

# Origins of christianity assignment

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Zealots, a group of political activists seeking to overthrow the Romans through military methods, and the Pharisees who were devout lay people seeking a more pure expression of Judaism. It was this powerful and prominent influence of the Pharisees which is reflected in the Gospels. Messianic expectation For centuries Jews expected God to intervene in their history by sending the Messiah to Earth. This belief, a central tenet of Judaism, is referred to as the Messianic expectation.

This expectation was particularly heightened during the time of Jesus' ministry because Jews suffered economic deprivation and great hardships under Roman rule. Consequently, Jews of the first century eagerly awaited the coming of the Messiah who would free them from oppression. However, speculation on the exact nature of the Messiah varied. Many believed that the Messiah would be a political figure in the tradition of King David who would overthrow the Roman rulers and liberate the oppressed Jews. Jesus sought to renew the Jewish religion in the spirit of the prophets of Israel but did not intend to lead a breakaway from Judaism.

It is in witnessing these efforts that his followers come to believe that he was the Messiah. Jesus Christ Students learn to: Examine the principal events of Jesus' life Jesus did not intend to found a new religion Jesus is typically known as the founder of Christianity. Yet, Jesus was born a Jew, lived as a Jew and died a Jew. Jesus sought to renew Judaism in the spirit of the prophets by opposing the legalism of Judaism during his time and calling people to return to the demands of the covenant. There is no evidence to suggest that he intended to found a new religion.

Given that he sought only to renew Judaism from within it is not surprising that he left very few instructions except to preach, baptize, heal the sick, feed the poor and forgive. **Reign of God** The main focus of Jesus' preaching was the reign (kingdom) of God, which is understood as God's vision or dream for humankind. The reign of God envisages a world where God's values (love, peace, cooperation, tolerance and justice) are realized. Essentially, Jesus sought to show how this could be done. By announcing this reign of God, Jesus was inaugurating it and inviting others to join in its development.

The reign of God will reach completion at the end of time when God's realm for humankind becomes a reality. Until then it is the responsibility of the followers of Jesus to live in accordance with these values and to lead others to them. **Principal events in the life of Jesus** Much of what we know about Jesus is derived from the Gospels. Even though the Gospels were not written to provide a historical explanation of the life of Jesus, the Gospels do provide an historical framework through which we can examine the principal events in the life of Jesus.

Modern scholarship suggests that the infancy narratives were written to make theological statements about Jesus' heritage. These statements emphasize the claim that Jesus is the Messiah. Historically Jesus is known to have traveled from Nazareth to Galilee, where he was baptized by John the Baptist. He then preached around the region of Galilee and attracted disciples some of whom were women. Jesus began this ministry when he was about thirty years old and little is known of his life before this time. Jesus taught in parables mostly concerning the reign of God.

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In essence this message challenged the temporal and the material and consequently, Jesus attracted a significant following from those who were socially disadvantaged. Frequently, the Gospels depict Jesus as a healer or a miracle worker as a way of highlighting the power of God in action. Jesus' preaching brought him into conflict with the Jewish authorities. Pharisees The clash between Jesus and the Pharisees however, reflects the situation at the time the Gospels were written rather than the situation at the time of Jesus.

At the time of the writing of the gospels conflict existed between the Christians and the Pharisees because the Pharisees regarded the Christian sect as heretical. Thus, when we read of the conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees we are reading something that is ore a reflection of the times of the gospel writer rather than the situation that prevailed a generation earlier during the life and ministry of Jesus. Death and resurrection Jesus' ministry took him to Jerusalem, where he stayed for the Passover.

He was arrested and sentenced to death by crucifixion. He was placed in a tomb on the eve of the Passover and appeared to his disciples after being raised on the third day. Gospels written so that people would believe Even though the Gospels provide a historical framework by which we can analyse the principal events in the life of Jesus it is important to remember that the Gospels were to written with the intent of providing an accurate historical explanation of the life of Jesus.

Modern Biblical hermeneutics The synoptic problem, which describes the attempts to understand the relationship between the synoptic gospels, highlights the point that the gospels were written for different target

audiences. Thus it is futile to attempt to form a composite picture of the historical Jesus by ironing out the contradictions in the Gospel. In the same way, the achievements of modern biblical scholarship show us that each Gospel should be appreciated on its own as it reflects the needs of a particular target audience.

Consequently, we need to be wary of attempts to examine the historical events in the gospel accounts in the life of Jesus as a precise way of studying the life of the historical Jesus. Explain why Jesus is the model for Christian life Jesus is the embodiment of the reign of God Jesus is seen as the model for Christian life through his embodiment of the reign of God. The synoptic gospels portray Jesus as emerging from obscurity in Galilee and announcing the inauguration of the reign of God (Mark 1: 14-15).

This reign of God, often referred to as the Kingdom of God, can be understood in simple terms as the legislation of God's vision or dream for the world. Jesus' preaching of the reign of God points to a future yet already present reality where the values of love, justice and peace prevail in a world living in accordance with God's plan. The reign of God is central to the preaching of Jesus and is at the heart of his life and ministry.

Following his death and resurrection Jesus was recognized as the embodiment of the reign of God and those who seek to bring about the reign of God are encouraged to model their lives on the example of Jesus. This modeling can be identified according to four significant aspects of Jesus' life and ministry. Jesus lives a life of prayer, Christians model Jesus' attitude to prayer The first significant aspect is the prayerful nature of Jesus' life. The

gospel portraits of Jesus show him to be a man of prayer, frequently communing with God in a familiar and intimate manner (Luke 10: 21).

He often withdraws from the pressures of daily life to pray in a quiet place (Luke 5: 16) and does so especially as he approaches key moments in his ministry such as the calling of his disciples (Luke 8: 12-15). Jesus' prayer includes the traditions of the Jewish liturgy and often draws on the tradition of the Hebrew Scriptures (Matthew 27: 46). Jesus is also found at prayer in times of personal crisis as well as in the face of the needs of others (Matthew 26: 39). Finally Jesus teaches his disciples some important principles of prayer and famously he teaches them how to pray.

Christians throughout history have closely studied Jesus attitude of prayer and have sought to model their lives on a variety of lessons drawn from Jesus' example. Jesus lives a life of service to others, Ministry of Jesus is characterized by service to others From the outset, the ministry of Jesus is characterized by service of others. It is notable that the early scenes from the ministry in the synoptic gospels are littered with examples of healing miracles where Jesus seeks to bring the healing power of God into contact with the need of others (Mark 1: 23-45).

While it appears that Jesus initially saw his ministry as directed solely to the needs of the people of Israel, an encounter with a determined Gentile woman seems to have transformed his understanding (Mark 7: 24-30). A number of the sayings attributed to Jesus including the famous Beatitudes (Matthew 5: 3-12) and the Golden Rule (Matthew 8: 12) highlight this attitude of service. Another important example is the account of the last supper in John's gospel

where Jesus washes the feet of his disciples as an example of service to one another (John 13: 1-15).

Christians have always embraced an ethos of service to others and have done so as a direct consequence of the example provided in the life and ministry of Jesus. Jesus acts as an advocate for the poor, Ministry of Jesus is characterized by advocacy for the needy. In the Jewish tradition, there is a strong ethical dimension which calls upon people to stand up for the needs of the poor and disadvantaged. This tradition is embraced emphatically in the ministry of Jesus who makes this a central characteristic of his ministry.

The gospels provide many examples of Jesus taking the side of the poor and oppressed (John 9: 1-41). In many cases the cause of the oppression is the harsh requirements of religious observance and Jesus is strident in his indictment of religious extremism which leads to the oppression of those who are vulnerable. While advocacy for the poor has always been present in the Christian tradition, recent developments such as Liberation Theology have brought this important dimension into sharper focus.

This is particularly so for the majority of Christians who now live among the poorer countries of the world. Jesus loves and forgives others, Jesus' attitude of love and forgiveness is a model for Christian life. The final example which highlights the role of Jesus as a model for Christian life has to do with an attitude of love and forgiveness of others. There are numerous examples in the gospels where Jesus' love for others is shown (John 8: 2-11). Furthermore he is shown as being ever willing to forgive the failings of others.

Most poignantly this is seen in the post resurrection appearances with the disciples who had abandoned him (Luke 24: 1-14) and in the famous prayer for the forgiveness of his own executioners (Luke 23: 34). Christians have modeled these attributes in a number of ways. Some denominations have incorporated sacraments or other ceremonies to ritualize the importance of forgiveness. Finally the famous prayer, the Lord's Prayer incorporates the petition asking for forgiveness as we also forgive others (Luke 11: 4).

The development of early Christian communities Describe the early development of Christian communities after the death of Jesus Jesus movement and the New Testament period There are two major periods within the history of the early Church. The death of Jesus marks the beginning of the Jesus movement which lasted approximately from 30-60 CE. The New Testament period which followed this is quite extensive and lasted from approximately 65-110 CE. The characteristics of the Church changed quite considerably during this latter period.

There are two divisions within the New Testament period, firstly the period of the Proto-Pauline letters which is followed by the period of the Deutero-Pauline letters. A considerable variety existed in the heartsickness of these early Christian Churches due to the absence of precedent and a lack of centralized leadership stemming from the infancy of the Christian movement. Characteristics of the Jesus movement The term ' Jesus movement' describes a period where the infant Christian community saw itself as a sect which existed within the Jewish tradition.



These earliest communities were characterized by their gender inclusive nature and scatological vision, that is, they believed that they were living in the last days before the Prussia, the second coming of Christ. As a result little emphasis was given to laying down the infrastructure of the movement. So for the first forty years after Jesus' death the Churches were scattered in different areas and existed without a centralized code of Christian behavior and practice. Paul and Peter Paul and Peter were the two most significant leaders in the early Church. Small groups of Palestinian Jews followed Jesus through the preaching of Peter.

Larger groups of Diaspora Hellenic Jews and Gentile Christians followed Jesus through the preaching of Paul. Paul is regarded by Brandon Byrne and others as the second founder of Christianity. Where Jesus set down the foundational message of Christianity concerning the reign of God, Paul helped to set up the structure of this new religion and hence confirm the status of Christianity visa-Γ-visa Judaism. This was because Paul recognized that Jesus' message was not intended solely for people of the Jewish faith and consequently he utilized Hellenic philosophy to help communicate many of Jesus' ideas.

This included the introduction of the Pauline theology of salvation, Justification and law into Christian life and belief. Divisions in the early Church The existence of a varied community which contained Jewish Christians of Palestinian aground, Jewish Christians of Hellenic background and Gentile Christians in the period of the early Church was a source of disagreement and conflict. In fact one of the most important controversies in the early Church arose because the original Jewish nature of the Christian Church was challenged by the conversion of the Gentiles.

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The debate regarding the inclusion of the Gentiles resulted in the formation of the Council of Jerusalem in 49 CE. This amounted to an early attempt to overcome differences within the Church. Paul's argument that Gentiles do not need to become Jews and undergo circumcision in order to become Christians prevailed at this council. Despite this formal solution, divisions of this nature continued for some time. After the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE the Pauline group of Diaspora Jewish converts to Christianity and the Gentile Christians became more closely knit.

At the same time as the Palestinian group fragmented. Reasons for the formalization of the early Church The Christian Churches became more formalized from 70 CE onwards. This was the result of unforeseen events which significantly changed the character of early Church communities. The delay of the Prussia, the second coming of Christ and the death of the Apostles meant that there was a need to institutionalism the charisma of the movement by introducing more regulated practices. This formalization of the Christian identity meant that Christianity was increasingly seen as a distinct and separate religion from Judaism.

This was partly because during this period the Christian Churches came into great conflict with Judaism. Conflict with Judaism Jews persecuted Christians because they were seen as a threat to the purity of Judaism, for three main reasons: firstly, Christians spoke of and emulated Jesus, as God which made the Christians sound like they were polytheistic. Secondly, Christians and Jews could not interact as Christians were not seen as ritually pure due to their association with the Gentiles. Thirdly the Christians had refused to support the Jews in their attempts to overthrow the Roman occupation.

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Roman persecution The continued but sporadic persecution of Christians by the Romans during the second and third centuries meant that secret signs and meeting places had to be devised for the protection of Christians. The Romans persecuted the Christians because they appeared to be neglectful citizens in that they were pacifists who refused to join the army during a war ravaged age and because they refused to serve on the Judiciary. The Christian monotheistic practice also offended Roman sensibilities as Romans worshipped many gods.

On top of this there were rumors that Christians were incestuous and cannibalistic. These rumors developed as a result of the secretive nature of the Eucharist celebrations. Constantine Prior to the 3rd century CE, Christians occupied a small, insignificant part of society. The efforts of Constantine in the fourth century meant that Christianity became a powerful and dominant religion. Constantine who is typically known as the founder of Christendom helped the religion to gain the privileges, wealth and influence that it did not previously have during the age of persecutions.

Anglicanism, Catholicism, Orthodoxy, Pentecostal, Protestantism Outline the unique features of: Anglicanism, Catholicism, Orthodoxy, Pentecostal, Protestantism Before considering the distinguishing characteristics of the major groupings within Christianity it will be helpful to briefly survey the contours of history which gave rise to the existence of different groups in the Christian family. While there have undoubtedly been differences and divisions among Christians from the very beginning, the first major schism did not occur until over a thousand years after the life and ministry of Jesus.

East/ West Schism This first schism, known as the Great Schism or East West Schism was formalized in 1054 CE. This formally divided the Christian Church into two major groups known today as Catholic (Western Christianity) and Orthodox (Eastern Christianity). The Catholic Church is predominantly Roman Catholic though there are other groups such as Marinate and Milkiest which are known as Eastern Rite Catholic. In the Orthodox tradition a number of Churches exist including Greek Orthodox, Russian Orthodox, Antioch (Syrian) Orthodox and Septic (Egyptian).

Reformation The next major schism occurred in the 16th century in the Western or Catholic Church. This Western schism is known as the Reformation and led to the formation of the Protestant Churches which separated from the Roman Catholic Church. The Protestant Churches following the reforms of Martin Luther included the Lutheran and Presbyterian. The Church of England (Anglican) also separated from Roman Catholicism at this time though it did so for different reasons.

As time went on the fragmentation of Western Christianity continued with various reforms and realignments taking place within the Protestant and Anglican groupings. For example the Baptist and Congregationalist Churches formed from within the Protestant tradition while the Methodist and Salvation Army groups grew from within the Anglican tradition. The most recent fragmentation within Western Christianity have come through the development of Pentecostal Churches which have mostly emerged within the last 150 years.

Protestant groups : Anglican Church The Church of England or Anglican Church stems from the 16th century schism now as the Reformation. During this time the King of England, Henry VIII, formalized the separation between the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church. Head of Church Today the Anglican Church is found in many countries throughout the world, principally in those with close historical ties to England. The nominal head of the Anglican Church is the English Monarch, currently Queen Elizabeth II.

However authority in the Anglican Church is more practically expressed in the leadership of the Archbishop of Canterbury, currently Archbishop Rowan Williams. Principal beliefs and sacraments The key elements of the Anglican Church are summed up according to the statements of the Lambent conference in 1920 which stressed the centrality of the bible and confirmed that it contained everything necessary for salvation. It also highlighted the Apostles Creed and Nice Creed and statements which accurately and reliably expressed the Christian faith.

Lambent also confirmed that two sacraments are to be celebrated as part of the Christian faith. These two sacraments are Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Finally, Lambent affirmed the importance of the historical line of succession of Bishops known as the " historic episcopate". Subdivisions within the Church Within the Anglican Church there are two recognizable groups with their own particular emphases. The larger of the two groups is known as High Church Anglican, sometimes referred to as Anglo Catholic. The second group is known as Low Church Anglican, sometimes referred to as Evangelical Anglican.

High Church Anglicans are recognizable through the retention of a number of Roman Catholic rituals and practices. These include the use of vestments, incense and their ministers being known as Priests. Low Church Anglicans are more closely aligned with the Protestant radiation with Ministers leading congregations and worship carried out with very little adornment. While the majority of Anglicans throughout the world belong to the High Church group, it is worth noting that the Anglican Church in Sydney is predominantly Low Church.

It is the Low Church or Evangelical Church which has had considerable historical influence in the development of religious expression in Australia due to the prominence of the Anglican Church in colonial times in NEWS. Catholic Church The Catholic Church teaches of itself that it is historically and in terms of its teaching n line and continuity with that of the first disciples of Jesus. It is the largest and most widespread of all the Christian denominations.

Principal beliefs A key belief of the Catholic Church is that God's teachings have been preserved and safeguarded through the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the teaching authority of the Church. In particular this authority is exercised through the leader of the Roman Catholic Church, the Pope, currently Pope Benedict XI. The Bishops of the local Churches, known as Dioceses, exercise this authority in unity with the Pope. Catholics believe there is a direct and unbroken line from the Apostle Peter as the iris Bishop of Rome to his current successor Benedict XI.

Catholics also believe in an historic episcopate with each Bishop continuing in a direct line from the Apostles who are regarded as the first groups of Bishops of the Church. Most Catholics in the world belong to the Roman Catholic Church although there are other Eastern Rite Catholics such as the Maronites and Melchites. Ecumenical councils Throughout history when the Church faced significant questions and challenges it has assembled the leaders of the Church in councils known as Ecumenical Councils. The most recent of these councils was the Second Vatican Council held from 1962 - 1965.

Many of the priorities and directions of the Catholic Church in recent decades have stemmed from the documents of Vatican II. It included important statements on Liturgy, Priesthood, Ecumenism, Religious Freedom, the Role of the Church in the Modern World and the role of the Laity. Bible and Church teaching work in conjunction with each other Catholics regard the Bible as the normative text for Christian teaching, however, they understand that the tradition of the Church has an indispensable role in interpreting and explaining the meaning of sacred scripture.