

The Great Schism

The Church Divided

Events, Causes and Controversies
which led to the Church's division

East and West

Why The Schism?

The “Catholic” “Orthodox” Christian Church of the Apostles survived Empire wide persecutions for over 2 ½ centuries. It converted diverse groups inside and outside the Empire. It changed the Emperors from persecutors to supporters. At times, it not only influenced Emperors, but also punished them.

Yet over the centuries, the Church could not reconcile its diverging, differing views of what its ecclesiology (church structure) was to be, and how it would function. East and West had clearly different views of what “church” should be.

Pride, arrogance, and pettiness would eventually win out and the Church would be broken.

This East-West schism wasn’t the first schism, nor would it be the last, but it certainly was the largest, and little has been done in a thousand years to heal it or to reconcile those who claim the same faith.

The faith the apostles received from Christ and passed on to us. (1 Cor 11:23)

Which Schism?

- **Christological (Chalcedonian) schism**
 - Chalcedon 451 CE (4th Ecumenical Council)
 - Nature(s) of Christ
- **East – West Schism**
- **Great Western Schism** (1378 – 1417)
 - Avignon ... Rome ... Pisa
 - Council of Constance 1417-18
- **Protestant schisms** (beginning 15th – 16th cent)

The Emerging Church

As the early Church spread beyond Palestine in the Apostolic and Post-Apostolic period it was subject to episodic persecution, usually regional, but at times empire wide.

- Stephen stoned ~ 33 CE ... James (apostle) beheaded ~ 43 CE ... James (bishop of Jerusalem) clubbed ~ 62 CE ... Peter crucified ~ 64 CE ... Paul beheaded ~ 67 CE ...
- Eight major Emperor initiated persecutions from 64 through 311 CE.
 - Approximately 114 of 247 years.
- Constantine issues Edict of Milan granting official toleration of Christians in 313 CE.
- Emperor Theodosius makes orthodox Christianity the official religion of the Empire in 380 CE.

Persecution and Response

How to deal with the “lapsed.”

The power of the church.

Official Persecution

- **~ 248, the Empire was in crisis.**
 - Goths from the north ... Persians from the east ... Germans from across the Rhine ...
 - A revulsion ... against a large body of citizens whose allegiance to Rome was suspect ... the Christians'
- **Emperor Decius (249 – 251 CE) persecution.**
 - Decius wanted to restore the ancient Roman ways to include paganism.
 - Emperor declared divine.
 - Christians were unprepared after a generation of relative calm for his systematic persecutions.
 - Citizens required a certificate that testified that they had burnt incense to the pagan gods. Many Christians killed ... but many commit apostasy. Term “Confessors” first used.
 - Emperor Valarian (253 - 259 CE) maintains the persecution.

The Roman Empire



Internal Struggle

- **After the persecutions, the Church was forced to deal with itself.**
 - What to do with those who apostatized and their position within the Church.
 - Many clergy and laity disavowed the faith to save themselves.
 - Apostasy ... *he who is disloyal to the divine truth which he has received and to which he has given his inner acceptance.*
- Generally, the response of the dissatisfied was separation from the official Church.
 - Rigorism ... Schism
 - Monasticism

Novatian

- **During the Decian persecution, Fabian, the bishop of Rome is martyred (250 CE) ... and Cornelius is consecrated the new bishop of Rome (251 CE).**
- **After Cornelius' appointment, Novatian, a Roman theologian, was elected bishop of Rome in opposition to Cornelius ... who many thought was far too lenient to church members ... including clergy ... who had apostatized.**
 - Many Roman clergy opposed Cornelius because of his apparent leniency.
 - Selection of Novatian (presbyter) as “anti-pope.”
 - Two churches ... side by side ... in Rome.
 - **Novatian** ... only God can forgive apostasy.
 - **Cornelius** ... “church” had the power to forgive ... after an appropriate period of penance.
 - **Cyprian of Carthage** became major apologist for Cornelius position.

Cyprian of Carthage

- Bishop of Carthage (248 - 258 CE)
- During the persecution of the Emperor Decius beginning in 250 CE ... Cyprian fled Carthage.
- After the Decian persecution ... the question of the “lapsed” ... those who had somehow not shown proper Christian “heroism” during the persecution arose.
- Cases would be reviewed on an individual basis ... some would be readmitted quickly ... some not until the point of death.
 - *Viaticum* ... preparation for a journey.
- Some thought Cyprian too liberal ... some thought him to be too harsh.
- Novatian (anti-pope) appoints an opposing hard line bishop for Carthage.
 - “Shadow churches” in Carthage.

Was the church to be a celebration of holy people or a [school](#) of repentant sinners?

The Argument

Novatian

- “... everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven; but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit **will not be forgiven.**” (Luke 12:10)
 - Apostasy ... the unforgivable sin ...

Cornelius ... Cyprian

- “And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and **whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.**” (Matthew 16:18-19)
 - Power of forgiveness is in the church.

Cyprian of Carthage

- But ... another conflict ... this time with bishop Stephen I of Rome ... over the validity of baptism performed by lapsed clergy.
 - Novatian ... still anti-pope.
- Bishop Stephen argued that the proper formula (actions and words) alone were required for a baptism to be valid ... even if the clergy person were a heretic ... or ... lapsed.
- Cyprian disagreed ... “We decided long ago ... that the ancient practice against heretics should be maintained and held firm. We have decided that all baptism administered outside the church must be rejected.”
- There was no reconciliation ...

Stephen martyred ... 257.

Cyprian martyred ... 258.

Novatian dies ...258.

Point

- Bishops could ...and did ... disagree with one another.
- As with the issue of baptism performed by lapsed clergy ... bishops agreed to disagree and their rulings prevailed in there areas.
- Sometimes disagreements were considered more severe ... and shadow churches ... with opposing bishops were established. Some of these shadow churches remained for centuries.

No central – central authority.

New Persecutions

- **The Great Persecution under Emperor's Diocletian (284 - 305 CE) ... and Galerius (292 - 311 CE).**
 - Diocletian wanted to be revered as representative of Jupiter on earth ... Emperor as "First Citizen" ... transitions to Emperor as "Lord."
 - Refusal of Christians to serve in the army.
 - Christian officials removed from government.
 - Famines, plagues, uprisings occur which are all blamed on the Christians because "the gods are angry."
 - Many churches and sacred writings destroyed in systematic purges. Most widespread of persecutions. Causes much difficulty in the Church.

Controversy

- **After the Diocletian and Galerian persecutions another “rigorist” controversy arose in North Africa.**
 - When some were asked to surrender scripture to be burned by government authorities ... they turned the documents over and were allowed to live ...
 - Some however boldly told the authorities that they had secreted away documents but would not turn them over ... even under punishment of death ... martyrs and confessors.
 - Most bishops were considered guilty of some form of surrender to the authorities.

The Donatist Controversy

- The bishop of Carthage ... Mensurius ... forbade intentional martyrdom during the persecution.
 - An archdeacon in the church ... Caecilianus ... forbade Christians to gather for worship for fear of the authorities.
- The bishop of Numidia ... Secundus ... held a synod to determine if there were any “traitors” still in the church.
- Mensurius dies 311 CE ... Caecilianus is deposed ... Majorinus is elected bishop of Carthage ... but soon dies in 313 CE.
- Donatus ... a rigorist ... is elected bishop in 313 CE.
 - Two churches emerge in and around Carthage.
 - The Donatists wanted the Church cleansed of apostates.
- Caecilianus ... recognized as bishop by anti-Donatist moderates.

The Donatist Controversy

- Questions raised by the Donatists
 - Were “traitors” still in the Church?
 - If clergy had apostatized, were they still validly ordained, were their priestly actions valid?
 - Would apostates have to be “rebaptized” to participate in the Church?
- In 313 CE, Constantine authorizes the Edict of Milan
 - Christian church would no longer be persecuted ... would be under the protection of the Empire.
 - Donatists are excluded.
 - Appeal to emperor ...
- Some Donatists waged war against the Church (340 CE) because to be a martyr was the highest calling.

Augustine and the Donatists

- As Bishop of Hippo, Augustine (354 - 430 CE) tries to resolve the issue.
 - The Church is a Church of sinners.
 - **Schism is a worse sin than that of heresy.**
 - It separates one from the Church of God.
- The argument: the actions of the Church (sacramental) are efficacious because of the salvific actions of Jesus not because of the goodness of the minister, i.e., the one performing the action.
 - *Ex opere operantis* ...on account of the work of the one who works...the Donatist position.
 - *Ex opere operato* ...on account of the work which is worked ... the Catholic position.

Augustine and the Donatists

- Augustine states his case at the Synod of Carthage in 411 CE.
 - The Emperor decreed Donatists to be banned.
 - Augustine argues for the use of force against schismatics.
 - Donatists lose rights to assemble in 414 CE.
- Augustine's arguments actually win the day and most Donatists return to the Church, but...
- The Donatist schism continues until the entire area is overrun by Moslem Arabs in the 7th century.

The Concept of Church

Meaning

Church ?

What is it that we really mean by the word *church* ?

- Whatever our understanding of the word ... this understanding will define what we feel about church ... **expectations, membership and obligations.**
- The use of the word ... even the distribution of the use of the word “church” in scripture ... that is, where and when the word is used ... shows a clear distinction in the words use and contextual meaning.

Ecclesia

- The word that is translated as “church” in the Greek Christian scripture is *ecclesia* ...
 - It is used 115 times in the New Testament ... and is translated as church 112 times.
- In all four of the gospels, however, the word only appears 3 times ... all in Matthew ... within two specific occurrences in chapters 16 and 18.
 - The word is never used in the gospels of Mark, Luke or John.
- In the book the Acts of the Apostles, the history of the early church, the word is used 19 times and in the 21 epistles, or letters, in the New Testament, the word is used 66 times.
 - The word is also frequently used in the Revelation of Jesus to John.

Jesus and Church

It is clear from this distribution, that the term “church” is not one used by Jesus ... but is a word that is frequently used by the believers in Jesus ... after his death, resurrection, and ascension.

Why ?

Jesus ... the Jew

- Jesus taught in Aramaic and within a Jewish context ...
 - Within this Jewish context of 2000 years ago there is really no concept such as church ... as we know it today.
- The Hebrew/ Aramaic word that would have been used by Jesus and his followers is *qahal*.
 - This word, is used over 100 times in the Hebrew scriptures, and is translated as *ecclesia* in the Greek Hebrew scriptures ... the Septuagint.
 - We rely on the Septuagint as the source of our Old Testament.
- *Qahal* ... in the context of the Hebrew Scripture means, and is translated as congregation (86), assembly (17), multitude (3), or company (1).

Qahal

For example ... in Genesis 48:4 ...

– “... *Behold, I will make you fruitful, and you will multiply, and I will make you a **qahal**; and will give this land to your seed for an everlasting possession.*”

- Qahal here means “**a multitude of people.**” We wouldn’t be speaking of “church” in God’s covenant promise to Abraham. (There aren’t even Jews yet at this point!)

In the Jewish context ... *qahal* ... came to mean ... and is oftentimes used ... to refer to the “restoration” of Israel at the end of time.

Qahal ... Ecclesia ... Church

- Even though the word *qahal* is translated from Hebrew into Greek as *ecclesia* ...
when this word is used in the “Old Testament” context it is never translated as “church” ...
but when the word appears in the New Testament ... it is *always* translated as church.
- Modern scholars “blame” the first translators of the scriptures in to English ... in England ... in the 15th century for this “mistranslation.”

Ecclesia

- ***Ecclesia* means an “assembly” ... from the Greek roots “ecc” “kaleo” ... “to be called out” ... usually by a higher authority.**
 - A secular council ...
 - Soldiers in an army.
- In the Christian context we should think of an *ecclesia* as **an assembly of believers ... called out ... by God.**
- Called out of what ... **the world.**
- For what purpose ... **to be God’s people.**

Ecclesia

If we think of the word meaning **an assembly of believers ... called out ... by God ...**

it makes sense for the covenant people of God of the Old Testament ...

and for the believers in Jesus as the Son of God in the context of the New Testament.

We are ecclesia ...

Jesus spoke about the Kingdom of God ... the Church talks about the Church.

Early Church Organization

Ministries (offices) in the early Church ... the Acts of the Apostles ... Apostles and Deacons

- *Apostoloi*, apostle, meaning "ambassador," "one sent," "missionary."
 - Originally "the twelve" but later includes others ... Paul and Barnabas (Acts 14:14), Andronicus and Junia (Rom 16:7), Timothy and Titus.
 - James, "the brother of the Lord," first bishop of Jerusalem.
- *Diakonia*, deacon, meaning "service," "ministry."
 - Stephen and Philip (Acts 6:1-6)
- Separation of function ... Samaria and Antioch.
 - Preaching (Acts 8:4-5)
 - Baptizing (Acts 8:11-12)
 - Chrismation (Acts 8:14-17)

Early Church Organization

Bishops were considered to have the “fullness” of the Apostles.

– **Bishop**

- Every major city (towns and villages) had a bishop.
 - By the end of the 3rd century there were over 200 bishops in the province of Africa alone.

– **Deacon**

- Representative of the bishop.

Example of Rome (mid 3rd century)

- City divided ... with deacons.
- Acts 6

Priests ?

See Didache

The Roman Empire



Early Church Organization

How did one become a bishop?

- Early ... a bishop is selected by one of the twelve or one of the apostles.
 - Elders are also selected to support the bishop in various functions.
 - Elders vote to replace bishop (upon his death) from among their own.
 - There are various preachers, teachers and "ministers" in the area who are not directly under the control of the bishop.
- Later ... bishops are selected by elders (presbyters/priests), the people (at least some of them), and perhaps the influence of neighboring bishops.
 - Priests may have limited functions ... could not consecrate chrism, ordain other ministers, some could not even preach.
 - All ministers put under the control of the bishop.
- Ambrose of Milan ... 4th cent ... an example ... government official until his selection as bishop.

Hippolytus of Rome

The Apostolic Tradition ... ~ 215 CE

- “He who is ordained as a bishop, **being chosen by all the people**, must be irreproachable.

When his name is announced and approved, the people will gather on the Lord's day with the council of elders and the bishops who are present.

With the assent of all, the bishops will place their hands upon him, with the council of elders standing by, quietly. Everyone will keep silent, praying in their hearts for the descent of the Spirit.

After this, one of the bishops present, **at the request of all**, shall lay his hand upon him who is being ordained bishop, and pray, saying ...”

Hippolytus of Rome

- A presbyter in Rome.
- Came into conflict with Bishop Zephyrinus of Rome (199 - 217 CE) over developing Trinitarian concepts and especially ... church discipline.
- When Callistus ... who Hippolytus also thought to be soft on sinners ... heretical in his views ... and immoral ... was elected bishop of Rome in 217 CE ...
- A contingent of Roman clergy chose Hippolytus as “antipope” ... and the Roman church was in schism.
- Hippolytus continued as bishop of this rival church through the reign of three “regular” bishops of Rome.
 - *The Apostolic Tradition* ... 215 CE.
- During persecution ... he was arrested ... sent to work in the mines of Sardinia ... where he died as a martyr (235 CE) ...

Martyr ... Saint ... antipope ... theologian ... prolific writer

Early Church Organization

From the beginning, there was a Church organization and a hierarchy of clergy

- **Qualifications ... from the catholic or universal epistles.**
 - For bishops ... (1 Tim 3:1-7)
 - For deacons ... (1 Tim 3:8-13)
 - ...further advice... (Titus 1:5-9), (1 Tim 5:22), (2 Tim 1:6)
- **Ignatius of Antioch ... *Epistle to Tralles*, (107 CE)**
 - Threefold character of the hierarchy ... bishops, priests, deacons
- **Iranaeus of Lyons ... *Against Heresies*, (170-180 CE)...** "We have to obey the elders in the church since they are successors of the apostles and along with their succession as overseers have certainly been granted the spiritual gift of truth by the Father."
- **Cyprian of Carthage (mid 3rd century) ... *Letters* ...** "You must realize that the bishop is where the church is and the church is where the bishop is, and that whoever is not with the bishop is not in the church."

The Church of Many Churches

During the periods of persecution, there arose many “centers” of Christianity which ultimately had influence over surrounding areas (administratively) and universally (doctrinal development).

- By the end of the 3rd century there were over 135 such centers.

The stature of these centers developed not only because of the cities they were in but because of the personalities of the leaders of those areas.

- **Rome** Peter, Paul, Clement (1st), Justin Martyr (2nd).
- **Antioch** Center of the Church after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE. Nestorius (5th).
- **Carthage** Tertullian (3rd), Cyprian (3rd), Augustine (5th).
- **Alexandria** Origen (3rd), Clement (3rd), Athanasius (4th), Arius (4th), Cyril (5th).
- **Lyons** Irenaeus (2nd).
- **Laodicea** Appolinaris (4th).
- **Cappadocia** Gregory (4th), Basil (4th), Gregory (4th).

Edict of Milan

- In 313 CE, Constantine and Licinius ... the Emperor of the east, meet in Milan ... and proclaim the Edict of Milan.
 - “No one whatsoever should be denied the opportunity to give his heart to the observance of the Christian religion, or that religion which he should think best for himself ...”
 - “Now any one of these who wishes to observe the Christian religion may do so freely and openly, without molestation.”
 - Roman authorities were required to return to Christians all property previously confiscated from them and all seized churches were to be restored.

The Early Church

After the Edict of Milan resulted in end of official persecution in 313 CE, the Church held its first General Council at Nicea in 325 CE.

- Originally (4th century) three Patriarchates were recognized ... Rome ... Antioch ... Alexandria.
- Jerusalem was “honored.”

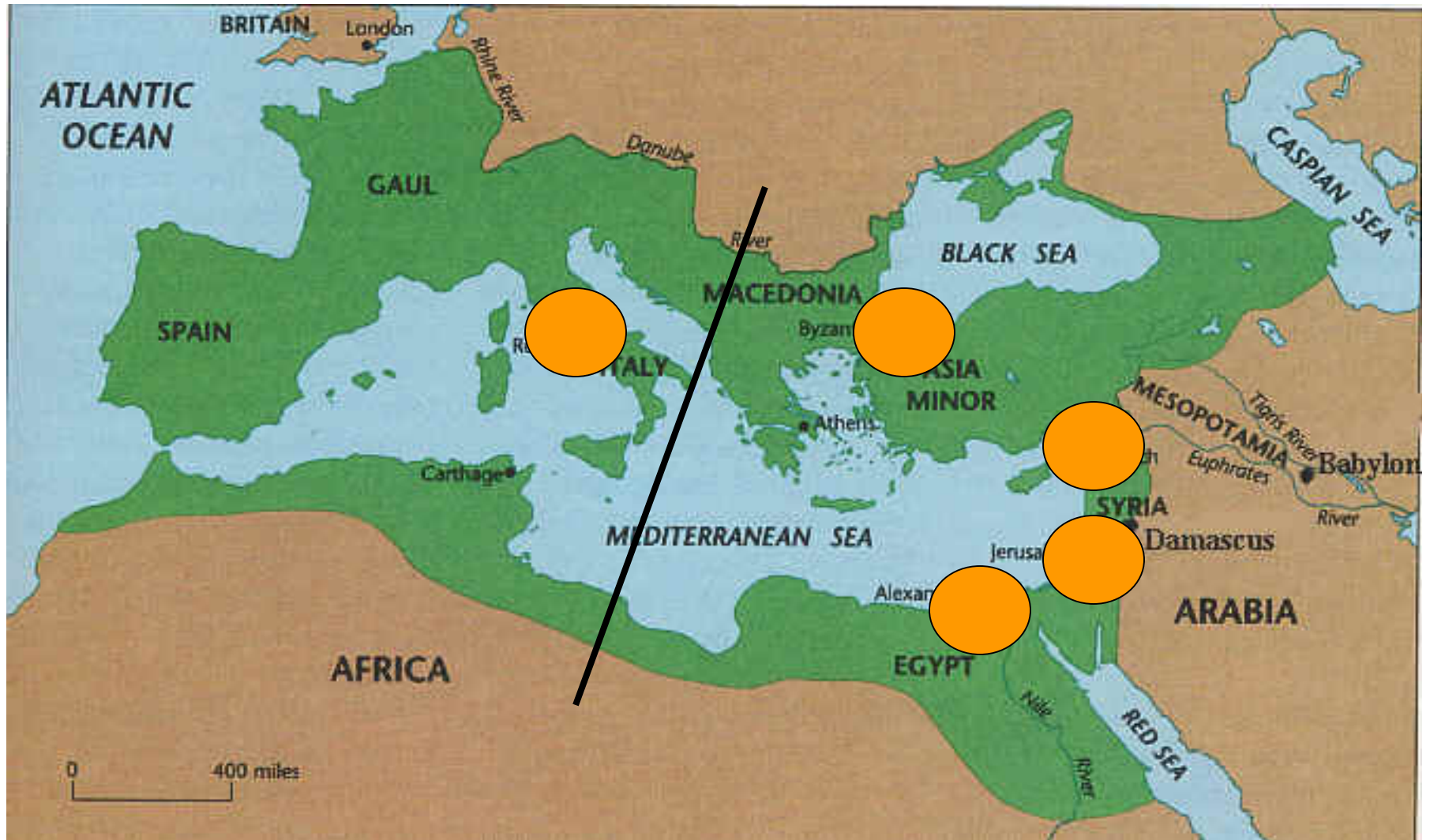
Two “schools” of theology developed:

- Antioch ... stressed the humanity of Jesus.
- Alexandria ... stressed the divinity of Jesus.

After Constantine consolidated his authority over the empire, he decided to move the capital east to a new city, Constantinople.

- This move was completed in 330 CE.
- The fourth General Council of the Church at Chalcedon (451 CE) added Constantinople and Jerusalem ... with Constantinople the “New Rome.” (Canon XXVIII)

Roman Empire



The Church “Defines” Itself

The earliest General Councils of the Church were convened to deal with serious doctrinal issues. The first four General Councils of the Church generally all dealt with the question of the nature and being of Jesus.

The bishops, however, did conduct other “business.”

- Developed creedal statements
 - “I believe ...”
- Decreed *anathemas*
 - Heretics were “turned over to Satan.”
- Developed canons: a “measuring rod” A standard or norm by which all things are evaluated or judged.
 - Ecclesial (Church) law.

The Councils spoke for the universal Church and their authority could not be questioned.

Development of “Law”

Generally, Canons were declared to be universal that were already in the “tradition” of the Church, were established by local synods, or responded to some obvious “violation” of the norm.

- **Council of Nicea (325 CE)**
 - Canon IV ... “a bishop be established by all the bishops of a province, but ... at least three bishops. The confirmation ... falls to the metropolitan bishop of each province.”
 - Canon V ... “concerning those who are excommunicated. Those so excluded by some bishops must not be received by others.”
 - Canon VI ... recognizes the “metropolitan.”
 - Canon XV ... “it is forbidden for a bishop, priest or deacon to go from one city to another.”

Development of “Law”

Council of Constantinople (381 CE)

- Canon II ... “Let the bishops refrain from interfering in churches outside the limits of a diocese and from causing trouble in the churches...”
- Canon III ... “As for the bishop of Constantinople, let him have the prerogatives of honor after the bishop of Rome, seeing that this city is the new Rome.”

Council of Chalcedon (451 CE)

- Canon XVII ... “rural and village communities of each church must without change remain attached to the bishops who possess them...”
 - “if a city is founded in the future ... be in conformity with that of the civil and public arrangements.”
- Canon XXVIII ... expands upon Constantinople (Canon) III as the “new Rome.”

Point

- Church's focus should be on believers, community and the establishment of the kingdom ... the gospel.
- Even during the time of persecution, there was disagreement over the Church's power ... authority ... processes and organization.
- After the Edict of Milan (313 CE), and Christianity becoming the official religion of the empire (380 CE), bishops gained significant power.
- Their conflicts became personal, had an impact on the secular society, and at times ... became violent.