

INTRODUCTION TO THE EARLY CHURCH

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2 Timothy 2:2—Passing on the Tradition				
“The things which you have heard from me . . .”		“. . . entrust these to faithful men . . .”		“. . . who will be able to teach others also.”
FIRST GENERATION		SECOND GENERATION		THIRD GENERATION
Peter		Clement		Justin
John		Ignatius		Melito
Paul	→	Aristides	→	Athenagoras
Luke		Polycarp		Theophilus
Timothy		Papias		Irenaeus

RESOURCES

MODERN BOOKS

“In the Beginning was the Logos” - Paul Pavao (\$5 if you get the Kindle book)
“Reading Scripture with the Church Fathers” - Christopher Hall
“A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs” – David Bercot
“Sketches of Jewish Social Life” - Alfred Edersheim (Edersheim free @ Philologos.com)
“The Temple and Its Service” – Alfred Edersheim
“The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah” – Alfred Edersheim
“The Spirit of Early Christian Thought” - Robert Wilken
Excellent critique of “The Da Vinci Code”:
[http://www.webtruth.org/articles/cultural-issues-26/the-da-vinci-code-\(a-critique\)-63.html](http://www.webtruth.org/articles/cultural-issues-26/the-da-vinci-code-(a-critique)-63.html)
“Three-Hundred Sayings of the Ascetics of the Orthodox Church” (an interesting survey of E.O.)
Books by Thomas Oden (he seeks to formulate his theology based on ancient consensus)
“Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture” collection
“The Christian Tradition 1: The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition 100-600” - Jaroslav Pelikan

STUDY AND SEARCH TOOLS

Collections of Early Church writings:

www.NewAdvent.com/fathers/ (a Roman Catholic site)

<http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/index.htm>

<http://www.bible.ca/history/fathers/> (The authors of this website have a few axes to grind and they are certainly not bias-free, so use discretion on the other parts of the site. However, they have a searchable database of many of the writings from the Apostolic era til 600AD).

<http://www.iclnet.org/pub/resources/christian-history.html>

E-CATENA – <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/e-catena/>

Textavation.com

Earlychurchwritings.com

Canonical tools, original languages: <http://textexcavation.com/texts.html>

Irenaeus in Greek: <http://www.textexcavation.com/irenaeusah.html>

Hyperlink in documents of original languages (for example):

http://www.earlychurchtexts.com/main/vincentoflerins/catholic_faith_and_heresy.shtml

Thematic list of texts (quite limited... by no means exhaustive!)

http://www.earlychurchtexts.com/main/updates/themed_list.shtml

Map of centers of early Christianity and spread:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Early_centers_of_Christianity

Summary of heresies confronting the early church:

<http://www.sundayschoolcourses.com/heresy/heresy.pdf>

Early church quotes on abortion: <http://www.bible.ca/H-Abortion.htm>

Ethiopian Church ‘Expanded’ Canon (81 books):

<http://www.ethiopianorthodox.org/english/canonical/books.html>

List and links to church councils: <http://sfxwinooski.org/documents.html> (Roman Catholic page)

List of church councils: <http://mb-soft.com/believe/txw/orthcoun.htm> (Eastern Orthodox page)

VOCABULARY

Catholic – If used before 400AD, this in no way indicates the Roman Catholic church, but merely indicates the world-wide church. However, if used after 400AD by a Western author, the Western author may have merely the Roman side of the church in mind and be completely unfamiliar with a potential disagreement from the Eastern churches. The Eastern churches use the term catholic as well.

Tradition – To receive, pass down, and preserve truth unchanged. Traditions can be apostolic, dubious, or even heretical – one must see if they match the early consensus of the ancient churches and are not in disagreement with Scripture.

Economy / Oikonomia / Dispensation – All of these words indicate the actions of a steward or manager of an estate. Such a person would be responsible for delegating tasks, paying people their due wages, foreseeing needs and meeting them. In God’s Economy, God makes provision and ‘sets things up’ in certain ways, while ensuring that His ‘payments’ are just. A related idea is that of a doctor or nurse, who provides for their patient the things that will offer the most long-term benefit, and does not use a ‘one size fits all’ system. In the same way, although there are standards of righteousness, concessions are made to human weakness. Marriage, according to Paul, is such a concession, and yet even as a “concession” it is a sanctified blessing. Economia, in short, can be a discretionary deviation from the letter of the law, so that soul care is ‘managed’ rightly.

Providence – That there is a God who has made all things, properly provided for all things, and oversees all things. In this way the wicked will be punished, the righteous blessed, and nothing is outside His abilities or knowledge. The goodness and righteousness of God are key elements in His provision of these things.

EARLY CHURCH WRITINGS

A RECOMMENDED STARTING POINT

Because much of the Early Church Writings deal with particular Gnostic heresies which we are no longer familiar with, they can get rather difficult and seem irrelevant. The following list of works and chapters provides a good starting point for what I think are the most interesting portions of the early church writings. I have included a snippet from each, to spur your interest.

Note that this is certainly not all of the writers from the Ante-Nicene and Nicene/Post-Nicene Fathers collection!

A CAUTION TO THE READER

The early church was not modern Roman Catholic. Nor was it Lutheran, or Church of Christ, or Baptist, Methodist, or any other modern church. Not *exactly*. We need to be careful against trying to find little quotes from the early church to buttress our own personal views. Anyone will be able to find such, especially if not in context. Please listen to these writers humbly, and let them edify you, and not have a mindset of judging them. Don't settle for small quotes – it might be a dialogue and you might be reading the heretics' part! Read the author's entire book. They might be presenting an extreme view for rhetorical purposes, which they later balance in a following chapter. Listen to other perspectives. Likewise, don't just trust someone because they quote a few early church fathers. Look it up for yourself. Consensus and Antiquity are key. Unless you have a very, very, very good reason to reject the ancient consensus of a scriptural interpretation, the wise thing to do is to submit to the ancient consensus, but that, of course, requires some study to determine 'consensus.'

Finally, Christianity is about right doctrine but also about and right living (orthodoxy and orthopraxy). In our quest for doctrinal 'purity' we may fail to let the words of admonition sink into our ears. Reading these writings should convict us and inspire us to greater love, humility, trust in God, purity of heart, and communion with others.

CLEMENT OF ROME (96AD)

Bishop of Rome from 92AD until his death in 99AD, overlapping the life of the apostle John. Several other spurious letters are attributed to him, but 1st Clement is well attested and was received as Canonical by many churches. Irenaeus appeals to Clement, writing, *"This man, as he had seen the blessed apostles, and had been conversant with them, might be said to have the preaching of the apostles still echoing [in his ears], and their traditions before his eyes. Nor was he alone [in this], for there were many still remaining who had received instructions from the apostles."* (*Against Heresies*, 3.3.3) Is Clement the same man mentioned in Philippians 4:3? Is the Fortunatus mentioned in Clement the same as in 1 Corinthians 16:17? It seems likely.

In this letter, Clement urges the Corinthians to repent from a recent schism.

1st LETTER OF CLEMENT

"And Cain said to Abel his brother, Let us go into the field. And it came to pass, while they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.' You see, brethren, how envy and jealousy led to the murder of a brother. Through envy, also, our father Jacob fled from the face of Esau his brother. Envy made Joseph be persecuted unto death, and to come into bondage....Envy has alienated wives from their husbands, and changed that saying of our father Adam, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh. Envy and strife have overthrown great cities, and rooted up mighty nations....These things, beloved, we write unto you, not merely to admonish you of your duty, but also to remind ourselves. For we are struggling on the same arena, and the same conflict is assigned to both of us. Wherefore let us give up vain and fruitless cares, and approach to the glorious and venerable rule of our holy calling. Let us attend to what is good, pleasing, and acceptable in the sight of Him who formed us. Let us look steadfastly to the blood of Christ, and see how precious that blood is to God which, having been shed for our salvation, has set the grace of repentance before the whole world...The ministers of the grace of God have, by the Holy Spirit, spoken of repentance; and the Lord of all things has himself declared with an oath regarding it, 'As I live, says the Lord, I desire not the death of the sinner, but rather his repentance.'

IGNATIUS (~110AD)

The 3rd bishop of Antioch. There is also a separate account of his martyrdom, in which he was killed by lions after making the good confession before the emperor.

LETTER TO SMYRNA

LETTER TO ROME

"So far as I am concerned, to die in Jesus Christ is better than to be monarch of earth's widest bounds. He who died for us is all that I seek; He who rose again for us is my whole desire... Here and now, as I write in the fullness of life, I am yearning for death with all the passion of a lover. My love has been crucified; in me there is left no spark of desire for mundane things, but only a murmur of living water that whispers within me, 'Come to the Father'."

THE DIDACHE (circa. 50AD – 150AD)

A very early synopsis of apostolic teaching and church practice, including instructions on baptism and the Lord's Table. Athanasius describes it as 'appointed by the Fathers to be read by those who newly join us, and who wish for instruction in the word of goodness' [Festal Letter 39:7].

5 Give to everyone that asks thee, and do not refuse, for the Father's will is that we give to all from the gifts we have received. Blessed is he that gives according to the mandate; for he is innocent. Woe to him who receives; for if any man receive alms under pressure of need he is innocent; but he who receives it without need shall be tried as to why he took and for what, and being in prison he shall be examined as to his deeds, and "he shall not come out thence until he pay the last farthing." 6 But concerning this it was also said, "Let thine alms sweat into thine hands until thou knowest to whom thou art giving."

POLYCARP (B. 52AD – D.156AD)

Polycarp was instructed by John. He was the bishop of Smyrna. Among his church credentials, Ignatius wrote an entire letter to him (~108 A.D.), Irenaeus wrote that Polycarp was faithful (~70 A.D.), Polycrates likewise deemed him faithful (~190 A.D.), Tertullian wrote that the true Christian church could be traced through him (~200 A.D.), and Eusebius affirmed that Polycarp was faithful to the apostolic traditions (~330 A.D.). The message to the "angel of the Church of Smyrna" in Revelation 2:8-11 is probably to Polycarp, since Polycarp was alive and leading the church in the area at the time of John's writing! The church of Smyrna (and Philadelphia) were the only churches who received no rebuke from Christ in Revelation. Polycarp quotes and alludes to most of the apostolic writings from the New Testament (in his letter written in 156AD!).

MARTYRDOM OF POLYCARP

LETTER TO THE PHILADELPHIANS

"[Paul], when among you, accurately and steadfastly taught the word of truth in the presence of those who were then alive. And when absent from you, he wrote you a letter, which, if you carefully study, you will find to be the means of building you up in that faith which has been given you, and which, being followed by hope, and preceded by love towards God, and Christ, and our neighbor, is the mother of us all. [Galatians 4:26] For if anyone be inwardly possessed of these graces, he has fulfilled the command of righteousness, since he that has love is far from all sin."

MATHETES (~150AD)

Nothing is known of Matthetes (meaning 'disciple' and perhaps a pen name) or of Diognetus, beyond the contents of this early writing.

MATHETES TO DIOGNETUS

"Since I see thee, most excellent Diognetus, exceedingly desirous to learn the mode of worshipping God prevalent among the Christians, and inquiring very carefully and earnestly concerning them, what God they trust in, and what form of religion they observe, so as all to look down upon the world itself, and despise death...I cordially welcome this thy desire... They marry, as do all [others]; they beget children; but they do not destroy their offspring. They have a common table, but not a common bed. They are in the flesh, but they do not live after the flesh. They pass their days on earth, but they are citizens of heaven. They obey the prescribed laws, and at the same time surpass the laws by their lives.... To sum up all in one word--what the soul is in the body, that are Christians in the world."

JUSTIN MARTYR (~150AD)

Justin was converted by an old man he encountered on the sea shore, who confuted his philosophical arguments with the testimony of the prophets of the Old Testament. Justin had been well-versed in pagan philosophies and as a Christian he sought to gently argue with and persuade those who were in error.

THE MARTYRDOM OF JUSTIN MARTYR

(in modern language: <http://www.christian-history.org/justin-martyr-martyrdom.html>)

1ST APOLOGY

#27, 28, 35, 43, 44, 45, 46, 50, 55, 61, 65, 66, 67.

2ND APOLOGY

#4, 6-10, 13.

"DIALOGUE WITH TRYPHO, A JEW"

1-15, 18-22, 24-26, 38, 41(!), 43, 47, 64, 67(!), 80, 94, 95, 102, 111, 118, 123-125, 140-142

"And the offering of fine flour, sirs," I said, "which was prescribed to be presented on behalf of those purified from leprosy, was a type of the bread of the Eucharist [literally, 'Thanksgiving'], the celebration of which our Lord Jesus Christ prescribed, in remembrance of the suffering which He endured on behalf of those who are purified in soul from all iniquity, in order that we may at the same time thank God for having created the world, with all things therein for the sake of man, and for delivering us from the evil in which we were, and for utterly overthrowing principalities and powers by Him who suffered according to His will. Hence God speaks by the mouth of Malachi, one of the twelve prophets, as I said before, about the sacrifices at that time presented by you: 'I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord; and I will not accept your sacrifices at your hands: for, from the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same, My name has been glorified among the Gentiles, and in every place incense is offered to My name, and a pure offering: for My name is great among the Gentiles, saith the Lord: but ye profane it.' He then speaks of those Gentiles, namely us, who in every place offer sacrifices to Him, i.e., the bread of the Thanksgiving, and also the cup of the Thanksgiving, affirming both that we glorify His name, and that you profane it."

"Trypho, answer me: Are those righteous patriarchs who lived before Moses, who observed none of those ordinances which, the Scripture shows, received the commencement of their institution from Moses, saved and have they attained to the inheritance of the blessed?"

And Trypho said, "The Scriptures compel me to admit it."

"Likewise I again ask you," said I, "did God enjoin your fathers to present the offerings and sacrifices because He had need of them, or because of the hardness of their hearts and tendency to idolatry?"

"The latter," said he, "the Scriptures in like manner compel us to admit."

"Likewise," said I, "did not the Scriptures predict that God promised to dispense a new covenant besides that which was dispensed in the mountain Horeb?"

This, too, he replied, had been predicted.

THEOPHILUS (~170AD)

This is a letter from the 7th bishop of Antioch to his pagan friend. Although there are three books in this series of letters, I recommend the first one most highly. Interestingly, Theophilus uses the well-accepted science of the resurrection of the phoenix (!) as one example of many to show that resurrection is figured in creation. This letter is a good example of both the riches of the early writers but the superiority of Scripture, which has no such errors. I wonder what scientific assumptions we have that Christians will laugh at?

THEOPHILUS TO AUTOLYCUS

"My friend, you have assailed me with empty words, boasting of your gods of wood and tone, hammered and cast, carved and graven, which neither see nor hear, for they are idols, and the works of men's hands; and since, besides, you call me a Christian, as if this were a damning name to bear, I, for my part, avow that I am a Christian, and bear this name beloved of God, hoping to be serviceable to God. For it is not the case, as you suppose, that the name of God is hard to bear; but possibly you entertain this opinion of God, because you are yourself yet unserviceable to Him....[your] iniquities, man, involve you in darkness, so that you cannot see God... All these things, then, involve you in darkness, as when a filmy defluxion on the eyes prevents one from beholding the light of the sun: thus also do iniquities, man, involve you in darkness, so that you cannot see God."

IRENAEUS (~175ad)

Irenaeus was a bishop in Gaul, and a well-respected defender of the faith. He is one of my favorite writers from this period.

THE DEMONSTRATION OF THE APOSTOLIC TEACHING

(a quick survey through the entire Bible)

http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/irenaeus_02_proof.htm

"We send you as it were a manual of essentials, that by little you may attain to much, learning in short space all the members of the body of the truth, and receiving in brief the demonstration of the things of God. So shall it be fruitful to your own salvation, and you shall put to shame all who inculcate falsehood, and bring with all confidence our sound and pure teaching to everyone who desires to understand it."

AGAINST HERESIES

In Against Heresies, Irenaeus starts by refuting heretics in the first two books, and proceeds to articulate simple Christian doctrine along with his own interpretations in Books three through five.

I recommend:

- Book One: #10
- Book Two: #26,27,28.
- Book Three: #1–5, 7, 8, 16 – 25
- Book Four: #6, 7, 12 – 18, 21, 22, 26, 29, 30, 32, 33, 37-41
- Book Five, #1, 2, 8, 10, 14, 16, 17, 19-21, 24, 27, 28, 36

A chapter index with a sentence describing each chapter and hyperlinks may be found at:

<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103.htm>

Communion with God is life and light, and the enjoyment of all the benefits which He has in store. But on as many as, according to their own choice, depart from God, He inflicts that separation from Himself which they have chosen of their own accord. But separation from God is death, and separation from light is darkness; and separation from God consists in the loss of all the benefits which He has in store. Those, therefore, who cast away by apostasy these forementioned things, being in fact destitute of all good, do experience every kind of punishment. God, however, does not punish them immediately of Himself, but that punishment falls upon them because they are destitute of all that is good. Now, good things are eternal and without end with God, and therefore the loss of these is also eternal and never-ending. It is in this matter just as occurs in the case of a flood of light: those who have blinded themselves, or have been blinded by others, are forever deprived of the enjoyment of light. It is not, [however], that the light has inflicted upon them the penalty of blindness, but it is that the blindness itself has brought calamity upon them: and therefore the Lord declared, "He that believes in Me is not condemned", that is, is not separated from God, for he is united to God through faith. On the other hand, He says, "He that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God;" that is, he separated himself from God of his own accord.

TERTULLIAN (~200AD)

Tertullian is called by some "The Father of Western Christianity" since he was the first to extensively write in Latin, in the now 'Western'

church. A small caution is due here – in his later years he became involved in a rather charismatic and legalistic sect, which was later condemned by the church. However, this sect did not espouse doctrines significantly different from orthodoxy. They were marked by severe asceticism, allegedly Spirit-guided church leadership (known as "New Prophesy"), and a harsh treatment of sin.

ON REPENTANCE

"How irrationally [the heathen] behave in the practice of repentance... They repent of good faith, of love, of simple-heartedness, of patience, of mercy... They execrate their own selves for having done good; and that species chiefly of repentance which is applied to the best works they fix in their heart, making it their care to remember never again to do a good turn. On repentance for evil deeds, on the contrary, they lay lighter stress."

PRESCRIPTION AGAINST HERETICS

Chapters 8,11, 13,14,16, 18, 19, 20,21,22,27,32,36,42,44.

"Heretics, According to the Apostle, are Not to Be Disputed With, But to Be Admonished. ...[Do not] consort with a heretic "after the first and second admonition" (Titus 3:10). Not, observe, "after a discussion." The Apostle has restrained discussion in this way, by designating admonition as the purpose of dealing with a heretic, and the first admonition too, because he is not a Christian...Also such a controversy over the Scriptures can, clearly, produce no other effect than help to upset either the stomach or the brain."

"Now then, ye dogs, whom the apostle puts outside, and who yelp at the God of truth, let us come to your various questions. These are the bones of contention, which you are perpetually gnawing! If God is good, and prescient of the future, and able to avert evil, why did He permit man, the very image and likeness of Himself, and, by the origin of his soul, His own substance too, to be deceived by the devil, and fall from obedience of the law into death? ...I find, then, that man was by God constituted free, master of his own will and power; indicating the presence of God's image and likeness in... To conclude: the goodness of God, then fully considered from the beginning of His works, will be enough to convince us that nothing evil could possibly have come forth from God; and the liberty of man will, after a second thought, show us that it alone is chargeable with the fault which itself committed... You ought, however, to deduct from God's attributes both His supreme earnestness of purpose and most excellent truth in His whole creation, if you would cease to inquire whether anything could have happened against the will of God.

ORIGEN (~250AD)

Treat Origen with caution. While he was accepted as a brilliant theologian and wonderful expositor of Scripture, some of his ideas were later condemned as heresy (such as the eventual redemption of even Satan, which might be hoped for but is certainly not found in Scripture). Origen wrote commentaries on most books of the Bible. He also compiled a massive work: the Old Testament in six columns (Hebrew, Hebrew in Greek characters, the Septuagint, and three other Greek translations). His writings exceeded 6,000 scrolls. Many works are lost. Thankfully, we have "The choice thoughts of Origen" selected by Gregory of Nazianzus (d.390), divided into subject matter and chapters:

PHILOKALIA OF ORIGEN

http://www.ccel.org/ccel/pearse/morefathers/files/origen_philocalia_02_text.htm

"Blessed are the peacemakers"...there is also a third peacemaker: he who shows that what to the eyes of others seems like disagreement in the Scriptures is not really so, and who proves that harmony and concord exist, whether between the Old and the New, or the Law and the Prophets, or Gospel and Gospel, or Evangelists and Apostles, or Apostles and other Apostles. ...For as the different strings of the psaltery or the lyre, each of which gives forth a note of its own seemingly unlike that of any other, are thought by an unmusical man who does not understand the theory of harmony to be discordant, because of the difference in the notes: so they who have not ears to detect the harmony of God in the sacred Scriptures suppose [it to be so]. But if a reader comes who has been instructed in God's music... he will produce a note of God's music, for he will have learned from God's music to keep good time, playing now upon the strings of the Law, now upon those of the Gospel in harmony with them, now upon those of the Prophets; and when the harmony of good sense is required he strikes the apostolic strings tuned to suit the foregoing, and, similarly, apostolic strings in harmony with those of Evangelists. For he knows that the whole Scripture is the one, perfect, harmonious instrument of God, blending the different notes, for those who wish to learn, into one song of salvation, which stops and hinders all the working of an evil spirit, as the music of David laid to rest the evil spirit in Saul which was vexing him.

CYRIL OF JERUSALEM (~370ad)

Bishop of Jerusalem and an esteemed theologian. He was accused of secretly selling church property so as to feed the starving poor during a famine! I especially recommend #4 and #13 of his catechetical lectures.

CATECHETICAL LECTURES

"If any man disbelieves the words which I speak, let him believe the actual power of the things now seen. All kings when they die have their power extinguished with their life: but Christ crucified is worshipped by the whole world. We proclaim The Crucified, and the devils tremble now. Many have been crucified at various times; but of what other who was crucified did the invocation ever drive the devils away? Let us, therefore, not be ashamed of the Cross of Christ; but though another hide it, do thou openly seal it upon thy forehead, that the devils may behold the royal sign and flee trembling far away."

JOHN CHRYSOSTOM (~390AD)

John Chrysostom is my favorite Church Father. John Chrysostom preached verse by verse through numerous books of the Bible – and his native language was Greek. A massive amount of his writings has come down to us. He is one of the most esteemed preachers of the church – even in his own day, he preached to packed audiences, warning and convicting and encouraging their hearts with Scripture. I would encourage you to find a commentary or homily of his on a passage you are meditating on and let him minister to you.

INSTRUCTIONS TO CATECHUMENS

HOMILIES ("ON MARRIAGE", AND "NO ONE CAN HARM THE MAN WHO DOES NOT HARM HIMSELF")

COMMENTARY ON ROMANS AND FIRST CORINTHIANS

"Even if we stand at the very summit of virtue, it is by mercy that we shall be saved."

"John tells us by anticipation that Jesus was buried with much myrrh, which glues linen to the body not less firmly than lead; in order that when you hear that the burial cloths lay apart, you may not endure those who say that He was stolen. For a thief would not have been so foolish as to spend so much trouble on a superfluous matter."

"When you see the unbelief of the disciple Thomas, consider the lovingkindness of the Lord, how for the sake of a single soul He showed Himself with His wounds, and comes in order to save even the one, though he was grosser than the rest; on which account indeed he sought proof from the grossest of the senses, and would not even trust his eyes. For he said not, "Except I see," but, "Except I handle," he says, lest what he saw might somehow be an apparition... yet, since he desired more, Christ did not deprive him even of this."

"...If anyone in the present day say, "I would that I had lived in those times, and had seen Christ working miracles," let them reflect, that, "Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed."

"God loves us more than a father, mother, friend, or any else could love, and even more than we are able to love ourselves."

"Let us not then make ourselves unworthy of entrance into the bride-chamber: for as long as we are in this world, even if we commit countless sins it is possible to wash them all away by manifesting repentance for our offenses: but when once we have departed to the other world, even if we display the most earnest repentance it will be of no avail, not even if we gnash our teeth, beat our breasts, and utter innumerable calls for succor, no one with the tip of his finger will apply a drop to our burning bodies, but we shall only hear those words which the rich man heard in the parable 'Between us and you a great gulf has been fixed.' [Luke xvi. 26]

"Oh! foolish men; who even curse the poor, and say that both houses and living are 'disgraced' by poverty, confusing everything. For, I ask you, what is a 'disgrace' to a house? "It hath no couch of ivory, nor silver vessels, but all of earthenware and wood." Nay, this is the greatest glory and distinction to a house. For to be indifferent about worldly things, often occasions all a man's leisure to be spent in the care of his soul."

"And He came to the place of a skull.' Some say that Adam died there, and there lieth; and that Jesus in this place where death had reigned, there also set up the trophy. For He went forth bearing the Cross as a trophy over the tyranny of death: and as conquerors do, so He bare upon His shoulders the symbol of victory."

'If for a certain period, you and your wife have abstained by agreement, perhaps for a time of prayer and fasting, come together again for the sake of your marriage. You do not need procreation as an excuse. It is not the chief reason for marriage. Neither is it necessary to allow for the possibility of conceiving, and thus having a large number of children, something you may not want.'

AUGUSTINE (~400AD)

Augustine is perhaps one of the most influential theologians of all time, for better or worse. He was a brilliant, prolific, and somewhat problematic writer, eclipsed possibly only by Origen so far as his body of work. The Roman Catholic church holds Augustine as one of their most esteemed theologians. However, the Eastern Orthodox did not interact with his ideas due to the linguistic and political divide at the time. After interacting with his writings centuries later, they view him with some trepidation, seeing in him a tendency to innovate new doctrines.

Augustine departed from the Nicene Creed by claiming the Spirit proceeded from the Son in addition to the Father. He innovated what became the Roman Catholic view of Original Sin due to his use of a poor Latin translation of Romans (he was not fluent in Greek), deeming that everyone was judicially guilty of Adam's sin (not just infected with mortality and corrupted) and that this sin was passed on in the sinful lust inherent in human conception – a completely speculative, extra-Biblical, and odd idea, without traditional support. Further, he admitted that some of his answers to doctrinal questions were out of step with the 'normal' answer – such as "Whence comes evil?", which he seems to ultimately answer by asserting that in the big picture, and to God, evil does not exist (Confessions, Book 7, Chapter 13) – certainly an answer any of the earlier writers would reject vehemently. Sometimes Augustine subjects Scripture to torturous bending to make it conform to his theology: "*we must understand the Scripture, "Who will have all men to be saved," as meaning that no man is saved unless God wills his salvation: that is, not that 'there is no man whose salvation he does not will', but that 'no one is saved unless He wills it.'*" Even in the West, his doctrinal ideas did not meet universal sanction – see, for instance, the middle ground taken by the Council of Orange (529AD). Compare also Augustine's treatment of why some are not saved (in his *Enchiridion*, #97 – 98), with Irenaeus' assessment (*Against Heresies*, Book 4, #29, 37), Chrysostom's commentaries (Romans 8 – 9), and Tertullian's extensive answer (*Against Marcion*, Part Two, #4 – 11). For these, and other reasons, Augustine should be viewed as a "paleo-Roman Catholic" writer, rather than a strictly orthodox and catholic writer. Some accuse him of being flavored with Manichean heresy. It is ironic that the Protestant Reformers drew largely on the works of the Church Father revered most highly by the Roman Catholics.

However, Augustine is recognized by nearly all as a blessed and Spirit-filled man, who in spite of his flaws was an eminently godly man and who is rightly known as the "Doctor of Grace," for his own experience with and exaltation of the profound love of God. His "Confessions" is perhaps the first real autobiography that we find in the life of the Church, and for that it is very precious.

CONFESIONS

"You never go away from us, yet we have difficulty in returning to You. Come, Lord, stir us up and call us back. Kindle and seize us. Be our fire and our sweetness."

"I recall how miserable I was, and how one day You brought me to a realization of my miserable state. I was preparing to deliver a eulogy upon the emperor in which I would tell plenty of lies with the object of winning favor with the well-informed by my lying; so my heart was panting with anxiety and seething with feverish, corruptive thoughts. As I passed through a certain district in Milan I noticed a poor beggar, drunk, as I believe, and making merry. I groaned and pointed out to the friends who were with me how many hardships our idiotic enterprises entailed. Goaded by greed, I was dragging my load of unhappiness along, and feeling it all the heavier for being dragged. Yet while all our efforts were directed solely to the attainment of unclouded joy, it appeared that this beggar had already beaten us to the goal, a goal which we would perhaps never reach ourselves. With the help of the few paltry coins he had collected by begging this man was enjoying the temporal happiness for which I strove by so bitter, devious and roundabout a contrivance. His joy was no true joy, to be sure, but what I was seeking in my ambition was a joy far more unreal; and he was undeniably happy while I was full of foreboding; he was carefree, I apprehensive. If anyone had questioned me as to whether I would rather be exhilarated or afraid, I would of course have replied, "Exhilarated"; but if the questioner had pressed me further, asking whether I preferred to be like the beggar, or to be as I was then, I would have chosen to be myself, laden with anxieties and fears. Surely that would have been no right choice, but a perverse one? I could not have preferred my condition to his on the grounds that I was better educated, because that fact was not for me a source of joy but only the means by which I sought to curry favor with human beings: I was not aiming to teach them but only to win their favor."

THE DIVINE LITURGY OF ST JOHN CHRYSOSTOM (398AD)

This liturgy, although later than some other ancient liturgies known to us, is one of the standard liturgies of the East, yet developed at first in the West. It is likely much older than the date of ~400AD – the Eastern Orthodox church would hold that it accurately reflects the apostolic tradition. There is much that is beautiful in it, and a few things that would make Protestants uneasy. However, it is worthy of struggling through and considering the ideas contained within it.

Priest: Blessed is the kingdom of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages.

People: Amen.

THE GREAT LITANY

Priest: In peace let us pray to the Lord.

People: Lord, have mercy.

Priest: For the peace of God and the salvation of our souls, let us pray to the Lord.

People: Lord, have mercy.

Priest: For peace in the whole world, for the stability of the holy churches of God, and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.

People: Lord, have mercy.

Priest: For this holy house and for those who enter it with faith, reverence, and the fear of God, let us pray to the Lord.

People: Lord, have mercy.

....People: Save us, O Son of God, (who rose from the dead), to You we sing: Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

Glory to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

Only begotten Son and Word of God, although immortal You humbled Yourself for our salvation, taking flesh from the holy Theotokos and ever virgin Mary and, without change, becoming man. Christ, our God, You were crucified but conquered death by death. You are one of the Holy Trinity, glorified with the Father and the Holy Spirit - save us.

Priest: In peace let us again pray to the Lord.

People: Lord, have mercy.

....Shine within our hearts, loving Master, the pure light of Your divine knowledge and open the eyes of our minds that we may comprehend the message of Your Gospel. Instill in us also reverence for Your blessed commandments, so that having conquered all sinful desires, we may pursue a spiritual life, thinking and doing all those things that are pleasing to You. For You, Christ our God, are the light of our souls and bodies, and to You we give glory together with Your Father who is without beginning and Your all holy, good, and life giving Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

THE HOLY GOSPEL

Priest: Wisdom. Arise. Let us hear the holy Gospel. Peace be with all.

People: And with your spirit.

Priest: The reading is from the Holy Gospel according to (Name). Let us be attentive.

People: Glory to You, O Lord, glory to You.

VINCENT OF LERINS (~420AD)

Vincent of Lerins was a layman who is now known for providing a succinct synopsis of the ancient rule that the true faith is that, "We hold that faith which has been believed everywhere, always, and by everyone." This was affirmed by everyone in the early church, but Vincent does a great job of summarizing it. Remember, appeals to the authority of "the church" is not necessarily referring to the church in any particular era, but to the ancient church.

COMMONITORY, #2, 3, 22, 59, 62, 64, 69

"Someone perhaps will ask, "Since the canon of Scripture is complete, and sufficient of itself for everything, and more than sufficient, what need is there to join with it the authority of the church's interpretation?" For this reason— because, owing to the depth of Holy Scripture, all do not accept it in one and the same sense, but one understands its words in one way, another in another; so that it seems to be capable of as many interpretations as there are interpreters. ...Therefore, it is very necessary, on account of so great intricacies of such various error, that the rule for the right understanding of the prophets and apostles should be framed in accordance with the standard of Ecclesiastical and Universal interpretation."

