



1958

## 6. Jerusalem: The Development of a Theology


Robert L. Bloom  
*Gettysburg College*

Basil L. Crapster  
*Gettysburg College*

Harold A. Dunkelberger  
*Gettysburg College*

*See next page for additional authors*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/contemporary\\_sec1](https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/contemporary_sec1)

 Part of the [Ancient History, Greek and Roman through Late Antiquity Commons](#), [History of Christianity Commons](#), [Jewish Studies Commons](#), and the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

**Share feedback about the accessibility of this item.**

Bloom, Robert L. et al. "6. Jerusalem: The Development of a Theology. Pt. I: Athens, Rome, and Jerusalem: Background of Western Civilization." Ideas and Institutions of Western Man (Gettysburg College, 1958), 90-96.

This is the publisher's version of the work. This publication appears in Gettysburg College's institutional repository by permission of the copyright owner for personal use, not for redistribution. Cupola permanent link: [https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/contemporary\\_sec1/19](https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/contemporary_sec1/19)

This open access book chapter is brought to you by The Cupola: Scholarship at Gettysburg College. It has been accepted for inclusion by an authorized administrator of The Cupola. For more information, please contact [cupola@gettysburg.edu](mailto:cupola@gettysburg.edu).

---

## 6. Jerusalem: The Development of a Theology

### Abstract

Christianity began as a religion centering around the person of Jesus, and not as a philosophy. It was rooted in Judaism, likewise a religion, not a philosophy. The truths of both were held to have been revealed by God and hence the need for a rational inquiry into their nature was minimized. Many individuals to whom Christianity appealed were satisfied with the simple message of repentance and salvation, but there were many others whose minds were more inquiring and who could not rest until they had explored in a rational way the deep questions which Christianity posed. Most early Christians and most early Christian activity were in the Greek East, where inquisitiveness was more pronounced than in the Roman West. [*excerpt*]

### Keywords

Contemporary Civilization, Christianity, gospels, Jesus, New Testament, Christians, bishop, Judaism, God, theology, Greece, Rome

### Disciplines

Ancient History, Greek and Roman through Late Antiquity | Classics | History of Christianity | Jewish Studies | Religion | Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion

### Comments

This is a part of [Section I: Athens, Rome, and Jerusalem: Background of Western Civilization](#). The [Contemporary Civilization](#) page lists all additional sections of *Ideas and Institutions of Western Man*, as well as the [Table of Contents](#) for both volumes.

### More About Contemporary Civilization:

From 1947 through 1969, all first-year Gettysburg College students took a two-semester course called Contemporary Civilization. The course was developed at President Henry W.A. Hanson's request with the goal of "introducing the student to the backgrounds of contemporary social problems through the major concepts, ideals, hopes and motivations of western culture since the Middle Ages."

Gettysburg College professors from the history, philosophy, and religion departments developed a textbook for the course. The first edition, published in 1955, was called *An Introduction to Contemporary Civilization and Its Problems*. A second edition, retitled *Ideas and Institutions of Western Man*, was published in 1958 and 1960. It is this second edition that we include here. The copy we digitized is from the Gary T. Hawbaker '66 Collection and the marginalia are his.

### Authors

Robert L. Bloom, Basil L. Crapster, Harold A. Dunkelberger, Charles H. Glatfelter, Richard T. Mara, Norman E. Richardson, and W. Richard Schubart

## 6. The Development of a Theology

Christianity began as a religion centering around the person of Jesus, and not as a philosophy. It was rooted in Judaism, likewise a religion, not a philosophy. The truths of both were held to have been revealed by God and hence the need for a rational inquiry into their nature was minimized. Many individuals to whom Christianity appealed were satisfied with the simple message of repentance and salvation, but there were many others whose minds were more inquiring and who could not rest until they had explored in a rational way the deep questions which Christianity posed. Most early Christians and most early Christian activity were in the Greek East, where inquisitiveness was more pronounced than in the Roman West.

A man like Paul wrote primarily to elucidate Christian beliefs for the benefit of the faithful, to show how they differed from disputed Jewish doctrines or from the mystery religions. When, later, Christianity became influential enough to be attacked by imperial partisans or by advocates of one philosophy or another, a group of writers rose to its defense. Called the apologists (they were defending, not apologizing), they presented the case for Christianity as skilfully as they could, which meant that they had to compare it with and demonstrate its superiority to the beliefs of its opponents. In waging this kind of battle, they were forced to use whatever intellectual tools were available and to refine their own beliefs.

There was another reason why the early Church needed penmen in its service. Christianity was sufficiently broad in its implications to provide a vast field for speculation. Such speculation seemed appropriate enough and was encouraged, up to a point. But the time came when it appeared very necessary for the Church, if it hoped to maintain its distinctive character, to decide which was the acceptable among a host of possible beliefs and then to give those which it approved the seal of

orthodoxy. [One of the first steps in the process of defining standards was the compilation of the New Testament. By about the year 185 there was fairly general agreement on incorporating into the canon most of the present twenty-seven books describing the ministry of Jesus and the experiences of the early Church. The Christians also accepted the Hebrew Bible and called it the Old Testament. About the same time the Apostles' Creed began taking shape, although several centuries elapsed before it assumed its present form.]

The more influential men whose writings supplemented the New Testament and were accepted by religious authorities as having great merit are called Church fathers. Their work is called Patristic literature. The lives of most of them fall between the third and the sixth centuries. In general, the Greek fathers were more interested in arguing the fine points of doctrine: Was the human or the divine nature of Christ more important? The Latin fathers tended to be more interested in matters of morals and practice. Are the sacraments valid when administered by an unworthy priest?

[Theology is the systematic exposition of beliefs concerning and relating God, the universe, and man. It could be called a halfway house between philosophy and religion, between metaphysics and God. When early Christian thinkers -- from Paul to the fathers -- undertook to expound their separate beliefs, relate them one to the other, and view them as part of a consistent whole, they were in effect trying to express their faith in rational terms. They could not help considering the usefulness of Greek philosophy as a guide in their work. It was the common property of the intellectuals of the day and it was undoubtedly the best guide available. Not that they would accept it automatically, for some of the most biting criticism of Christianity came from people well-versed in their Plato and Aristotle. These were people to whom such Christian beliefs as revelation, incarnation, and resurrection were repulsive. [Some early Christian writers argued that Greek reason had nothing to contribute to their faith, a view well expressed by Tertullian:]

What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What concord is there between the Academy and the Church? what between heretics and Christians? Our instruction comes from "the porch of Solomon," who had himself taught that "the Lord should be sought in simplicity of heart." Away with all attempts to produce a mottled Christianity of Stoic, Platonic, and dialectic composition! We want no curious disputation after possessing Christ Jesus, no inquisition after enjoying the gospel! With our faith, we desire no further belief. For this is our palmary faith, that there is nothing which we ought to believe besides. \*

*Reason has nothing to do with faith. Faith is the only one that counts.*

\* Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds., The Ante-Nicene Fathers... (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1899), III, 246.



The Attitude of Tertullian to Greek philosophy and to Greco-Roman learning in general was one which can be found cropping up here and there well into the Middle Ages, but his was clearly the minority opinion. Many, perhaps most, early Christian intellectual leaders were trained in the Greco-Roman tradition and some were not converted to Christianity until their formal education was completed. The majority decided to take what they could use from Athens and put it to the use of Jerusalem. In this way Greek philosophy was employed to construct Christian theology.

Two distinctively Christian beliefs which were of cardinal importance to the preservation of the faith were fashioned during the first five centuries of the Church's history: the doctrine of the Trinity and the doctrine of the Incarnation. Both of these doctrines were made necessary by the statement of very practical religious problems which the person of Jesus posed and which demanded a solution. The Church believed that Jesus was a human person who had lived and died in historic time. It also believed that he was the Messiah, Lord, himself the Deity. How was this relationship between God and Christ and the relationship between the human Jesus and the divine Christ to be expressed in words that would grasp this unique situation, that would harmonize with other Christian assumptions, and that would at the same time be understood by believers and nonbelievers alike? Clearly this was a task for the speculative mind, for there was nothing then available which would answer the need. And if the task could not be completed successfully, it would gravely weaken the claims of Christianity to be a universal religion.

The problem which was solved by the doctrine of the Trinity involved expressing the relationship between God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit in a way that would avoid each of several pitfalls. It could not be held there was no unity among this trinity, that there were three gods; this would be polytheism all over again. It could not be held that there was no distinction within this trinity; this would deny the possibility that God in Christ was on earth. It could not be held that Christ was not God; this would deny the whole ground of the Christian faith -- the mediating and redeeming work which only God can do.

This controversy was more prolonged and involved in the Greek East where, if contemporary accounts are to be believed, men in the streets, shops, and baths took an active part in the debate. Two main positions were taken, one of which is named after Arius (d. 336), an Alexandrian priest. The Arians argued that Christ was indeed more than man but that he was less than God. He was different from both man and God. He had been created in time and was divine in only a limited sense. To the Arians the Trinity detracted from the majesty and the oneness of God which they considered an indispensable assumption of their faith. In short, they could not reconcile a coequal trinity with monotheism.

The other position was championed by Athanasius (c. 298-373), who was for fifty years bishop of Alexandria and who is considered one of the Greek Church fathers. The Athanasians argued that there was but one essential nature (ousia) in the Trinity which manifests itself in three personalities (hypos-tases). To them, salvation, which was their chief concern, depended upon man's redemption, and for Christ to be able to redeem men he had to be fully and completely divine. How fine a distinction the Athanasians had drawn can be seen from the fact that the Latin vocabulary had only one word (substantia) to express the two aspects of the Trinity; as can be seen, the Greeks had two. How close to the heart of Greek philosophy this was can be seen from the fact that the word used by Athanasius to express the one essential nature in the Trinity was the same word used by the Greek philosophers from Thales on to represent the basic material reality of the universe. In many ways, the attempts to solve the problem of the Trinity can be compared to the attempts of Greek philosophy to solve the problem of the one and the many. But the real purpose of the Athanasians was religious rather than philosophical and to them the issue was vital. In no other way within the Christian faith could they explain man's redemption while at the same time preserving what was for them the unity of God.

[The emperor Constantine, who had just succeeded in restoring imperial order under his undisputed control, opposed any religious controversy which might become a dangerously divisive force in the empire. Unable to reconcile the opposing points of view by correspondence, he called a council of three hundred bishops to meet at Nicaea, in Asia Minor, in the year 325. This was the first occasion which brought together representatives from the whole Church (though there were only a few present from the West) and for that reason it is called the first ecumenical council. After lengthy discussion, the bishops rejected the claims of the Arians. They drew up a statement of belief incorporating with the Athanasian position tenets which the Church had been expressing for more than two centuries. This creed was declared to be the orthodox position and the Arians were condemned as heretics. This did not mean, however, that the Arians gave up the fight.]

The Council of Nicaea had, in fact, moved too rapidly for the Church at large, which was not yet ready to commit itself to the Athanasian viewpoint. Subsequently, Athanasius himself was forced into exile on five separate occasions. Constantine, who in 325 stood ready to enforce the decisions of Nicaea, was baptized some years later by an Arian bishop and several of his successors were supporters of the heretical position. During the fourth century, as we have seen, most of the Germans were converted to Arian Christianity. In the year 381 Emperor Theodosius summoned the Council of Constantinople, which again rejected Arianism. The council approved a creed which, but for the change of a few words, is the Nicene Creed of today. By this time the vast majority of leaders were willing to support the reaffirmed decision of Nicaea. But, as before, there were

some -- now only a few -- who refused to yield. For better or for worse, the Church has found that creeds drawn up to express its unity have produced evidence of division.

[The problem which was solved by the doctrine of the Incarnation followed logically from that raised by the problem of the Trinity. It involved expressing a relationship between the human and the divine natures of Jesus Christ. If Christ was really only divine, as some claimed, then the human Jesus was a myth. If Christ was really only human, as others claimed, then again the whole ground of the Christian faith and its uniqueness were swept away. But it was not enough to decide between these two positions. If Christ was both human and divine, then how could the relationship be expressed rationally? Was he really two persons? If he was but one, then how could the divine and the human be associated and yet distinguished? To the intellectual Christian the problem was crucial. Central to his faith was the belief that in the person of Jesus Christ God had lived on earth in a human body (the word "incarnate" means embodied in flesh) and with the nature of a human being. Could he deny the reality either of the human Jesus or of the divine Christ without jeopardizing that faith?]

[One of the words employed frequently in discussing the Incarnation was Logos, a term which appears in the New Testament and which was used also by the Greeks. To the latter -- Herac- litus, Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics -- Logos did not always mean precisely the same thing. Nevertheless, it was always associated with the Greek belief that the universe is completely rational and, as used by them, it is most often translated as "reason" or "the power of reason." In the Old Testament some- thing of the same idea is conveyed by such passages as this one: "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made." (Psalms 33:6). When the author of the Gospel of John wrote that in "the begin- ning was the Word [Logos], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us," he was using the Logos concept to explain to his readers the divine and the human natures of Christ. But this identification of Christ with the Logos made by John, which was pursued at length and in different ways by many subsequent writers, was not enough for such an explanation and the theological debate went on. Synods met, but only to have one side bitterly condemn the other without resolving the issue.]

In the year 451, at the behest of Pope Leo the Great, the emperor called a council, which met at Chalcedon, near Constanti- nople. The bishops in attendance approved a statement which de- clared that Christ was "truly God and truly man." The emperor approved this declaration and commanded the debate to cease. It continued, but, except for some groups in the Greek East, the Council of Chalcedon represented the final definition of the second great theological doctrine of the Christian Church.

The Athanasian Creed, which follows, is an attempt to ex- press in some detail both the Trinity and the Incarnation. This



creed has been in use in the Western Church from a very early date. It is considered certain that it was composed by someone other than Athanasius and probably after his death. It is worth comparing the language of this creed with the sermon of Peter which is quoted on page 84.

Whosoever will be saved: before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic Faith: Which Faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled: without doubt he shall perish everlastingly.

And the Catholic Faith is this: That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; Neither confounding the Persons: nor dividing the Substance. For there is one Person of the Father: another of the Son: and another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one: the Glory equal, the Majesty coeternal. Such as the Father is: such is the Son: and such is the Holy Ghost. The Father uncreated: the Son uncreated: and the Holy Ghost uncreated. The Father incomprehensible: the Son incomprehensible: and the Holy Ghost incomprehensible. The Father eternal: the Son eternal: and the Holy Ghost eternal. And yet they are not three eternals: but one eternal. As also there are not three uncreated: nor three incomprehensibles, but one uncreated: and one incomprehensible. So likewise the Father is Almighty: the Son Almighty: and the Holy Ghost Almighty. And yet they are not three Almightyes: but one Almighty. So the Father is God: the Son is God: and the Holy Ghost is God. And yet they are not three Gods: but one God. So likewise the Father is Lord: the Son Lord: and the Holy Ghost Lord. And yet not three Lords: but one Lord. For like as we are compelled by the Christian verity: to acknowledge every Person by himself to be God and Lord: So are we forbidden by the Catholic Religion: to say, There are three Gods, or three Lords.

The Father is made of none: neither created, nor begotten. The Son is of the Father alone: not made, nor created: but begotten. The Holy Ghost is of the Father and of the Son: neither made, nor created, nor begotten: but proceeding. So there is one Father, not three Fathers: one Son, not three Sons, one Holy Ghost, not three Holy Ghosts.

And in this Trinity none is afore, or after another: none is greater, or less than another. But the whole three Persons are coeternal, and coequal. So that in all things, as aforesaid: the Unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity, is to be worshiped. He therefore that will be saved, must thus think of the Trinity.

Furthermore it is necessary to everlasting salvation: that he also believe rightly the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. For the right Faith is, that we believe and confess: that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man; God, of the Substance of the Father; begotten before the worlds; and Man, of the Substance of his Mother, born in the world. Perfect God: and perfect Man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting.



Equal to the Father, as touching his Godhead: and inferior to the Father as touching his Manhood. Who although he is God and Man; yet he is not two, but one Christ. One; not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh: but by taking of the Manhood into God. One altogether; not by confusion of Substance: but by unity of Person. For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man: so God and Man is one Christ; Who suffered for our salvation: descended into hell: rose again the third day from the dead. He ascended into heaven, he sitteth on the right hand of the Father God Almighty. From whence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. At whose coming all men shall rise again with their bodies; And shall give account for their own works. And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting: and they that have done evil, into everlasting fire.

This is the Catholic Faith: which except a man believe faithfully, he can not be saved. \*