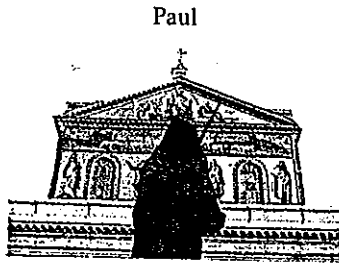


CHRISTIANITY AND ROME

The Roman Empire helped Christianity spread. The Pax Romana allowed missionaries to travel all over the empire in safety. The Roman system of roads helped them go from one place to the next quickly. As most of the people spoke either Latin or Greek, the missionaries could talk with them directly.

1. What helped Christianity spread?



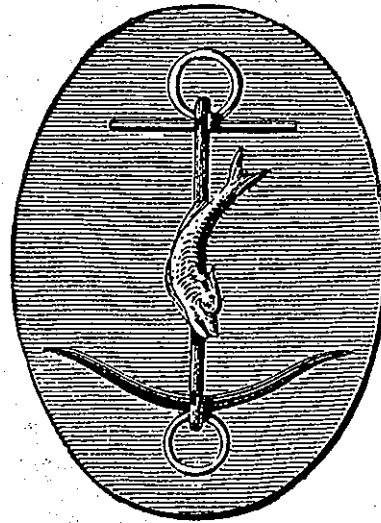
POLITICAL CONDITIONS Political conditions did not favor the spread of Christianity, however. Although all people in



EARLY CHRISTIANITY

Many Christians died during the years of Roman persecution. Christian widows and their children (left) pay their respects at a grave. The anchor and fish (right) are Christian symbols found on many early Christian tombs.

Why were the Christians persecuted?



the Roman Empire were allowed to worship freely, Romans expected everyone to honor the emperor as a god. The Christians, like the Jews, refused to do this. They claimed that only God could be worshipped. This greatly annoyed the Romans.

The Romans also did not like some other Christian attitudes. For example, Christians did not want to serve in the army or hold public office. They often criticized Roman festivals and games. They taught that all people would be equal in heaven if they followed Jesus' teachings.

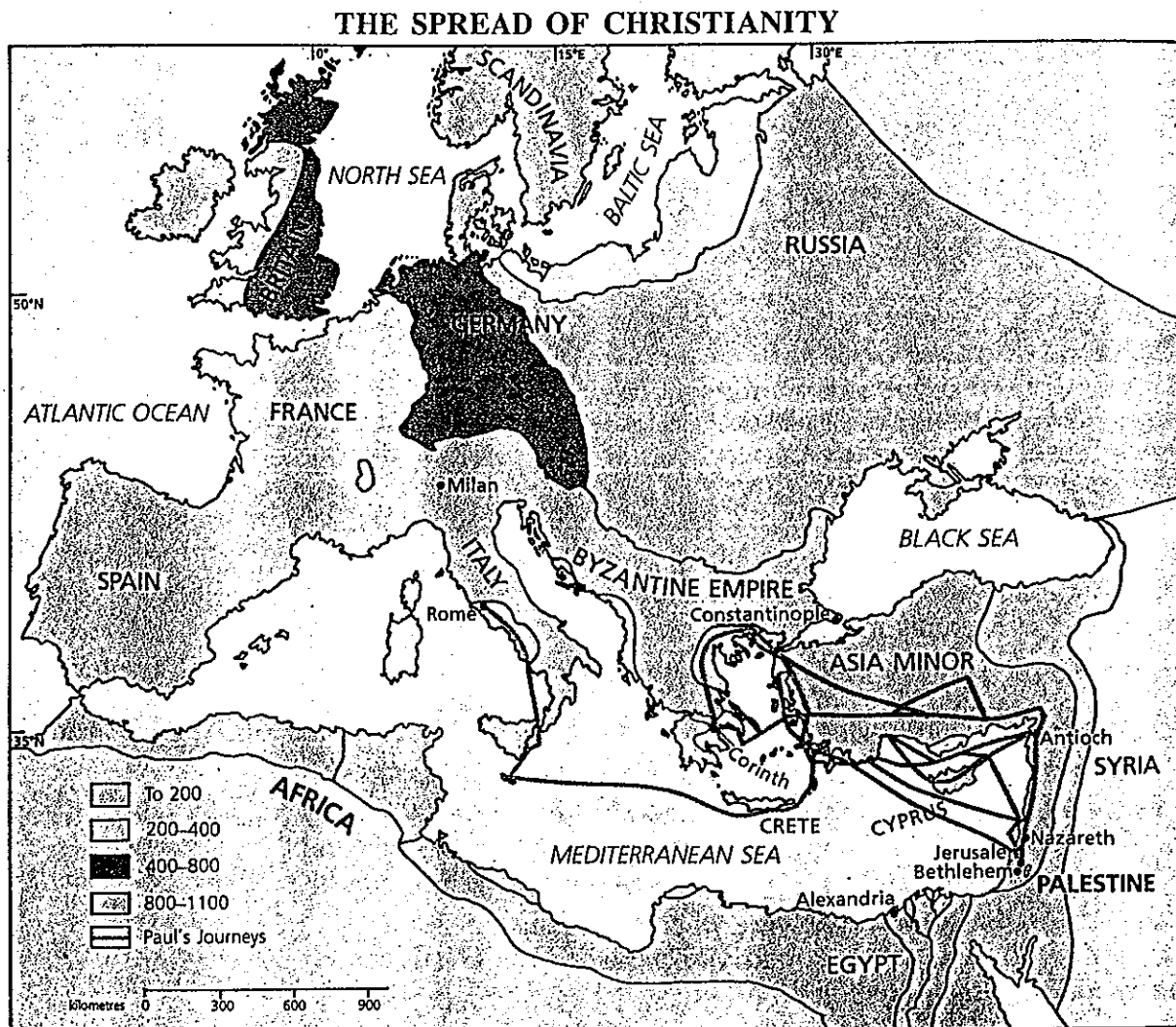
Thus, the Romans blamed and punished the Christians for all kinds of disasters such as plagues and famines. In 64 A.D. they accused the Christians of starting a fire which burned down

According to tradition, the emperor Nero sat in his palace and "fiddled while Rome burned." In reality, there were no fiddles at the time; Nero played a harp. One story hinted that Nero himself set fire to the city so he could admire the sight of Rome in flames.

much of Rome. Christianity was then made illegal, and many Christians were killed. Some officials ignored the law which made Christianity illegal, but Christians still had a difficult time in most areas of the empire. In Rome they were forbidden to use regular burial places. They had to bury their dead in crowded catacombs.

1. Why did most Romans dislike Christianity?
2. How did Roman dislike affect the Christians?

THE SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY In spite of the difficulties, however, Christianity continued to spread. At first the rich



were not interested in it. They did not want anything to do with a religion whose founder had died by crucifixion. Christianity was of more interest to the poor workers and slaves in the cities. They led very hard lives. A religion that promised a happier life after death attracted them.

Over time Christianity began to draw people from all classes. After 250 A.D. Romans grew tired of war and feared the collapse of the empire. They began to admire the certainty and courage of the Christian missionaries. They wanted the love, kindness, and security that Christianity offered. At the same time, many Christians became less opposed to the empire. Christian writers began to claim that it was possible to be both a good Christian and a good Roman.

1. What groups of people were first attracted to Christianity? Why were they attracted?
2. What factors brought about a change in attitudes between Romans and Christians?



Silver Cup

CONSTANTINE I In 312 A.D. Christianity gained the support of Constantine I, who was a general at the time. Legend says that as he was about to go into battle, Constantine saw a flaming cross in the sky. Written beneath the cross were the Latin words *In hoc signo vinces*, "In this sign thou shalt conquer." Constantine won the battle and with it the throne of the Roman Empire. He believed that God had helped him, so he ordered his soldiers to paint crosses on their shields.

The following year the Edict of Milan was issued. It granted religious freedom to all and made Christianity legal. Constantine I did a great deal to encourage the growth of Christianity. He had churches built in Rome and Jerusalem. He allowed the use of government money to support Christian churches. He permitted church leaders to enter government service and excused them from paying taxes.

The emperor who followed Constantine I continued pro-Christian policies. In 392 A.D. the emperor Theodosius made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire and outlawed all other religions.

1. Why did Constantine I support Christianity?
2. How did relations between Christians and the Roman government change during Constantine I's reign?
3. What did Theodosius do to help Christianity?

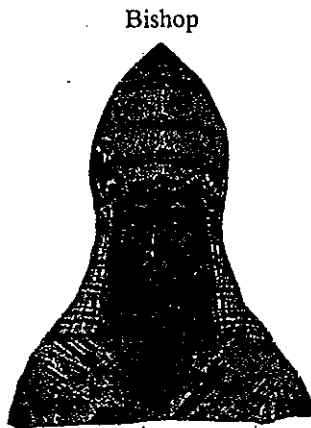
THE CHURCH

Early Christians thought the end of the world was near. At the time, they believed Jesus would return to set up God's kingdom on earth. While they were waiting for this to happen, they lived together in small groups called **churches**. They shared whatever goods they had and took turns conducting worship services in homes and outdoors. Each group managed its own affairs. **Apostles**, or those followers Jesus chose to preach his gospel, visited the various groups. The apostles taught and gave advice on problems. They also provided a sense of unity.

The word "church" means "belonging to the Lord."

1. What did early Christians believe?
2. What did the apostles do?

The church structure is diagrammed on page 229. Please note that the number of clerics portrayed in the chart does not correspond to the actual number of clerics at the time.



CHURCH STRUCTURE After the apostles died, Christians realized that Jesus was not going to return to earth as quickly as they had expected. So they looked for ways to hold their churches together. They began to develop a church organization. Since they lived in the Roman Empire, they borrowed its structure of government.

By 300 A.D. each local church was called a **parish** and had a fulltime leader known as a **priest**. Several parishes were grouped together into larger units. Each unit was called a **diocese**, a term that originally meant a Roman military district. A **bishop** headed each Christian diocese. The most important bishops were called **archbishops**. They governed churches in the larger cities of the empire. The five leading archbishops were called **patriarchs**.

As time went on, the archbishop of Rome began to claim authority over the other archbishops. By 600 A.D. he was called **Pope**, a Latin word meaning "father." Latin-speaking Christians regarded him as the head of all of the churches. Greek-speaking Christians, however, would not accept his authority over their churches. They turned instead to the archbishop of Constantinople. In 1054 A.D. the Latin and Greek churches split. The Latin churches as a group became known as the **Roman Catholic Church**. The Greek churches became known as the **Eastern Orthodox Church**.

1. Why did Christians develop a church organization?
2. How was the church organized?
3. What caused the split between the Latin and the Greek churches?

THE NEW TESTAMENT At the same time that Christians were developing a church organization, they were deciding what writings to include in the New Testament, or Christian scriptures. Jesus had left no written records. However, after the crucifixion, others wrote about his life and teachings.

Toward the end of the fourth century A.D., four of these accounts were accepted as part of the New Testament. The accounts were believed to have been written by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, four of Jesus' early followers. A number of letters written by Paul and other disciples were also accepted as sacred writings.

At about the same time, bishops met in councils to discuss questions about Christian thinking. The decisions they reached at these councils came to be accepted as official **doctrine**, or teachings. The points of view the councils did not accept were considered **heresy**, or false doctrines.

1. What writings make up the New Testament?
2. What did the councils of bishops do?

FATHERS OF THE CHURCH Between 100 and 500 A.D. various scholars wrote works that greatly influenced later Christian thinkers. These scholars were known as "Fathers of the Church." Jerome was one such scholar. He translated the Old and New Testaments into Latin. His work, called the *Vulgate*, became the official Latin bible used by the Roman Catholic Church.

St. Augustine was born a Christian but left Christianity at age 17. In 387 he met St. Ambrose, the bishop of Milan, who influenced him to return to Christianity.

Augustine was another important leader of Christian thought. His most famous work was *City of God*. In it he defended Christianity against those who claimed that Rome would not have fallen to Germanic invaders if it had not accepted Christianity. Augustine argued that Rome's fall was a punishment for having become rich and corrupt and for having persecuted Christians. He explained that Rome would have fallen sooner or later because the only eternal city is the city of God.

MONASTERIES In the early years of Christianity thousands of Christians often left the cities to live and pray alone in the desert. Such people were called hermits. In Egypt and Syria especially, thousands of hermits lived apart from other people. They believed that being a hermit would help them grow closer to Christ.

A hermit was protected from the temptation of daily life. But at the same time, the hermit was not doing anything to improve society. Near the end of the fourth century A.D. a bishop named Basil suggested a different way of life. He said that dedicated Christians should form religious communities near cities. In this way they would be protected from the evils of the world. At the same time they could help others by performing good deeds and by setting an example of Christian living. Many Christians took Basil's advice.

The Christian men who did as Basil suggested were called monks. Their communities were known as monasteries. The Christian women who did the same were called nuns. They lived in quarters of their own called convents. Basil drew up a list of rules for these communities. This list, which is known as the Basilian Rule, became the model for Eastern Orthodox religious life.

In the West another rule called the Benedictine Rule was followed. It was created in Italy about 529 A.D. by Benedict. The monks who followed Benedict's rule promised to give up all their possessions before entering the monastery. They agreed to wear simple clothes and eat only certain foods. They could not marry. They had to obey without question the orders of the abbot, or leader of the monastery. They had to attend services seven times during the day and once at midnight. In addition, they were expected to work six or seven hours a day in the fields surrounding the monastery. When they grew older, the monks did clerical work or worked as carpenters and weavers. In this way, they spent their entire lives serving Christ.

By the seventh century A.D. monks were playing an important role in spreading Christianity throughout Europe. By taking care of old Roman and Greek writings, they helped western civilization survive.



Monastery Bell Tower

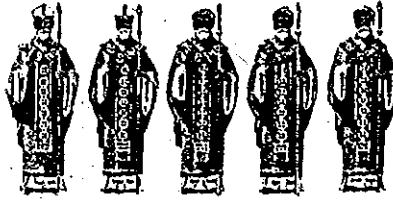
Many early Christian leaders came from monasteries.

St. Benedict founded the monastery of Monte Cassino, which was bombed during World War II and then restored after the war.

EARLY CHURCH ORGANIZATION

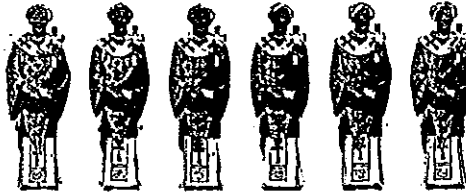
Patriarchs

Patriarchs were archbishops with the highest standing. They headed churches founded by apostles.



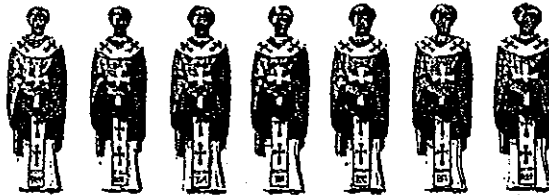
Archbishops

Archbishops were bishops of large cities. They governed an area of several dioceses.



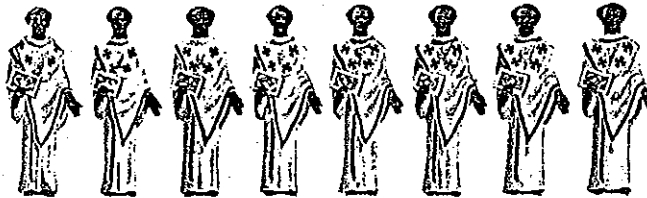
Bishops

Bishops headed a group of parishes called a diocese. They preached, performed important church rituals, collected offerings for the poor, and appointed priests.



Priests

Priests headed the local Christian community, or parish. They advised bishops, preached, led worship services, and carried out missionary work.



Deacons

Deacons assisted bishops and priests in church worship, cared for the poor, and looked after finances.



Christianity: The Catholic World View

It is now clear that by the middle of the fifth century A.D. the life of the people of western Europe was a hard, unrewarding struggle. In this situation people searching for security, order, meaning and purpose in their lives turned to religion as a source of hope and comfort. The basic beliefs and values of a religion play a major role in how people view life and the cultural decisions that are made.

The Christian Church and the teachings of Christianity that had been established during the Roman Empire became a major power and influence in the life of western Europe during this difficult time.

Power

Individuals, people or organizations have the power to do what they wish when they have:

- control of resources
- control of numbers of people
- control of an organization
- control of information

People can express this power through:

- the use of authority
- influence and/or charisma
- the use of force

Let us now try to understand how and why the Christian Church gained such power and influence in the historical time before and after the fall of the Roman Empire.

REFERENCE: Christianity handout

- 1) Christianity is a religion based on the life and teachings of Jesus, who lived and died in Palestine during the rule of the Roman Emperor Augustus Caesar. After Jesus died, his teachings were spread by his followers. Christianity grew from the belief of a few into a world religion.
 - a) What is a missionary?
 - b) The Roman Empire helped Christianity spread. Give 3 reasons how.
 - i)
 - ii)
 - iii)
- 2) To begin with the Romans persecuted Christians because they did not like some Christian teachings and attitudes. The Romans blamed and punished Christians for all kinds of disasters such as plagues and famines. But Christianity continued to spread.
 - a) Christianity was of interest to poor workers and slaves. Why?

b) Over time Christianity began to draw people from all classes. After 250 A.D. Romans grew tired of war and feared the collapse of their empire. They were attracted to the teachings of Christianity because:

i)

ii)

iii)

c) In 313 A.D. the Roman Emperor Constantine issued the Edict of Milan. It granted... (fill in the rest)...

d) Constantine encouraged the growth of Christianity by...

i)

ii)

iii)

e) In 392 A.D., what did the Emperor Theodosius do that was a huge boost for the growth of Christianity?

3) As Christianity spread, it developed a church organization. Christianity borrowed the Roman structure of government for its church organization.

a) Describe the structure of the church organization.

b) Which church official began to claim authority over all other church officials?

c) By 600 A.D. he was called _____. To Christians in western Europe he was _____.

d) At the same time that Christians were developing a church organization, they were deciding what writings to include in the New Testament. A little while later, church bishops met in councils to discuss questions about Christian thinking. The decisions they reached at these councils came to be accepted as _____.

4) In the early years of Christianity thousands of Christians became monks.

a) What is a monk?

b) In Western Europe monks followed a set of rules called the Benedictine Rule drawn up by a monk named St. Benedict. Describe 5 basic requirements of the Benedictine Rule.

i)

ii)

iii)

iv)

v)

c) By the seventh century A.D. monks were playing what 2 important roles in Europe?

i)

ii)