

While in the first two or three centuries of the early Church heresy and schism were not clearly distinguished and a similar overlapping occurred in medieval scholastic thought, heresy is understood today to mean the denial of revealed truth as taught by the Church.

See Article History Alternative Title: The Cathari professed a neo-Manichaean dualism "that there are two principles, one good and the other evil, and that the material world is evil. Similar views were held in the Balkans and the Middle East by the medieval religious sects of the Paulicians and the Bogomils; the Cathari were closely connected with these sects. In the first half of the 11th century isolated groups of such heretics appeared in western Germany, Flanders, and northern Italy. In the late 11th century no more was heard of them; then in the 12th century they reappeared. A period of rapid growth came in the 30 years following. At about this time the Bogomil Church was reorganizing itself, and Bogomil missionaries, as well as Western dualists returning from the Second Crusade '49, were at work in the West in the middle of the century. From the s the Cathari were an organized church with a hierarchy, a liturgy, and a system of doctrine. About the first bishop established himself in the north of France; a few years later he established colleagues at Albi and in Lombardy. The status of these bishops was confirmed and the prestige of the Cathar Church enhanced by the visit of the Bogomil bishop Nicetas in. In the following years more bishops were set up, until by the turn of the century there were 11 bishoprics in all, 1 in the north of France, 4 in the south, and 6 in Italy. Although the various groups emphasized different doctrines, they all agreed that matter was evil. Man was an alien and a sojourner in an evil world; his aim must be to free his spirit, which was in its nature good, and restore it to communion with God. There were strict rules for fasting, including the total prohibition of meat. Sexual intercourse was forbidden; complete ascetic renunciation of the world was called for. The extreme asceticism made the Cathari a church of the elect, and yet in France and northern Italy it became a popular religion. This success was achieved by the division of the faithful into two bodies: They devoted themselves to contemplation and were expected to maintain the highest moral standards. The believers were not expected to attain the standards of the perfect. The Cathar doctrines of creation led them to rewrite the biblical story; they devised an elaborate mythology to replace it. They viewed much of the Old Testament with reserve; some of them rejected it altogether. The orthodox doctrine of the Incarnation was rejected. Jesus was merely an angel; his human sufferings and death were an illusion. They also severely criticized the worldliness and corruption of the Catholic Church. The Cathar doctrines struck at the roots of orthodox Christianity and of the political institutions of Christendom, and the authorities of church and state united to attack them. Pope Innocent III " attempted to force Raymond VI, count of Toulouse, to join him in putting down the heresy, but this ended in disaster; the papal legate was murdered in January, and the Count was generally thought to have been an accessory to the crime. A crusade—the Albigensian Crusade—was proclaimed against the heretics, and an army led by a group of barons from northern France proceeded to ravage Toulouse and Provence and massacre the inhabitants, both Cathar and Catholic see Albigenses. A more orderly persecution sanctioned by St. Louis IX, in alliance with the nascent Inquisition, was more effective in breaking the power of the Cathari. The Cathari had to go underground, and many of the French Cathari fled to Italy, where persecution was more intermittent. The hierarchy faded out in the s; the heresy lingered through the 14th century and finally disappeared early in the 15th. Learn More in these related Britannica articles:

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Second Century Heretics It is important to make a few comments regarding the heretics we are about to mention. Most heretics in early Christianity had positions of influence within the Church prior to being labeled a heretic.

The Holy Office at Rome I. The Suppression of Heresy during the first twelve Christian centuries;[edit] 1 Though the Apostles were deeply imbued with the conviction that they must transmit the deposit of the Faith to posterity undefiled, and that any teaching at variance with their own, even if proclaimed by an angel of Heaven, would be a culpable offense, yet St. Paul did not, in the case of the heretics Alexander and Hymeneus, go back to the Old Covenant penalties of death or scourging Deut. In fact to the Christians of the first three centuries it could scarcely have occurred to assume any other attitude towards those who erred in matters of faith. *Humani iuris et naturalis potestatis, unicuique quod putaverit colere, nec alii obest aut prodest alterius religio. Sed nec religionis est religionem colere, quae sponte suscipi debeat, non vi.* In other words, he tells us that the natural law authorized man to follow only the voice of individual conscience in the practice of religion, since the acceptance of religion was a matter of free will, not of compulsion. Replying to the accusation of Celsus, based on the Old Testament, that the Christians persecuted dissidents with death, burning, and torture, Origen C. Jewish Christians, if sincere, could no longer conform to all of the Mosaic law; hence they were no longer at liberty to kill their enemies or to burn and stone violators of the Christian Law. Cyprian of Carthage, surrounded as he was by countless schismatics and undutiful Christians, also put aside the material sanction of the Old Testament, which punished with death rebellion against priesthood and the Judges. Lactantius was yet smarting under the scourge of bloody persecutions, when he wrote this in A. Naturally, therefore, he stood for the most absolute freedom of religion. Religion being a matter of the will, it cannot be forced on anyone; in this matter it is better to employ words than blows [*verbis melius quam verberibus res agenda est*]. Of what use is cruelty? What has the rack to do with piety? Surely there is no connection between truth and violence, between justice and cruelty. It is true that it must be protected, but by dying for it, not by killing others; by long-suffering, not by violence; by faith, not by crime. If you attempt to defend religion with bloodshed and torture, what you do is not defense, but desecration and insult. For nothing is so intrinsically a matter of free will as religion. At the same time they retained the traditional authority of "Pontifex Maximus", and in this way the civil authority inclined, frequently in league with prelates of Arian tendencies, to persecute the orthodox bishops by imprisonment and exile. But the latter, particularly St. Hilary of Poitiers *Liber contra Auxentium*, c. They repeatedly urged that in this respect the severe decrees of the Old Testament were abrogated by the mild and gentle laws of Christ. However, the successors of Constantine were ever persuaded that the first concern of imperial authority Theodosius II, "Novellae", tit. In the space of fifty seven years sixty-eight enactments were thus promulgated. All manner of heretics were affected by this legislation, and in various ways, by exile, confiscation of property, or death. A law of , aimed at the traitorous Donatists, asserts for the first time that these heretics ought to be put on the same plane as transgressors against the sacred majesty of the emperor, a concept to which was reserved in later times a very momentous role. The death penalty however, was only imposed for certain kinds of heresy; in their persecution of heretics the Christian emperors fell far short of the severity of Diocletian, who in sentenced to the stake the leaders of the Manichaeans, and inflicted on their followers partly the death penalty by beheading, and partly forced labor in the government mines. So far we have been dealing with the legislation of the Christianized State. In the attitude of the representatives of the Church towards this legislation some uncertainty is already noticeable. At the close of the fourth century, and during the fifth, Manichaeism, Donatism, and Priscillianism were the heresies most in view. Expelled from Rome and Milan, the Manichaeism sought refuge in Africa. Though they were found guilty of abominable teachings and misdeeds St. Augustine, *De haeresibus*", no. He sought their return only through public and private acts of submission, and his efforts seem to have met with success. Indeed, we learn from him that the Donatists themselves were the first to appeal to the civil power for protection against the Church. However, they fared like Daniels accusers: State intervention not answering to their wishes, and the violent excesses of the Circumcellions being condignly punished, the Donatists

complained bitterly of administrative cruelty. But, say you, the State cannot punish in the name of God. Yet was it not in the name of God that Moses and Phineas consigned to death the worshippers of the Golden calf and those who despised the true religion? This was the first time that a Catholic bishop championed a decisive cooperation of the State in religious questions, and its right to inflict death on heretics. For the first time, also, the Old Testament was appealed to, though such appeals had been previously rejected by Christian teachers. Augustine, on the contrary, was still opposed to the use of force, and tried to lead back the erring by means of instruction; at most he admitted the imposition of a moderate fine for refractory persons. Finally, however, he changed his views, whether moved thereto by the incredible excesses of the Circumcellions or by the good results achieved by the use of force, or favoring force through the persuasions of other bishops. Apropos of his apparent inconsistency it is well to note carefully whom he is addressing. He appears to speak in one way to government officials, who wanted the existing laws carried out to their fullest extent, and in another to the Donatists, who denied to the State any right of punishing dissenters. In his correspondence with state officials he dwells on Christian charity and toleration, and represents the heretics as straying lambs, to be sought out and perhaps, if recalcitrant chastised with rods and frightened with threats of severer but not to be driven back to the fold by means of rack and sword. On the other hand, in his writings against the Donatists he upholds the rights of the State: It seems certain, however, that Priscillian, Bishop of Avilia in Spain, was accused of heresy and sorcery, and found guilty by several councils. Ambrose at Milan and St. Damascus at Rome seem to have refused him a hearing. At length he appealed to Emperor Maximus at Trier, but to his detriment, for he was there condemned to death. Priscillian himself, no doubt in full consciousness of his own innocence, had formerly called for repression of the Manichaeans by the sword. But the foremost Christian teachers did not share these sentiments, and his own execution gave them occasion for a solemn protest against the cruel treatment meted out to him by the imperial government. Martin of Tours, then at Trier, exerted himself to obtain from the ecclesiastical authority the abandonment of the accusation, and induced the emperor to promise that on no account would he shed the blood of Priscillian, since ecclesiastical deposition by the bishops would be punishment enough, and bloodshed would be opposed to the Divine Law Sulp. After the execution he strongly blamed both the accusers and the emperor, and for a long time refused to hold communion with such bishops as had been in any way responsible for Priscillians death. The great Bishop of Milan, St. Ambrose, described that execution as a crime. Priscillianism, however, did not disappear with the death of its originator; on the contrary, it spread with extraordinary rapidity, and, through its open adoption of Manichaeism, became more of a public menace than ever. In this way the severe judgments of St. Jerome against Priscillianism become intelligible. In Leo the Great had to reproach the Priscillianists with loosening the holy bonds of marriage, treading all decency under foot, and deriding all law, human and Divine. It seemed to him natural that temporal rulers should punish such sacrilegious madness, and should put to death the founder of the sect and some of his followers. He goes on to say that this redounded to the advantage of the Church: The ecclesiastical ideas of the first five centuries may be summarized as follows: Leo I, and others ; other teachers, however, like Optatus of Mileve and Priscillian, believed that the State could pronounce the death penalty on heretics in case the public welfare demanded it; the majority held that the death penalty for heresy, when not civilly criminal, was irreconcilable with the spirit of Christianity. John Chrysostom says substantially the same in the name of the Eastern Church Hom. The help of the "secular arm" was therefore not entirely rejected; on the contrary, as often as the Christian welfare, general or domestic, required it, Christian rulers sought to stem the evil by appropriate measures. As late the seventh century St. How little we are to trust the vaunted impartiality of Henry Charles Lea, the American historian of the Inquisition, we may here illustrate by an example. It was only sixty-two years after the slaughter of Priscillian and his followers had excited so much horror, that Leo I, when the heresy seemed to be reviving in , not only justified the act, but declared that, if the followers of a heresy so damnable were allowed to live, there would be an end to human and Divine law. The final step had been taken and the church was definitely pledged to the suppression of heresy at any cost. It is impossible not to attribute to ecclesiastical influence the successive edicts by which, from the time of Theodosius the Great, persistence in heresy was punished with death. In these lines Lee has transferred to the pope words employed by the emperor. Moreover, it is simply the exact opposite of historical

truth to assert that the imperial edicts punishing heresy with death were due to ecclesiastical influence, since we have shown that in this period the more influential ecclesiastical authorities declared that the death penalty was contrary to the spirit of the Gospel, and themselves opposed its execution. For centuries this was the ecclesiastical attitude both in theory and in practice. Thus, in keeping with the civil law, some Manichaeans were executed at Ravenna in 485. On the other hand, Elipandus of Toledo and Felix of Urgel, the chiefs of Adoptionism and Predestinationism, were condemned by councils, but were otherwise left unmolested. We may note, however, that the monk Gothescalc, after the condemnation of his false doctrine that Christ had not died for all mankind, was by the Synods of Mainz in 848 and Quiercy in 853 sentenced to flogging and imprisonment, punishments then common in monasteries for various infractions of the rule. They were numerous in Italy, Spain, Gaul and Germany. Christian popular sentiment soon showed itself adverse to these dangerous sectaries, and resulted in occasional local persecutions, naturally in forms expressive of the spirit of the age. Elsewhere similar acts were due to popular outbursts. Catalaunens", and "Anselmi Gesta episc. Wazo replied that this was contrary to the spirit of the Church and the words of its Founder, Who ordained that the tares should be allowed to grow with the wheat until the day of the harvest, lest the wheat be uprooted with the tares; those who today were tares might to-morrow be converted, and turn into wheat; let them therefore live, and let mere excommunication suffice. St. Chrysostom, as we have seen, had taught similar doctrine. This principle could not be always followed. Thus at Goslar, in the Christmas season of 1040, and in 1041, several heretics were hanged because Emperor Henry III wanted to prevent the further spread of "the heretical leprosy. Other Catharists, in spite of the archbishops' intervention, were given their choice by the magistrates of Milan between doing homage to the Cross and mounting the pyre. By far the greater number chose the latter. In the Bishop of Soissons kept sundry heretics in durance in his episcopal city. But while he was gone to Beauvais, to ask advice of the bishops assembled there for a synod the "believing folk, fearing the habitual soft-heartedness of ecclesiastics clericalium verens mollitiem, stormed the prison, took the accused outside of town, and burned them. The people disliked what to them was the extreme dilatoriness of the clergy in pursuing heretics. A like drama was enacted about the same time at Cologne. The best-known heresiarchs of that time, Peter of Bruys and Arnold of Brescia, met a similar fate – the first on the pyre as a victim of popular fury, and the latter under the henchman's axe as a victim of his political enemies. In short, no blame attaches to the Church for her behavior towards heresy in those rude days. The former says "Verbum abbreviatum", c. Whether they be convicted of error, or freely confess their guilt, Catharists are not to be put to death, at least not when they refrain from armed assaults upon the Church. For although the Apostle said, A man that is a heretic after the third admonition, avoid, he certainly did not say, Kill him.

3: The Great Heresies | Catholic Answers

A heresy common during the first Christian centuries (AD ARIANISM. This heresy was addressed during the Council of Nicaea (). A 5th century heresy.

By this term is usually meant a special ecclesiastical institution for combating or suppressing heresy. Its characteristic mark seems to be the bestowal on special judges of judicial powers in matters of faith, and this by supreme ecclesiastical authority, not temporal or for individual cases, but as a universal and permanent office. Moderns experience difficulty in understanding this institution, because they have, to no small extent, lost sight of two facts. On the one hand they have ceased to grasp religious belief as something objective, as the gift of God, and therefore outside the realm of free private judgment; on the other they no longer see in the Church a society perfect and sovereign, based substantially on a pure and authentic Revelation, whose first most important duty must naturally be to retain unsullied this original deposit of faith. Before the religious revolution of the sixteenth century these views were still common to all Christians ; that orthodoxy should be maintained at any cost seemed self-evident. However, while the positive suppression of heresy by ecclesiastical and civil authority in Christian society is as old as the Church, the Inquisition as a distinct ecclesiastical tribunal is of much later origin. Historically it is a phase in the growth of ecclesiastical legislation, whose distinctive traits can be fully understood only by a careful study of the conditions amid which it grew up. Our subject may, therefore, be conveniently treated as follows: The Suppression of Heresy by the Institution known as the Inquisition under its several forms: Paul did not, in the case of the heretics Alexander and Hymeneus, go back to the Old Covenant penalties of death or scourging Deuteronomy In fact to the Christians of the first three centuries it could scarcely have occurred to assume any other attitude towards those who erred in matters of faith. *Humani iuris et naturalis potestatis, unicuique quod putaverit colere, nec alii obest aut prodest alterius religio. Sed nec religionis est religionem colere, quae sponte suscipi debeat, non vi.* In other words, he tells us that the natural law authorized man to follow only the voice of individual conscience in the practice of religion, since the acceptance of religion was a matter of free will, not of compulsion. Replying to the accusation of Celsus, based on the Old Testament, that the Christians persecuted dissidents with death, burning, and torture, Origen C. Jewish Christians, if sincere, could no longer conform to all of the Mosaic law ; hence they were no longer at liberty to kill their enemies or to burn and stone violators of the Christian Law. Cyprian of Carthage, surrounded as he was by countless schismatics and undutiful Christians, also put aside the material sanction of the Old Testament, which punished with death rebellion against priesthood and the Judges. Lactantius was yet smarting under the scourge of bloody persecutions, when he wrote this *Divine Institutes* in A. Naturally, therefore, he stood for the most absolute freedom of religion. Religion being a matter of the will, it cannot be forced on anyone; in this matter it is better to employ words than blows [*verbis melius quam verberibus res agenda est*]. Of what use is cruelty? What has the rack to do with piety? Surely there is no connection between truth and violence, between justice and cruelty. It is true that it must be protected, but by dying for it, not by killing others; by long-suffering, not by violence ; by faith, not by crime. If you attempt to defend religion with bloodshed and torture, what you do is not defense, but desecration and insult. For nothing is so intrinsically a matter of free will as religion. At the same time they retained the traditional authority of "Pontifex Maximus", and in this way the civil authority inclined, frequently in league with prelates of Arian tendencies, to persecute the orthodox bishops by imprisonment and exile. But the latter, particularly St. Hilary of Poitiers *Liber contra Auxentium*, c. They repeatedly urged that in this respect the severe decrees of the Old Testament were abrogated by the mild and gentle laws of Christ. However, the successors of Constantine were ever persuaded that the first concern of imperial authority Theodosius II, "Novellae", tit. In the space of fifty seven years sixty-eight enactments were thus promulgated. All manner of heretics were affected by this legislation, and in various ways, by exile, confiscation of property, or death. A law of , aimed at the traitorous Donatists, asserts for the first time that these heretics ought to be put on the same plane as transgressors against the sacred majesty of the emperor, a concept to which was reserved in later times a very momentous role. So far we have been dealing with the

legislation of the Christianized State. In the attitude of the representatives of the Church towards this legislation some uncertainty is already noticeable. At the close of the fourth century, and during the fifth, Manichaeism, Donatism, and Priscillianism were the heresies most in view. Expelled from Rome and Milan, the Manichaeism sought refuge in Africa. Though they were found guilty of abominable teachings and misdeeds St. Augustine, *De haeresibus*, no. He sought their return only through public and private acts of submission, and his efforts seem to have met with success. Indeed, we learn from him that the Donatists themselves were the first to appeal to the civil power for protection against the Church. State intervention not answering to their wishes, and the violent excesses of the Circumcellions being condignly punished, the Donatists complained bitterly of administrative cruelty. But, say you, the State cannot punish in the name of God. Yet was it not in the name of God that Moses and Phineas consigned to death the worshippers of the Golden Calf and those who despised the true religion? This was the first time that a Catholic bishop championed a decisive cooperation of the State in religious questions, and its right to inflict death on heretics. For the first time, also, the Old Testament was appealed to, though such appeals had been previously rejected by Christian teachers. Augustine, on the contrary, was still opposed to the use of force, and tried to lead back the erring by means of instruction; at most he admitted the imposition of a moderate fine for refractory persons. Finally, however, he changed his views, whether moved thereto by the incredible excesses of the Circumcellions or by the good results achieved by the use of force, or favoring force through the persuasions of other bishops. Apropos of his apparent inconsistency it is well to note carefully whom he is addressing. He appears to speak in one way to government officials, who wanted the existing laws carried out to their fullest extent, and in another to the Donatists, who denied to the State any right of punishing dissenters. In his correspondence with state officials he dwells on Christian charity and toleration, and represents the heretics as straying lambs, to be sought out and perhaps, if recalcitrant chastised with rods and frightened with threats of severer but not to be driven back to the fold by means of rack and sword. On the other hand, in his writings against the Donatists he upholds the rights of the State: As to Priscillianism, not a few points remain yet obscure, despite recent valuable researches. It seems certain, however, that Priscillian, Bishop of Avila in Spain, was accused of heresy and sorcery, and found guilty by several councils. Ambrose at Milan and St. Damascus at Rome seem to have refused him a hearing. At length he appealed to Emperor Maximus at Trier, but to his detriment, for he was there condemned to death. But the foremost Christian teachers did not share these sentiments, and his own execution gave them occasion for a solemn protest against the cruel treatment meted out to him by the imperial government. Martin of Tours, then at Trier, exerted himself to obtain from the ecclesiastical authority the abandonment of the accusation, and induced the emperor to promise that on no account would he shed the blood of Priscillian, since ecclesiastical deposition by the bishops would be punishment enough, and bloodshed would be opposed to the Divine Law Sulpicius Severus, *Chron.* The great Bishop of Milan, St. Ambrose, described that execution as a crime. Priscillianism, however, did not disappear with the death of its originator; on the contrary, it spread with extraordinary rapidity, and, through its open adoption of Manichaeism, became more of a public menace than ever. 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John Chrysostom says substantially the same in the name of the Eastern Church *Hom.* The help of the "secular arm" was therefore not entirely rejected; on the contrary, as often as the Christian welfare, general or domestic, required it, Christian rulers sought to stem the evil by appropriate measures. As late the seventh century St. How little we are to trust the vaunted impartiality of Henry Charles Lee, the American historian of the Inquisition, we may here illustrate by an example. It was only sixty-two years after the slaughter of Priscillian

and his followers had excited so much horror, that Leo I, when the heresy seemed to be reviving in , not only justified the act, but declared that, if the followers of a heresy so damnable were allowed to live, there would be an end to human and Divine law. The final step had been taken and the church was definitely pledged to the suppression of heresy at any cost. It is impossible not to attribute to ecclesiastical influence the successive edicts by which, from the time of Theodosius the Great, persistence in heresy was punished with death. In these lines Lee has transferred to the pope words employed by the emperor. Moreover, it is simply the exact opposite of historical truth to assert that the imperial edicts punishing heresy with death were due to ecclesiastical influence, since we have shown that in this period the more influential ecclesiastical authorities declared that the death penalty was contrary to the spirit of the Gospel, and themselves opposed its execution. For centuries this was the ecclesiastical attitude both in theory and in practice. On the other hand. Elipandus of Toledo and Felix of Urgel, the chiefs of Adoptionism and Predestinationism, were condemned by councils, but were otherwise left unmolested. We may note, however, that the monk Gothescalch, after the condemnation of his false doctrine that Christ had not died for all mankind, was by the Synods of Mainz in and Quiercy in sentenced to flogging and imprisonment, punishments then common in monasteries for various infractions of the rule. They were numerous in Italy, Spain, Gaul and Germany. Christian popular sentiment soon showed itself adverse to these dangerous sectaries, and resulted in occasional local persecutions, naturally in forms expressive of the spirit of the age. Elsewhere similar acts were due to popular outbursts. Catalaunens", and "Anselmi Gesta episc. Wazo replied that this was contrary to the spirit of the Church and the words of its Founder, Who ordained that the tares should be allowed to grow with the wheat until the day of the harvest, lest the wheat be uprooted with the tares; those who today were tares might to-morrow be converted, and turn into wheat; let them therefore live, and let mere excommunication suffice. Chrysostom, as we have seen, had taught similar doctrine. This principle could not be always followed. Thus at Goslar, in the Christmas season of , and in , several heretics were hanged because Emperor Henry III wanted to prevent the further spread of "the heretical leprosy. By far the greater number chose the latter. In the Bishop of Soissons kept sundry heretics in durance in his episcopal city. But while he was gone to Beauvais, to ask advice of the bishops assembled there for a synod the "believing folk, fearing the habitual soft-heartedness of ecclesiastics clericalem verens mollitiem , stormed the prison took the accused outside of town, and burned them. The people disliked what to them was the extreme dilatoriness of the clergy in pursuing heretics. A like drama was enacted about the same time at Cologne, while the archbishop and the priests earnestly sought to lead the misguided back into the Church, the latter were violently taken by the mob a populis nimio zelo abreptis from the custody of the clergy and burned at the stake. In short, no blame attaches to the Church for her behavior towards heresy in those rude days. The former says "Verbum abbreviatum", c. Whether they be convicted of error, or freely confess their guilt, Catharists are not to be put to death, at least not when they refrain from armed assaults upon the Church.

4: Heresy in Christianity - Wikipedia

Twenty-first-century views on early Christian heresies The development of doctrine, the position of orthodoxy, and the relationship between the early Church and early heretical groups is a matter of academic debate.

Jesus and History Hard archaeology is quite marginal to the continuing power of the biblical tradition. Neil Asher Silberman, *Archaeology*, At the very heart of Christianity lies the life of Jesus Christ, which from nearly every perspective imaginable involves complications of some sort. Most problematical of all, an array of accounts now known as the Gospels ascribed to various disciples connected with him, present different and sometimes incompatible recollections of his teachings. Indeed, the first century CE presents an excellent example of the difficulties encountered in dealing with the various types of histories. Moreover, given their different and sometimes conflicting accounts of his life, we have no choice but to conclude that some of them must contain some degree of "invented history. These so-called Gnostic gospels paint a very different picture of Christ from the one which orthodox Christians in the day envisioned, and following in their wake, most Christians today do also. With all this, savvy historians tend to steer a wide course around Jesus himself. Particularly given the yawning vacuum of external sources for primordial Christianity, scholars cannot speak "certainly not with any sense of comfort" about the original stimulus producing this religion. His point seems to be that civilized people should be ashamed to stand by and watch a sadist butcher morons. Instead of Greek, the language of the New Testament, Jesus most likely spoke Aramaic, a Semitic tongue used commonly throughout the Holy Lands in his day. And because he was born a Jew and most Jewish boys at the time were trained in Hebrew, he almost certainly could speak that language, too, or at least read it. As the international language of science, philosophy and commerce, both intellectual and economic, the Greek tongue would in those days have reached a much wider audience than Aramaic or Hebrew. On the other hand, believers and theologians who have freedom to traffic in mysteries or miracles may find easy and ready solutions to this problem "or difficult ones, but solutions all the same" by calling on resources historians do not find on their menu of executable options. So, without external sources to contradict, corroborate or give dimension to the testimony of its authors, the gospels of the New Testament do not admit history as such, which exempts the life of Christ itself from the direct scrutiny of historical investigation. Little makes the desperation of this situation more apparent than the thorny issue of the year in which Jesus was born. Saint Paul This means that the historical study of Christianity begins not with Christ but with his most important early follower, Paul. Often called the "second founder of the Christian church," he was a Jew who had Roman citizenship and initially oppressed Christians until he experienced an intense vision of Christ and converted to Christianity. Over time, the last developed into a schism, then open contempt and finally outright insurgency, forging a long-standing tradition of animosity between these religious sects. In leaning toward the wider pagan world, Paul set a precedent for incorporating aspects of Roman and Greek culture into the burgeoning cult, "christianizing" several useful and admirable aspects of ancient life. In particular, from the Greek philosophical system called Stoicism he adopted notions such as the assumption that all people are fundamentally equal, that slavery is an abomination and that war does less good in the world than peace. Greek literature also clearly informed his upbringing, as is visible in the high quality of lyric expression he produces at times: When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I thought as a child, I reasoned as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we look through a mirror darkly, but later we will see him face to face. Now I understand only partly; then I will understand fully, just as I have been fully understood. So faith, hope and love live on, three things; but the greatest of them is love. As it grew and prospered, Christianity came more and more into the public eye, and that ultimately brought its membership into conflict with Roman authority. In particular, the predilection of early believers in Christ to proclaim that the end of the world was imminent smacked to the Romans of insurrection, the sort of cabal that promoted general despair and hysteria and late payment of taxes. Rome and the Early Christians Moreover, the Romans saw the Christians as a subset of Jews who had already been granted special privileges because of their unusual religion and, in return, delivered little more than a ragged promise of peaceful cooperation. Because of their

non-conformist monotheistic notions, they had also received a general exemption from emperor-worship see Chapter 12, which in the minds of many Romans amounted to tax-dodging. Worse still, this mercy imported the potential for setting other sects off which might decide to petition for the same sort of licence. Thus, into an already noxious environment, Christianity was pumping only more poison. But persecution was not the way Romans as a rule preferred to handle their civic and social responsibilities. To the contrary, open acceptance of new ideas was their default position, whenever feasible. A Pantheon, a space consecrated to "all gods," is the type of temple the Romans and their coalition partners encouraged everyone to embrace. And so they did, several times in history, though never harder, it should be noted, than they did on the Jews themselves or, for that matter, other barbarian groups whom they slaughtered mercilessly and displaced in droves, always in the name of protecting Rome and the greater good. Especially in the great economic depression of the third century CE when it was becoming harder and harder for the Roman government to pay its armies and keep at bay the hordes of foreigners pounding on the gates of the frontier, emperors sought reasons to confiscate wealth anywhere they could and, because Christians lived in a tax-shelter of sorts, exempted from having to participate in certain forms of revenue collection, some of them had become quite well-off. Many more used their religious convictions to beg off serving in the army. Nevertheless, late third-century Rome finally found the savior it so desperately needed, not a divine one but a hard-nosed, working-class emperor named Diocletian. This no-nonsense general who had risen to pre-eminence out of the lowest caste of Roman society looked with suspicion upon those who appealed to ideology as a means of escaping any form of public service. In the East, on the other hand, it took a few more years, until CE and the death of the Emperor Galerius who was a fierce opponent of Christianity. Then, general persecutions ended once and for all. Within the century, Rome would not only learn to tolerate this new belief-system but come to embrace it exclusively. What matters to the issue at hand here is that he converted to some sort of Christianity at some point during his life. The truth is, Constantine was only finally baptized on his deathbed, and his biography hardly constitutes a model of the good Christian life. If, in issuing the Edict of Milan in , Constantine did not go so far as to declare Rome a Christian state, he did enforce a policy of official neutrality in Christian affairs. Under his regime, Christians were free at last to speak as themselves in public without fear of reprisal or torture and, more important, to worship as they wished. It was surely his hope that the Edict of Milan and a general posture of tolerance would help restore order within the government and the state. Just the opposite happened. By sanctioning Christianity, Constantine quickly learned that he had made himself an important figure in the Church and, like any influential "board member," he was now obliged to give his advice on matters of consequence which, as it turned out, were all there seemed to be in this religion. The Christian Church in his day was, in fact, boiling over with controversy, and Constantineâ€™much to his surprise and, no doubt, dismayâ€™found himself having to render judgment about complex theological issues. If anyone ever in history was poorly prepared or ill-equipped to debate the nature of the Trinity, it was this lucky bastard. If so, his conversion turned out to offer the mere mirage of peace and order, for not only did his investment in Christianity embroil Roman government in doctoral-dissertation-level religious disputes, but it seriously alienated the many who refused to join the Church, those traditional pagans who still constituted the majority of Romans, the conservatives of their day. There, the worship of local gods and spirits persisted, even as countless armies marched by and revolutions revolved. Well past Roman times and into the Middle Ages, these so-called pagan beliefs carried on. Furthermore, to many Christians in the day, especially Church administrators, there were "heathens" inside their ranks, too. Because much acrimonious debate surrounded the formation of the hierarchy which ultimately came to govern the early Church, this antagonism tended to center around what constituted being a "good upstanding Christian. The Gnostics One of the earliest and most prominent of the heretical groups denounced by Church officials was a class of believers called the Gnostics. In evidence as early as the second century CE, they represented not so much an organized sect as a motley collection of alternative Christians whose views on the nature of Jesus and the lessons of his ministry differed broadly, sometimes directly contradicting each other as much as the Church. To many of the bishops and saints who held the reins of the burgeoning Christian community at that time, these factions represented a realâ€™if not the realâ€™enemy. This cache of fifty-two scriptures included several works by Gnostic authors

whose "gospels" were later censured and censored by the Church. Before the discovery of the Nag Hammadi trove, most of these writings had survived only in tattered fragments, several completely lost. As Elaine Pagels says p. Yet even the fifty-two writings discovered at Nag Hammadi offer only a glimpse of the complexity of the early Christian movement. We now begin to see that what we call Christianity—and what we identify as Christian tradition—actually represents only a small selection of specific sources, chosen from among dozens of others. Now, for the first time, we have the opportunity to find out about the earliest Christian heresy; for the first time, the heretics can speak for themselves. To give just a brief glimpse of the scope of this "heresy," most Gnostics write about Jesus in less literal terms than orthodox scriptures. To them, the real world was evil, incapable of either containing or deriving from a true divinity. Gnostics subscribed to the notion that those who met this god in real life saw him only with the crude instruments of sensation humans possess—eyes and ears—and these crude tools of perception had misled them grossly. To many Gnostics, he was far too removed from the material world to feel human pain. In this context, wearing a crucifix makes little sense; waving it around in battle even less. One Gnostic author remarks on how people "go down into the water and come up without having received anything"—that is, they just get wet—and with this, martyrdom cannot carry special meaning, either. But the heart of the controversy between the Gnostics and the Church centered around the value of bishops and priests, and whether there was any need for clergy at all. To many non-orthodox Christians, such things were "waterless canals," without any definitive basis in what Jesus was verified to have said. Instead, wholesome Christians must find their own way to heaven by exploring their personal feelings, not participating in empty rituals bearing no clear sanction from Christ. Or, in the words of the Gnostic teacher Theodotus, "each person recognizes the Lord in his own way, not all alike. In simplest terms, ideas which bear implications contrary to that development come to be labeled as "heresy"; ideas which implicitly support it become "orthodox. They preached also that the knowledge of self was the knowledge of God, saying "When you come to know yourselves, then you will be known, and you will realize that you are the sons of the living Father. Indeed, to more than one theological expert in the last century, the discovery of the Gnostic scriptures has proven nothing less than shocking, especially in how profoundly at odds the Gnostics were with what later evolved into the standard view. Arianism In the later stages of the Roman Empire, neither pagans nor Gnostics proved the fiercest foe the early Church would face. This type of factionalism could be rooted out and isolated, silenced or eradicated with relative ease because its adherents had no overarching bureaucracy sheltering them from general onslaught. Even if the process took centuries, it was not all that difficult, certainly compared to the other challenges that lay ahead. Little did Christian officials suspect a far more dangerous foe was lurking within their very own ranks, a well-organized body of questioners who were prepared to attack the orthodox vision of Christ. The basic issue underlying this festering controversy stemmed from Jesus himself, who in the day represented a new type of divinity, both man and god at the same time. While in Greek religion Dionysus was also depicted as having a two-fold nature—likewise, both mortal and divine—once Dionysus had assumed immortal status, he no longer suffered in human ways. Jesus, of course, was quite different. As recorded in the four gospels accepted by the orthodox Church, his story gave rise to serious questions about the exact nature of his divinity, issues which kept cropping up because they were inherent in the narratives of his life, in particular, how a being could be both a deity and a non-deity at once. That, in turn, led directly to another complication built into Christianity, the relationship between God and Jesus. This perplexing conundrum fueled many a lively debate among the first few centuries of Christians, especially after their religion had assumed world prominence in the days following Constantine. Much as earnest deliberation can be a helpful and healthy exercise for a growing and evolving system like early Christianity, it can also make some aspects of organizing a working religion hard to manage, such as spreading the good word. That is, when priests have a hard time explaining easily the nature and function of a deity—even something as simple as where he came from or who his parents are, or parent is—it can impede the process of recruiting converts, especially among the hordes of unschooled barbarians filtering through and around late Rome. The result was a faction of churchmen led by a dynamic and well-educated priest named Arius ca. Seeing Jesus as a divine being and the offspring of God but not a god exactly like God—in other words, a very high-level, celestial messenger sent to earth—this heresy later

called Arianism endorsed the position that, if Jesus is the Son of God, then he cannot be allowed to assume precedence over his Father in heaven or on earth. It was a difficult position to counter in the arena of argument and reason. Common sense dictates that sons should submit to their fathers, and common decency demands respect for elders. Also a savvy administrator, Athanasius made no real attempt to counter the arguments of his trouble-making underling but, instead, insisted that Jesus was ultimately unknowable and the Trinity a mystical union. In simple terms, he told Arius to shut up. Like any powerful, under-educated politician confronted with a real brain-teaser of this sort, the emperor called together his advisors, in this case, Christian clergy from all across the Empire to a synod, the famous Council of Nicaea near Constantinople in CE. After some vigorous debate, the bishops ended up backing Athanasius and forged the famous Nicene Creed in which adherents and converts to Christianity were sworn to uphold the orthodox perception of Christ as "begotten not made" by God and " who was made flesh, was made man, suffered and rose again on the third day. But those who say that there was once when he was not and before he was begotten he was not and he was made of things that were not or maintain that the Son of God is of a different essence or substance or created or subject to moral change or alteration"the Catholic and Apostolic Church condemn them to damnation.

5: Outcasts and Heretics: Profiles in Independent Thought and Courage - Donald Sharpes - Google Books

Christian History provides quality articles about the history of the Christian Church and is the official site of Christian History Magazine. c. Irenaeus writes Against the Heresies.

Major Christian Heresies in historical order Background: There are certain elements of Christian theology so difficult to understand that the only way for different people to give the appearance of agreeing about them is to use exactly the same words. In a sense, that is the problem that was addressed at the First Ecumenical Council at Nicaea in AD 325, which articulated a unified statement of belief, and in the subsequent Church councils intended to clarify it further. Heretics Burning Such councils, by accepting certain positions as orthodox, provide historians the useful term "proto-orthodox" to refer to those positions before their general or official acceptance. With conciliar acceptance, proto-orthodox views formally became orthodox for those accepting the authority of the council, and all conflicting ones became "heterodox. All three terms "orthodoxy, heterodoxy, and heresy" are widely extended beyond discussions of Christianity. There has probably never been a Christian whom some other Christian at some period would not have considered a heretic, and there is probably no Christian alive today who would not have been viewed as a heretic by the majority of participants at some of the historical Church councils. But truly famous "heresies" have arisen when believers in various periods have proclaimed heterodox views so persuasively that they gained enough followers for the organized church to consider them a problem. The challenge of combatting these positions focused a great deal of attention on exactly what they argued and precisely why it was incompatible with established doctrine. For purposes of this page, I have tried to state a number of historically important heretical positions as starkly as possible, together with a very brief indication of the "error" underlying each one. All of the heresies listed here, obviously, were originally expounded in far subtler and wordier form, as were the attacks on them. The summaries here are merely thumbnail sketches. Marcionism IIrd Century named after Marcion, The wrathful and war-like God of the Old Testament is a different god from the just and forgiving God of the New Testament, who, on discovering human suffering, appeared as Jesus Christ to bring salvation; the Old Testament is irrelevant; in the New Testament only parts of Luke and parts of the Pauline letters are authentic. This is heretical in part because: Marcion rejected all scriptures except the book of Luke and the letters of Paul, to whom he considered himself an intellectual successor. He was excommunicated as few as four years after his conversion to Christianity. Rejecting nearly all forms of Christianity but his own, Marcion attracted a sufficient following to cause concern among more mainstream Christians, and his lasting influence on many Christian communities was probably one of the influences that led to the establishment of Nicene Creed AD 325 Humans have a spark of divinity, however. The realm of the true God is concealed from humans, but there is secret knowledge which can enable some human souls to return to it. The knowledge was secretly transmitted by Jesus to the select few. Public rituals, unfortunately, have little utility. There was no "demiurge. The means for full salvation are freely available from the public teachings and openly performed sacraments of the Church. Manichaeism IIIrd century named after Mani, ca. 216-276. Evil therefore could have entered the world only afterward. Mani was a Persian or Mesopotamian. Although Manichaeism sometimes borrowed Christian elements as well as Zoroastrian, Hebrew, and even eventually Buddhist elements, Manichaeism was not really a Christian sect, and its doctrines therefore should be classed as paganism rather than heresy. But it was an important force in the third and fourth centuries when it was usually illegal, and competed with Christianity, with which some people tried to combine it. Arianism IVth century Jesus was different from God and secondary to him. Condemned at the Second Ecumenical Council Constantinople, Arianism, not yet officially a heretic, kneels before Constantine and the bishops at the First Council of Nicaea. Christ was wholly divine, as well as wholly human, and, being wholly divine, could in no way be secondary to God the Father. Although condemned by the Church in the fourth century, the belief continues to reinvent itself today among liberal Christians. The non-divinity of Jesus is, of course, also a view held by most non-Christians. Arianism is historically one of the most important of the great heresies because it was especially widespread, as was opposition to it. The bitter conflict personified in Arianism and his enemy St. Athanasius was important in

inspiring Emperor Constantine to intervene by calling the Council of Nicene Nicaea in 325, which developed the Nicene Creed, encapsulating the orthodox doctrine of the trinity. Pelagianism 5th century named after Pelagius, ca 390 - ca 460 The sin of Adam affected only Adam, not all humanity. Every individual is born innocent, but is free to choose to perform good or evil deeds. Thus choosing to behave virtuously will earn one spiritual salvation. We are saved or condemned by our own choices, not by choices made by Adam. Pelagianism was a particular target for St. Augustine, one of the most important formulators of Christian theology. Arguably it was his effort to argue against Pelagianism that led Augustine to refine his doctrine of the absolute necessity of divine grace in human salvation Comment: Variants of his position became widespread in modern Christianity under the name "semi-Pelagianism" in contrast to predestinationism. See Arminianism, below. Nestorianism 5th century named after Nestorius, ca 388 - ca 451 Christ had two natures, human Jesus and divine Christ, quite distinct from each other, but united in the historical Jesus Christ. Thus Mary was the mother of Jesus, his human nature, but was not the "Mother of God," since God was his divine nature. Christ was both wholly human and wholly divine, and these two natures were united in a single entity: To speak of them being distinct implies that he was not wholly either of them. The title "Mary, Mother of God" is a constant reminder of the error of the Nestorian formulation. Nestorius was excommunicated in 451. The movement became the first Christian church in China. Monophysitism 5th century Christ had a single, divine nature, not separate human and divine natures. Christ was both wholly human and therefore suffered as we suffer, and also wholly divine, and therefore able to forgive sins and redeem humans. To argue that he has only a divine nature is to deny that he had a human nature able to suffer as a human suffers. Condemned at the Third Council of Constantinople 451 Although Monophysitism has been reinvented constantly throughout the history of Christianity, it is often especially associated with Cyril of Alexandria ca 375 - 444, and enjoyed greatest popularity in the churches of Syria, Palestine, Ethiopia, and especially Egypt. The individual part is not eternal. The divine part is eternal, but it is not individual; instead it is shared with all people. It precludes the immortality of the individual and the resurrection of the dead. Albigensianism 12th century named after the town of Albi, France The Cathedral of Albi even today is dominated by murals depicting the differing fates of the saved and the damned, the good and the evil. The world is caught in a conflict between the two gods of good and evil. The earth was created by Satan, the evil god, and through Jesus humans may be saved and brought to the realm of the true God. The world was created by God, not by Satan. Because of the similarity of this 12th-century position to earlier Manichaeism, it was often called Manichaeism by writers of the period. Persecution of the Walensians or Waldenses was probably motivated largely by this message being an embarrassing nuisance rather than by its being strictly heretical. Waldensianism seems to have deviated further after adherents were excommunicated, when they had little further motivation to toe any church line and when they saw church wealth as even more sinful. Since God has perfect knowledge, he knows in advance who will be saved and who not. What is known in advance is not logically available for modification. Arminianism had wide appeal, almost certainly wider than predestinationism, and influenced John Wesley and the Methodist churches derived from his views. Some variant of the rejection of predestination is found among most Christians today, who are, in that respect, mostly Arminian heretics. See Pelagianism, above. It is very likely a logical fallacy that foreknowledge is the same as predestination. This is a problem that has troubled Western philosophy since Classical Greek times. Jordanianism 20th-21st Centuries named after me People are a lot sillier than they think they are, and discussing theology does not, in itself, save them from that trait. It fails to take the silly bits seriously and it ignores the saving grace of fatuous pomposity and vaulting self-confidence.

6: The Earliest Christian Heretics: Readings from Their Opponents | Fortress Press

Major Christian Heresies But it was an important force in the third and fourth centuries (when it was usually illegal), and competed with Christianity, with which.

Already in apostolic times, distortions of belief threatened the Christian community from within. The First Letter of Peter Heresy differs from schism in that the heretic sometimes remains in the church despite his doctrinal errors, whereas the schismatic may be doctrinally orthodox but severs himself from the church. The Greek word *hairesis* from which heresy is derived was originally a neutral term that signified merely the holding of a particular set of philosophical opinions. Once appropriated by Christianity, however, the term heresy began to convey a note of disapproval. This was because the church from the start regarded itself as the custodian of a divinely imparted revelation which it alone was authorized to expound under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This attitude of hostility to heresy is evident in the New Testament itself. Paul, for instance, insists that his gospel is identical with that of the Twelve Apostles, and in the later books of the New Testament the contrast in attitudes regarding approved doctrines and heretical ones is even more sharply drawn. In the 2nd century the Christian church became increasingly aware of the need to keep its teaching uncontaminated, and it devised criteria to test deviations. Later, the ecclesiastical and universal church council became the instrument for defining orthodoxy and condemning heresy. Eventually, in the Western church, the doctrinal decision of a council had to be ratified by the pope to be accepted. During its early centuries, the Christian church dealt with many heresies. See also Donatist; Marcionite; monophysite. Historically, the major means that the church had of combating heretics was to excommunicate them. In the 12th and 13th centuries, however, the Inquisition was established by the church to combat heresy; heretics who refused to recant after being tried by the church were handed over to the civil authorities for punishment, usually execution. The Roman Catholic church, satisfied that it is the true church armed with an infallible authority, has alone remained faithful to the ancient and medieval theory of heresy, and it occasionally denounces doctrines or opinions that it considers heretical. Most of the great Protestant churches similarly started with the assumption that their own particular doctrines embodied the final statement of Christian truth and were thus prepared to denounce as heretics those who differed with them. But with the gradual growth of toleration and the 20th-century ecumenical movement, most Protestant churches have drastically revised the notion of heresy as understood in the pre-Reformation church. It does not now seem to them inconsistent for a person to stoutly maintain the doctrines of his own communion while not regarding as heretics those who hold different views. The Roman Catholic church, too, draws a distinction between those who willfully and persistently adhere to doctrinal error and those who embrace it through no fault of their own, etc. The term heresy also has been used among Jews, although they have not been as intense as Christians in their punishment of heretics. Learn More in these related Britannica articles:

7: Outcasts and heretics : profiles in independent thought and courage - Brigham Young University

A heresy common during the first Christian centuries that denied that Jesus was truly God. Athanasius (Roman Catholic Church) Greek patriarch of Alexandria who championed Christian orthodoxy against Arianism.

Adoptionism “ Jesus was not born the Son of God , but was adopted at his baptism , resurrection or ascension. Docetism “ Jesus was pure spirit and his physical form an illusion. The letters of Ignatius of Antioch and Polycarp of Smyrna to various churches warned against false teachers, and the Epistle of Barnabas accepted by many Christians as part of Scripture in the 2nd century, warned about mixing Judaism with Christianity , as did other writers, leading to decisions reached in the first ecumenical council , which was convoked by the Emperor Constantine at Nicaea in , in response to further disruptive polemical controversy within the Christian community, in that case Arianist disputes over the nature of the Trinity. Twenty-first-century views on early Christian heresies[edit] The development of doctrine, the position of orthodoxy, and the relationship between the early Church and early heretical groups is a matter of academic debate. Walter Bauer proposed a thesis that in earliest Christianity, orthodoxy and heresy do not stand in relation to one another as primary to secondary, but in many regions heresy is the original manifestation of Christianity. Drawing upon distinctions between Jewish Christians , Gentile Christians, and other groups such as Gnostics, they see early Christianity as fragmented and with contemporaneous competing orthodoxies. Turner , is one of many scholarly responses to the concept of early Christian origins as being ambiguous. The Russian philosopher Aleksey Khomyakov stated that the very church was the idea of submission and compromise of the individual to God through the idea of catholic or the Russian equivalent sobornost. Russian Orthodox theologian Father Georges Florovsky addressed the concept of sobornost as the concept of Orthodox Christianity after rejecting the World Council of Churches as being Catholic or orthodox simply because it expressed unity in Christ. Early suppression of heresies[edit] Main article: Heresy was to be approached by the leader of the church according to Eusebius, author of The Church History. Each phrase in the Nicene Creed , which was hammered out at the Council of Nicaea , addresses some aspect that had been under passionate discussion prior to Constantine I, and closes the books on the argument, with the weight of the agreement of the over bishops, as well as Constantine I in attendance. The number of participating bishops cannot be accurately stated; Socrates Scholasticus and Epiphanius of Salamis counted ; Eusebius of Caesarea, only This was therefore an early argument supported by apostolic succession. Irenaeus first established the doctrine of four gospels and no more, with the synoptic gospels interpreted in the light of John. Gnosticism is predicated on the existence of such hidden knowledge, but brief references to private teachings of Jesus have also survived in the canonic Scripture as did warning by the Christ that there would be false prophets or false teachers. One of the outcomes of this blurring of Church and State was a sharing of State powers of legal enforcement between Church and State authorities, with the state enforcing what it determined to be orthodox teaching. For some years after the Protestant Reformation , Protestant denominations were also known to execute those whom they considered heretics. The orthodox teaching, as it developed, is that Christ was fully divine and at the same time fully human, and that the three persons of the Trinity are co-equal and co-eternal. This position was challenged in the 4th century by Arius. Arianism held that Jesus, while not merely mortal, was not eternally divine and was, therefore, of lesser status than God the Father John Trinitarianism held that God the Father, God the Son , and the Holy Spirit were all strictly one being with three hypostases. Many groups held dualistic beliefs , maintaining that reality was composed into two radically opposing parts: Others held that both the material and spiritual worlds were created by God and were therefore both good, and that this was represented in the unified divine and human natures of Christ. Creed Urgent concerns with the uniformity of belief and practice have characterized Christianity from the outset. In the three centuries between the crucifixion and the First Council of Nicaea in , the religion was at times an illegal, underground movement spreading within the urban centres of the Roman Empire, a process bolstered through merchants and travel through the empire. The process of establishing orthodox Christianity was set in motion by a succession of different interpretations of the teachings of Christ being taught after the crucifixion , though

Christ himself is noted to have spoken out against false prophets and false christs within the Gospels themselves: The epistles of John and Jude also warn of false teachers and prophets, as does the writer of the Book of Revelation and 1 John. Due to this, in the first centuries of Christianity, churches had locally begun to make a statement of faith in line with mainstream Christian doctrine a prerequisite for baptism. The reason for this demand was to insure that new converts would not be followers of teachings that conflicted with widely accepted views of Christianity such as Gnosticism and other movements that later were considered heretical by church leaders. These statements of faith became the framework for ecumenical creeds such as the Apostles Creed and the Nicene Creed. It was against these creeds that teachings were judged in order to determine orthodoxy and to establish teachings as heretical. The first ecumenical and comprehensive statement of belief, the Nicene Creed, was formulated in at the First Council of Nicaea. The edict of Theodosius II provided severe punishments for those who had or spread writings of Nestorius. First seven Ecumenical Councils Several ecumenical councils were convened. These were mostly concerned with Christological disputes. The councils of Nicaea and Constantinople condemned Arian teachings as heresy and produced a creed see Nicene Creed. Perhaps the most significant council was the Council of Chalcedon in that affirmed that Christ had two natures, fully God and fully man, distinct yet always in perfect union. Thus, it condemned Monophysitism and would be influential in refuting Monothelitism. The First Ecumenical Council was convoked by the Roman Emperor Constantine at Nicaea in and presided over by the Patriarch Alexander of Alexandria, with over bishops condemning the view of Arius that the Son is a created being inferior to the Father. The Second Ecumenical Council was held at Constantinople in, presided over by the Patriarchs of Alexandria and Antioch, with bishops, defining the nature of the Holy Spirit against those asserting His inequality with the other persons of the Trinity. It was presided over by the Patriarch of Alexandria, with bishops and was mired in controversy because of the absences of the Patriarchs of Constantinople, and Antioch, the absence of the Syrian Clergy, and violence directed against Nestorius, and his supporters. It affirmed that Mary is the "Bearer" of God Theotokos, contrary to the teachings of Nestorius, and it anathematized Nestorius. The Fourth Ecumenical Council is that of Chalcedon in, Patriarch of Constantinople presiding, bishops, affirmed that Jesus is truly God and truly man, without mixture of the two natures, contrary to Monophysite teaching. The Fifth Ecumenical Council is the second of Constantinople in, interpreting the decrees of Chalcedon and further explaining the relationship of the two natures of Jesus; it also condemned the teachings of Origen on the pre-existence of the soul, etc. The Sixth Ecumenical Council is the third of Constantinople in; it declared that Christ has two wills of his two natures, human and divine, contrary to the teachings of the Monothelites. It supports the veneration of icons while forbidding their worship. It is often referred to as "The Triumph of Orthodoxy" However, not all of these Councils have been universally recognised as ecumenical. In addition, the Catholic Church also has convened numerous other councils which it deems as having the same authority, making a total of twenty-one Ecumenical Councils recognised by the Catholic Church. Middle Ages[edit] From the late 11th century onward, heresy once again came to be a concern for Catholic authorities, as reports became increasingly common. The reasons for this are still not fully understood, but the causes for this new period of heresy include popular response to the 11th-century clerical reform movement, greater lay familiarity with the Bible, exclusion of lay people from sacramental activity, and more rigorous definition and supervision of Catholic dogma. The question of how heresy should be suppressed was not resolved, and there was initially substantial clerical resistance to the use of physical force by secular authorities to correct spiritual deviance. As heresy was viewed with increasing concern by the papacy, however, the "secular arm" was used more frequently and freely during the 12th century and afterward. Late Middle Ages and Early Modern[edit] In later years, the Church instituted the Inquisition, an official body charged with the suppression of heresy. This began as an extension and more rigorous enforcement of pre-existing episcopal powers possessed, but little used, by bishops in the early Middle Ages to inquire about and suppress heresy, but later became the domain of selected Dominicans and Franciscans [17] under the direct power of the Pope. The use of torture to extract confessions was authorized by Innocent IV in It is linked to the movement now known as the Medieval Inquisition. The Spanish Inquisition was particularly brutal in its methods, which included the burning at the stake of many heretics. The last person to be burned alive at the stake on orders from Rome was

Giordano Bruno , executed in for a collection of heretical beliefs including Copernicanism , belief of an unlimited universe with innumerable inhabited worlds, opinions contrary to the Catholic faith about the Trinity, divinity of Christ, and Incarnation. Medieval Heresies[edit] There were many Christian sects , cults , movements and individuals throughout the Middle Ages whose teachings were deemed heretical by the established church, such as: Paulicans â€” an Armenian group 6th to 9th centuries who sought a return to the purity of the church at the time of Paul the Apostle. Tondrakians - an Armenian group 9th to 11th centuries who advocated the abolition of the Church along with all its traditional rites. Bogomils â€” a group arising in the 11th century in Macedonia and the Balkans who sought a return to the spirituality of the early Christians and opposed established forms of government and church. Gundolfo â€” an itinerant 11th century preacher near Lille , France , who taught that salvation was achieved through a virtuous life of abandoning the world, restraining the appetites of the flesh, earning food by the labor of hands, doing no injury to anyone, and extending charity to everyone of their own faith. Cathars â€” a major Christian movement in the Languedoc region of southern France from the 11th to 13th centuries. The Cathars believed that human souls were the spirits of angels trapped within the physical creation of an evil god. Through living a pure and sinless life, the soul could become perfect and free from the snare of matter. Arnoldists â€” a 12th century group from Lombardy who criticized the wealth of the Catholic Church and preached against baptism and the Eucharist. Petrobrusians were 12th century followers of Peter of Bruys in southeastern France who rejected the authority of the Church Fathers and of the Catholic Church, opposing clerical celibacy , infant baptism , prayers for the dead and organ music. Henricans were 12th century followers of Henry of Lausanne in France. They rejected the doctrinal and disciplinary authority of the church , did not recognize any form of worship or liturgy and denied the sacraments. Waldensians â€” a movement that began in the 12th century in Lyon , France , and still exists today. They held that Apostolic poverty was the way to spiritual perfection and rejected what they perceived as the idolatry of the Catholic Church. Brethren of the Free Spirit â€” a term applied in the 13th century to those, primarily in the Low Countries , Germany , France , Bohemia and northern Italy , who believed that the sacraments were unnecessary for salvation , that the soul could be perfected through imitating the life of Christ , and that the perfected soul was free of sin and beyond all ecclesiastical , moral and secular law. Apostolic Brethren later known as Dulcinians â€” a 13th to 14th century sect from northern Italy founded by Gerard Segarelli and continued by Fra Dolcino of Novara. The Apostolic Brethren rejected the worldliness of the church and sought a life of perfect sanctity, in complete poverty, with no fixed domicile, no care for the morrow, and no vows. Fraticelli or Spiritual Franciscans â€” Franciscan extremists through the 13th to 15th centuries who regarded the wealth of the Church as scandalous. Neo-Adamites â€” a term applied in the 13th to 15th century to those, including Taborites , Picards and some Beghards , who wished to return to the purity of the life of Adam by living communally , practicing social and religious nudity , embracing free love and rejecting marriage and individual ownership of property. Nicholas of Basel â€” a 14th century Swiss leader who, after a spiritual experience, taught that he had the authority to use episcopal and priestly powers even though he was not ordained , that submission to his direction was necessary for attaining spiritual perfection, and that his followers could not sin even though they committed crimes or disobeyed both the Church and pope. Last execution of a heretic[edit] The last case of an execution by the inquisition was that of the schoolmaster Cayetano Ripoll , accused of deism by the waning Spanish Inquisition and hanged on 26 July in Valencia after a two-year trial. The number of people executed as heretics as sentenced by various church authorities is not known; however it most certainly numbers into the several thousands. Coincidentally, the first heretic executed had been a Spaniard, Priscillian ; the most notorious organization known for the persecution of heretics had been based in Spain, the Spanish Inquisition , and the last heretic executed had been a Spaniard, Cayetano Ripoll. Thus, the era of the execution of heretics by the Catholic Church had come to an end. Modern Roman Catholic response to Protestantism[edit] Main article: Roman Catholic teachings on heresy Well into the 20th century, Catholics defined Protestants as heretics. Thus, Hilaire Belloc , in his time one of the most conspicuous speakers for Catholicism in Britain, was outspoken about the "Protestant heresy". He even defined Islam as being "a Christian heresy", on the grounds that Muslims accept many of the tenets of Christianity but deny the divinity of Christ. However, in the second half of the century, and

especially in the wake of the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic Church, in the spirit of ecumenism, tended to diminish the effects of Protestantism as a formal heresy by referring to many Protestants who, as material heretics, "through no fault of their own do not know Christ and his Church", [20] even though the teachings of Protestantism are indeed formally heretical from a Catholic perspective. Modern usage in ecumenical contexts favors referring to Protestants as "separated brethren". The difficulty in the way of giving an answer is a profound one. Ultimately it is due to the fact that there is no appropriate category in Catholic thought for the phenomenon of Protestantism today one could say the same of the relationship to the separated churches of the East. This, however, cannot be regarded as an appropriate description of the spiritual situation of the Protestant Christian. In the course of a now centuries-old history, Protestantism has made an important contribution to the realization of Christian faith, fulfilling a positive function in the development of the Christian message and, above all, often giving rise to a sincere and profound faith in the individual non-Catholic Christian, whose separation from the Catholic affirmation has nothing to do with the pertinacia characteristic of heresy. Perhaps we may here invert a saying of St. The very passage of time alters the character of a division, so that an old division is something essentially different from a new one. Something that was once rightly condemned as heresy cannot later simply become true, but it can gradually develop its own positive ecclesial nature, with which the individual is presented as his church and in which he lives as a believer, not as a heretic. This organization of one group, however, ultimately has an effect on the whole. The conclusion is inescapable, then: Protestantism today is something different from heresy in the traditional sense, a phenomenon whose true theological place has not yet been determined.

8: Lecture Heretics, Heresies and the Church

The earliest Christian heretics. "Hultgren and Haggmark have brought together in one volume all of the major orthodox references to persons and theological movements of the first two Christian centuries that were subsequently branded as 'heretical.'"

The Bible describes Jesus as having the nature and power of God, and the Gospel of John tells us that He existed before the universe began He was, in fact, the creator of the universe. At the same time, the Bible teaches Jesus was fully human and died on the cross. Efforts to reconcile the Divine and human nature of Jesus have resulted in a number of classic and historic misinterpretations: Adoptionism 2nd Century This heresy denies the pre-existence of Christ and therefore denies His Deity. It taught Jesus was simply a man who was tested by God and after passing the test was given supernatural powers and adopted as a son this occurred at His baptism. Jesus was then rewarded for all He did and for His perfect character with His own resurrection and adoption into the Godhead. Leaders in the Heresy: Theodotus of Byzantium Correctors of the Heresy: It taught Jesus only appeared to have a body and was not truly incarnate. Docetists viewed matter as inherently evil, and therefore rejected the idea God could actually appear in bodily form. By denying Jesus truly had a body, they also denied He suffered on the cross and rose from the dead. Ignatius of Antioch, Irenaeus, and Hippolytus refuted it was condemned at the Council of Chalcedon in AD Apollinarianism 4th Century This heresy denied the true and complete humanity of Jesus, because it taught He did not have a human mind, but instead had a mind that was completely Divine. The heresy lessened the human nature of Jesus in order to reconcile the manner in which Jesus could be both God and man at the same time. In this view, only the Father is truly God; He was too pure and perfect to appear here on earth, so He created the Son as His first creation. The Son then created the universe. God then adopted Jesus as a son because, after all Jesus and God are not supposed to have the same nature in this view. Jesus was worshipped only because of His preeminence as the first creation. The Council of Nicaea in AD. The Nicene Creed was written to respond to this heresy. If that was true, then Jesus was not God incarnate while in the womb. In essence, the heresy claimed Jesus had only one nature something new and different than the Divine or human nature that God and humans have, respectively. Instead, this heresy taught a third unique nature was possessed by Jesus; a blend or mixture of the human and the Divine. The Chalcedonian Creed addresses this heresy. Monothelism 7th Century This heresy emerged in response to the Monophysite heresy see above , but it also taught something denied by the Scripture. Monothelism taught Jesus had two natures but only one will. The Third Council of Constantinople; the Sixth Ecumenical Council "AD These ancient heresies have been revisited by believers over the centuries and even persist into the modern era. Unitarians, for example have embraced a view of Jesus very similar to the heretics of Arianism. The more we understand these classic heresies related to Jesus, the better prepared we will be to spot counterfeits when they re-emerge in our culture.

9: Catholic Encyclopedia (/Inquisition - Wikisource, the free online library

Heresy is the obstinate post-baptismal denial of some truth which must be believed with divine and Catholic faith, or it is likewise an obstinate doubt concerning the same; apostasy is the total repudiation of the Christian faith; schism is the refusal of submission to the Roman Pontiff or of communion with the members of the Church subject to.

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has given a negative response to a "Dubium" regarding the validity of Baptism conferred in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, more commonly known as the Mormons. Given that this decision changes the past practice of not questioning the validity of such Baptism, it seems appropriate to explain the reasons that have led to this decision and to the resulting change of practice. Doctrinal errors usually do not invalidate baptism This explanation becomes even more necessary if one considers that errors of a doctrinal nature have never been considered sufficient to question the validity of the sacrament of Baptism. In fact, already in the middle of the third century Pope Stephen I, opposing the decisions of an African synod in A. In this way, the name of Christ attains great honour for faith and sanctification because whoever is baptized in the name of Christ, wherever that has taken place, has received the grace of Christ cf. The same principle was upheld by the Synod of Arles in cf. Well known also is the struggle of St Augustine against the Donatists. The Bishop of Hippo affirms that the validity of the sacrament depends neither on the personal sanctity of the minister nor on his belonging to the Church. Right intention is the intention to do what the Church wants, what Christ wants Even non-Catholics can validly administer Baptism. In every case, however, it is the Baptism of the Catholic Church, which does not belong to those who separate themselves from her but to the Church from which they have separated themselves cf. Augustine, On Baptism 1, 12,9. This validity is possible because Christ is the true minister of the sacrament: Christ is the one who truly baptizes, whether it is Peter or Paul or Judas who baptizes cf. The Council of Trent, confirming this tradition, defined that Baptism administered by heretics in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, with the intention of doing what the Catholic Church does is true Baptism cf. The validity of doubtful baptism is presumed especially in the case of marriage, as in the case of the Christians of Nagasaki The most recent documents of the Catholic Church maintain the same teaching. The Code of Canon Law prescribes that those who have been baptized in non-Catholic ecclesial communities as long as there is no doubt regarding the matter or the form or the intention of the minister or of the person being baptized should not be baptized again cf. Code of Canon Law, can. According to the Code, in cases of necessity anyone can baptize, provided the intention is correct cf. The Code of Canon Law confirms the fundamental elements of Tridentine teaching and makes more explicit what is the required correct intention: The Church finds the reason for this possibility in the universal saving will of God and the necessity of Baptism for salvation" CCC, n. Evidently, the necessity of Baptism spoken of here is not to be understood in an absolute sense; cf. Precisely because of the necessity of Baptism for salvation the Catholic Church has had the tendency of broadly recognizing this right intention in the conferring of this sacrament, even in the case of a false understanding of Trinitarian faith, as for example in the case of the Arians. Taking into account this deeply-rooted practice of the Church, applied without any doubt as to the multiplicity of non-Catholic Christian communities emerging from the so-called Reform of the 16th century, it is easily understood that when there appeared in the United States the religious movement of Joseph Smith around , in which the matter and the words of the form of Baptism were correctly utilized, this Baptism was considered valid, analogously to the Baptism of so many other non-Catholic ecclesial communities. Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, according to their teaching, received the priesthood of Aaron in Given the circumstances of the Church in the United States in the 19th century and the means of social communication at that time, even though the new religious movement gained a considerable number of followers, the knowledge that ecclesiastical authorities could have had of the doctrinal errors that were professed in this new group was necessarily very limited throughout the entire century. For the practical cases that emerged there was applied the response of the Holy Office of 9 September given for the Christian communities of Japan which had remained isolated and without priests from the time of the persecution at the beginning of the 17th century. According to this response: Current doubts about the validity of Mormon

baptism In the 20th century, the Catholic Church became more aware of the Trinitarian errors which the teaching proposed by Smith contained, though he used the traditional terms, and therefore more and more doubts spread about the validity of the Baptism conferred by the Mormons, in spite of the fact that the form, as far as the substance of the terminology goes, coincided with that used by the Church. As a result, almost imperceptibly there developed difference of practice, insofar as those who had a certain personal knowledge of the teaching of the Mormons considered their Baptism invalid, while the common practice continued of applying the traditional principle of the presumption in favour of the validity of such Baptism, since there was no official norm in this regard. On its part the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith undertook a new examination of the material that came from the United States and thus was able to resolve the proposed question. What are the reasons which now led to this negative position regarding the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which seems different from the position of the Catholic Church throughout the centuries? Huge divergence on Trinity and baptism invalidates the intention of the Mormon minister of baptism and of the one to be baptized According to the traditional doctrine of the Catholic Church there are four requirements for the valid administration of the sacrament of Baptism: Let us examine briefly each of these four elements in the teaching and practice of the Mormons. On this point there is no problem. The Mormons practice Baptism by immersion cf. We have seen that in the texts of the Magisterium on Baptism there is a reference to the invocation of the Trinity to the sources already mentioned, the Fourth Lateran Council could be added here [DH The formula used by the Mormons might seem at first sight to be a Trinitarian formula. The similarities with the formula used by the Catholic Church are at first sight obvious, but in reality they are only apparent. There is not in fact a fundamental doctrinal agreement. There is not a true invocation of the Trinity because the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, according to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, are not the three persons in which subsists the one Godhead, but three gods who form one divinity. One is different from the other, even though they exist in perfect harmony Joseph F. Desert Book, , p. The very word divinity has only a functional, not a substantial content, because the divinity originates when the three gods decided to unite and form the divinity to bring about human salvation Encyclopaedia of Mormonism [EM], New York: This divinity and man share the same nature and they are substantially equal. God the Father is an exalted man, native of another planet, who has acquired his divine status through a death similar to that of human beings, the necessary way to divinization cf. God the Father has relatives and this is explained by the doctrine of infinite regression of the gods who initially were mortal cf. God the Father has a wife, the Heavenly Mother, with whom he shares the responsibility of creation. They procreate sons in the spiritual world. Their firstborn is Jesus Christ, equal to all men, who has acquired his divinity in a pre-mortal existence. Even the Holy Spirit is the son of heavenly parents. The Son and the Holy Spirit were procreated after the beginning of the creation of the world known to us cf. Four gods are directly responsible for the universe, three of whom have established a covenant and thus form the divinity. As is easily seen, to the similarity of titles there does not correspond in any way a doctrinal content which can lead to the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. The differences are so great that one cannot even consider that this doctrine is a heresy which emerged out of a false understanding of the Christian doctrine. The teaching of the Mormons has a completely different matrix. The Intention of the Celebrating Minister. Such doctrinal diversity, regarding the very notion of God, prevents the minister of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints from having the intention of doing what the Catholic Church does when she confers Baptism, that is, doing what Christ willed her to do when he instituted and mandated the sacrament of Baptism. This becomes even more evident when we consider that in their understanding Baptism was not instituted by Christ but by God and began with Adam cf. Book of Moses 6: Christ simply commanded the practice of this rite; but this was not an innovation. It is clear that the intention of the Church in conferring Baptism is certainly to follow the mandate of Christ cf. Mt 28,19 but at the same time to confer the sacrament that Christ had instituted. Desert Book, , cf. The Mormon minister, who must necessarily be the "priest" cf. Rom 6,; Col 2, We can note two other differences, not as fundamental as the preceding one, but which also have their importance: A According to the Catholic Church, Baptism cancels not only personal sins but also original sin, and therefore even infants are baptized for the remission of sins cf. This remission of original sin is not accepted by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which denies

the existence of this sin and therefore baptizes only persons who have the use of reason and are at least eight years old, excluding the mentally handicapped cf. In fact, the practice of the Catholic Church in conferring Baptism on infants is one of the main reasons for which the Mormons say that the Catholic Church apostatized in the first centuries, so that the sacraments celebrated by it are all invalid. B If a believer baptized in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, after renouncing his or her faith or having been excommunicated, wants to return, he or she must be rebaptized cf. Even in regard to these last elements it is clear that the Baptism of Mormons cannot be considered valid; since it is not Christian Baptism, the minister cannot have the intention of doing what the Catholic does. The Disposition of the Recipient. The person to be baptized, who already has the use of reason, has been instructed according to the very strict norms of the teaching and faith of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It must be maintained therefore that one cannot think that the Baptism received by that person is anything different from what he was taught. It does not seem possible that the person would have the same disposition that the Catholic Church requires for the Baptism of adults. Mormons hold that there is no real Trinity, no original sin, that Christ did not institute baptism. Summing up, we can say: The Baptism of the Catholic Church and that of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints differ essentially, both for what concerns faith in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in whose name Baptism is conferred, and for what concerns the relationship to Christ who instituted it. As a result of all this, it is understood that the Catholic Church has to consider invalid, that is to say, cannot consider true Baptism, the rite given that name by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latterday Saints. It is equally necessary to underline that the decision of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith is a response to a particular question regarding the Baptism of Mormons and obviously does not indicate a judgment on those who are members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Furthermore, Catholics and Mormons often find themselves working together on a range of problems regarding the common good of the entire human race. It can be hoped therefore that through further studies, dialogue and good will, there can be progress in reciprocal understanding and mutual respect.

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