OVERVIEW OF CHURCH HISTORY IN 36 ILLUSTRATED LECTURES

LECTURE 1 –INTRODUCTION; CRADLE OF CHRISTIANITY; SEPTUAGINT; ACTS OF THE APOSTLES; SOURCES

We'll start every lecture with a prayer from the period we're going to study. About twelve years after the apostle Paul founded the church at Philippi (Acts 16), he wrote a letter to them and we'll adopt part of his letter for our opening prayer:

> This is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ – to the glory and praise of God. Philippians 1:9-11

The rest of this page is an outline of this lecture.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 'The picture on the box'

If you were given a jigsaw with 2,000 pieces, and if you emptied them onto a table, they wouldn't make much sense, all jumbled up. But on the lid of the box there is a picture; if you patiently sort out the pieces, slot them together and relate them to each other, gradually the individual pieces will become the picture on the box. Many have heard about Martin Luther and Charles Wesley and others - but where do they fit into the overall picture? That's what we're going to explore in these lectures, mentioning many names, not to study most of them in detail but to gain a bird's-eye view, an overview, of the 2,000 years of Church History.

1.2. Course description and objectives

Course description

A broad panorama, a bird's eye view, of Church History from the apostolic age to the present, highlighting key people, events and issues, and illustrating and assessing our Christian heritage.

Try to see the big picture; in your own time you can explore the details of aspects that interest you. Don't worry about the details; it's not knowing things that's important, it's knowing where to find them when you need them. Learning is about expanding our horizons, and giving us the confidence to enter that enlarged space and explore it for ourselves.

Course objectives

1. To trace the history of the Church from Pentecost to the present.
2. To assess our evangelical heritage – we'll define that in lecture 34.
3. To understand why so many different theological positions have emerged - why there are Calvinists and Lutherans and Pentecostals and many more?
4. To explain why there are so many branches of Christianity today, Presbyterian, Anglican, Baptist, Orthodox, Roman Catholic and others.

1.3. Bibliography

There are hundreds of books on Church History; this Course makes regular reference to four of them, but it is not essential to buy any of them – the Notes are intended to be the panorama. There won't be many biographies in these Notes, as you can Google on the internet for the life-story of all the people mentioned.

Primarily, Earle E. Cairns, *Christianity through the Centuries*, 1996, 3rd edition, Grand Rapids, Zondervan; be sure to get the 1996 edition – it significantly updated earlier ones. Cairns has three merits – he is thoroughly evangelical and non-denominational; when he cites other works, he often adds his own evaluation of their worth; and he lists comprehensive bibliographies.

Alternatively, if you finds Cairns heavy going, a useful brief overview is Howard F. Vos, *Exploring Church History*, 1994, Nashville, Nelson.

For a comprehensive book of pictures and articles, with excellent indices, Tim Dowley, (ed.), *The History of Christianity,* 1996, Oxford, Lion.

To relate History to Theology, a companion book to Cairns is Roger E. Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology – Twenty Centuries of Tradition and Reform*, 1999, Illinois, Apollos.

You may find it helpful to buy, for reference throughout the Course, four inexpensive paperbacks, which select key people and events from the first century of the Church to the present day:

Tony Lane, *The Lion Concise Book of Christian Thought*, 1996, 3rd edition, Oxford, Lion. A useful feature of Lane's book is sample quotations from every person or event that he mentions.

A trilogy by Geoffrey Hanks, published by Christian Focus at Fearn:
Great Events in the story of the Church, 1994, with reprints to 2004.
70 Great Christians changing the world, 2nd ed. 1994, reprints to 2004.
The third one is different, as it covers only the 18th and 19th centuries:
60 Great Founders, 1995 with reprints to 2010

The Christian Classics Ethereal Library has English translations of many original works at http://www.ccel.org.

For a good 'Timeline' of Church History, see http://www.churchtimeline.com/

1.4 Dates and abbreviations

These Notes do not put the letters AD *(anno domini)* or CE (common era) in front of years subsequent to the birth of Christ[1] but the years before his birth have 'BC' after the date – so, for example, 250 (for the year 250 after the birth of Christ) or 250 BC (for the year 250 before it). Centuries are abbreviated to 'C', so C16 = sixteenth century. A small 'c' *(circa)* = about, e.g. c250.

Until recently, most historians described the years after the birth of Christ as AD (Latin, *anno domini*, in the year of the Lord), and the years before his birth as BC (before Christ). The phrases 'Common Era' and 'Before Common Era' have recently become more popular. Historically, Jewish scholarship used CE rather than AD, because AD recognized Jesus as Lord, which they did not. However, the former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan, himself a Protestant, argued that since the Christian calendar is used by people of all faiths and cultures, the shared phrase Common Era should be used. Some Christians are unhappy at this, seeing it as a secular attempt to eliminate Christ from the calendar, just as many reject the expression 'Xmas' as removing Christ from Christmas.

If you find it difficult to understand the BC – AD dating system, and how the centuries are numbered, and other ways in which historians describe time, try to get hold of a book by Nicholas R Needham, *2,000 Years of Christ's Power*, vol 1, 1998, London, Grace. After teaching Church History in a country where these concepts were not familiar, he devoted pages 17 to 24 of the book mentioned to explaining and illustrating how dates and centuries and Roman numerals are used in history books. It's well worth reading, as a refresher, even if you are already familiar with these abbreviations and how to work out dates.

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[1] Jesus was born five years earlier than our dating of *anno domini,* because a Christian abbot, Dionysius Exiguus, who died c550, invented the Christian calendar by counting forward for 754 years from the date of the founding the city of Rome. However, he miscalculated and he should have counted only 749, so Jesus was born in (our) 5 BC. (Cairns, 51, and fully explained in Needham's book, just mentioned, 21-23.)

2. INTRODUCTION TO CHURCH HISTORY

2.1 Definitions of 'Church'

We use the word 'Church' in four different ways, three of them found in the New Testament, which uses the word *ekklesia* (church)[2] in three ways:

(a) a local congregation in one place, e.g., in Corinth – and see Matt. 18.17; now, the church in (wherever you live), is usually written with a small 'c'.

(b) the whole Church, world-wide, Matt. 16:18, often now written with a capital 'C'; hence the saying 'One Church but many churches'.

(c) sections of the Church: 'the churches of Galatia/Asia' (1 Cor. 16.1,19); we now talk about the African Church or the Greek-speaking Church, usually 'C' but can be 'c').

(d) We also use the word 'church' for a 'building for public worship'; this is not found in the New Testament, as there were no purpose-built church buildings in NT times. (Cairns, 117; Lion 44). The oldest surviving building adapted for use as a church is described on the next page.

The 'Catholic' Church

As the Church expanded, splinter groups claimed that they, and they alone, were the true Church, so from the C2 the Apostolic Church described itself as *katholikos* ('catholic' in the sense of 'universal' or 'throughout the world' – that is throughout the Roman Empire). When groups claimed to be 'the Church', if they were not in fellowship with the empire-wide Church, the orthodox leaders said, 'No, you're not the Church, nor even part of the Church, you're not *katholikos*, you're not with us in the empire-wide Church.'

In the mid-C2 a traveller, Hegesippius, made his way from Palestine to Rome and talked with church leaders along the way. He reported that he heard the same teaching from them all, public teaching, available to everyone. He wrote: 'In every place and city, the law and the prophets and the Lord are faithfully preached and followed.' In other words, the true Church was the same empire-wide, *katholikos* ('catholic'). Lion, 119-20.

Incidentally, we shouldn't use the phrase 'Roman Catholic' until the Reformation in the 16th century. At the Reformation, Christians in northern Europe looked to Martin Luther for leadership, Christians in Switzerland looked to John Calvin, Christians in England looked to the Archbishop of Canterbury, and those who still looked to Rome called themselves 'Roman Catholic', that is Catholics with allegiance to Rome. They officially accepted the phrase for the first time at the Council of Trent in 1545 – lecture 26.
However, many books, including Cairns, use the phrase 'Roman Catholic' from early on.

The next page is about of the earliest known extant church building, excavated at Dura-Europa – the lecture resumes on page 6.

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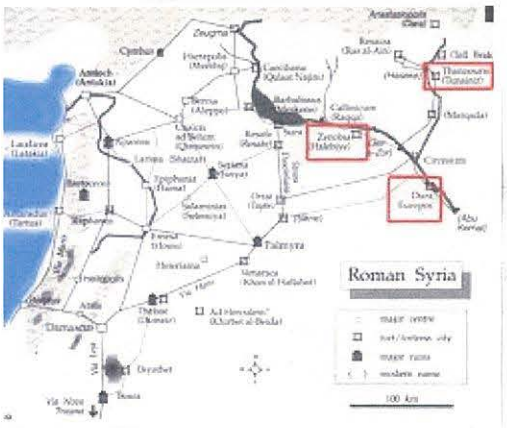
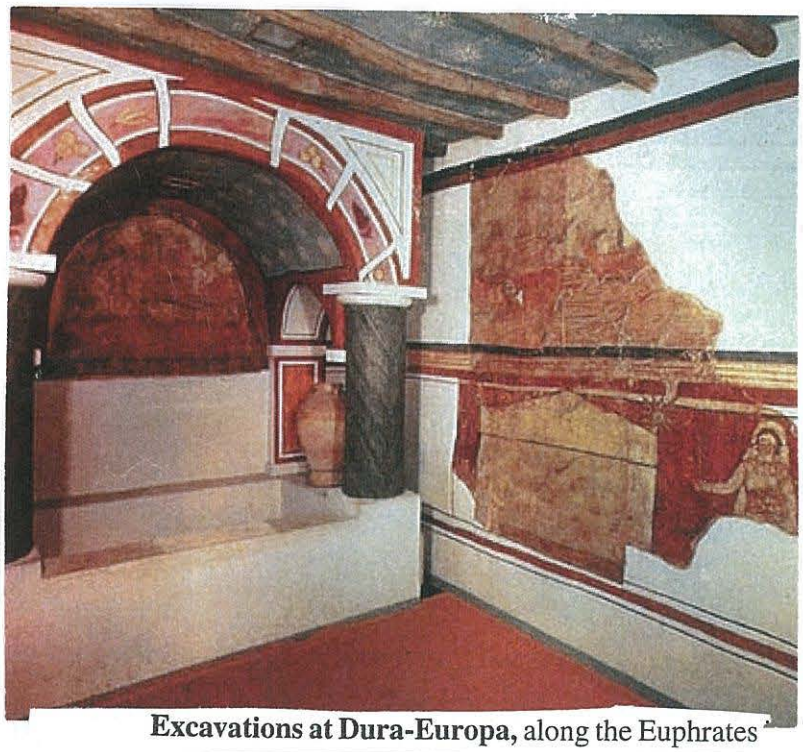
2 *Ekklesia* had both Jewish and Gentile backgrounds. For Jews, *ekklesia* was one way of describing 'synagogue', local gathering (Hebrew *keneseth*), and for Greeks *ekklesia* was a local body of citizens, as at Ephesus in Acts 19:39. However, in the Septuagint (the Greek version of the Hebrew scriptures), *ekklesia* meant also 'the whole congregation of Israel'. Early Christians believed they were the true Israel, so took over *ekklesia* and used it in a double sense, local church and universal Church.

Earliest extant Christian church-building, on the Euphrates at Dura-Europa, Syria.

A typical private house, built about 232, was adapted for Christian use soon after 232. The two most significant rooms are the Assembly Hall and the Baptistery. The former was created by knocking down a wall between two smaller rooms and placing a low platform at the eastern end of the room, which could now hold perhaps sixty people. The latter incorporated a basin surmounted by a heavy vaulted canopy supported by columns (see the coloured photograph) and the walls were decorated with Biblical scenes - Adam and Eve, David and Goliath, the Good Shepherd and his sheep, the healing of the paralytic, the woman at the well, and Jesus walking on water – copy of that, below. The Assembly Hall is undecorated, implying that the Baptistery room had an importance not shared by the Hall.

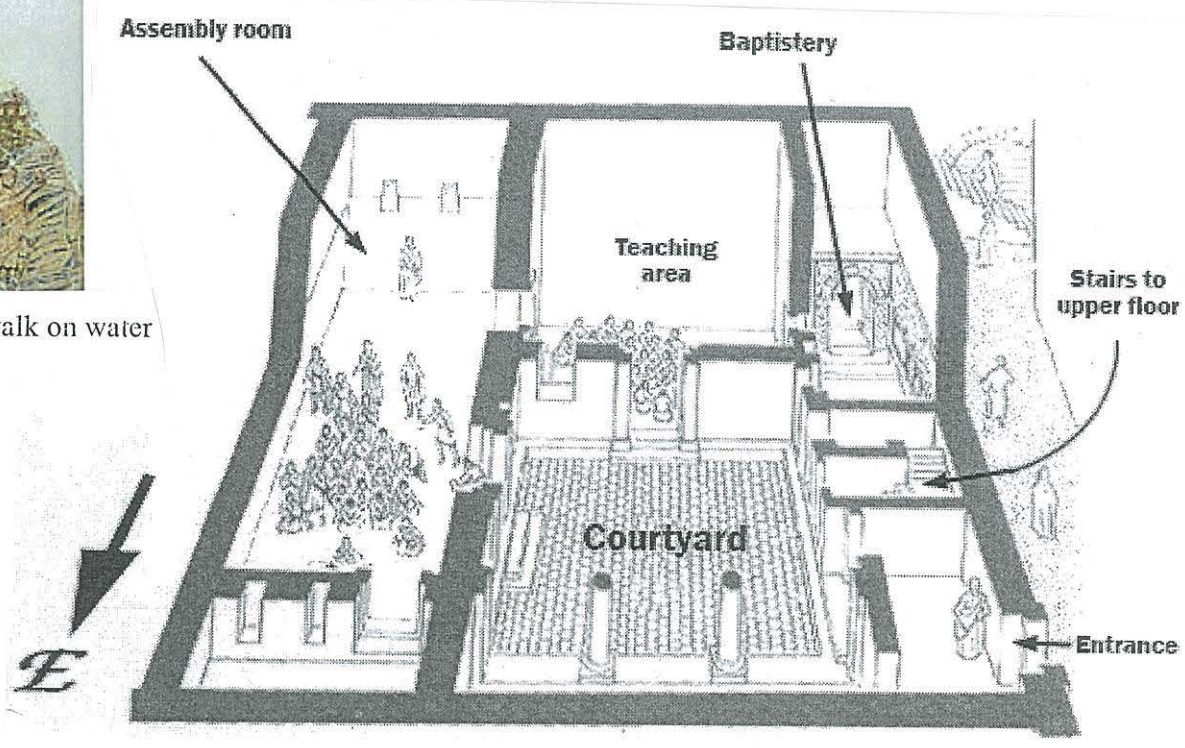
While the Acts of the Apostles records the progress of the Church westward from Jerusalem, others (whose work is unrecorded) went as far as the eastern boundary of the Empire.





Excavations at Dura-Europa, along the Euphrates
This reconstruction shows the baptistery.

Peter and Jesus walk on water



2.2 Why study Church History? (Cairns, 20-23; Olson, 11)

(a) It is our link to the New Testament - and many folk like to trace their ancestry.

Christianity is a historical faith, and its history should be the framework for our other studies.

> I once read about certain primitive tribes people who, when asked how they had come to live on their particular spot of earth, informed the anthropologist that their ancestors had descended from the heavens on a vine. I grew up thinking something very similar about where evangelicals had come from. We were simply the current manifestation of the first-century church, as modified very slightly, after a long period of Roman darkness, by the Protestant Reformation. But exactly how we had got here from there was shrouded in mystery that no one seemed interested in exploring. That our journey through history might have something to do with our present beliefs and practices, did not seem to occur to anybody, This left us naive and un-self-critical. Douglas W. Frank, *Less Than Conquerors; How Evangelicals entered the Twentieth Century,* Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, c1986, p.vii.

'Every generation stands on the shoulders of its predecessors, like acrobats in a pyramid.'

'The further back you can look, the further forward you are likely to see.'

(b) To learn from the mistakes of others

> Every generation has its blind spots and its hobby horses and ours is no exception. By studying past generations we can be challenged where our views are defective and helped to see our own pet ideas in perspective. 'There have been no new heresies since 451 [a major Council at Chalcedon] - only old heresies under different names'.

(c) We see Christian doctrine developing (Olson, 15-18).

> The words 'trinity', 'incarnation', etc., are not in the New Testament – they are concepts which had to be drawn out from Scripture. The Patristic period defined how God is one and three; how Christ is human and divine; how the Church is spotless and sinful; why some documents are in the NT and others are not. Every mainstream Christian body - including Anglican, Baptists, Eastern Orthodox, Lutheran, Reformed and Roman Catholic - looks to Church History for development of its doctrine.

(d) Many current issues were debated then also

> Abortion, baptism, capital punishment, church government, civil disobedience, charismatic worship, divorce, euthanasia, homosexuality, occult, powers of government, race relations, re-marriage, Second Coming, State/Church relations, Toronto Blessing, use of military force, women in ministry. 'The way we talk today will be more intelligent if we allow the dead to participate in it.' (Pelikan)

2.3 Approaches to Church History

There are two ways to study Church History:

(a) Some treat it as a mirror, in which to admire their own ideas – 'I'm right and here's why I'm right'; by studying only selected periods and people, they recreate the past in their own image, to glorify their ideas. This is to turn history into a distorting mirror.

(b) The proper approach is to treat history like a window - to look outside, to see how others have done things. We learn from history when it shows us why some did well and others made mistakes. We will meet heroism and failure, as we see Christians struggling to understand and propagate their faith. Kurt Aland warns about scholars

> ... for whom controversies become the actual content of church life... controversies are often discussed in a way that makes it appear that nothing else was happening then, while the truth is that alongside these arguments the life of the church continued in its entirety - worship, prayer, interpretation of Scripture, and preaching and the theological writings of the time in no way devote themselves exclusively to this theme, even when addressing the ... controversy, If we were to think only of the ... controversy ..., things would be skewed in an inappropriate manner. *History of Christianity*, I, Fortress, Philadelphia, 1985, p185.

2.4 Time divisions in Church History. (Cairns, 24-27)

See the Time and Event chart on the next page; here are some of the 2,000 pieces of the jigsaw mentioned at 1.1.

There are no exact divisions in history, only in the minds of historians, who divide Church History into four broad periods, or manageable blocks. These are described below, and the names for the periods are at the foot of the chart on the next page.

1. Patristic Period – Pentecost to c500[3]

Leaders of the Early Church were called Church Fathers; Latin for 'father' is *pater*, so first Period (on left of chart) is called 'Patristic Period' or 'Period of the Church Fathers'; we will spend our first ten lectures on them.

2. Middle Ages – c500 to c1500

The section from the years 500 to 1500 is called Medieval or Middle Ages. 'Middle Ages' was originally a derogatory term; Renaissance scholars looked back to Greek and Roman civilizations and compared them with the revival of learning in their time – Renaissance means 'new birth' – and they wrote off 'the bit in the middle' (one thousand years) as 'contemptuous' – 'Middle Ages' – of no cultural value.

'Middle Ages' are subdivided by modern historians into three: (1) Dark Ages, 500-1050, when barbarians ran amuck through what we now call Europe and North Africa, destroying towns and settlements; (2) Schoolmen, 1050-1350 (Cairns, 226-34), when teaching and learning were re-established; finally (3) Renaissance, 1350-1500 (Cairns, 252-8), when art and literature flourished – explored in Lecture 18.

3. Reformation – 1520 to 1650

Five different but inter-connected religious revolutions took place in Europe from 1520 to 1650, known now as The Reformation. There have been many other renewals within the Church, but only those 130 years are called Reformation with a capital R – here we find Luther and Calvin and Knox - explored in Lectures 19-26.

4. Modern Period – 1650 to now

It may seem strange to call 1650 'modern', but, as we'll see when we come to Lecture 27, there was a fundamental change in attitude to Christianity from 1650 onward, which has characterised Church and State relations ever since, and also characterised personal views of religion, so the classification, Beginning of the Modern Period, is apt.

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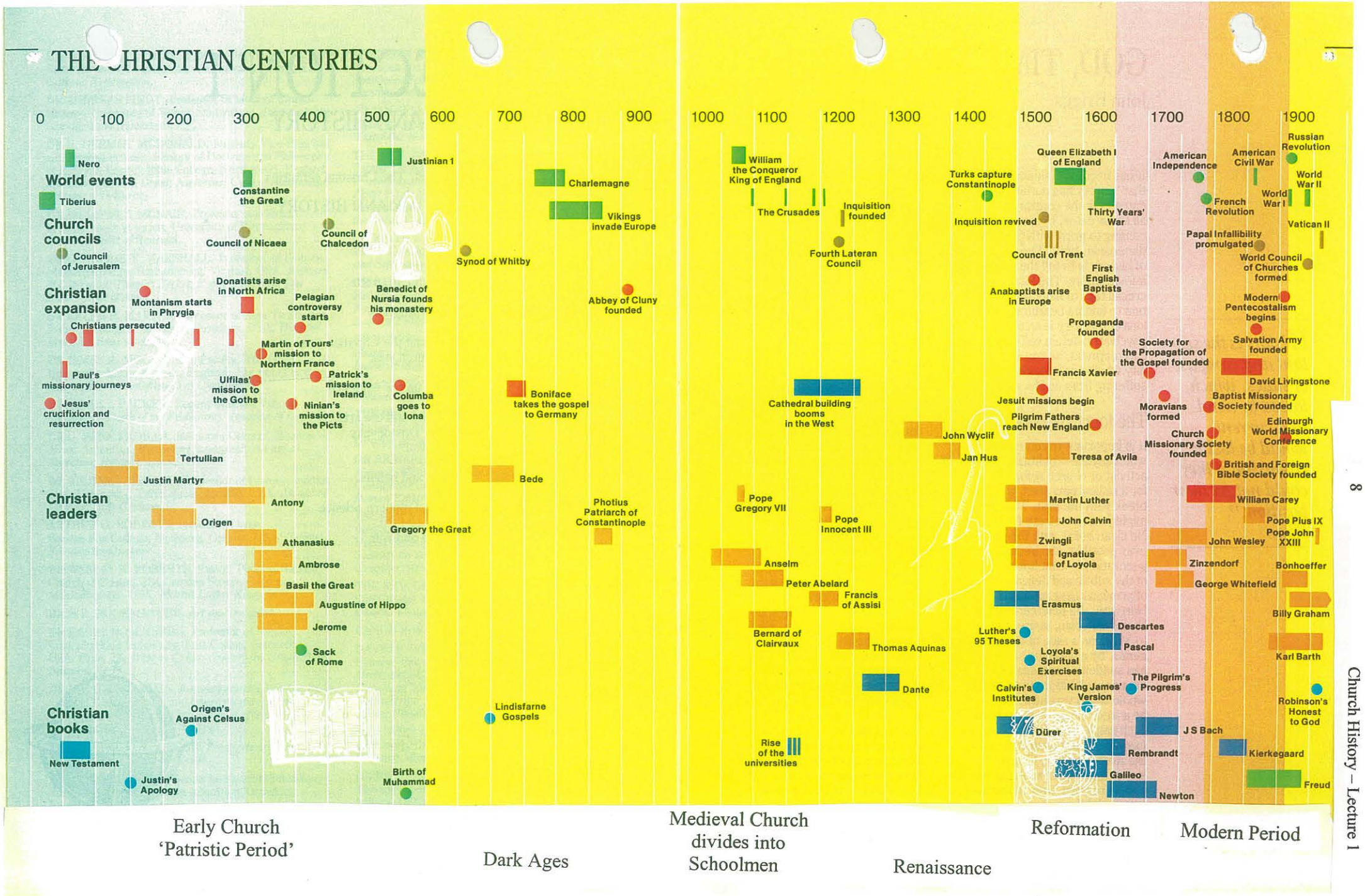
[3] There's no agreed definition of the date-range of the 'Patristic Period'. The beginning is usually taken as the writings of the earliest orthodox Christians not included in the New Testament, so the beginning is about the end of the C1/early C2.
The end is sometimes taken as the death of Leo 1, first Pope (Bishop of Rome) to be called 'the Great', in 451. The chart on the next page takes it as the death of Gregory, the only other Pope to be called 'the Great', in 604. Others take other events in between. Whatever date is chosen, it must shade into the beginning of the Medieval Period.


THE CHRISTIAN CENTURIES
0
100
200
300
400
500
600
700
800
900
1000
1100
1200
1300
1400
1500
1600
1700
1800
1900
World events
Church councils
Christian expansion
Christian leaders
Christian books
Nero
Tiberius
Justinian 1
Charlemagne
Constantine the Great
Vikings invade Europe
Council of Jerusalem
Council of Nicaea
Council of Chalcedon
Synod of Whitby
Donatists arise in North Africa
Montanism starts in Phrygia
Pelagian controversy starts
Benedict of Nursia founds his monastery
Abbey of Cluny founded
Christians persecuted
Martin of Tours' mission to Northern France
Paul's missionary journeys
Ulfilas' mission to the Goths
Patrick's mission to Ireland
Columba goes to Iona
Boniface takes the gospel to Germany
Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection
Ninian's mission to the Picts
Tertullian
Justin Martyr
Bede
Antony
Photius Patriarch of Constantinople
Origen
Gregory the Great
Athanasius
Ambrose
Basil the Great
Augustine of Hippo
Jerome
Sack of Rome
Origen's Against Celsus
Lindisfarne Gospels
New Testament
Justin's Apology
Birth of Muhammad
William the Conqueror King of England
The Crusades
Inquisition founded
Fourth Lateran Council
Cathedral building booms in the West
John Wyclif
Jan Hus
Pope Gregory VII
Pope Innocent III
Anselm
Peter Abelard
Francis of Assisi
Bernard of Clairvaux
Thomas Aquinas
Dante
Rise of the universities
Queen Elizabeth I of England
Turks capture Constantinople
Inquisition revived
Thirty Years' War
Council of Trent
Anabaptists arise in Europe
First English Baptists
Propaganda founded
Francis Xavier
Jesuit missions begin
Pilgrim Fathers reach New England
Teresa of Avila
Martin Luther
John Calvin
Zwingli
Ignatius of Loyola
Erasmus
Luther's 95 Theses
Loyola's Spiritual Exercises
Calvin's Institutes
Dürer
Rembrandt
Galileo
Newton
American Independence
American Civil War
Russian Revolution
French Revolution
World War I
World War II
Vatican II
Papal Infallibility promulgated
World Council of Churches formed
Modern Pentecostalism begins
Salvation Army founded
Society for the Propagation of the Gospel founded
David Livingstone
Moravians formed
Baptist Missionary Society founded
Edinburgh World Missionary Conference
Church Missionary Society founded
British and Foreign Bible Society founded
William Carey
Pope Pius IX
Pope John XXIII
John Wesley
Zinzendorf
Bonhoeffer
George Whitefield
Billy Graham
Descartes
Pascal
Karl Barth
The Pilgrim's Progress
King James' Version
Robinson's Honest to God
J S Bach
Kierkegaard
Freud
Early Church 'Patristic Period'
Dark Ages
Medieval Church divides into Schoolmen
Renaissance
Reformation
Modern Period

3. THE CRADLE OF CHRISTIANITY (Cairns, 39-46; Lion, 66-68)

3.1 'The right time'

To understand the expansion of the Church, we need to look at the society into which it was born. Paul twice spoke of Christ coming into the world at 'the right time' (Romans 5:6, Galatians 4:4). What he had in mind we do not know, but there was:

- a common language for most people in the Roman Empire, due to Greek civilisation (3.2)
- political stability, including safe travel, due to the Roman Empire (3.3)
- a network of synagogues throughout the Mediterranean world, due to Jews of the Dispersion,[4] where not only Jews but Gentile adherents, known as 'God-fearers', learned about monotheism and gained knowledge of (what we call) the Old Testament and so provided fertile ground for the Christian message. Christian preachers came to them and interpreted the Hebrew Scriptures as a Christian book, which spoke of Christ - as the Lord himself had done.

It was also 'the right time', religiously, because there was general disillusionment with:

- ancient gods, who had not saved tribes from Roman conquest and so were seen as unconcerned or unable to help – leaving people in a spiritual vacuum,
- Stoic philosophy, which was too dry for most, and anyway offered no external help,
- Judaism, which had become law-bound and introverted,
- popular paganism, which was morally degenerate, unrestrained by effective censorship.

The world into which the Church was born was hungry for religion. Surviving monuments testify to longing, felt by all classes, for assurance against death and fate, redemption from evil, spiritual cleansing, union with God. To meet this need, classical religions had little to offer, but Christianity offered answers to questions people were asking.

3.2 Greek language. (Cairns, 42-44 – maps about Alexander on the next page)

Influence of Greek language was immense on Ancient World and on Early Church. It is hard to imagine Christianity spreading so rapidly if Alexander the Great, 300 years before Christ, had not spread Greek (known as 'Hellenic') culture eastward from his native Greece to North India. His conquest was different from others, as he imposed his ideas as well as physical presence. Greeks were intelligent and curious and loved adventure, both physical and mental, and they excelled in arts (painting, sculpture, architecture, poetry, drama) and in sciences (mathematics, astronomy, medicine, biology). People were attracted to this and so learned to speak Greek; also, Alexander encouraged trade and emigration, so that while Latin was official language in West, Greek was widely used in West also, but not vice-versa. Colloquial Greek *(koine* Greek) was therefore common trade language throughout Empire, even among slaves, whose literacy level was high. Early Christian missionaries encountered no language barriers and could keep in touch with their converts by letter. Even OT, written originally in Hebrew, had been translated into Greek before Christ, called Septuagint (often abbreviated to 'LXX'), so 'Bible' of early church was in Greek. NT was written in Greek; church at Rome spoke Greek for its first hundred years. Christianity was born into a vast area with a common language.[5]

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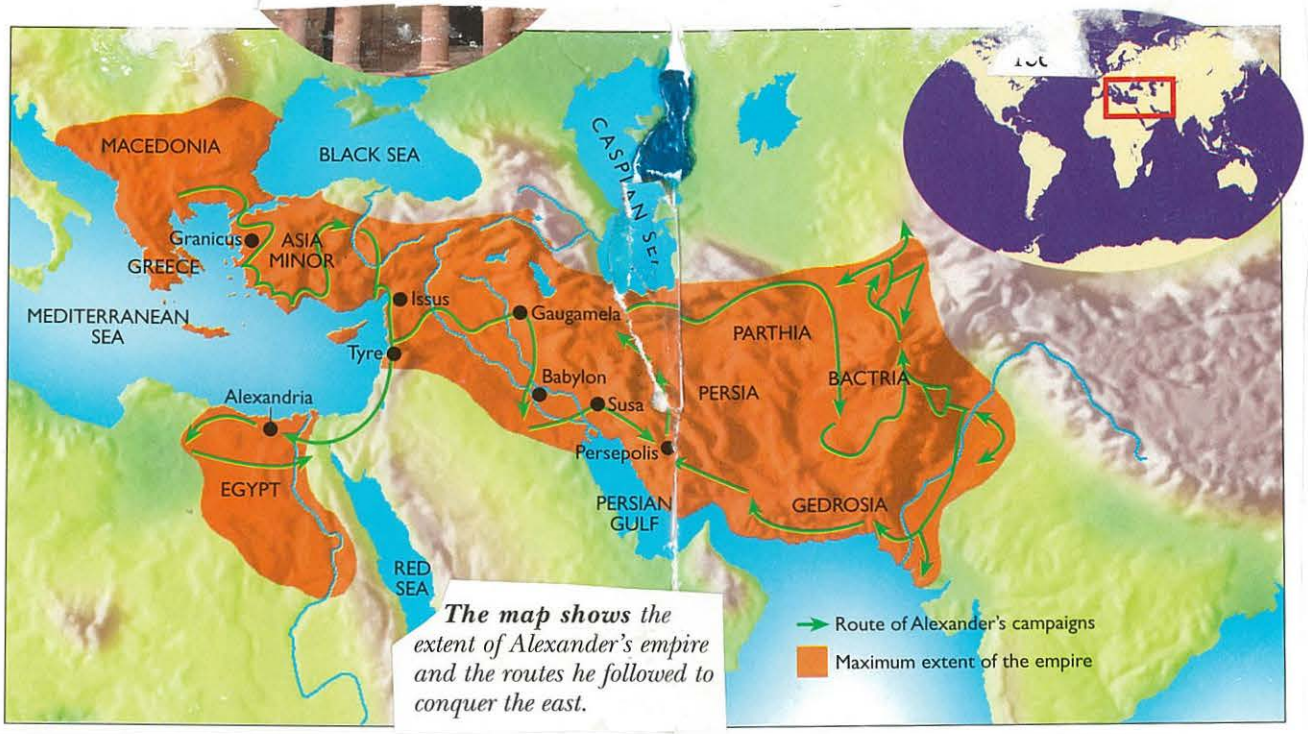
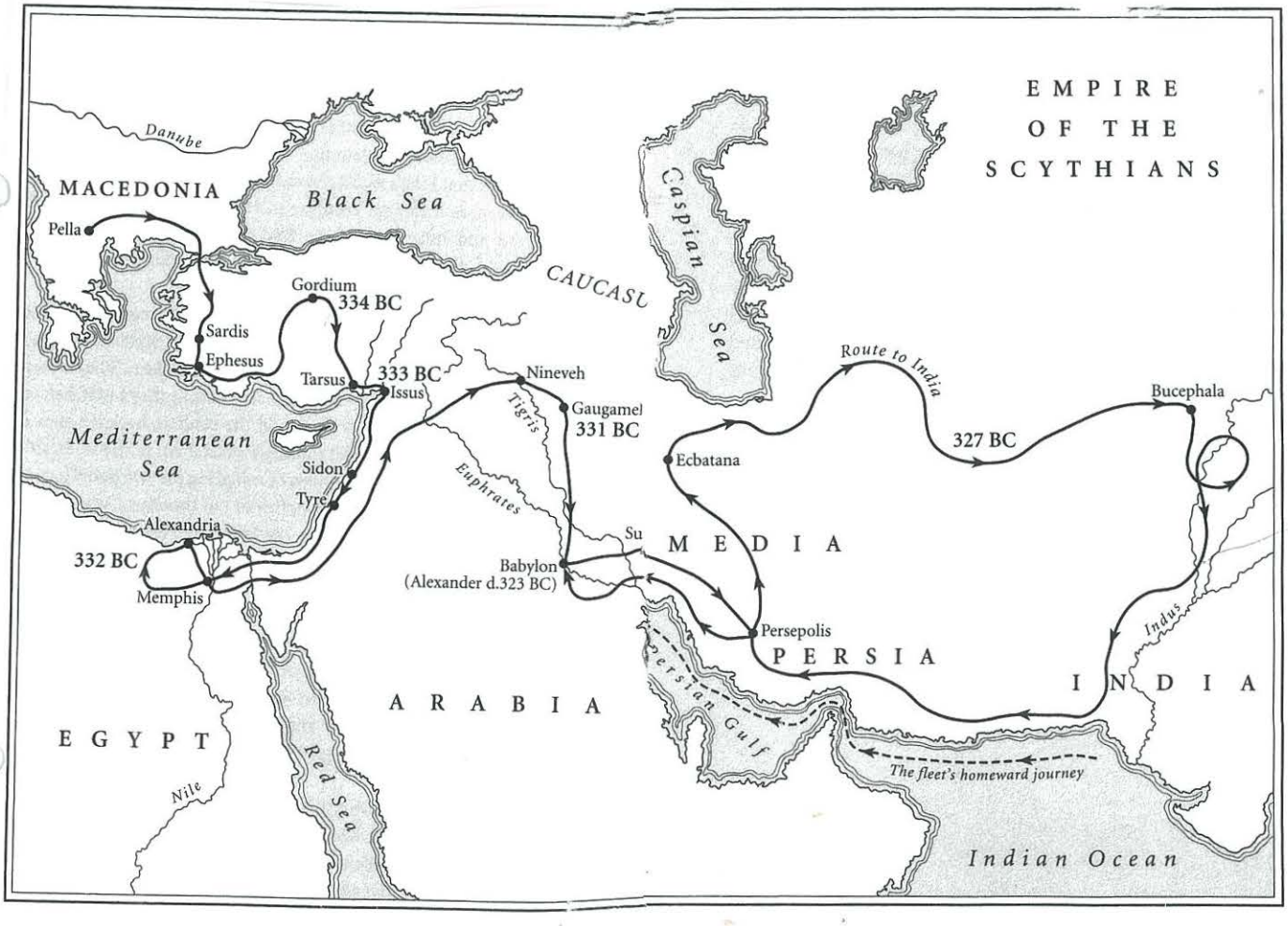
[4] For 'Dispersion', see p. 14.

[5] Not everything Greek was good - life was series of social activities - politicians were shamefully selfish and opportunist - people were callous, jealous and exploited weak - there was much moral vice - but point is that all over civilised world, educated people wrote and thought in Greek, surrounded by Greek architecture and ideas.

Alexander the Great (356-323 BC) conquered half of what was then the civilized world, starting from his native Macedonia – follow the arrows. Wherever Alexander went, he imposed Greek culture and the Greek language. Even the Old Testament, originally written in Hebrew, was translated into *koine* Greek, called the Septuagint; the New Testament was written in Greek. Christian missionaries did not need an interpreter, or to go to language school, because colloquial Greek was commonly spoken almost everywhere. How else, humanly speaking, could the message of the Bible, Old and New Testaments, have spread so rapidly?



***The map shows** the extent of Alexander's empire and the routes he followed to conquer the east.*



The Topic, THE SEPTUAGINT, that is the Greek translation of (what we call) the Hebrew Old Testament; was taken at this point in the Lecture; here, it is printed at the end of the Notes for this Lecture.

3.3 Roman Empire - political stability, excellent and safe travel. (Cairns, 39-42)

(a) Rome 'established' the Empire shown on the map on the next page.

The second major influence on the early Church was the Roman Empire. While Alexander the Great was conquering the East,[6] a small city-state on the river Tiber in central Italy was flexing its muscles and taking over the Italian peninsula by force. From there, Rome conquered Sicily, North Africa then, during the century before Christ, what we now call Spain, France, Albania, Greece, Turkey and more. By 31 BC one Emperor ruled an Empire stretching from the Atlantic to the Euphrates, from the Danube to the Sahara.[7] The Mediterranean Sea was, for the only time in history, surrounded by territories controlled by a single power. Rome cleared the sea of pirates and the land of brigands and built a network of roads, along which Christians could travel safely.

Cities were of immense benefit for the spread of the Gospel. Many of the early converts mentioned in Acts belonged to the business class, e.g. Lydia, Priscilla and Aquila, Acts 16:14 and 18:2. Paul's strategy was to preach in centres of trade and government, leaving converts to evangelise surrounding areas, e.g., I Thess 1:8. Desire to reach Rome (achieved by early 40s, long before Paul), made main (recorded) thrust westward.

(b) The Church benefited from what was good in the Roman Empire – a sense of order

The prospect of an early return of Christ *(parousia)* motivated expansion of the Church at first. Then, when the Church settled down to organise itself on the longer term, it noted that the Roman civil service was simply the best in the world and this influenced Church leaders for good as they emulated the best of the Roman sense of order and organisation and modelled Church government on it. This will be seen especially in Bishop Cyprian in Lecture 6.

(c) Roman attitude to religion

This is crucial to understanding the relationship of the Roman Empire to early Christians. Paul's experience at Athens (Acts 17.19) was not unusual – no one 'god' had a monopoly of belief. Many in the Empire were genuinely religious. Ordinary people prayed to many gods for help in all kinds of human enterprises, appeased gods with sacrificial gifts and rewarded them for services rendered with anything from a bunch of flowers at a shrine to consecrating a new temple. You could believe whatever you liked, or nothing, but you must do two things.

(Continued on page 13)

[6] Alexander did not, as is popularly supposed, 'conquer the whole known world and cry because there was nothing left to conquer'. He went eastward from his native Macedonia; if he had gone west, he would have met emerging Roman army, instead of decadent Persian Empire, and it is moot point who would have won.

[7] 'Augustus gave Graeco-Roman world peace, which lasted for more than two centuries, until death in 180 of emperor Marcus Aurelius. ... Christian writers have argued that the Augustan peace was designed by divine providence as preparation for the coming of Christ and the spread of the gospel. Alternatively, it may be claimed that Christianity owed its initial success to the relatively happy and suitable conditions, political stability and religious chaos of the world into which it was born.' Barnes, *The Rise of Christianity,* p 61


THE
ROMAN EMPIRE
IN THE APOSTOLIC AGE
ROMAN MILES
0 100 200 300 400 500
BRITISH MILES
0 100 200 300 400 500
Longitude East 15 from Greenwich
MARE ATLANTICUM
BRITANNIA
Eboracum
Deva
Londinium
Venta Belg.
Lugdunum
Colonia Agrippina
Belgica
Rhenus
GERMANIA
Albis
Viadus
Vistula
SARMATIA
SCYTHIA
Tanais
Rha
Borysthenes
Hypanis
Tyras
Hierasus
DACIA
Tibiscus
Lugdunensis
Durocortorum
Lutetia
Genabum
Liger
GALLIA
Aquitania
Burdigala
Garumna
Narbonensis
Narbo
Pyrenæi Ms.
Helvetii
Agri Decumates
VINDELICIA
NORICUM
RHÆTIA
Danubius
Acinium
PANNONIA
Aquileia
Mediolanum
Patavium
Ravenna
Liguria
Genua
Pisa
Ancona
Roma
Puteoli
Brundusium
Thurii
Rhegium
ITALIA
CORSICA
SARDINIA
Caralis
Panormus
SICILIA
Syracusæ
Mare Hadriaticum
Epidaurus
ILLYRICUM
Sirmium
Savus
MŒSIA
Hæmus M.
THRACIA
Hadrianopolis
Byzantium
Philippi
MACEDONIA
Thessalonica
Epirus
Thessalia
Corinthus
ACHAIA
Athenæ
ÆGÆUM M.
Rhodos
CRETA
Tarraco
Lucus Augusti
Durius
Cæsaraugusta
Iberus
Tarraconensis
HISPANIA
Lusitania
Emerita Aug.
Toletum
Anas
Bætica
Bætis
Hispalis
Gades
Carthago Nova
BALEARES I.
Tingis
Siga
Babba
Cæsarea
MAURITANIA
NUMIDIA
Hippo Regius
Utica
Carthago
Adrumetum
MELITA
MEDITERRANEAN SEA
Syrtis Minor
Leptis Magna
Syrtis Magna
AFRICA
Cyrene
CYRENAICA
Alexandria
ÆGYPTUS
Nilus
PONTUS EUXINUS
Chersonesus Taurica
Palus Mæotis
CAUCASUS M.
Phasis
Cyrus
Sinope
Trapezus
Amisus
PONTUS
BITHYNIA
Propontis
Halys
Mt. Ararat
Araxes
Ancyra
GALATIA
CAPPADOCIA
Cæsarea
Troas
Pergamos
Smyrna
Ephesus
ASIA
Antiochia
Iconium
LYCIA
Patara
Perga
CILICIA
Tarsus
Seleucia
CYPRUS
Commagene
Edessa
MESOPOTAMIA
Tigris
Euphrates
Ctesiphon
ASSYRIA
Antiochia
SYRIA
Damascus
Tripolis
Sidon
Ptolemais
Cæsarea
Jerusalem
Petra
ARABIA
Mare Caspium
Longitude East 15 from Greenwich

(One): locally - join in whatever way local people honoured their local 'gods', for example by pouring wine or throwing incense onto their altars. Pagans believed that their welfare depended on a proper regard for the traditional gods. Failure to honour them threatened the security of the people - the contract theory - as long as people honour the 'gods', they will have good harvests, win battles, enjoy good health, be kept free from drought, earthquake, etc.; but things will go badly if everyone doesn't join in whatever way local people worshipped the community gods. It didn't matter what you believed - but it was essential to take part in the ceremony. Christians refused to do this, because to honour a local god was idol worship, so from time to time they were persecuted by the locals for that. There were no other 'monotheists' in the Roman Empire except Jews, and they had negotiated a special deal with Rome about their exclusive worship of Yahweh – explained in Lecture 7.

(Two): nationally. To unify the diverse and sprawling Empire under one figurehead, from early C2 Emperors promoted the cult of the Emperor as quasi-divine. Everyone had to say, if called upon to do so, 'Caesar is Lord' and make an offering at the Emperor's statue. (It was required only if someone made a complaint against a Christian, so it was sporadic, as explained in Lecture 7.) Not to do so was treason against the State, but for Christians, only 'Jesus is Lord' - that was the earliest Christian confession of faith. If a complaint was made, and if Christians would not say that 'Caesar is Lord', the State persecuted them for treason. Persecution will be studied in more detail in Lecture 7.

3.4 Judaism. (Cairns, 44; Lion, 101-103)

The third major influence on the Early Church was Judaism. We'll see in a moment, when we look at the opening chapters of Acts at 4.1 below, how long it took for Jesus' message to break out of the Jewish mould.

(a) The first Christians were Jews, different only in the belief that in Jesus, the Messiah had come. They took it for granted that his coming was the fulfilment of past revelation of God – Hebrews 1:1-2. In the early days of Acts, Christians established themselves as an active 'sect' among their fellow Jews, 'spending much time together in the temple' (Acts 2:46). Early Christianity was modelled on traditional Judaism - e.g. patterns of worship, belief in God's election, reverence for Scripture, social distinctives, stable family life, works of charity, etc. Initially there was no aspect of Judaism which they gave up, they just added features noted in Acts 2:41-46. All the time, however, the demands of Jesus' message were breaking up the Jewish mould in which the primitive Church had been set - there was no Jewish counterpart of the Eucharist, the significance of Christian baptism, meeting on Sunday not Saturday, etc.

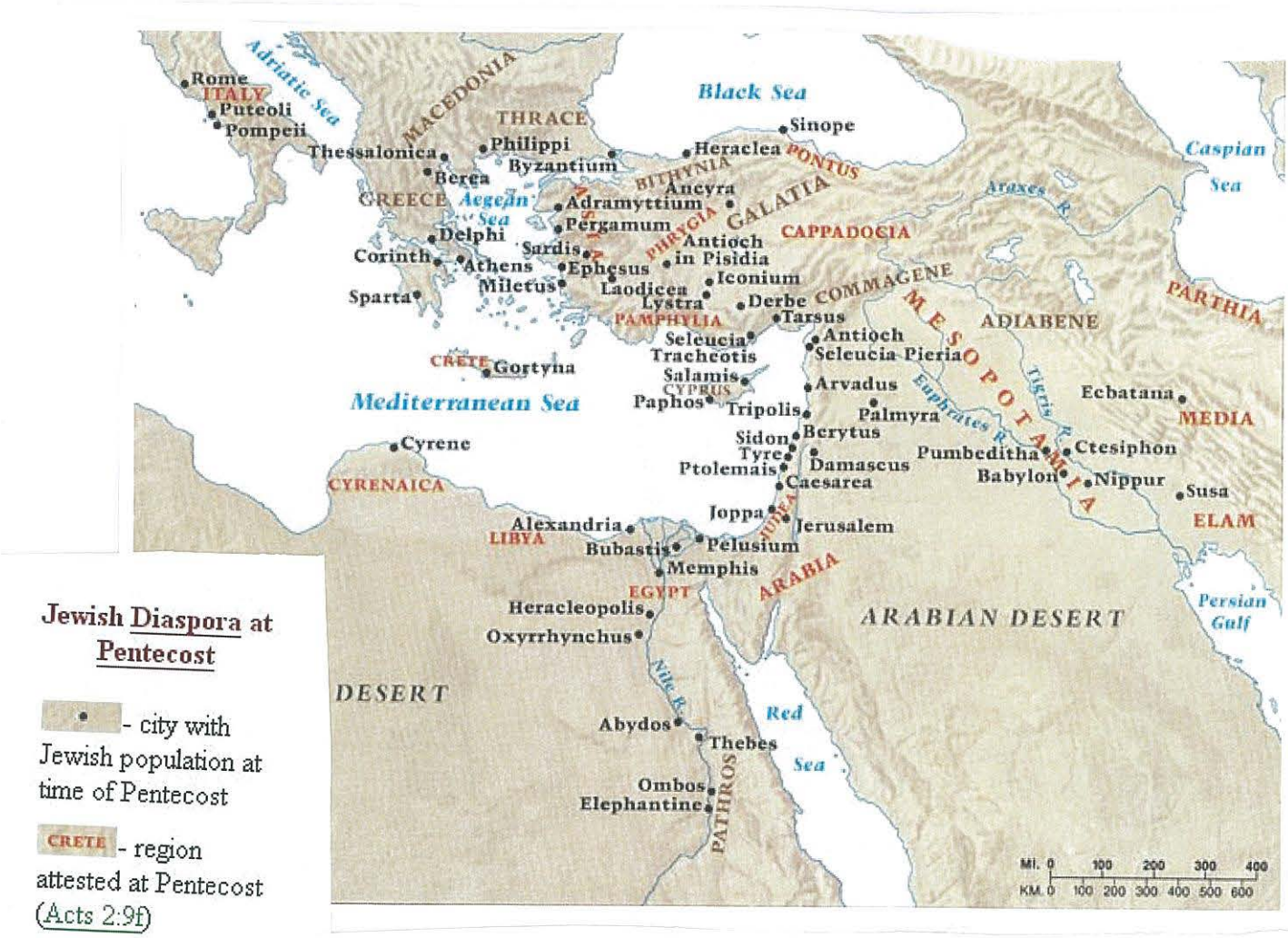
Importance of synagogues (Cairns, 46)

Synagogues were places for prayer and worship but primarily for instruction, to teach the Law of Moses. Acts narrates how early missionaries went first to Jews in the synagogue, if there was one, to proclaim that in Jesus, Messiah/Christ had come. (Greek 'Christ' = Hebrew 'Messiah'). Synagogues were natural starting-points for them, not only to preach to fellow Jews but to Gentiles who attended - many devout Gentiles admired Jewish morality and social work and attended the local synagogue, without becoming Jews – they were known as 'God-fearers'. Because they had heard the Old Testament read, Saturday after Saturday for years, they were ready listeners when Christian missionaries interpreted the Old Testament as a Christian book, which spoke of Christ, as the Lord himself had done, and when they preached that Jesus was the Messiah.

(b) The Dispersion

Millions of Jews lived permanently outside Palestine, known as Jews of the Dispersion *(diaspora)*. Jewish presence throughout the Empire was vast, eight or nine percent of the total, with significant presence in Rome, Italy, Greece, Egypt (one million) and Islands. Wherever ten men were found, a synagogue could be formed, so there was a network of synagogues throughout the Mediterranean world. As mentioned, when the early Christian missionaries went to a new community, their first approach was usually to the local synagogue, explaining that in Jesus, the Messiah had come. Even Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, usually started there.

Until the Temple was destroyed in 70, thousands came every year to one of the festivals in Jerusalem. Read Acts 2:9-11 with one eye on the map below and follow Luke's description of the extent of the *diaspora* who had come to be present at Pentecost – it illustrates the widespread places where there were synagogues. On the map, the areas in upper-case red are the ones mentioned in Acts 2. Luke begins his list in the east with Parthia, Media, Elam, and Mesopotamia, he then mentions Judea, then his list goes north to Cappadocia and Pontus, then west to the province of Asia, then inland to Phrygia and Pamphylia. From there he crosses to Egypt and its neighbour, Cyrene, then to Rome and finally he mentions Crete and Arabia. Many pilgrims heard the apostles preach at Pentecost and were astounded to hear their own languages, but we have no record as to whether these hearers formed churches when they got home.



Luke's record of areas represented in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:9-11)

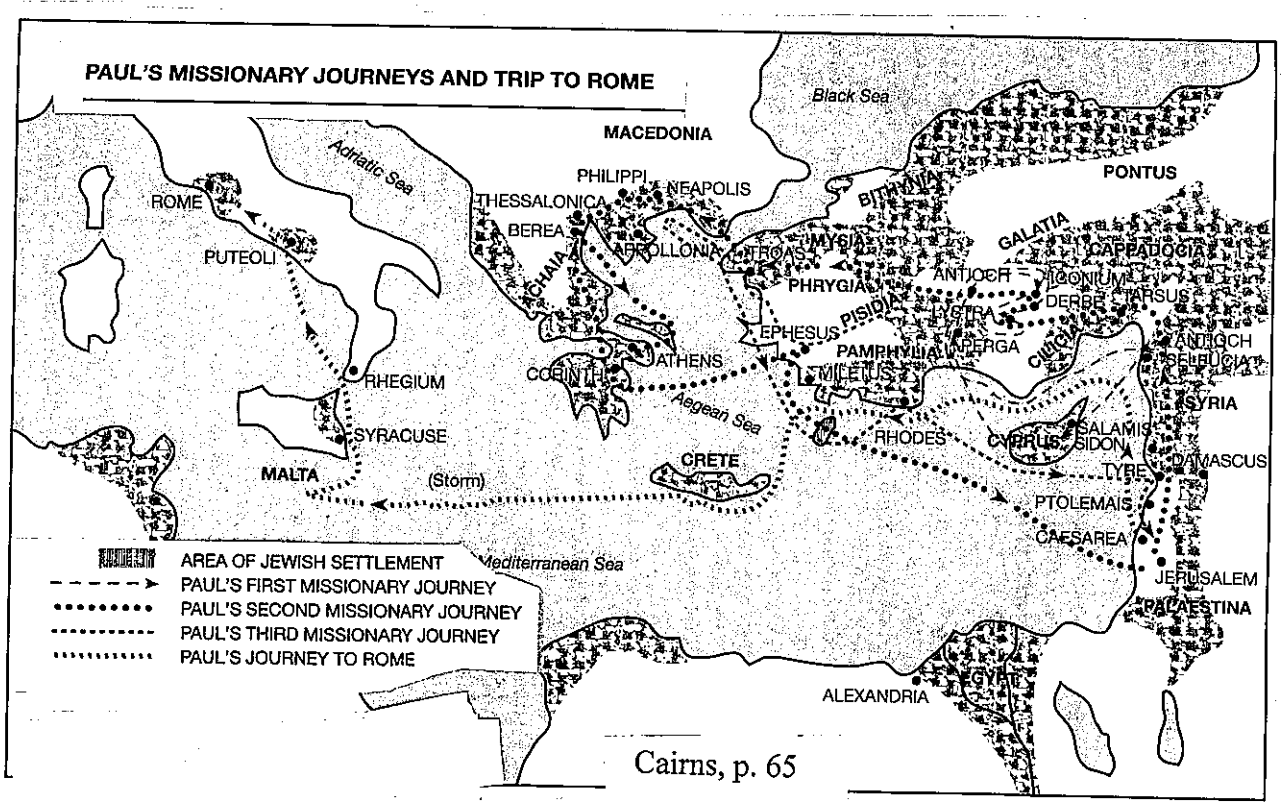
4. CHURCH GROWTH IN THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES (Cairns, 59-63)

4.1 The focus of Acts 1 to 11

>	Pentecost	Acts 2.41	50 days after resurrection, 10 days after ascension
>	'Every day in temple'	Acts 2.46	'Jerusalem Jews' (that is, Hebrew-speaking Jews)
>	Temple priests protest	Acts 4 - 5	focus still on Temple
>	Grecian Jews	Acts 6. 1	own deacons appointed for Greek-speaking Jews
>	Rapid increase	Acts 6.7	but still focus on Jerusalem and still only to Jews.
>	Persecution scatters	Acts 8.1-4	Philip to Samaria etc, with approval of apostles.
>	Ethiopian and Cornelius	Acts 8.35, 10.34	Gentiles, who were already 'God-fearers'
>	Circumcision?	Acts 11.1	query baptism of God-fearers who not circumcised.
>	O.k. but still not seek	Acts 11.18	Gentiles accepted but still no outreach to Gentiles.
>	'Still telling Jews only'	Acts 11.19	persecuted go to Phoenicia, Cyprus, Antioch, but still to Jews only
>	'To the Greeks also'	Acts 11.20	Jews from Cyprus and Cyrene evangelise Greeks in Antioch. First recorded outreach to Gentiles.

4.2 Paul's travels (Cairns, 64-68; Lion, 59-68; Vos, 4; Hanks, *Great Events*, 27-29)

When the focus of Acts moved to Paul in Acts 13, when he went to Pisidian Antioch on his first missionary journey, he preached only in the synagogue for his first three weeks; it was not until the Jews there rejected him that he 'turned to the Gentiles' (Acts 13.46). The map below shows how much time he spent in areas where Dispersion was numerous. The next page tries to fill in the gaps in our knowledge of how Paul was treated in Rome.



Cairns, p. 65

Paul's time at Rome after Luke closed the Book of Acts is outlined on the next page.

Paul's imprisonment at Rome

House arrest

Luke records that when Paul arrived in Rome, he 'was allowed to live by himself, with a soldier to guard him' (Acts 28:16), and that he remained there as a prisoner for two years, awaiting trial (Acts 28:30-31). Historians date these years c60-62 or 62-64. Although still under guard ('bound with this chain', Acts 28.20), Paul was allowed to live in his own rented house, surrounded by co-workers and friends (Acts 28:17-31; Colossians 4:10-14), with visitors and freedom to preach the gospel. That he was 'in chains' (Philippians 1:7 and 13-14 and Colossians 4:3 and 18), probably means that his wrist was bound by a length of chain to the wrist of a soldier, which gave him freedom of movement but escape was impossible. We might call it house arrest.

Solitary confinement

In Paul's last Letter, he is almost alone (II Timothy 4:11) and 'chained like a criminal' (1:16 and 2:9). Onesiphorus found him only after diligent search and at personal risk (1:16-17). In Philippians and Philemon, Paul confidently expected to be released (Phil. 1:26; 2:24; Philemon 22); in II Timothy he knew that his end was near (4:6-8).

Two imprisonments?

The best and simplest explanation for these two incompatible descriptions of his captivity is that Paul experienced two imprisonments in Rome. Luke didn't mention the second one, but Luke had to be selective and perhaps – this is conjecture – Luke's purpose in writing Acts was to show the Christian faith progressing from Jerusalem, the centre of Judaism, to Rome, the centre of the Roman Empire, so he closed the book of Acts when that had been accomplished. Paul's Letter to Titus cannot be fitted into the Acts narrative and is best understood if Paul visited Crete after his first imprisonment and established Titus in a leadership position there – as well as revisiting some churches already founded.

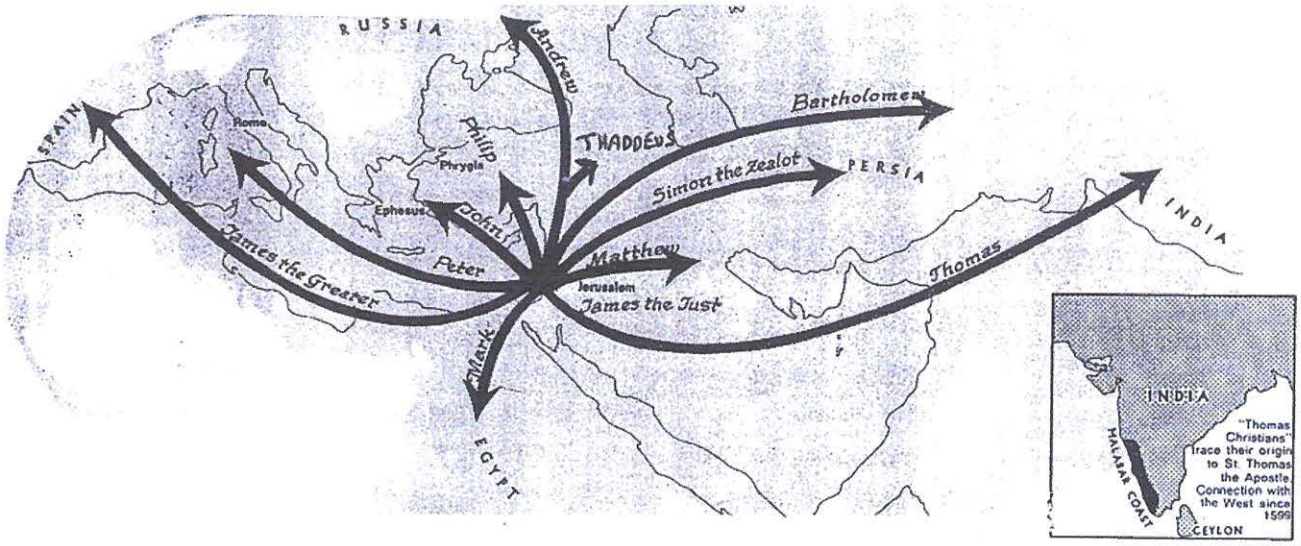
Second arrest

If Paul was acquitted at his trial and released from the first Roman imprisonment, why and where was he arrested again? Perhaps the attitude of Emperor Nero toward Christians at Rome – in October 64 he charged them with incendiarism and savagely persecuted them – gave the enemies of Christianity an excuse to charge Christians as enemies of the State, making them out as dangerous individuals, to be strictly segregated, a more serious charge than the one that had brought Paul to Rome in the first place. That would explain his privation and close confinement.

It is not known where Paul was re-arrested, but he had left his books and parchments, necessary for his missionary work, at Troas (II Tim. 14:13), suggesting that his departure had been hasty and perhaps involuntary. Wherever it was, he was transferred to Rome, and this time he suffered close confinement. He appealed to certain notable Christian men in Asia, men familiar with his work and character, to come and testify in his behalf, but because of the hostile attitude of the government, the apparent hopelessness of the situation, and the personal dangers involved, they all declined to come (II Tim. 1:15) and he found himself almost alone (II Tim. 4:11).

II Timothy must have been written shortly before Paul's death. If it was written in the late summer or early autumn of 66, Paul's execution may have been early in 67. As a Roman citizen, he was beheaded rather than being put to death by crueller means.

4.3 Twelve apostles after Acts 12.1 (year 44) (Cairns, 81-82, Vos, 5)



Name	Biblical Information	Traditional Information
Simon Peter	Preached sermon on Day of Pentecost. Healed lame man. Withstood persecution of Sanhedrin. Rebuked Ananias and Sapphira and Simon Magus. Raised Dorcas from the dead. Preached gospel to Cornelius. Miraculously delivered from prison. Rebuked by Paul at Antioch. Wrote two New Testament epistles.	In Jerusalem for council of 49, not mentioned in Acts again. Late traditions speak of visits to Britain and Gaul. Was crucified upside-down in Rome during Neronian persecution (A.D.64-68). John 21:12-19
Andrew	Brother of Simon Peter	Is supposed to have preached in Scythia, Asia Minor, and Greece; was crucified at Patras in Achaia, west end of (now) Corinth canal. St. Andrew Cross
James, son of Zebedee	Brother of John; was executed by Herod Agrippa, Acts 12:1, first martyr	Called James the Great/Greater to distinguish him from James son of Alphaeus. Patron saint of Spain hence 'San Diago'. Spain claims that he visited before being martyred and that disciples took his bones to Spain.
John, son of Zebedee	Participated in healing of lame man at temple. Followed up Philip's work in Samaria. Was exiled late in life on island of Patmos. Wrote Gospel that bears his name, three epistles and Apocalypse.	Ministered at Ephesus. Is said to have rebuked early Gnostic Cerinthus. Died a natural death In Ephesus c100. Last surviving disciple.
Philip	Sceptical at first about following Jesus, but Nathaniel tells him Jesus is the Messiah. Philip is the one approached by Greeks seeking to speak with Jesus.	Is said to have been crucified in Hierapolis in Asia Minor. Claimed by Church in Constantinople in 330 to give it status.
Matthew	Wrote Gospel that bears his name.	Conflicting traditions place him in Ethiopia, Parthia, Persia and Macedonia. (Everyone wanted to claim him to give them status.)
Thomas	'The Doubter'	Strong early tradition that he founded churches on Malabar coast of India – see map above – from 52 to 72, when he was martyred there – 'Thomas Christians'.
Bartholomew	Not mentioned in NT apart from lists of disciples.	Is supposed to have accompanied Philip to Hierapolis. Was martyred after ministry in Armenia.
James Son of Alphaeus	Also "James the just" or "James the less" to distinguish him from "James the Great"	Has been persistently confused with James the brother of Jesus in early church tradition. Possibly ministered in Syria.
Thaddaeus	This name in Mark/Matthew Luke calls Judas but presumably he changed it.	Has often been confused with Jude, the brother of Jesus. Tradition associates his ministry with Edessa, on border of Rome / Persia
Simon the Zealot	Little is recorded about him apart from his name; called 'the Zealot' to distinguish him from Simon Peter.	Variously (and dubiously) associated with Persia, Egypt, Carthage, and Britain.
Judas Iscariot	Hanged himself after betraying Jesus.	
Matthias (Judas's replacement)		Ethiopia? (not on this map)
Mark		Not on this map; claimed by Alexandria, but that would have to be after Peter died because he was with Peter in Rome until then.

Supplement to 'Twelve Apostles after Acts 12:1'
James, the brother of John

Cathedral of *Santiago de Compostela*, in city of that name in northwest Spain, is still third most popular place of Christian pilgrimage, after Rome and Jerusalem. That is because it is said to be final resting place of Apostle Saint James the Great, brother of John. His remains are said to be beneath altar in crypt of cathedral. Saint James = *Santiago* in Spanish, and *Compostela* is Spanish translation of Latin *Campus Stellae*, field of the star, as explained below.

Tradition has it that when apostles left Jerusalem, preaching gospel, they went in different directions; James went to what Romans called 'the end of the world' (*finis terrae*), north-western Spain. He returned to Palestine in year 44, where he was taken prisoner by Herod Agrippa and beheaded (factually correct, Acts 12:2).

Further tradition has it that two of James' apostles, Anthanasius and Theodore, took his body and severed head by boat from Jerusalem back to *finis terrae*, and buried them secretly in a wood. Centuries later, in 813, a hermit saw a shining light in sky over that wood. Local bishop investigated *Campus Stellae* (field of the star), and found tomb of Apostle. King Alphonse II declared Saint James patron of his empire and built a chapel at that place. More and more pilgrims followed Way of Santiago, *Camino de Santiago*, and original chapel soon became cathedral of new settlement, *Santiago de Compostela*. Pope Alexander III declared it a Holy Town, like Rome and Jerusalem.

Pilgrims from beyond Pyrenees were visiting shrine by middle of C10, and pilgrims travelled from England from 1092 onward. By early C12, pilgrimages were highly organized, with four established pilgrimage routes from starting points in France converged in Basque country of western Pyrenees. From there a single combined track crossed northern Spain. Pilgrims would walk Way of St James for months, to arrive finally at church in main square to pay homage; so many pilgrims have laid their hands on pillar just inside doorway to rest their weary bones, that a groove has been worn in the stone.

5. SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE OF THE EARLY CHURCH (apart from the NT)

5.1 Contemporary sources

(a) Church records (Cairns, 73-79)

Letters between churches, records of persecution, Christians explaining their faith to critics, writings to counter heresy, decisions of councils, etc.

(b) The Apocryphal New Testament (Cairns, 51)

(c) Contemporary non-Christian writers (Cairns, 50-51)

Historians, critics, Jewish anti-Christian writings.

(d) Official government records, especially about persecution (Cairns, 49-50)

(e) Archeological evidence (Lion, 69-76)

Mosaics; inscriptions, gravestones, etc

5.2 Further reading

Cairns, at pages 30-35, recommends many general textbooks; at the end of every chapter, he recommends other books that are relevant for that chapter. From these:

(a) Recommended general textbooks for the patristic period:

Henry Chadwick, *The Early Church*, 1993 London, Penguin - not 1967 edition.
Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity*, 1984, San Francisco, Harper.
Nicholas R. Needham, *2,000 years of Christ's power*, vol 1, 1998, London, Grace.
Fred. F. Bruce, *The Spreading Flame*, 1958, London, Paternoster.
William H. C, Frend, *The Early Church*, 1991, London, SCM, (not 1965 or 1982).

(b) For primary documents on the patristic period:

J. Stevenson, (ed), *A New Eusebius*, 1987, London, SPCK, (not 1957).
J. Stevenson, (ed), *Creeds, Councils and Controversies*, 1989, London, SPCK.
Bart D. Ehrman, *After the New Testament – A Reader in Early Christianity*, 1999, Oxford, OUP.

Note: Stevenson's *New Eusebius* replaces B.J. Kidd, *Documents illustrative of the history of the Church*, Vol. 1, 1938. London, SPCK.

(c) Two major works specifically on the patristic period

William H. C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity*, 1984,Philadelphia, Fortress Press.
Johannes Quasten, *Patrology* (4 vols), 1995, Allen, Texas, Christian Classics.

5.3 Aspects to be aware of:

(1) History tends to be written by 'winners'

'Winners' seldom mention anything damaging to themselves. We have nothing written by Montanus (Topic 5), nothing definitely written by Pelagius (Topic 9) and very little written by Arius (a key figure in Lecture 10). All were condemned by the official Church, so we hear their voices only through the mouths of their opponents. Furthermore, authors are selective, and emphasise points they favour, so documents which survive may not represent the situation as a whole. Beware of accepting them as normative.

For example, Ignatius (Lecture 2) emphasised the role of the Bishop in early C2 churches of Antioch and Asia Minor, but that does not mean that anyone else felt the same way as he did about bishops at that time, or even if there were bishops in other churches at such an early period. Like a modern newspaper headline, 'This outrage has shocked the conscience of the civilised world', it may really mean, 'This has upset the editor and a few of his friends'. Some records from the patristic period may similarly reflect only the point of view of the author.

Furthermore, until the C19, it was acceptable for 'historians' to subordinate the factual accuracy of 'history' to make the point the author was trying to put across, so look critically at material.

(2) Books written many years ago

Understanding of Church History needs constant revision as new documents come to light and new interpretations are put on existing documents. However, some earlier works, especially general works, are still useful.

(3) Works by scholars unsympathetic to the conservative evangelical position

Be aware of, and be prepared to answer, views taught by scholars unsympathetic to the conservative evangelical position. For example, if you are considering what was 'orthodox' (correct belief, right teaching) in the early Church and what was 'heretical', it would be wrong not to take on board the views of Walter Bauer (1877-1960), who argued persuasively in *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, 1971, Philadelphia, Fortress Press, that certain teaching condemned by the Church as new and therefore heretical was in fact the authentic expression of the religion of Jesus and that the Church re-wrote history to condemn what it did not like. His view has been widely accepted among scholars, but instead of being distressed by it, or ignoring or dismissing it, be prepared to demonstrate, in a scholarly way, how Early Church History equally teaches that orthodoxy was earlier and more widespread that Bauer allowed – for example in the 1954 Brampton Lectures by H.E.W. Turner, published as *Pattern of Christian Truth*, 1954, London, Mowbray.

OVERVIEW OF CHURCH HISTORY IN 36 ILLUSTRATED LECTURES

TOPIC FOR LECTURE 1: THE SEPTUAGINT

The Jewish community in Egypt had the Hebrew Bible translated into Greek, probably as early as the C2 BC. It was known as the Septuagint from the Latin *septuaginta,* seventy, for the reasons set out on the next page. Seven more Hebrew books were included in the Septuagint than there are in the Hebrew Bible; these are now known as the OT *Apocrypha,* which is Greek for 'hidden things' (asterisk on chart).

HEBREW BIBLE		PROTESTANT OLD TESTAMENT	ROMAN CATHOLIC OLD TESTAMENT (DOUAY VERSION)
Genesis		Genesis	Genesis
Exodus		Exodus	Exodus
Leviticus	LAW	Leviticus	Leviticus
Numbers		Numbers	Numbers
Deuteronomy		Deuteronomy	Deuteronomy
		Joshua	Josue
Joshua		Judges	Judges
Judges		Ruth	Ruth
Samuel		Samuel	Kings
Kings		Kings	Paralipomenon
Isaiah		Chronicles	Esdras
Jeremiah		Ezra	Nehemias
Ezekiel		Nehemiah	*Tobias
Hosea		Esther	*Judith
Joel	PROPHETS	Job	Esther
Amos		Psalms	Job
Obadiah		Proverbs	Psalms
Jonah		Ecclesiastes	Proverbs
Micah		Song of Solomon	Ecclesiastes
Nahum		Isaiah	Canticle of Canticles
Habakkuk		Jeremiah	*Wisdom of Soloman
Zephaniah		Lamentations	*Ecclesiasticus
Haggai		Ezekiel	Isaias
Zechariah		Daniel	Jeremias
Malachi		Hosea	Lamentations
		Joel	*Baruch
Psalms		Amos	Ezechiel
Proverbs		Obadiah	Daniel
Job		Jonah	Osee
Ruth		Micah	Joel
Song of Songs		Nahum	Amos
Lamentations	WRITINGS	Habakkuk	Abdias
Ecclesiastes		Zephaniah	Jonas
Esther		Haggai	Micheas
Daniel		Zechariah	Nahum
Ezra		Malachi	Habacuc
Nehemiah			Sophonias
Chronicles			Aggeus
			Zacharias
* = Books not found in Hebrew Bible or Protestant OT.			Malachi
			*I and II Maccabees

Explanation for these notes on the Septuagint

Normally students were given only a title and a very brief introduction to the Topic on which they were to speak. However, since the Course papers were not given out until the first day, the students couldn't prepare for the first couple of Topics – there were usually two lectures on the same day. These are therefore some explanatory comments about the translation of the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek, known as the Septuagint, often abbreviated to LXX (the Latin number 70).

Why and how the Septuagint was published

More than two hundred years before Christ, the Jewish community in Alexandria in Egypt was numerous and like everyone else in Alexandria, they spoke Greek as their first language. They no longer understood Hebrew, so they had the sacred books of the Jewish people, including what we call the Old Testament, translated into Greek.

It became known as the Septuagint because a legend grew up that it was the work of seventy elders of Israel, who were brought to Alexandria for the purpose. The legend was then further embellished, that the elders conferred together and completed the translation in seventy days. Later embellishments said they were isolated from one another in separate cells and produced seventy identical versions - conclusive proof, it was said, of divine inspiration of work.

Significance of the LXX for the Early Church

It made (what we call) the Hebrew Old Testament available in the common language of the Roman Empire. The Ethiopian eunuch, in Acts 8, was reading Isaiah 53.7-8, 'He was led as a sheep to the slaughter …' when Philip joined him; we know from the words used that he was reading from the Septuagint, not from the Hebrew – not surprisingly, because the Ethiopian would not understand Hebrew, but he did understand Greek.

The Early Church made many uses of the Old Testament, including:
(a) showing that OT prophecy was fulfilled in Jesus, their most compelling point of contact with Jews and God-fearers in synagogues; they could go anywhere in the Empire and quote it, and
(b) proof that Christianity had long antecedents/ancestry, which was important because Gentiles worked on the basis that if a teaching was 'new' it probably wasn't 'true'.

The Protestant Old Testament – middle column of the chart on page 1 – is the 27 books of the Hebrew Bible, but in a different order –the later prophets come at the end, as bridge to the NT.

As mentioned on page 1, there are seven more Hebrew books in the Septuagint than the 27 which make up our OT, and they are now called the OT Apocrypha (asterisks on the chart). Roman Catholic translations of the OT into English include these seven, either as a separate section between the OT and the NT, or interleaved with the OT books. This is because about the year 400, a churchman called Jerome, whom we'll study as Topic 8, was asked to make a new translation of the Bible for Latin readers. Instead of going back to the Septuagint, as everyone else had previously done, he mastered the Hebrew language and made his translation from the original Hebrew Scriptures. It became known as the Vulgate (meaning 'popular'). He said that the seven books which were not in the Hebrew Scriptures could be read for edification but that they were not authoritative for the Church.

At the Reformation in the C16, which we'll come to lecture 19, the Roman Catholic Church wanted to define where it differed from the emerging Protestant Churches – details in lecture 26. As the Protestant Churches rejected the inspiration, authority and usefulness of the Apocrypha, the Catholic Church declared that all of Jerome's Vulgate, including the seven books, were Scripture.

While the Apocrypha sheds some light on the period between our Old Testament and our New Testament, it is unlikely to be of use to most of us and we'll say no more about it here.