

## **Church History and Evidences**

**Notes: 400-600 AD:**

### **The Council of Ephesus (Third Ecumenical Council) and The Council of Chalcedon (Fourth Ecumenical Council)**

**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”)**

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

**381 AD: First Council of Constantinople (Second “Ecumenical Council”)**

**379-395 AD: The Reign of Theodosius I**

**393 AD: The Synod of Hippo**

#### **Jerome (347-419 AD)**

- He is best known for his translation of most of the Bible into Latin (the translation that became known as the Vulgate), and his commentaries on the Gospels.

#### **Council of Ephesus (431 AD) (Third “Ecumenical Council”)**

- Nestorius' doctrine, Nestorianism, which emphasized the distinction between Christ's human and divine natures (two beings as one) and argued that Mary should be called Christotokos (Christ-bearer) but not Theotokos (God-bearer), had brought him into conflict with other church leaders, most notably Cyril, Patriarch of Alexandria. Nestorius himself had requested the Emperor to convene the council, hoping that it would prove his orthodoxy; the council in fact

condemned his teachings as heresy. The council declared Mary as Theotokos (Mother of God).

- Approximately 250 bishops were present. The proceedings were conducted in a heated atmosphere of confrontation and recriminations and created severe tensions between Cyril and Theodosius II. Nestorius was decisively outplayed by Cyril and removed from his see, and his teachings were officially anathematized. This precipitated the Nestorian Schism, by which churches supportive of Nestorius, especially in the Persian Empire of the Sassanids, were severed from the rest of Christendom and became known as Nestorian Christianity, or the Church of the East, whose present-day representatives are the Assyrian Church of the East, the Ancient Church of the East, the Chaldean Syrian Church, and the Chaldean Catholic Church. Nestorius himself retired to a monastery, later recanting his Nestorian position.
- The Council denounced Nestorius' teaching as erroneous and decreed that Jesus was one person (hypostasis), and not two separate persons, yet possessing both a human and divine nature. The Virgin Mary was to be called Theotokos a Greek word that means "God-bearer" (the one who gave birth to God).
- The Council declared it "unlawful for any man to bring forward, or to write, or to compose a different Faith as a rival to that established by the holy Fathers assembled with the Holy Ghost in Nicæa". It quoted the Nicene Creed as adopted by the First Council of Nicaea in 325, not as added to and modified by the First Council of Constantinople in 381.
- In addition to its condemnation of Nestorianism, the council also condemned Pelagianism, and rejected premillennialism (Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Papias, Tertullian, Origen, Lactantius) in favor of amillennialism (Clement of Alexandria, Chrysostom, Jerome and Augustine of Hippo): "Augustine's explanation became Church doctrine when it was adopted as the definitive explanation of the millennium by the Council of Ephesus in 431." According to Augustine of Hippo, the number 'one thousand' of the thousand-year reign of Christ in Revelation 20:1–3 is a synecdochic figure of speech, "but [...] some Christians do not understand [...], and so construe the passage into ridiculous fancies. [...] [S]uch assertions can be believed only by the carnal. They who do believe them are called by the spiritual Chiliasts, which we may literally reproduce by the name Millenarians." Against these assertions (Jerome: 'so let's stop with this fable of a thousand years'; Augustine: 'certain ridiculous fables'; Council of Ephesus: 'like the delusions, and the fabled dogmas of the unfortunate Apollinaris about a millennium'), both Augustine and the Council of Ephesus "prefer proceeding to show how that passage of Scripture should be understood", by quoting, contextualizing, and paraphrasing the "Lord Jesus Christ" Himself in Matthew 12:29 and Mark 3:27.
- Eight canons were passed:

- Canon 1–5 condemned Nestorius and Caelestius and their followers as heretics
- Canon 6 decreed deposition from clerical office or excommunication for those who did not accept the Council's decrees
- Canon 7 condemned any departure from the creed established by the First Council of Nicaea (325), in particular an exposition by the priest Charisius.
- Canon 8 condemned interference by the Bishop of Antioch in affairs of the Church in Cyprus and decreed generally, that no bishop was to "assume control of any province which has not heretofore, from the very beginning, been under his own hand or that of his predecessors [...] lest the Canons of the Fathers be transgressed".
- The events created a major schism between the followers of the different versions of the council, which was only mended by difficult negotiations. However, the rift would open again during the debates leading up to the Council of Chalcedon twenty years later.
- In 1994, the Common Christological Declaration between the Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East marked the resolution of a dispute between those two churches that had existed since the Council of Ephesus. They expressed their common understanding of doctrine concerning the divinity and humanity of Christ, and recognized the legitimacy and rightness of their respective descriptions of Mary as, on the Assyrian side, "the Mother of Christ our God and Saviour", and, on the Catholic side, as "the Mother of God" and also as "the Mother of Christ".

## **Pelagianism**

- Pelagianism, also called Pelagian heresy, is the Christian theological position that the original sin did not taint human nature and that mortal will is still capable of choosing good or evil without special divine aid or assistance. This theological theory is named after Pelagius (c. AD 360 – 418), although he denied, at least at some point in his life, many of the doctrines associated with his name. Pelagius taught human will, as created with its abilities by God, was sufficient to live a sinless life, although he believed God's grace assisted every good work. Pelagianism has come to be identified with the view (whether taught by Pelagius or not) human beings can earn salvation by their own efforts.
- According to Augustinian theologians, Pelagius rejected the biblical concept of grace. According to his opponents, Pelagius taught moral perfection was attainable in this life without the assistance of divine grace through human free will. Augustine contradicted this by saying perfection was impossible without grace because we are born sinners with a sinful heart and will. The Pelagians charged Augustine with departing from the accepted teaching (e.g.: John 8:11) of the Apostles and the Bible, demonstrating the doctrine of original sin amounted to Manichaeism, which taught that the flesh was in itself sinful (and thus denied

Jesus came in the flesh). This charge would have carried added weight since contemporaries knew Augustine had himself been a Manichaean layman before converting to Christianity. Augustine also taught a person's salvation comes solely through a free gift, the efficacious grace of God, but this was a gift one had no free choice to accept or refuse.

- The teachings of Pelagius are generally associated with the rejection of both original sin and infant baptism. Although the writings of Pelagius are no longer extant, the eight canons of the Council of Carthage (418) provided corrections to the perceived errors of the early Pelagians. These corrections include:
  - Death did not come to Adam from a physical necessity, but through sin.
  - New-born children must be baptized on account of original sin.
  - Justifying grace not only avails for the forgiveness of past sins, but also gives assistance for the avoidance of future sins.
  - The grace of Christ not only discloses the knowledge of God's commandments, but also imparts strength to will and execute them.
  - Without God's grace it is not merely more difficult, but absolutely impossible to perform good works.
  - Not out of humility, but in truth must we confess ourselves to be sinners.
  - The saints refer the petition of the Our Father, "Forgive us our trespasses", not only to others, but also to themselves.
  - The saints pronounce the same supplication not from mere humility, but from truthfulness.
- Some codices containing a ninth canon: Children dying without baptism do not go to a "middle place" since the non-reception of baptism excludes both from the "kingdom of heaven" and from "eternal life". Pelagianism stands in contrast to the official hamartiological system of the Catholic Church that is based on the theology of Saint Augustine of Hippo. Semipelagianism is a modified form of Pelagianism that was also condemned by the Catholic Church at the Council of Orange (529).
- Pelagius was disturbed by the immorality he encountered in Rome and saw Christians using human frailty as an excuse for their failure to live a Christian life. He taught that the human will, as created with its abilities by God, was sufficient to live a sinless life, although he believed that God's grace assisted every good work. Pelagius did not believe that all humanity was guilty in Adam's sin, but said that Adam had condemned mankind through bad example. The value of Christ's redemption was, in his opinion, limited mainly to instruction and example.
- Pelagius' views were sometimes misrepresented by his followers and distorted by his opponents. "Pelagianism has come to mean – unfairly to its founder – the view that human beings can earn salvation by their own efforts."
- Many of the Church Fathers before Augustine taught that humans have the power of free will and the choice over good and evil.

- Justin Martyr said that "every created being is so constituted as to be capable of vice and virtue. For he can do nothing praiseworthy, if he had not the power of turning either way".
- Theophilus (c.180) said, "If, on the other hand, he would turn to the things of death, disobeying God, he would himself be the cause of death to himself. For God made man free, and with power of himself."
- Irenaeus said, "But man, being endowed with reason, and in this respect similar to God, having been made free in his will, and with power over himself, is himself his own cause that sometimes he becomes wheat, and sometimes chaff."
- Clement of Alexandria (c.195) said, "We ... have believed and are saved by voluntary choice."
- Jerome (d. 420) emerged as one of the chief critics of Pelagianism, because, according to him, sin was an unavoidable part of human nature.
- The second Article of Faith of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints states that "We believe that men will be punished for their own sins, and not for Adam's transgression." The Book of Mormon states that the "original sin" allowed humanity to progress in the Plan of Salvation.
- Mormon philosopher Sterling M. McMurrin, argued that "[t]he theology of Mormonism is completely Pelagian." Mormon theology teaches that the Atonement of Jesus Christ has overcome the effects of "original sin" for all mankind. For example, the Book of Mormon, a sacred text for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, teaches: "[T]he Messiah cometh in the fullness of time, that he might redeem the children of men from the fall. And because they are redeemed from the fall they have become free forever, knowing good and evil; to act for themselves and not to be acted upon, save it be by the punishment of the law at that great and last day, according to the commandments which God has given." It also teaches: "there is no flesh that can dwell in the presence of God, save it be through the merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah". Pelagianism is not the official stance of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

### **Council of Chalcedon (451 AD) (Fourth "Ecumenical Council")**

- The Council was called by Emperor Marcian to set aside the 449 Second Council of Ephesus. Its principal purpose was to assert the orthodox catholic doctrine against the heresy of Eutyches who taught a variation of orthodox teaching regarding Christ's human and divine nature.
- Followers of the Council believe its most important achievement was to issue the Chalcedonian Definition, stating that Jesus is "perfect both in deity and in humanness; this selfsame one is also actually God and actually man." The council's judgments and definitions regarding the divine marked a significant turning point in the Christological debates.

- A great deal of political wrangling preceded the council assembly and was a major issue during proceedings, with claims afterward that members of assembly were being coerced to approve certain actions.
- The near-immediate result of the council was a major schism. The bishops that were uneasy with the language of Pope Leo's Tome repudiated the council, saying that the acceptance of two physes was tantamount to Nestorianism. Dioscorus of Alexandria advocated Miaphysitism and had dominated the Council of Ephesus. Churches that rejected Chalcedon in favor of Ephesus broke off from the rest of the Eastern Church in a schism, the most significant among these being the Church of Alexandria, today known as the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria. The rise of the "so-called" Monophysitism in the East was led by the Copts of Egypt. A significant effect on the Orthodox Christians in Egypt was a series of persecutions by the Roman (later, Byzantine) empire forcing followers of the Eastern Orthodox Church to claim allegiance to Leo's Tome, or Chalcedon. This led to the martyrdom, persecution and death of thousands of Egyptian saints and bishops till the Arab Conquest of Egypt. As a result, The Council of Chalcedon is referred to as "Chalcedon, the Omnious" among Coptic Egyptians given how it led to Christians persecuting other Christians for the first time in history. Coptic Orthodox Christians continue to distinguish themselves from followers of Chalcedon to this day. Although the theological differences are seen as limited (if non-existent), it is politics, the subsequent persecutions and the power struggles of a rising Roman Empire, that may have led to the Great Schism, or at least contributed significantly to amplifying it through the centuries.
- Many Anglicans and most Protestants consider it to be the last authoritative ecumenical council. These churches, along with Martin Luther, hold that both conscience and scripture preempt doctrinal councils and generally agree that the conclusions of later councils were unsupported by, or contradictory, to scripture.
- The Council of Chalcedon issued the Chalcedonian Definition, which repudiated the notion of a single nature in Christ and declared that he has two natures in one person and hypostasis. It also insisted on the completeness of his two natures: Godhead and manhood. The council also issued 27 disciplinary canons governing church administration and authority. In a further decree, later known as canon 28, the bishops declared that the See of Constantinople (New Rome) had the patriarchal status with "equal privileges" to the See of Rome.
- The Confession of Chalcedon provides a clear statement on the two natures of Christ, human and divine:
  - "We, then, following the holy Fathers, all with one consent, teach people to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man, of a reasonable [rational] soul and body; consubstantial [co-essential] with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the Manhood; in all things like unto us, without sin; begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for

us and for our salvation, born of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, according to the Manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one Subsistence (hypostasis), not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only begotten God, the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ; as the prophets from the beginning [have declared] concerning Him, and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself has taught us, and the Creed of the holy Fathers has handed down to us.”

- Canons

1. The canons of every Synod of the holy Fathers shall be observed.
2. Whoso buys or sells an ordination, down to a Prosmonarius, shall be in danger of losing his grade. Such shall also be the case with go-betweens, if they be clerics they shall be cut off from their rank, if laymen or monks, they shall be anathematized.
3. Those who assume the care of secular houses should be corrected, unless perchance the law called them to the administration of those not yet come of age, from which there is no exemption. Unless further their Bishop permits them to take care of orphans and widows.
4. Domestic oratories and monasteries are not to be erected contrary to the judgment of the bishop. Every monk must be subject to his bishop, and must not leave his house except at his suggestion. A slave, however, can not enter the monastic life without the consent of his master.
5. Those who go from city to city shall be subject to the canon law on the subject.
6. In Martyries and Monasteries ordinations are strictly forbidden. Should any one be ordained therein, his ordination shall be reputed of no effect.
7. If any cleric or monk arrogantly affects the military or any other dignity, let him be cursed.
8. Any clergyman in an almshouse or monastery must submit himself to the authority of the bishop of the city. But he who rebels against this let him pay the penalty.
9. Litigious clerics shall be punished according to canon, if they despise the episcopal and resort to the secular tribunal. When a cleric has a contention with a bishop let him wait till the synod sits, and if a bishop have a contention with his metropolitan let him carry the case to Constantinople.
10. No cleric shall be recorded on the clergy-list of the churches of two cities. But if he shall have strayed forth, let him be returned to his former place. But if he has been transferred, let him have no share in the affairs of his former church.

11. Let the poor who stand in need of help make their journey with letters pacificatory and not commendatory: For letters commendatory should only be given to those who are open to suspicion.
12. One province shall not be cut into two. Whoever shall do this shall be cast out of the episcopate. Such cities as are cut off by imperial rescript shall enjoy only the honour of having a bishop settled in them: but all the rights pertaining to the true metropolis shall be preserved.
13. No cleric shall be received to communion in another city without a letter commendatory.
14. A Cantor or Lector alien to the sound faith, if being then married, he shall have begotten children let him bring them to communion, if they had there been baptized. But if they had not yet been baptized they shall not be baptized afterwards by the heretics.
15. No person shall be ordained deaconess except she be forty years of age. If she shall dishonour her ministry by contracting a marriage, let her be anathema.
16. Monks or nuns shall not contract marriage, and if they do so let them be excommunicated.
17. Village and rural parishes if they have been possessed for thirty years, they shall so continue. But if within that time, the matter shall be subject to adjudication. But if by the command of the Emperor a city be renewed, the order of ecclesiastical parishes shall follow the civil and public forms.
18. Clerics and Monks, if they shall have dared to hold conventicles and to conspire against the bishop, shall be cast out of their rank.
19. Twice each year the Synod shall be held wherever the bishop of the Metropolis shall designate, and all matters of pressing interest shall be determined.
20. A clergyman of one city shall not be given a cure in another. But if he has been driven from his native place and shall go into another he shall be without blame. If any bishop receives clergymen from without his diocese he shall be excommunicated as well as the cleric he receives.
21. A cleric or layman making charges rashly against his bishop shall not be received.
22. Whoever seizes the goods of his deceased bishop shall be cast forth from his rank.
23. Clerics or monks who spend much time at Constantinople contrary to the will of their bishop, and stir up seditions, shall be cast out of the city.
24. A monastery erected with the consent of the bishop shall be immovable. And whatever pertains to it shall not be alienated. Whoever shall take upon him to do otherwise, shall not be held guiltless.
25. Let the ordination of bishops be within three months: necessity however may make the time longer. But if anyone shall ordain counter to this

decree, he shall be liable to punishment. The revenue shall remain with the *œconomus*.

26. The *œconomus* [treasurer] in all churches must be chosen from the clergy. And the bishop who neglects to do this is not without blame.
27. If a clergyman elope with a woman, let him be expelled from the Church. If a layman, let him be anathema. The same shall be the lot of any that assist him.
28. The bishop of New Rome (Constantinople) shall enjoy the same privileges as the bishop of Old Rome, on account of the removal of the Empire. For this reason the [metropolitans] of Pontus, of Asia, and of Thrace, as well as the Barbarian bishops shall be ordained by the bishop of Constantinople.
29. He is sacrilegious who degrades a bishop to the rank of a presbyter. For he that is guilty of crime is unworthy of the priesthood. But he that was deposed without cause, let him be [still] bishop.
30. It is the custom of the Egyptians that none subscribe without the permission of their Archbishop. Wherefore they are not to be blamed who did not subscribe the Epistle of the holy Leo until an Archbishop had been appointed for them.