians – hold theological discussions at all times w/ all people
• Gregory – mere intelligence not enough – must have proper virtue to understand and appreciate theology
• Core of his argument – Father, Son, HS – terms of relation;
• Opponents pose dilemma: “Father” must refer to essence or action
• His answer - “Father” refers to relation; this was Gregory’s great contribution to the Trinitarian doctrine
• He explained that distinctions within the trinity – based upon relations of origin;
• The source of each person of the trinity – Father is Unoriginate; Son is begotten; the Spirit proceeds from the Father
• This explanation accepted by both east and west;
• One ousia; three hypostases

Gregory of Nyssa
• In temperament and interest – similar to Origen
• A theologian and exponent of mystical experiences; makes more and better use of pagan philosophy than Origen; but -
• more aware of the dangers of pagan philosophy on theology than Origen
• follows Origen in using allegorical method of interpretation
• saw evil as a certain negativity – not as a subsisting essence
• believed that souls were pre-existent but only in the mind of God (because souls are creatures – they cannot be actually eternal)
• Idealist tendencies – “Seeing, then, that these several qualifications which complete the particular body [figure, color, weight, extension, quantity] are grasped by thought alone, and not by sense, and that the Deity is a thinking being, what trouble can it be to such a thinking agent to produce the thinables whose mutual combination generates for us the substance of that body?” (pp. 318-319)

• Challenge posed to him – Peter, James and John have the same nature (human) – yet they are three men – the trinity must be three gods?

• His answer – re: Peter, James and John – we speak conventionally but inaccurately; in fact – human nature is only one – the man who is in Peter is the man who is in John;

• The inexactitude re: human unity and diversity is acceptable – re: the trinity it is not

• Another reason why we may refer to several men (and not several gods) – operations of the men are multiple and individual;

• Operations of the trinity’s members are unified; always common to the three

• The only distinctions between the members are relational; unbegotten and begotten

• His mysticism – neo-platonic; series of successive steps of purification and ascent

Chapter 15 – The Trinitarian Doctrine of the West

• Arianism – not so great a threat; Latin Christianity – concern with practical matters

• Tertullian – created Trinitarian formula accepted

• Stoicism – common philosophy – contributed to avoiding the pitfalls of Neo Platonist east

• During reign of Constantius – felt pressure or support Arianism

• West slowly developed its own forms of discussing the trinity – climax – Augustine’s On the Trinity

• Augustine – builds on the foundation of the three Cappadocias; distinctions in the trinity

• due to their inner relations

• Father, Son, HS – work indivisibly – saw parallels in human nature – memory, intellect, and will;

• Augustine – begins with essential unity of God – moves to distinction of persons;

• Unity paramount for him – will not grant the distinctions the importance it had for the Cappadoceans

• Proposed that the HS is the bond of love between the Father and Son (God is love);

• Pointed the way in which western Trinitarian doctrine would develop in 3 ways:

  o Insistence on divine unity (but close to Sabellianism)

  o Procession of the Spirit

  o Theory of vestige Trinitatis (paramount in western medieval theology)

Chapter 16 – The Beginnings of the Christological Controversies

• Question – how are divinity and humanity related in Christ?

• Docetism – affirm divinity / deny humanity – unacceptable

• Ebionitism – affirm humanity/ deny divinity – also unacceptable

• Most Christians somewhere between the two; early church prior had not tried to reach precise definitions
4th century – much interest in Trinitarian question – led to Christological debate;
Tertullian’s idea – two natures in one person; better than any other proposed solution;
But not immediately accepted by west
Later on – Augustine led to west back to Tertullian’s solution
Christological controversies raged in the east; in west they were never a crucial issue
Two main contradictory streams of Christological thought – Alexandrian and Antiochene
Antioch – often the battleground between them; Alexandria never infiltrated by Antiochene teachings
Antiochene school – Eustathius – believed divinity in Christ was not personal; union of divinity and humanity the union of two wills;
Followers – Diodore of Tarsus (d. 394) and Theodore of Mopsuestia
Diodore – emphasized Gospels and historic Jesus; claimed that the Word dwelt in Jesus as in a temple; as he did in the OT prophets
Alexandrine Christology – Jesus lacked a rational human soul – Diodore saw the error in this; led him to propose a Christology in which the union of the Word and assumed man made communication idiomatum impossible
Theodore of Mopsuestia – follows traditional Antiochene pattern – emphasized the distinction of Christ’s two natures – but denied that there were two Christs or two Lords
Spoke of two natures in one person (as Tertullian did) – but he understood “person” not as the second person of the trinity;
God present in Christ through his gracious will – as he did in the OT prophets;
The God who dwells in Jesus – not an impersonal force – but the second person of the Trinity
The human assumed by the Word continues to be the proper subject of human attributes – these are not transferrable to the Word;
Attributes of the Word are extended to the human – but not vice versa
Simplified:
o Antiochene: Logos-human
o Alexandrine: Logos-flesh
Alexandrian – neoplatonist tendencies; felt they needed to sustain the immutability of the Word
Not humanity that was assumed by the Word; only human flesh
 Came into conflict with Antiochene doctrine;
4th century – Alexandrian theology dominated; even Arius and Athanasius agreed on Logos-Flesh Christology (but agreed on nothing else)
Apollinarius (b. early 4th century) Syrian city of Laodicea – skilled orator and true scholar
Great defender of Nicene faith; also of Alexandrian theology that opposed Antiochene tradition
Shows two principle interests:
o Integrity of the person of Christ
o Immutability of the Word
Apollinarius a trichotomist – (based on 1 Thess 5:23); body, soul, and spirit
Soul – the vital principle that gives life to the body; impersonal – not conscious
Spirit – seat of all the rational faculties
In Christ – the Word occupied the place of the spirit; Christ is human because his body and soul are human; he is divine because his spirit is divine
Cappadocians first to recognize the danger in this doctrine – denies the full humanity of Jesus; if Christ not fully human – cannot save humans
Christ can only save what he has assumed
Gregory Nazianzus – abandoned Word-flesh Christology; adopted Word-human instead
Saw the center of Christ’s personality is in his divinity – humanity absorbed by the divine nature
Gregory Nyssa – also rejects Word-flesh Christology; speaks of Word united to a complete human nature; divinity and humanity intermingle
Cappadocians – often criticized for condemning Apollinarus when their Christology is so similar;
For them – salvation essentially deification – important that God in Christ truly assumed humanity

Chapter 17 – The Nestorian Controversy and the Council of Ephesus

Alexandrian Christology – suffered because of condemnation of Apollinarus; still strong in the east
Christological controversies of the 5th cent began in AD 428
Nestorius – against the title “mother of God” –
Cyril – bishop of Alexandria; saw Nestorius as denying the unity of the savior
Mustered all the forces he could to condemn Nestorius
Nestorius condemned by synod in Rome AD 430; though he did have the support of John patriarch of Antioch
Emperors Valentinian III and Theodosus II called council in AD 421 – Nestorius condemned and deposed
John and his party arrived too late to the council; declared themselves the true council – condemned and deposed Cyril
Theodosus II ordered Cyril, Nestorius and John imprisoned
Cyril – had emperor convoke a group of delegates from each of the two factions to meet in Chalcedon;
Nestorius deposed and forced to return to Antioch
Many claimed that Cyril’s 12 anathemas against were themselves heretical
Schism – John of Antioch and other Syrian bishops broke communion with the rest of the church;
Emperor intervened – long and complicated negotiations – compromise was reached
Was Nestorius a heretic? Scholars not in agreement – no agreement on what his exact doctrine was;
Heart of the controversy – difficulty establishing agreement between his Book of Heraclides and the fragments of his other works
In the former – “nature” often appears with adjective “complete”
• Body and soul are incomplete natures – their union produces a complete human nature;
• Complete human nature – often referred to as “hypostasis” –
• Father, Son and HS – three prosopa
• Speaks of prosopa in Jesus Christ – uses the term in the sense of “natural prosopon” –
• Natural prosopon = the totality of the properties and distinctions that make a nature complete so that it may be called hypostasis
• Claimed it necessary to reject every interpretation that claims that the union is natural or hypostatic; for him – natural or hypostatic union = two natures coming together to form a third
• For him – in Christ there was a conjunction – each of the two natures retains its own predicates – must not be confused;
• Both share actively in the union itself – so – cannot accept the communication idiomatum
• Nestorius – made himself vulnerable through his excessive distinction between the human and the divine natures of Christ
• Also – unable to speak of their union in strong enough terms
• Before the controversy – Cyril had a Christology close to Apollinarus;
• After Nestorian controversy – had to elaborate and define his Christology
• Saw the human and divine in hypostatic union in Christ; the humanity of Christ does not have its own hypostasis or nature – does not subsist in itself; only in the hypostasis of the Word
• Mary is the mother of God – because she is the mother of a humanity that subsists only by its union to the Word;
• Nestorius – Cyril never made an attempt to understand him – only attacked caricatures of his view

Chapter 18 – The Council of Chalcedon

• AD 444 – Dioscorus – succeeded Cyril as patriarch of Alexandria
• In Syria – episcopal throne occupied by Domnus – entrusted government to Theodoret of Cyrus; close personal ties with Nestorius
• Dioscorus – convinced emperor to pass anti-Nestorian edict – directed against Antichene Christology
• Eutyches – opponent of Nestorianism
• AD 448 – local synod in Constantinople – accused Eutyches of heresy;
• Today – hard to tell what is doctrine was exactly – he appears not very well learned; based his theology superficially on Cyril
• Eutyches – appealed to bishops of main sees; Dioscorus probably hoped for this – made the conflict universal;
• Plain was to hold a council that would determine Eutyches correct – would be a victory for Dioscorus and see of Alexandria
• Council of Ephesus AD 449 – Rome supported the condemnation of Eutyches – pope Leo charged him with denying the consubstantiality of the savior with humanity;
• Leo affirms the formula of Tertullian – one person with two natures
• Three Christological currents:
  o Alexandrian
  o Antiochene
  o The West
• All see humanity and divinity united in Christ – did not agree as to how it was done
• 1. Alexandrines – Logos-flesh Christology; reached its natural conclusion in Apollinarus
• Held to formula: “of two natures before incarnation; in one nature after incarnation.”
• Christ’s humanity absorbed by divinity
• 2. Antiochene theologians – unity of humanity and divinity allowed true communication idiomatum
• Not ready to accept a doctrine that would confuse the natures
• 3. Western theologians – saw the saving work of Christ as payment for sin; required that Christ be truly human and divine – but no particular understanding of this union
• All three gathered at Ephesus AD 449 – Dioscorus had support of the emperor
• Eutychus declared orthodox; condemned and deposed main exponents of Antiochene Christology
• Final victory of Alexandria over Antioch
• Pope Leo began campaign against what had taken place at Ephesus; new council called – council of Chalcedon AD 451
• 520 bishops attended –
• Dioscorus – remained firm that Christ was of two natures – not in two natures
• He was condemned, deposed, and banished – those that had been deposed by him reinstated
• New document drawn up: The Definition of the Faith of Chalcedon; included statement that Christ was made known in two natures – both concurring in one Person (prosopon) and one hypostasis; not parted or divided into two persons (prosope)
• Creed of the church – still Nicene; interpreted by the Faith of Chalcedon;
• Condemned those like Eutychus who confused the natures; also those like Nestorius who separated them
• Most bishops agreed – agreement for superficial than real
• Dissident groups arose – some persist
• Christological controversies continued for several centuries

Chapter 19 – Apostolic or Apostate?

• Vast development of Christian thought from Pentecost to Chalcedon
• Christian message originally Jewish – so Hellenized that it ceased to be Jewish
• Note – message that God entered the world as a man;
• Makes sense that Christianity would enter the Hellenized world and become Hellenized