

JEWS AND CHRISTIANS: A TANGLED HISTORY

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Session 5: Christianity Becomes Official

1. CHRISTIANITY BECOMES OFFICIAL

Christianity becomes the state religion

Theodosius I, Code, 16. 1. 2 (380 CE)

It is our desire that all the various nations which are subject to our clemency and moderation should continue to the profession of that religion which was delivered to the Romans by the divine Apostle Peter, as it has been preserved by faithful tradition and which is now professed by the Pontiff Damasus and by Peter, Bishop of Alexandria, a man of apostolic holiness. According to the apostolic teaching and the doctrine of the Gospel, let us believe in the one deity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in equal majesty and in a holy Trinity. We authorize the followers of this law to assume the title Catholic Christians; but as for the others, since in our judgement they are foolish madmen, we decree that they shall be branded with the ignominious name of heretics, and shall not presume to give their conventicles the name of churches. They will suffer in the first place the chastisement of divine condemnation and in the second the punishment of our authority, in accordance with what the will of heaven shall decide to inflict.

Church organization

Ignatius of Antioch, Epistle to the Smyrnans, 8: 1 (c. 110 CE)

Follow your bishop, as Jesus Christ followed the Father, and the presbytery as the Apostles; and to the deacons pay respect, as to God's commandment.

Jews in the Christian Roman/Byzantine empire

Laws of Constantine the Great, 18 October 315

We wish to make it known to the Jews and their elders and their patriarchs that if, after the enactment of this law, any one of them dares to attack with stones or some other manifestation of anger another who has fled their dangerous sect and attached himself to the worship of God [Christianity], he must speedily be given to the flames and burn, together with all his accomplices.

Laws of Constantius, 13 August, 339

This prohibition [of intermarriage] is to be preserved for the future lest the Jews induce Christian women to share their shameful lives. If they do this they will subject themselves to a sentence of death...

If, indeed, a Jew does not hesitate to purchase slaves -- those who are members of the faith that is worthy of respect [Christianity] -- then all these slaves who are found in his possession

shall at once be removed. No delay shall be occasioned, but he is to be deprived of the possession of those men who are Christians.

Laws of Theodosius II, January 31, 439

No Jew ... shall obtain offices and dignities; to none shall the administration of city service be permitted; nor shall any one exercise the office of a defender [overseer] of the city. Indeed, we believe it sinful that the enemies of the heavenly majesty and of the Roman laws should become the executors of our laws - the administration of which they have slyly obtained and that they, fortified by the authority of the acquired rank, should have the power to judge or decide as they wish against Christians, yes, frequently even over bishops of our holy religion themselves, and thus, as it were, insult our faith. Moreover, for the same reason, we forbid that any synagogue shall rise as a new building.

Laws of Theodosius II (429)

But we especially command those persons who are truly Christians ... that they shall not abuse the authority of religion and dare to lay violent hands on Jews and pagans who are living quietly and attempting nothing disorderly or contrary to law.

Supersessionist theology

Epistle to the Galatians (50-60 CE?), 3: 13

Christ bought us freedom from the curse of the law ...

Justin Martyr (100-165 CE), *Dialogue with Trypho*, 11

For the true spiritual Israel ... are we who have been led to God through this crucified Christ.

Augustine (354-430 CE), *City of God*, 18. 46

The Jews ... are thus by their own Scriptures a testimony to us that we have not forged the prophecies about Christ

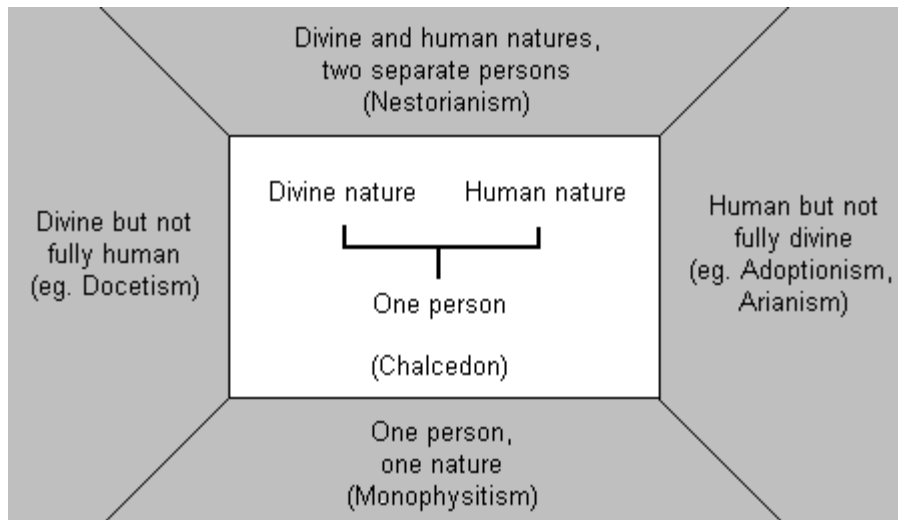
2. COUNCILS AND CREEDS

The multiplication of 'heresies'

- *Docetists*: Jesus' body was a physical illusion; he was pure spirit
- *Marcionists*: Two 'Gods' - the evil creator of the Jewish Scriptures and the good deity who sent Jesus as saviour
- *Monarchians*: 'God the father', Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are one and the same person
- *Trinitarians*: one God in three separate persons
- *Modalists/Sabellians*: the Trinity represents three aspects of the same God and not three separate persons
- *Subordinationists*: Jesus as son was inferior to 'God the father'
- *Adoptionists*: Jesus was a human being whom God had later infused with the divine Logos

- *Arians*: Jesus was ‘son of God’ from his conception; but though he was the Logos made flesh, the Logos itself was not divine but was created by God, so Jesus was a sort of angel or superman
- *Nestorians*: ‘Christ’ consists of two persons, the man Jesus and the divine Son of God

Theories about the nature of Jesus



(Source: Wikipedia)

The seven (or eight) ecumenical councils

Name	Date	Results	Schisms
Nicaea 1	325	Creed; condemnation of Arianism; date of Easter detached from Passover	
Constantinople 1	381	Condemns Arianism	
Ephesus	431	Condemns Nestorianism, Pelagianism	Assyrian Church of the East
Chalcedon	451	Condemns Monophysitism	Oriental Orthodox Church
Constantinople 2	553	Condemns Nestorian writings	North Italian dioceses (till late 7th century)
Constantinople 3	680-1	Condemns Monothelitism	
[Quinisext]	692	Condemned practices of the Latin Church	Rejected by the Roman Catholic Church
Nicaea 2	787	Affirmed veneration of icons	Rejected by some Protestants

The Nicene Creed

Book of Common Prayer version (1662)

I believe in one God the Father Almighty,
 Maker of heaven and earth,
 And of all things visible and invisible:
 And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God,

Begotten of his Father before all worlds,
God of God, Light of Light,
Very God of very God,
Begotten, not made,
Being of one substance with the Father,
By whom all things were made;
Who for us men, and for our salvation came down from heaven,
And was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary,
And was made man,
And was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate.
He suffered and was buried,
And the third day he rose again according to the Scriptures,
And ascended into heaven,
And sitteth on the right hand of the Father.
And he shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead:
Whose kingdom shall have no end.
And I believe in the Holy Ghost,
The Lord and giver of life,
Who proceedeth from the Father and the Son,
Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified,
Who spake by the Prophets.
And I believe one Catholick and Apostolick Church.
I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins.
And I look for the Resurrection of the dead,
And the life of the world to come.
Amen

3. JEWISH REACTION - JESUS IN THE TALMUD

John Chrysostom (c. 347-407), *Homily 1 against the Jews*

... But do not be surprised that I called the Jews pitiable. They really are pitiable and miserable. When so many blessings from heaven came into their hands, they thrust them aside and were at great pains to reject them. The morning Sun of Justice arose for them, but they thrust aside its rays and still sit in darkness.... Nothing is more miserable than those people who never failed to attack their own salvation. When there was need to observe the Law, they trampled it under foot. Now that the Law has ceased to bind, they obstinately strive to observe it.

Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin 107b (Sotah 47a)*

The master said: Jesus the Nazarene practised magic and deceived and led Israel astray.

Peter Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud* (2007)

... they are polemical counternarratives that parody the New Testament stories, most notably the story of Jesus' birth and death. They ridicule Jesus' birth from a virgin, as maintained by the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, and they contest fervently the claim that Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of God. Most remarkably, they counter the New Testament Passion story with its message of the Jews' guilt and shame as Christ killers. Instead, they reverse it completely: yes, they maintain, we accept responsibility for it, but there is no reason to feel ashamed because we rightfully executed a blasphemer and idolater. Jesus deserved death, and he got what he deserved. Accordingly, they subvert the Christian idea of Jesus' resurrection by having him punished forever in hell and by making clear that this fate awaits his followers as well, who

believe in this imposter. ... These stories are a deliberate and carefully phrased retelling not of what 'really happened' but of what has come to or captured the rabbis' attention.