

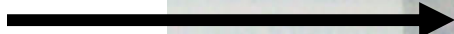
Lesson 11 The Patristic Period: The Evolution of the Catholic Church

The Role of Early Heresies

- Just as the controversy surrounding Marcion played a role in the formation of the canon, so did early heresies play a role in the formation of the Catholic Church hierarchy.
- Four early heresies that contributed to the emergence of the Catholic structure were:
 - Marcionism
 - Gnosticism
 - Ebionism
 - Docetism

An Overview of Gnosticism

Pure



UNAMED FATHER
[Spiritual & Good]



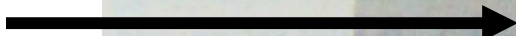
Aeons
*Emanations
or Mediators*

Pleroma
Fullness

Kenoma
Emptiness



Corrupt



WORLD
[Material & Evil]

Jesus Christ was not God incarnate. Christ was a spirit who temporarily inhabited Jesus of Nazareth or a lower emanation.

Chart from Shelley, 53

The Need to “Protect” the Truth

- In an effort to strengthen their positions, Gnostics and other heretical teachers often tried to trace their traditions back to an apostle. No fewer than three heretical tracts were supposedly written by Thomas. (Jones, 28)
- With so many false claims circulating, how could Christians protect the true teachings of the New Testament? In an attempt to protect authentic apostolic traditions, some bishops began tracing their beliefs back to apostles who may have lived in or passed through their cities. (Jones, 28)
- By the third century, not only were the bishop’s *teachings* traced to the apostles, but overseers also traced their *authority* back to the apostles thereby making themselves the official trustees of the apostle’s teachings. (Jones, 28)

The Need to “Protect” the Truth

- Consequently, the power and influence of the bishop’s expanded rapidly, particularly in large cities. Since city bishops nurtured Christians through entire regions they began calling one another “popes” the Latin word for “fathers.” (Jones, 28)
- If we are going to understand the evolution of the Catholic Episcopacy we need to consider the following issues in greater detail.
 - Emerging distinction between clergy and laity.
 - Increasing power of the bishops.
 - Apostolic succession

Clergy and Laity

- Andrew Miller, author of *Miller's Church History*, has much to say about how the establishment of a distinction between clergy and laity replaced the organic working of the Holy Spirit according to the word of God within the church.
- Miller writes, “It may be fair to suppose that those good men, by whose means a new order of things was brought into the church, and the free ministry of the Holy Spirit in the members of the body excluded had the welfare of the church at heart.” (Miller, 184)
- Christianity in the beginning had no separate priestly class. The divine order of the churches established by the apostle Paul had no distinction between clergy and laity. All believers stood on the same ground as to the priesthood, worship, and access to God. There was no outer court worship, every believer enjoy direct and unbroken access into the throne room of God for prayer and supplication. (Miller, 186)

Clergy and Laity

- “The separation of a privileged class—a sacerdotal order—is unknown in the New Testament. The distinction between clergy and laity was suggested by Judaism, and human invention soon made it great but it was Episcopal ordination that established the distinction and widened the separation.” (Miller, 186)
- In place of God speaking directly to the heart and conscience of believers through his written word the emerging priesthood came between the believer and God thereby causes believers to stand in the opinions of men rather than God’s written word. (Miller, 186)

Increasing Power of the Bishops

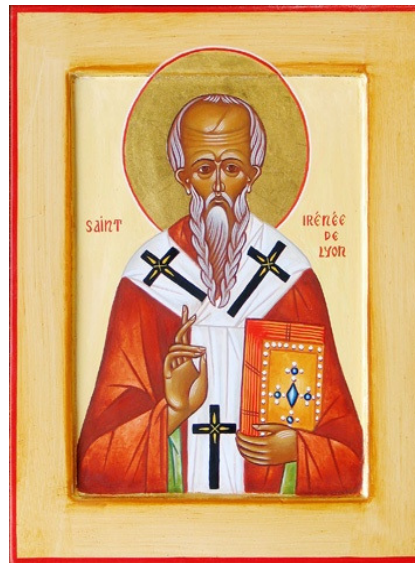
- We have already seen in previous studies that God ordained two offices within the local church.
 - Bishop/overseer/elder—I Timothy 3:1, Titus 1:5, 7, Acts 20:28
 - Deacons—I Timothy 3:8
- We have also seen that according to the scriptural pattern there was to be a multiplicity of elders/bishops in every city and every church.
 - Titus 1:5—in every city
 - Acts 14:23—in every church
- The evolution of the bishops power can be seen by summarizing the writings of three church fathers who lived about one life time apart from each other.

Increasing Power of the Bishops

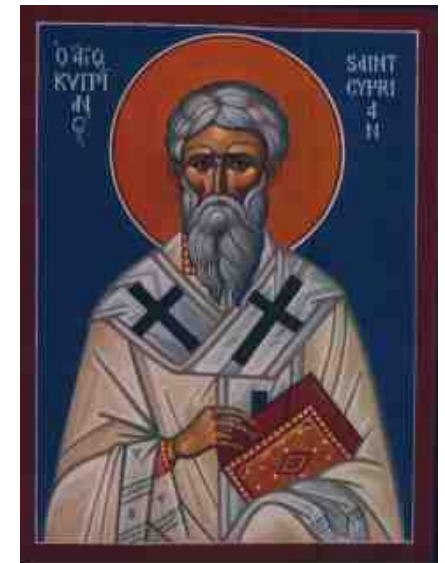
112 AD
Ignatius



180 AD
Irenaeus



250 AD
Cyprian



- Three Offices
- Preeminence of Bishops
- Liturgical Leaders/Guardians

- Apostolic Succession
- Guardians of Apostolic Traditions
- Focused on the Bishop of Rome

- No Church without Bishop
- No salvation outside of the church.
- Catholic system estb.

Apostolic Succession

The Concept of Authority in the Early Church

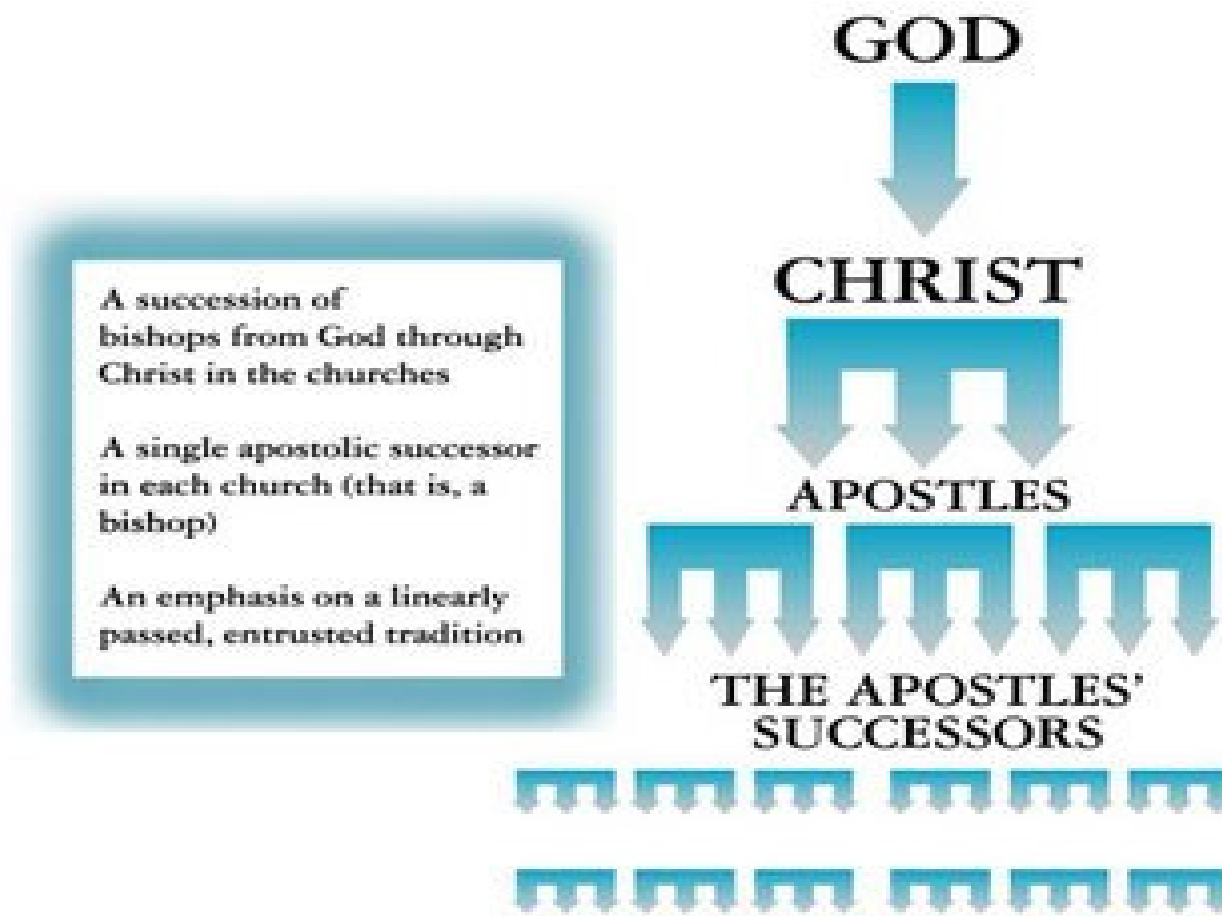
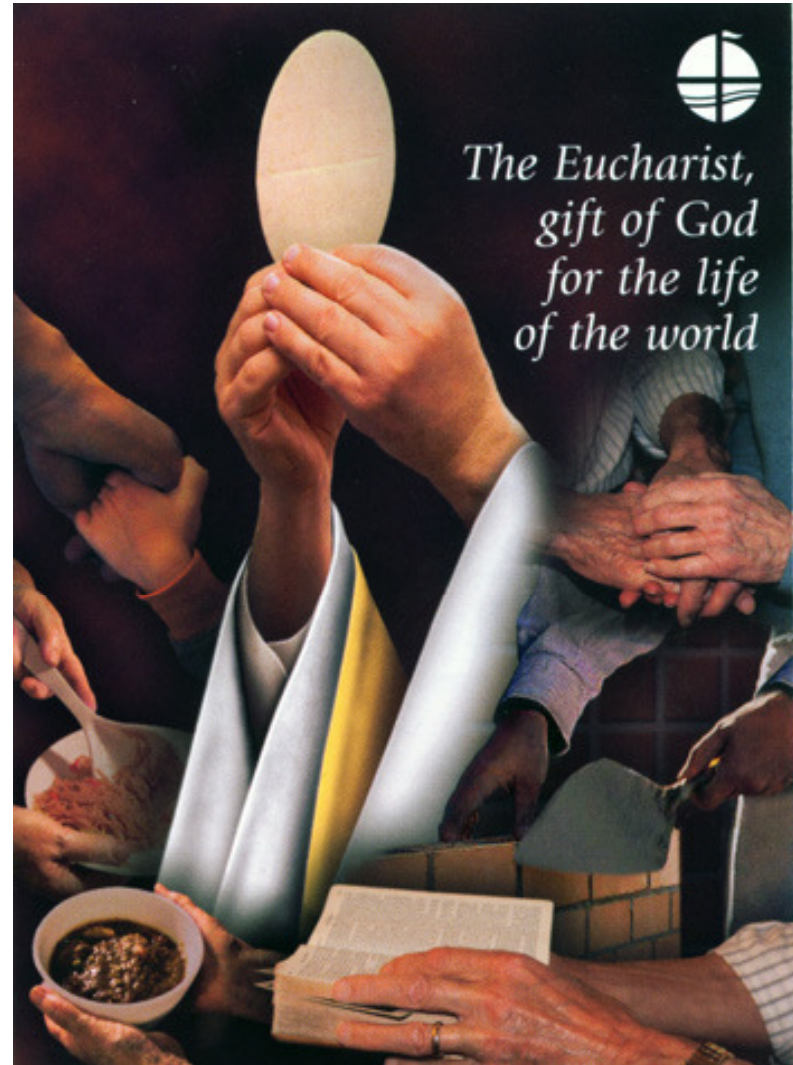
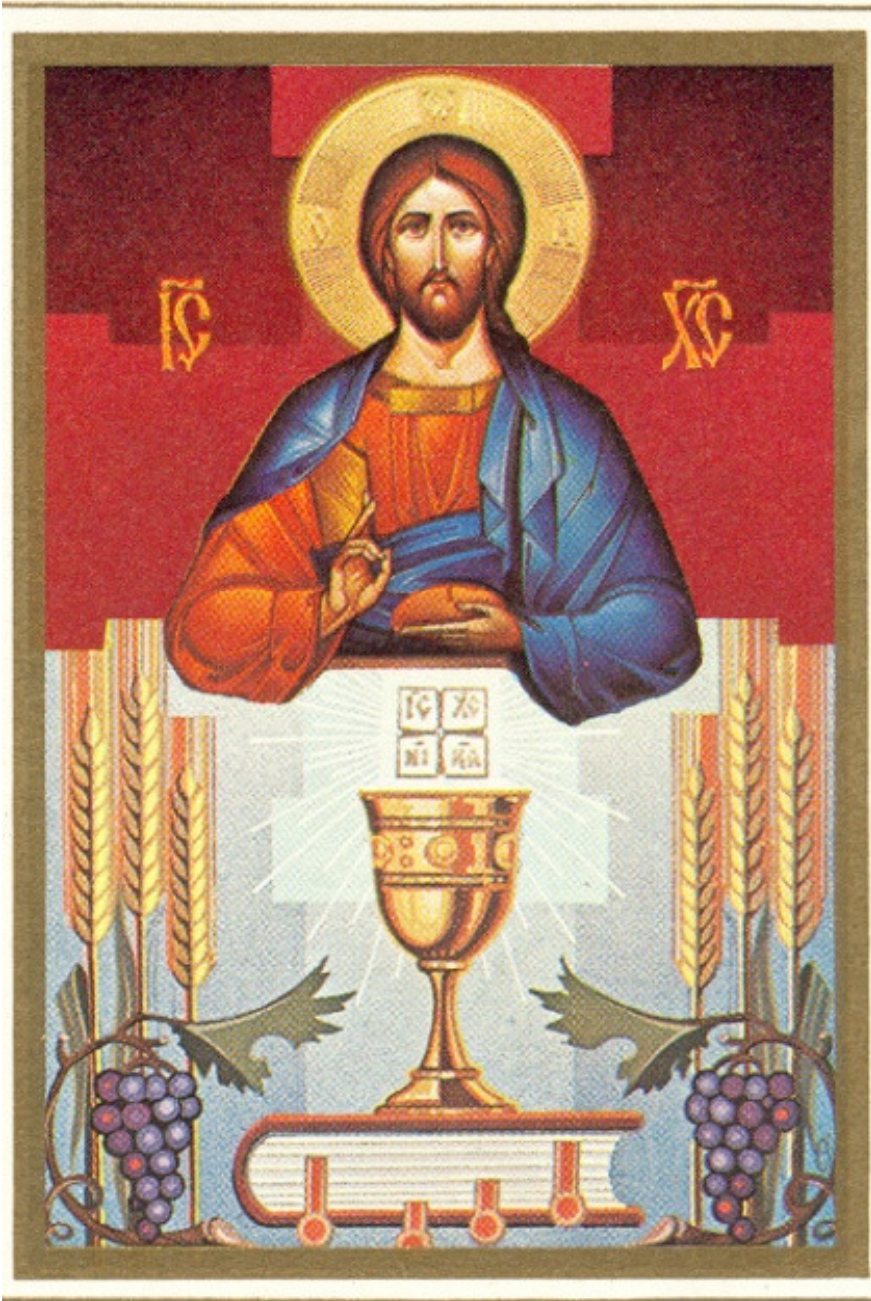


Chart 26

Implications



Eucharist

Implications

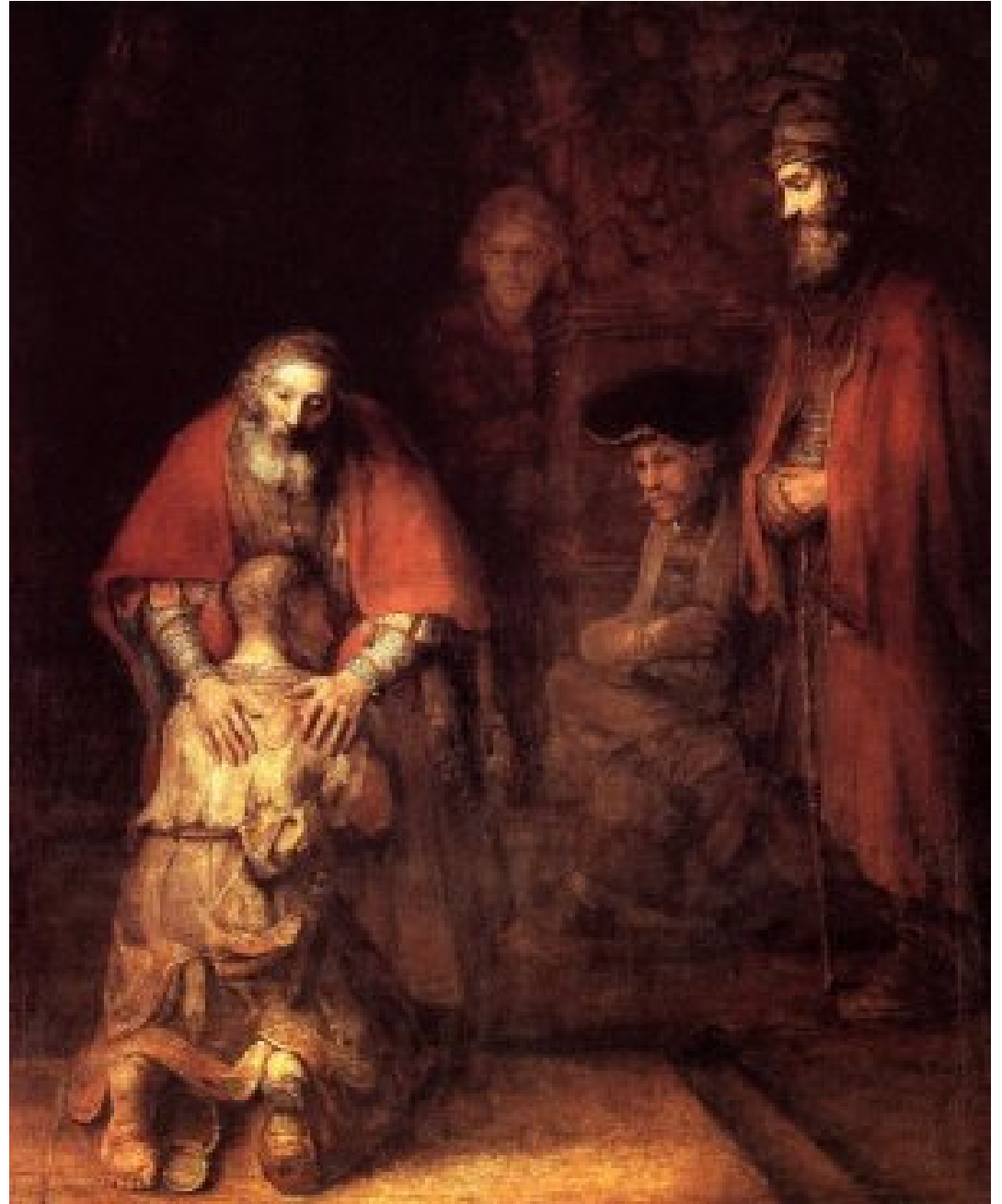
Baptismal Regeneration



Implications



Penance



Conclusion

- The seeds of the papacy are not found in Constantine's council of Nicea in 325 AD. Constantine is dealing with a fully rooted plan whose seeds were planted in the writings of Cyprian.
- So what have we seen in this study? By the year 250 AD the following aspect of the Roman Catholic system can be clearly seen:
 - Priestly class
 - Prominence of Bishops
 - Doctrine of Apostolic Succession
 - Development of dioceses and Metropolitan Priesthood
 - Sacramental System that could only be administered by the priesthood
 - Baptismal Regeneration
 - Eucharist
 - Penance

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