**Week 2: The Early Church to the end of the 4th Century**

**2.1 Introduction**

**2.2. The Church and the Roman Empire 192-392**

**Toleration 192-249**

**Decius (249-251)**

**Valerian (253-260)**

**Diocletian (284-305)**

**Constantine 312-337**

*From Eusebius Pamphilius: Church History, Life of Constantine, Oration in Praise of Constantine*

**Chapter 27:** Being convinced, however, that he needed some more powerful aid than his military forces could afford him, on account of the wicked and magical enchantments which were so diligently practiced by the tyrant, he sought Divine assistance, deeming the possession of arms and a numerous soldiery of secondary importance, but believing the co-operating power of Deity invincible and not to be shaken. He considered, therefore, on what God he might rely for protection and assistance. While engaged in this enquiry, the thought occurred to him, that, of the many emperors who had preceded him, those who had rested their hopes in a multitude of gods, and served them with sacrifices and offerings, had in the first place been deceived by flattering predictions, and oracles which promised them all prosperity, and at last had met with an unhappy end, while not one of their gods had stood by to warn them of the impending wrath of heaven; while one alone who had pursued an entirely opposite course, who had condemned their error, and honoured the one Supreme God during his whole life, had found him to be the Saviour and Protector of his empire, and the Giver of every good thing. Reflecting on this, and well weighing the fact that they who had trusted in many gods had also fallen by manifold forms of death, without leaving behind them either family or offspring, stock, name, or memorial among men: while the God of his father had given to him, on the other hand, manifestations of his power and very many tokens: and considering farther that those who had already taken arms against the tyrant, and had marched to the battle-field under the protection of a multitude of gods, had met with a dishonourable end (for one of themhad shamefully retreated from the contest without a blow, and the other, being slain in the midst of his own troops, became, as it were, the mere sport of deathreviewing, I say, all these considerations, he judged it to be folly indeed to join in the idle worship of those who were no gods, and, after such convincing evidence, to err from the truth; and therefore felt it incumbent on him to honour his father’s God alone.

**Chapter 28** Accordingly he called on him with earnest prayer and supplications that he would reveal to him who he was, and stretch forth his right hand to help him in his present difficulties. And while he was thus praying with fervent entreaty, a most marvellous sign appeared to him from heaven, the account of which it might have been hard to believe had it been related by any other person. But since the victorious emperor himself long afterwards declared it to the writer of this history, when he was honoured with his acquaintance and society, and confirmed his statement by an oath, who could hesitate to accredit the relation, especially since the testimony of after-time has established its truth? He said that about noon, when the day was already beginning to decline, he saw with his own eyes the trophy of a cross of light in the heavens, above the sun, and bearing the inscription, Conquer by this. At this sight he himself was struck with amazement, and his whole army also, which followed him on this expedition, and witnessed the miracle.

**Chapter 31:** Now it was made in the following manner. A long spear, overlaid with gold, formed the figure of the cross by means of a transverse bar laid over it. On the top of the whole was fixed a wreath of gold and precious stones; and within this, 3111    Thus rather than “on.” Compare cuts in article of Venables. “It [the monogram of Christ] is often set within a crown or palm branch.”—*Wolcott, Sacred Archæalogy*, p. 390.the symbol of the Saviour’s name, two letters indicating the name of Christ by means of its initial characters, the letter P being intersected by X in its centre: and these letters the emperor was in the habit of wearing on his helmet at a later period. From the cross-bar of the spear was suspended a cloth, a royal piece, covered with a profuse embroidery of most brilliant precious stones; and which, being also richly interlaced with gold, presented an indescribable degree of beauty to the beholder. This banner was of a square form, and the upright staff, whose lower section was of great length, bore a golden half-length portrait of the pious emperor and his children on its upper part, beneath the trophy of the cross, and immediately above the embroidered banner.

**Chapter 32:** These things were done shortly afterwards. But at the time above specified, being struck with amazement at the extraordinary vision, and resolving to worship no other God save Him who had appeared to him, he sent for those who were acquainted with the mysteries of His doctrines, and enquired who that God was, and what was intended by the sign of the vision he had seen. They affirmed that He was God, the only begotten Son of the one and only God: that the sign which had appeared was the symbol of immortality, and the trophy of that victory over death which He had gained in time past when sojourning on earth. They taught him also the causes of His advent, and explained to him the true account of His incarnation. Thus he was instructed in these matters, and was impressed with wonder at the divine manifestation which had been presented to his sight. Comparing, therefore, the heavenly vision with the interpretation given, he found his judgment confirmed; and, in the persuasion that the knowledge of these things had been imparted to him by Divine teaching, he determined thenceforth to devote himself to the reading of the Inspired writings. Moreover, he made the priests of God his counsellors, and deemed it incumbent on him to honour the God who had appeared to him with all devotion. And after this, being fortified by well-grounded hopes in Him, he hastened to quench the threatening fire of tyranny.

**337-361 Constantius II**

**Valentinian I and Valens (364-378)**

**Theodosus (378-395) (west from 392)**

**2.3 The development of the idea of church: Cyprian**

**Bishops and Synods**

**Cyprian of Carthage (c200-258)**

Converted aged 46, gave to the poor in Carthage.

Bishop 248-258 (martyred).

Vs. Stephen of Rome

Cyprian, on the Unity of the Church chapter 5:

*And this**[unity](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/17.HTM) we**[ought](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/3G.HTM)**[firmly](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/G6.HTM) to**[hold](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/48.HTM) and**assert,**especially those of us that are**[bishops](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/HW.HTM) who**[preside](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/E5.HTM) in the**[Church](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/O.HTM), that we**[may](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/1I.HTM) also**prove the**[episcopate](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/7N.HTM) itself to be one and**[undivided](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/8H.HTM). Let no one**[deceive](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/4R.HTM) the**[brotherhood](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/7Z.HTM) by a**[falsehood](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/GD.HTM): let no one**[corrupt](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/AS.HTM) the**[truth](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/25.HTM) of the**[faith](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/11.HTM) by**[perfidious](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/ED.HTM)* *prevarication. The**[episcopate](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/7N.HTM) is one, each**[part](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/5T.HTM) of which is**held by each one for the whole. The**[Church](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/O.HTM) also is one, which is**spread**[abroad](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/6F.HTM)**far and**wide into a**[multitude](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/7A.HTM) by an**[increase](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/FD.HTM) of**[fruitfulness](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/FS.HTM). As there are many**[rays](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/92.HTM) of the**[sun](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/CK.HTM), but one**[light](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/2E.HTM); and many**[branches](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/HT.HTM) of a**[tree](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/8K.HTM), but one**[strength](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/50.HTM)*[*based*](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/I2.HTM)*in its**tenacious**[root](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/DL.HTM); and since from one**[spring](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/CV.HTM)**flow many**streams, although the**multiplicity seems**[diffused](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/GZ.HTM) in the**[liberality](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/F4.HTM) of an**overflowing**[abundance](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/IK.HTM), yet the**[unity](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/17.HTM) is still**preserved in the**[source](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/6O.HTM).**Separate a**ray of the**[sun](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/CK.HTM) from its**[body](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/4D.HTM) of**[light](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/2E.HTM), its**[unity](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/17.HTM) does not**allow a**[division](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/GR.HTM) of**[light](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/2E.HTM);**break a**branch from a**[tree](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/8K.HTM),--when**[broken](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/80.HTM), it will not be**[able](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/IL.HTM) to**bud;**[cut](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/7T.HTM) off the**stream from its**[fountain](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/A3.HTM), and that which is**[cut](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/7T.HTM) off**dries up. Thus also the**[Church](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/O.HTM),**[shone](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/8T.HTM) over with the**[light](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/2E.HTM) of the**[Lord](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/J.HTM),**sheds**[forth](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/39.HTM) her**[rays](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/92.HTM) over the whole**[world](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/3A.HTM), yet it is one**[light](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/2E.HTM) which is everywhere**[diffused](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/GZ.HTM), nor is the**[unity](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/17.HTM) of the**[body](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/4D.HTM)**[separated](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/36.HTM). Her**fruitful**[abundance](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/IK.HTM)**spreads her**[branches](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/HT.HTM) over the whole**[world](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/3A.HTM). She**broadly**expands her**rivers,**liberally**flowing, yet her**[head](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/64.HTM) is one, her**[source](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/6O.HTM) one; and she is one**[mother](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/4O.HTM),**plentiful in the**results of**[fruitfulness](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/FS.HTM): from her**[womb](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/BJ.HTM) we are**[born](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/B0.HTM), by her**milk we are**nourished, by her**[spirit](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/2Q.HTM) we are**[animated](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0279/IC.HTM).*

**2.4. 3rd century theologians and thinkers –Tertullian and Origen**

**Montanism**

**Montanus – c156ad**

**Tertullian of Carthage (c150-212)**

Born Carthage, pagan c150AD, converted before 196AD, died between 212-220.

On the Trinity - *against Praxeas*. Modalism

**Origen of Alexandria (186-254**

Maverick, prolific (800 treatises) - condemned 553.

b. 185/6 in Alexandria, dies 254/5 Caesarea in Palestine.

Origen the Ascetic –

Origen the exegete -

Origen the Theologian -

**2.5. Theology from Nicaea to Constantinople (325-381)**

**The Person of Christ**

**Developments before Nicaea**

Docetism –

Adoptionism –

Sabellianism / Modalism –

**325-381 Athanasius and Arianism**

Born c298, d 373. Christian upbringing and on bishops staff, 325 at Nicaea, 328 B of Alexandria. 17/45 years in exile.

### Arianism

**Athansius’ response:**

*Homoousios*

### The Nicene Creed (325)

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, **begotten of the Father [the only-begotten; that is, of the essence of the Father, God of God], Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance (homoousios) with the Father**; by whom all things were made [both in heaven and on earth]; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down and was incarnate and was made man; he suffered, and the third day he rose again, ascended into heaven; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. And in the Holy Ghost.

### On the Incarnation

2(8) For this purpose, then, the incorporeal and incorruptible and immaterial Word of God entered our world. In one sense, indeed, He was not far from it before, for no part of creation had ever been without Him Who, while ever abiding in union with the Father, yet fills all things that are. But now He entered the world in a new way, stooping to our level in His love and Self-revealing to us… He took to Himself a body, a human body even as our own. Nor did He will merely to become embodied or merely to appear; had that been so, He could have revealed His divine majesty in some other and better way. No, He took our body, and not only so, but He took it directly from a spotless, stainless virgin, without the agency of human father—a pure body, untainted by intercourse with man. He, the Mighty One, the Artificer of all, Himself prepared this body in the virgin as a temple for Himself, and took it for His very own, as the instrument through which He was known and in which He dwelt. Thus, taking a body like our own, because all our bodies were liable to the corruption of death, He surrendered His body to death instead of all, and offered it to the Father. This He did out of sheer love for us, so that in His death all might die, and the law of death thereby be abolished because, having fulfilled in His body that for which it was appointed, it was thereafter voided of its power for men. This He did that He might turn again to incorruption men who had turned back to corruption, and make them alive through death by the appropriation of His body and by the grace of His resurrection. Thus He would make death to disappear from them as utterly as straw from fire.

(9) The Word perceived that corruption could not be got rid of otherwise than through death; yet He Himself, as the Word, being immortal and the Father's Son, was such as could not die. For this reason, therefore, He assumed a body capable of death, in order that it, through belonging to the Word Who is above all, might become in dying a sufficient exchange for all, and, itself remaining incorruptible through His indwelling, might thereafter put an end to corruption for all others as well, by the grace of the resurrection. It was by surrendering to death the body which He had taken, as an offering and sacrifice free from every stain, that He forthwith abolished death for His human brethren by the offering of the equivalent. For naturally, since the Word of God was above all, when He offered His own temple and bodily instrument as a substitute for the life of all, He fulfilled in death all that was required. Naturally also, through this union of the immortal Son of God with our human nature, all men were clothed with incorruption in the promise of the resurrection. For the solidarity of mankind is such that, by virtue of the Word's indwelling in a single human body, the corruption which goes with death has lost its power over all. You know how it is when some great king enters a large city and dwells in one of its houses; because of his dwelling in that single house, the whole city is honoured, and enemies and robbers cease to molest it. Even so is it with the King of all; He has come into our country and dwelt in one body amidst the many, and in consequence the designs of the enemy against mankind have been foiled and the corruption of death, which formerly held them in its power, has simply ceased to be. For the human race would have perished utterly had not the Lord and Savior of all, the Son of God, come among us to put an end to death….

3(1) When God the Almighty was making mankind through His own Word, He perceived that they, owing to the limitation of their nature, could not of themselves have any knowledge of their Artificer, the Incorporeal and Uncreated. He took pity on them, therefore, and did not leave them destitute of the knowledge of Himself, lest their very existence should prove purposeless. For of what use is existence to the creature if it cannot know its Maker? How could men be reasonable beings if they had no knowledge of the Word and Reason of the Father, through Whom they had received their being? They would be no better than the beasts, had they no knowledge save of earthly things; and why should God have made them at all, if He had not intended them to know Him? But, in fact, the good God has given them a share in His own Image, that is, in our Lord Jesus Christ, and has made even themselves after the same Image and Likeness. Why? Simply in order that through this gift of Godlikeness in themselves they may be able to perceive the Image Absolute, that is the Word Himself, and through Him to apprehend the Father; which knowledge of their Maker is for men the only really happy and blessed life.

**The Creed of Constantinople (381)**

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds ( aeons ), Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven , and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary , and was made man; he was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered , and was buried , and the third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven , and sitteth on the right hand of the Father ; from thence he cometh again, with glory , to judge the quick and the dead ; whose kingdom shall have no end And in the Holy Ghost, who is Lord and Giver of life, who pro-ceedeth from the Father, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spake by the prophets. In one holy catholic and apostolic church, we acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; we look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen .

## Further Reading

*On the Incarnation* can be found on www.ccel.org/ccel/athanasius/incarnation.ii.html. It is relatively short, and is definitely worth a read, especially chapters 2-3. A large selection of his works (including *Against the Arians*) can be found at www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf204.toc.html

**2.6 The Canon of Scripture**

**Biblical idea:**

**Developments during C2:**

**Developments in C4:**

330 Constantine – 350 editions of scriptures for churches – including Revelation which he liked → lists standardise

367 Athanasius Easter letter

393 / 397 prescribe the list we know

**Does the church define scripture?**

**What did the early church believe about scripture?**