

Church History and Evidences
Notes: 325-400 AD: The Formalization of "Christendom"

0-100 AD: The Church, The Apostles, Timothy and Titus

100-160AD: The "church fathers" – Clement, Ignatius, etc.

150-175 AD: Beginnings of the "Episcopal polity"- the basis for the Catholic Church

~ 220 AD: Argument made in 1886 that Callixtus, a bishop in Rome, forged letters in the name of Ignatius to garner support for a monarchical episcopate and modeled Ignatius after his own life to give precedent for his own authority.

~250 AD: The Roman Catholic Church organization begins to emerge

100-325 AD: Ante-Nicene Period (literally meaning "before Nicaea")

312-313 AD: Constantine makes Christianity legal

325 AD: First Council of Nicaea (First "Ecumenical Council")

- The Council of Nicaea "passed twenty disciplinary canons for the better government of the Church. By one (C. 6) of these the Bishops of Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch, were declared to possess jurisdiction over the Churches in their respective provinces". (*T. Gilmartin, Manual of Church History, Vol. 1. Ch XVII, 1890*)
- The agenda of the synod included:
 - The Arian question regarding the relationship between God the Father and the Son (not only in his incarnate form as Jesus, but also in his nature before the creation of the world); i.e., are the Father and Son one in divine purpose only or also one in being?
 - The date of celebration of Pascha/Easter
 - The Meletian schism (dealing with the nature of the Godhead)
 - Various matters of church discipline, which resulted in twenty canons
 - Organizational structure of the Church: focused on the ordering of the episcopacy
 - Dignity standards for the clergy: issues of ordination at all levels and of suitability of behavior and background for clergy
 - Reconciliation of the lapsed: establishing norms for public repentance and penance
 - Readmission to the Church of heretics and schismatics: including issues of when reordination and/or rebaptism were to be required
 - Liturgical practice: including the place of deacons, and the practice of standing at prayer during liturgy

367 AD: Athanasius is the first to list all 27 New Testament books in one of his festal letters

- **New Testament canon**

- It was the custom of the bishops of Alexandria to circulate a letter after Epiphany (Jan. 6) each year establishing the date of Easter, and therefore other moveable feasts. They also took the occasion to discuss other matters. Athanasius wrote forty-five festal letters. Athanasius' 39th Festal Letter, written in 367, is widely regarded as a milestone in the "evolution of the canon of New Testament books".
- Athanasius is the "first person to identify the same 27 books of the New Testament that are in use today". Up until then, various similar lists of works to be read in churches were in use. Athanasius compiled the list to resolve questions about such texts as The Epistle of Barnabas. Athanasius includes the Book of Baruch and the Letter of Jeremiah and places the Book of Esther among the "7 books not in the canon but to be read" along with the Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach (Ecclesiasticus), Judith, Tobit, the Didache, and the Shepherd of Hermas.
- The establishment of the canon was not a unilateral decision by a bishop in Alexandria, but the result of a process of careful investigation and deliberation, as documented in a codex of the Greek Bible and, twenty-seven years later, in his festal letter.
- Pope Damasus I, the Bishop of Rome in 382, promulgated a list of books which contained a New Testament canon identical to that of Athanasius. A synod in Hippo in 393 repeated Athanasius' and Damasus' New Testament list (without the Epistle to the Hebrews), and the Council of Carthage (397) repeated Athanasius' and Damasus' complete New Testament list.
- Scholars debate whether Athanasius' list in 367 formed the basis for later lists. Because "Athanasius' Canon" is the closest canon of any of the Church Fathers to the one used by Protestant churches today, many Protestants point to Athanasius as the "Father of the Canon".

381 AD: First Council of Constantinople (Second "Ecumenical Council")

- When Theodosius ascended to the imperial throne in 380, he began on a campaign to bring the Eastern Church back to Nicene Christianity. Theodosius wanted to further unify the entire empire behind the orthodox position and decided to convene a church council to resolve matters of faith and discipline.
- A council of Christian bishops convened in Constantinople in AD 381 by the Roman Emperor Theodosius I. This second ecumenical council, an effort to attain consensus in the church through an assembly representing all of Christendom, except for the Western Church, confirmed the Nicene Creed, expanding the doctrine thereof to produce the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, and dealt with sundry other matters. It met from May to July 381 in the Church of Hagia Irene.
 - Western vs. Eastern: Historically, the leadership of the Latin Church (i.e. the Holy See) has been viewed as one of the five patriarchates of the Pentarchy of early

Christianity, along with the patriarchates of Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem. Due to geographic and cultural considerations, the latter patriarchates developed into churches with distinct Eastern Christian traditions. The majority of Eastern Christian churches broke full communion with the bishop of Rome and the Latin Church, following various theological and leadership disputes in the centuries following the Council of Chalcedon in 451 AD. These included notably the Nestorian Schism (431–544) (Church of the East), Chalcedonian Schism (451) (Oriental Orthodoxy), and the East-West Schism (1054) (Eastern Orthodoxy).

- The Council of Nicaea in 325 had not ended the Arian controversy which it had been called to clarify. Arius and his sympathizers, e.g. Eusebius of Nicomedia were admitted back into the church after ostensibly accepting the Nicene creed. After the death of Constantine I in 337 and the accession of his Arian-leaning son Constantius II, open discussion of replacing the Nicene creed itself began. Up until about 360, theological debates mainly dealt with the divinity of the Son, the second person of the Trinity. However, because the Council of Nicaea had not clarified the divinity of the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, it became a topic of debate. The Macedonians (They denied the Godhood of the Holy Ghost, hence the Greek name Pneumatomachi or 'Combators against the Spirit') denied the divinity of the Holy Spirit. This was also known as Pneumatomachianism.
- Nicene Christianity also had its defenders: apart from Athanasius, the Cappadocian Fathers' Trinitarian discourse was influential in the council at Constantinople. Apollinaris of Laodicea, another pro-Nicene theologian, proved controversial. Possibly in an over-reaction to Arianism and its teaching that Christ was not God, he taught that Christ consisted of a human body and a divine mind, rejecting the belief that Christ had a complete human nature, including a human mind. He was charged with confounding the persons of the Godhead, and with giving in to the heretical ways of Sabellius. Basil of Caesarea accused him of abandoning the literal sense of the scripture, and taking up wholly with the allegorical sense. His views were condemned in a Synod at Alexandria, under Athanasius of Alexandria, in 362, and later subdivided into several different heresies, the main ones of which were the Polemians (of Apollinaris) and the Antidicomarianites.
 - Antidicomarianites: a term applied to Christians who believed that the brothers and sisters of Jesus mentioned in the New Testament were the younger children of Joseph and Mary after the birth of Jesus. It was a pejorative term used from the 3rd to 5th centuries by those who believed in the perpetual virginity of Mary and that the siblings of Jesus were children of Joseph by an earlier marriage—a belief originating with the 2nd century apocryphal Gospel of James, which had become orthodoxy by the 3rd century (although condemned by Pope Innocent I in 405 AD).
 - Antidocomarianites: those who believe Mary and Joseph had children of their own after the birth of Jesus.

- Seven canons, four of these doctrinal canons and three disciplinary canons, are attributed to the Council and accepted by both the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches; the Roman Catholic Church accepts only the first four because only the first four appear in the oldest copies and there is evidence that the last three were later additions.
 - The first canon is an important dogmatic condemnation of all shades of Arianism, and also of Macedonianism and Apollinarianism.
 - The second canon renewed the Nicene legislation imposing upon the bishops the observance of diocesan and patriarchal limits.
 - The third canon reads:
 - "The Bishop of Constantinople, however, shall have the prerogative of honour after the Bishop of Rome because Constantinople is New Rome."
 - The fourth canon decreed the consecration of Maximus as Bishop of Constantinople to be invalid, declaring "that [Maximus] neither was nor is a bishop, nor are they who have been ordained by him in any rank of the clergy". This canon was directed not only against Maximus, but also against the Egyptian bishops who had conspired to consecrate him clandestinely at Constantinople, and against any subordinate ecclesiastics that he might have ordained in Egypt.
 - The fifth canon might actually have been passed the next year, 382, and is in regard to a Tome of the Western bishops; "*Regarding the Tome of the Westerns: we have also recognised those in Antioch who confess a single Godhead of Father and Son and holy Spirit.*"
 - The sixth canon might belong to the year 382 as well and was subsequently passed at the Quinisext Council as canon 95. It limits the ability to accuse bishops of wrongdoing.
 - The seventh canon regards procedures for receiving certain heretics into the church.
- Today, almost all Christian denominations would be considered as adhering to the Nicene Creed, since its main focus was the nature of the Godhead, or Trinity. However, Joseph Smith rejected the Nicene doctrine of the Trinity as of one body and substance, with no "body, parts, or passions", and instead taught that the Godhead included God, the Eternal Father, also known as Elohim; his only-begotten son in the flesh, Jesus Christ, also known as Jehovah, the savior and redeemer of the world; and the Holy Ghost or Holy Spirit, an individual personage of spirit whose influence can be felt in many places at once. Further, Smith taught that the essence of all humans is co-eternal with God and that humans, as the spirit offspring of God the Father, have the potential to become like God.

379-395 AD: The Reign of Theodosius I

- The last emperor to rule over both the Eastern and the Western halves of the Roman Empire. After his death, Theodosius's young sons Arcadius and Honorius inherited the east and west halves of the empire respectively, and the Roman Empire was never again re-united.

- The Christian persecution of Roman (pagan) religion under Theodosius I began in 381, after the first couple of years of his reign in the Eastern Roman Empire. In the 380s, Theodosius I reiterated Constantine's ban on some practices of Roman religion, prohibited haruspicy (divination) on pain of death, decreed magistrates who did not enforce laws against polytheism were subject to criminal prosecution, broke up some pagan associations and tolerated attacks on Roman temples.
- Between 389–392 he promulgated the Theodosian decrees which removed non-Nicene Christians from church office and abolished the last remaining expressions of Roman religion by making its holidays into workdays, banning blood sacrifices, closing Roman temples, confiscating Temple endowments and disbanding the Vestal Virgins. The practices of taking auspices (interpreting signs and omens) and witchcraft were punished. Theodosius refused to restore the Altar of Victory in the Senate House, as asked by non-Christian senators.
- In 392 he became sole emperor. From this moment till the end of his reign in 395, while non-Christians continued to request toleration, he ordered, authorized, or at least failed to punish, the closure or destruction of many temples, holy sites, images and objects of piety throughout the empire.
- In 393 he issued a comprehensive law that prohibited any public non-Christian religious customs, and was particularly oppressive to Manicheans (an Iranian religion). He is likely to have discontinued the ancient Olympic Games, whose last record of celebration was in 393, though archeological evidence indicates that some games were still held after this date.

393 AD: The Synod of Hippo

- The synod of Hippo in 393 is best known for two distinct acts. First, for the first time a council of bishops listed and approved a Christian Biblical canon that corresponds closely to the modern Catholic canon while falling short of the Orthodox canon. The canon list approved at Hippo included six books later classed by Catholics as deuterocanonical books and by Protestants as Apocrypha. The canon list was later approved at the Council of Carthage (397) pending ratification by the "Church across the sea", that is, the See of Rome. Previous councils had approved similar, but slightly different, canons.
- The council also reaffirmed the apostolic origin of the requirement of clerical continence and reasserted it as a requirement for all the ordained, in addition requiring that all members of a person's household must be Christian before that person can be ordained. Rules regarding clerical succession were also clarified at the Synod, as well as certain liturgical considerations