

# **A COMPILATION FROM THE WRITINGS OF THE EARLY CHURCH FATHERS**

**By**

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**2016**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Greater love to Jesus comes not only in knowing Him through the Scriptures. Where the need for a personal relationship with Jesus is paramount it is also important to know and emulate what the early Christians believe. Faith in Jesus is knowing everything about him and believing what he left us.

The importance of the writings of the Church Fathers should be just as necessary in understanding Christ's teachings. These documents present more insight into the beliefs and practices of the early Christians. Knowledge outside the written scriptures adds more context or understanding to the scripture as written [Hermeneutics]. Scripture alone doctrine (sola scriptura) is not sufficient to show what the early Christians believe and do. The practices of the early Christian, before the Bible was canonized, are evident during the first 400 years. The following excerpts are either ignored by some or who were not at all aware of the documents that are in existence. A better understanding of these writings showed the existence of a church that entirely portray the Church of that time as it is today. History of the Church is the one important "asset" of the faith. Within the period, from the pentecost to the present, there was never a break in the apostolic succession. The practices during the early period can be seen today in the Holy Mass. It can be proven by historical documents that the Church continued to exist and grow after the death of the last apostle. For two thousand years there never was a break in the Church's continuity. One must ponder on what Jesus promised his Church that the "...gates of hades(hell) will not prevail against it" [Mt. 16:18]. "...I must bring them also, and they will heed my voice. So there shall be one flock, one shepherd." [Jn 10:16]. If we examine these verses in depth two things come to mind. Do we believe what Jesus said or do we reject it?[**vf**]

## ON APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION AND AUTHORITY

### **Clement of Rome, Letter to the Corinthians 44: 1-2 AD 80 4th Bishop of Rome (ordained by St. Peter):**

"Our [apostles](#) also [knew](#), through [our Lord Jesus Christ](#), that there would be strife on account of the office of the [episcopate](#). For this reason, therefore, inasmuch as they had obtained a perfect fore-[knowledge](#) of this, they appointed those ministers already mentioned, and afterwards gave instructions, that when these should fall asleep, other approved men should succeed them in their ministry."

### **Ignatius of Antioch (3rd Bishop of Antioch), Letter to the Smyrneans 8:1-2 AD 107:**

"See that you all follow the [bishop](#), even as [Jesus Christ](#) does the [Father](#), and the [presbytery](#) as you would the [apostles](#); and reverence the [deacons](#), as being the institution of [God](#). Let no man do anything connected with the [Church](#) without the [bishop](#). Let that be deemed a proper [Eucharist](#), which is administered either by the [bishop](#), or by one to whom he has entrusted it. Wherever the [bishop](#) shall appear, there let the multitude of the people also be; even as, wherever [Jesus Christ](#) is, there is the [Catholic Church](#)."

### **Ireneaus of Lyons - Letter Against Heresies, 1,2,3 AD 190:**

"1. It is within the power of all, therefore, in every [Church](#), who may wish to see the [truth](#), to contemplate clearly the tradition of the [apostles](#) manifested throughout the whole world; and we are in a position to reckon up those who were by the [apostles](#) instituted [bishops](#) in the [Churches](#), and [to demonstrate] the succession of these men to our own times; those who neither taught nor [knew](#) of anything like what these [[heretics](#)] rave about. For if the [apostles](#) had [known](#) hidden [mysteries](#), which they were in the [habit](#) of imparting to *the perfect* apart and privily from the rest, they would have delivered them especially to those to whom they were also committing the [Churches](#) themselves. For they were desirous that these men should be very perfect and blameless in all things, whom also they were leaving behind as their successors, delivering up their own place of government to these men; which men, if they discharged their functions honestly, would be a great boon [to the [Church](#)], but if they should fall away, the direst calamity.

2. Since, however, it would be very tedious, in such a volume as this, to reckon up the successions of all the [Churches](#), we do put to confusion all

those who, in whatever manner, whether by an **evil** self-pleasing, by vainglory, or by blindness and perverse opinion, assemble in unauthorized meetings; [we do this, I say,] by indicating that tradition derived from the **apostles**, of the very great, the very ancient, and universally **known Church** founded and organized at **Rome** by the two most **glorious apostles**, Peter and **Paul**; as also [by pointing out] the **faith** preached to **men**, which comes down to our time by means of the successions of the bishops. For it is a matter of necessity that every **Church** should agree with this **Church**, on account of its **preeminent authority**, that is, the faithful everywhere, inasmuch as the **tradition has been preserved continuously by those [faithful men] who exist everywhere.**

3. The **blessed apostles**, then, having founded and built up the **Church**, committed into the hands of Linus\* the office of the episcopate. Of this Linus, **Paul** makes mention in the Epistles to Timothy. To him succeeded Anacletus; and after him, in the third place from the **apostles**, Clement was allotted the **bishopric**. 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**. In the time of this Clement, no small dissension having occurred among the brethren at **Corinth**, the **Church** in **Rome** dispatched a most powerful letter to the Corinthians, exhorting them to peace, renewing their **faith**, and declaring the tradition which it had lately received from the **apostles**, proclaiming the one **God, omnipotent**, the Maker of heaven and earth, the Creator of **man**, who brought on the deluge, and called **Abraham**, who led the people from the land of **Egypt**, spoke with **Moses**, set forth the law, sent the prophets, and who has prepared fire for the **devil** and his **angels**. From this document, whosoever chooses to do so, may learn that He, the Father of **our Lord Jesus Christ**, was preached by the **Churches**, and may also understand the **tradition of the Church**, since this Epistle is of older date than these men who are now propagating **falsehood**, and who conjure into **existence** another god beyond the Creator and the Maker of all existing things. To this Clement there succeeded Evaristus. Alexander followed Evaristus; then, sixth from the **apostles**, Sixtus was appointed; after him, Telephorus, who was **gloriously martyred**; then **Hyginus**; after him, **Pius**; then after him, **Anicetus**. **Soter** having succeeded **Anicetus**, **Eleutherius** does now, in the twelfth place from the **apostles**, hold the inheritance of the **episcopate**. In this order, and by this succession, the **ecclesiastical tradition** from the **apostles**, and the preaching of the **truth**,

have come down to us. And this is most abundant **proof** that there is one and the same vivifying **faith**, which has been preserved in the **Church** from the **apostles** until now, and handed down in **truth**." [\*Linus - the first successor of Peter]

## ON THE EUCHARIST

### **Ignatius of Antioch, Letter to the Smyrneans 7:1 AD 107:**

“They abstain from the [Eucharist](#) and from [prayer](#), because they confess not the [Eucharist](#) to be the flesh of our Saviour [Jesus Christ](#), which suffered for our [sins](#), and which the [Father](#), of His goodness, raised up again.”

### **Justin Martyr, First Apology, 66:1 AD 151:**

“And this food is called among us [Εὐχαριστία](#) [the [Eucharist](#)], of which no one is allowed to partake but the man who believes that the things which we teach are [true](#), and who has been washed with the washing that is for the remission of [sins](#), and unto regeneration, and who is so living as Christ has enjoined. For not as common bread and common drink do we receive these; but in like manner as [Jesus Christ](#) our Saviour, having been made flesh by the [Word of God](#), had both flesh and blood for our [salvation](#), so likewise have we been taught that the food which is blessed by the [prayer](#) of His word, and from which our blood and flesh by transmutation are nourished, is the flesh and blood of that [Jesus](#) who was made flesh. For the [apostles](#), in the memoirs composed by them, which are called [Gospels](#), have thus delivered unto us what was enjoined upon them; that [Jesus](#) took bread, and when He had given thanks, said, *This do in remembrance of Me*, [Luke 22:19](#) *this is My body*; and that, after the same manner, having taken the cup and given thanks, He said, *This is My blood*; and gave it to them alone. Which the [wicked](#) devils have imitated in the [mysteries](#) of [Mithras](#), commanding the same thing to be done. For, that bread and a cup of water are placed with certain incantations in the mystic [rites](#) of one who is being initiated, you either [know](#) or can learn.”

### **Clement of Rome, Letter to the Corinthians 58,59,63 AD 80:**

[58]

“Let us, therefore, flee from the warning threats pronounced by Wisdom on the disobedient, and yield submission to His all-[holy](#) and [glorious](#) name, that we may stay our trust upon the most hallowed name of His majesty. Receive our counsel, and you shall be without repentance. For, as God lives, and as the [Lord Jesus Christ](#) and the [Holy Ghost](#) live—both the [faith](#) and hope of the [elect](#), he who in lowliness of [mind](#), with instant gentleness, and without

repentance has observed the ordinances and appointments given by God—the same shall obtain a place and name in the number of those who are being saved through Jesus Christ, through whom is glory to Him for ever and ever. Amen.

[59]

If, however, any shall disobey the words spoken I'm by Him through us, let them know that they will involve themselves in transgression and serious danger; but we shall be innocent of this sin, and, instant in prayer and supplication, shall desire that the Creator of all preserve unbroken the computed number of His elect in the whole world through His beloved Son Jesus Christ, through whom He called us from darkness to light, from ignorance to knowledge of the glory of His name, our hope resting on Your name which is primal cause of every creature—having opened the eyes of our heart to the knowledge of You, who alone *rests highest among the highest, holy among the holy*, [Isaiah 57:15](#) who *layest low the insolence of the haughty*, [Isaiah 13:11](#) who *destroyest the calculations of the heathen*, who *settest the low on high and bringest low the exalted*; who *makest rich and makest poor*, [1 Samuel 2:7](#) who *killest and makest to live*, [Deuteronomy 32:39](#) only Benefactor of spirits and God of all flesh, who beholdest the depths, the eye-witness of human works, the help of those in danger, the Saviour of those in despair, the Creator And Guardian of every spirit, who multiplieth nations upon earth, and from all made choice of those who love You through Jesus Christ, Your beloved Son, through whom You instructed, sanctify, honour us. We would have You, Lord, to prove our help and succour. Those of us in affliction save, on the lowly take pity; the fallen raise; upon those in need arise; the sick heal; the wandering ones of Your people turn; fill the hungry; redeem those of us in bonds; raise up those that are weak; comfort the fainthearted; let all the nations know that You are God alone and Jesus Christ Your Son, and we are Your people and the sheep of Your pasture.

[63]

Right is it, therefore, to approach examples so good and so many, and submit the neck and fulfil the part of obedience, in order that, undisturbed by vain sedition, we may attain unto the goal set before us in truth wholly free from blame. Joy and gladness will you afford us, if you become obedient to the words written by us and through the Holy Spirit root out the lawless wrath of your jealousy according to the intercession which we have made for

peace and unity in this letter. We have sent men faithful and discreet, whose conversation from youth to old age has been blameless among us—the same shall be witnesses between you and us. This we have done, that you may know that our whole concern has been and is that you may be speedily at peace.”

**Ignatius of Antioch, Letter to the Romans 1:1 AD 110:**

Ignatius, who is also called Theophorus, to the Church which has obtained mercy, through the majesty of the Most High Father, and Jesus Christ, His only-begotten Son; the Church which is beloved and enlightened by the will of Him that wills all things which are according to the love of Jesus Christ our God, which also presides in the place of the region of the Romans, worthy of God, worthy of honour, worthy of the highest happiness, worthy of praise, worthy of obtaining her every desire, worthy of being deemed holy, and which presides over love, is named from Christ, and from the Father, which I also salute in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father: to those who are united, both according to the flesh and spirit, to every one of His commandments; who are filled inseparably with the grace of God, and are purified from every strange taint, [I wish] abundance of happiness unblameably, in Jesus Christ our God.

## ON TRADITION

### **Irenaeus of Lyon, Against Heresies, AD190:**

1. It is within the power of all, therefore, in every [Church](#), who may wish to see the [truth](#), to contemplate clearly the [tradition of the apostles](#) manifested throughout the whole world; and we are in a position to reckon up those who were by the [apostles instituted bishops](#) in the [Churches](#), and [to demonstrate] the succession of these men to our own times; those who neither taught nor [knew](#) of anything like what these [[heretics](#)] rave about. For if the [apostles](#) had [known](#) hidden [mysteries](#), which they were in the [habit](#) of imparting to *the perfect* apart and privily from the rest, they would have delivered them especially to those to whom they were also committing the Churches themselves. For they were desirous that these men should be very perfect and blameless in all things, whom also they were leaving behind as their successors, delivering up their own place of government to these men; which men, if they discharged their functions honestly, would be a great boon [to the [Church](#)], but if they should fall away, the direst calamity.

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## ON THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH

### Cyprian of Carthage - Treatise I 251 A.D.

ARGUMENT.— ON THE OCCASION OF THE SCHISM OF NOVATIAN, TO KEEP BACK FROM HIM THE CARTHAGINIANS, WHO ALREADY WERE NOT AVERSE TO HIM, ON ACCOUNT OF NOVATUS AND SOME OTHER PRESBYTERS OF HIS CHURCH, WHO HAD ORIGINATED THE WHOLE DISTURBANCE, CYPRIAN WROTE THIS TREATISE. AND FIRST OF ALL, FORTIFYING THEM AGAINST THE DECEITS OF THESE, HE EXHORTS THEM TO CONSTANCY, AND INSTRUCTS THEM THAT HERESIES EXIST BECAUSE CHRIST, THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH, IS NOT LOOKED TO, THAT THE COMMON COMMISSION FIRST ENTRUSTED TO PETER IS CONTEMNED, AND THE ONE CHURCH AND THE ONE EPISCOPATE ARE DESERTED. THEN HE PROVES, AS WELL BY THE SCRIPTURES AS BY THE FIGURES OF THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT, THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH.

1. Since the Lord warns us, saying, *You are the salt of the earth*, [Matthew 5:13](#) and since He bids us to be simple to harmlessness, and yet with our simplicity to be prudent, what else, beloved brethren, befits us, than to use foresight and watching with an anxious heart, both to perceive and to beware of the wiles of the crafty foe, that we, who have put on Christ the wisdom of God the Father, may not seem to be wanting in wisdom in the matter of providing for our salvation? For it is not persecution alone that is to be feared; nor those things which advance by open attack to overwhelm and cast down the servants of God. Caution is more easy where danger is manifest, and the mind is prepared beforehand for the contest when the adversary avows himself. The enemy is more to be feared and to be guarded against, when he creeps on us secretly; when, deceiving by the appearance of peace, he steals forward by hidden approaches, whence also he has received the name of the Serpent. That is always his subtlety; that is his dark and stealthy artifice for circumventing man. Thus from (the very beginning of the world he deceived; and flattering with lying words, he misled inexperienced souls by an incautious credulity. Thus he endeavoured to tempt the Lord Himself: he secretly approached Him, as if he would creep on Him again, and deceive; yet he was understood, and beaten back, and therefore prostrated, because he was recognised and detected.

2. From which an example is given us to avoid the way of the old man, to stand in the footsteps of a conquering Christ, that we may not again be incautiously turned back into the nets of death, but, foreseeing our danger, may possess the immortality that we have received. But how can we possess immortality, unless we keep those commands of Christ whereby death is driven out and overcome, when He Himself warns us, and says, *If you will enter into life, keep the commandments?* [Matthew 19:17](#) And again: *If you do the things that I command you, henceforth I call you not servants, but friends.* [John 14:15](#) Finally, these persons He calls strong and steadfast; these

He declares to be founded in robust security upon the rock, established with immoveable and unshaken firmness, in opposition to all the tempests and hurricanes of the world. *Whosoever, says He, hears my words, and does them, I will liken him unto a wise man, that built his house upon a rock: the rain descended, the floods came, the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.* [Matthew 7:24](#) We ought therefore to stand fast on His words, to learn and do whatever He both taught and did. But how can a man say that he believes in [Christ](#), who does not do what Christ commanded him to do? Or whence shall he attain to the reward of [faith](#), who will not keep the [faith](#) of the commandment? He must of necessity waver and wander, and, caught away by a spirit of [error](#), like dust which is shaken by the wind, be blown about; and he will make no advance in his walk towards [salvation](#), because he does not keep the [truth](#) of the way of [salvation](#).

3. But, beloved brethren, not only must we beware of what is open and manifest, but also of what deceives by the craft of subtle fraud. And what can be more crafty, or what more subtle, than for this enemy, detected and cast down by the advent of [Christ](#), after light has come to the [nations](#), and saving rays have shone for the preservation of [men](#), that the deaf might receive the hearing of spiritual [grace](#), the blind might open their eyes to [God](#), the weak might grow strong again with [eternal](#) health, the lame might run to the church, the dumb might [pray](#) with clear voices and [prayers](#)— seeing his [idols](#) forsaken, and his lanes and his temples deserted by the numerous concourse of [believers](#)— to devise a new fraud, and under the very title of the [Christian](#) name to deceive the incautious? He has invented [heresies](#) and schisms, whereby he might subvert the [faith](#), might corrupt the [truth](#), might divide the unity. Those whom he cannot keep in the darkness of the old way, he circumvents and deceives by the [error](#) of a new way. He snatches men from the [Church](#) itself; and while they seem to themselves to have already approached to the light, and to have escaped the night of the world, he pours over them again, in their unconsciousness, new darkness; so that, although they do not stand firm with the [Gospel](#) of [Christ](#), and with the observation and law of [Christ](#), they still call themselves [Christians](#), and, walking in darkness, they think that they have the light, while the adversary is flattering and deceiving, who, according to the apostle's word, transforms himself into an angel of light, and equips his ministers as if they were the ministers of righteousness, who maintain night instead of day, death for [salvation](#), despair under the offer of hope, perfidy under the pretext of [faith](#),

antichrist under the name of Christ; so that, while they feign things like the **truth**, they make void the **truth** by their subtlety. This happens, beloved brethren, so long as we do not return to the source of **truth**, as we do not seek the head nor keep the teaching of the heavenly Master.

4. If any one consider and examine these things, there is no need for lengthened discussion and arguments. There is easy **proof** for **faith** in a short summary of the **truth**. The Lord speaks to Peter, saying, *I say unto you, that you are Peter; and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound also in heaven, and whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.* And again to the same He says, after His **resurrection**, *Feed my sheep.* And although to all the **apostles**, after His **resurrection**, He gives an equal power, and says, *As the Father has sent me, even so send I you: Receive the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins you remit, they shall be remitted unto him; and whose soever sins you retain, they shall be retained;* [John 20:21](#) yet, that He might set forth unity, He arranged by His authority the origin of that unity, as beginning from one. Assuredly the rest of the **apostles** were also the same as was Peter, endowed with a like partnership both of **honour** and power; but the beginning proceeds from unity. Which one Church, also, the **Holy Spirit** in the Song of Songs designated in the person of our Lord, and says, *My dove, my spotless one, is but one. She is the only one of her mother, elect of her that bare her.* [Song of Songs 6:9](#) Does he who does not hold this unity of the **Church** think that he holds the **faith**? Does he who strives against and resists the **Church** trust that he is in the **Church**, when moreover the blessed **Apostle Paul** teaches the same thing, and sets forth the sacrament of unity, saying, *There is one body and one spirit, one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God?* [Ephesians 4:4](#)

5. And this unity we ought firmly to hold and assert, especially those of us that are **bishops** who preside in the **Church**, that we may also prove the **episcopate itself** to be one and undivided. Let no one deceive the brotherhood by a **falsehood**: let no one corrupt the **truth** of the **faith** by perfidious prevarication. The Episcopate is one, each part of which is held by each one for the whole. The Church also is one, which is spread abroad far and wide into a multitude by an increase of fruitfulness. As there are many rays of the sun, but one light; and many branches of a tree, but one strength based in its tenacious root; and since from one spring flow many

streams, although the multiplicity seems diffused in the liberality of an overflowing abundance, yet the unity is still preserved in the source. Separate a ray of the sun from its body of light, its unity does not allow a division of light; break a branch from a tree—when broken, it will not be able to bud; cut off the stream from its fountain, and that which is cut off dries up. Thus also the Church, shone over with the light of the Lord, sheds forth her rays over the whole world, yet it is one light which is everywhere diffused, nor is the unity of the body separated. Her fruitful abundance spreads her branches over the whole world. She broadly expands her rivers, liberally flowing, yet her head is one, her source one; and she is one mother, plentiful in the results of fruitfulness: from her womb we are born, by her milk we are nourished, by her spirit we are animated.

6. The spouse of Christ cannot be adulterous; she is uncorrupted and pure. She knows one home; she guards with chaste modesty the sanctity of one couch. She keeps us for God. She appoints the sons whom she has born for the kingdom. Whoever is separated from the Church and is joined to an adulteress, is separated from the promises of the Church; nor can he who forsakes the Church of Christ attain to the rewards of Christ. He is a stranger; he is profane; he is an enemy. He can no longer have God for his Father, who has not the Church for his mother. If any one could escape who was outside the ark of Noah, then he also may escape who shall be outside of the Church. The Lord warns, saying, He who is not with me is against me, and he who gathers not with me scatters. *Matthew 12:30* He who breaks the peace and the concord of Christ, does so in opposition to Christ; he who gathers elsewhere than in the Church, scatters the Church of Christ. The Lord says, *I and the Father are one;* *John 10:30* and again it is written of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, *And these three are one.* *1 John 5:7* And does anyone believe that this unity which thus comes from the divine strength and coheres in celestial sacraments, can be divided in the Church, and can be separated by the parting asunder of opposing wills? He who does not hold this unity does not hold God's law, does not hold the faith of the Father and the Son, does not hold life and salvation.

7. This sacrament of unity, this bond of a concord inseparably cohering, is set forth where in the Gospel the coat of the Lord Jesus Christ is not at all divided nor cut, but is received as an entire garment, and is possessed as an uninjured and undivided robe by those who cast lots concerning Christ's garment, who should rather put on Christ. Holy Scripture speaks, saying, *But of the coat, because it was not sewed, but woven from the top*

throughout, they said one to another, *Let us not rend it, but cast lots whose it shall be.* [John 19:23-24](#) That coat bore with it an unity that came down from the top, that is, that came from heaven and the Father, which was not to be at all rent by the receiver and the possessor, but without separation we obtain a whole and substantial entireness. He cannot possess the garment of Christ who parts and divides the **Church of Christ**. On the other hand, again, when at Solomon's death his kingdom and people were divided, Abijah the **prophet**, meeting **Jeroboam** the king in the field, divided his garment into twelve sections, saying, *Take you ten pieces; for thus says the Lord, Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and I will give ten sceptres unto you; and two sceptres shall be unto him for my servant David's sake, and for Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen to place my name there.* [1 Kings 11:31](#) As the twelve tribes of **Israel** were divided, the **prophet** Abijah rent his garment. But because Christ's people cannot be rent, His robe, woven and united throughout, is not divided by those who possess it; undivided, united, connected, it shows the coherent concord of our people who put on **Christ**. By the sacrament and sign of His garment, He has declared the unity of the **Church**.

8. Who, then, is so **wicked** and faithless, who is so insane with the **madness** of discord, that either he should **believe** that the unity of God can be divided, or should dare to rend it— the garment of the Lord— the **Church of Christ**? He Himself in His **Gospel** warns us, and teaches, saying, *And there shall be one flock and one shepherd.* [John 10:16](#) And does any one **believe** that in one place there can be either many shepherds or many flocks? The **Apostle Paul**, moreover, urging upon us this same unity, beseeches and exhorts, saying, *I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no schisms among you; but that you be joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.* [1 Corinthians 1:10](#) And again, he says, *Forbearing one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.* [Ephesians 4:3](#) Do you think that you can stand and live if you withdraw from the **Church**, building for yourself other homes and a different dwelling, when it is said to Rahab, in whom was prefigured the **Church**, *Your father, and your mother, and your brethren, and all the house of your father, you shall gather unto you into your house; and it shall come to pass, whosoever shall go abroad beyond the door of your house, his blood shall be upon his own head?* [Joshua 2:19](#) Also, the sacrament of the passover contains nothing else in the law of the Exodus than that the lamb which is slain in the figure of Christ should be

eaten in one house. God speaks, saying, *In one house shall you eat it; you shall not send its flesh abroad from the house.* [Exodus 12:46](#) The flesh of Christ, and the holy of the Lord, cannot be sent abroad, nor is there any other home to believers but the one Church. This home, this household of unanimity, the Holy Spirit designates and points out in the Psalms, saying, *God, who makes men to dwell with one mind in a house.* in the house of God, in the Church of Christ, men dwell with one mind, and continue in concord and simplicity:

9. Therefore also the Holy Spirit came as a dove, a simple and joyous creature, not bitter with gall, not cruel in its bite, not violent with the rending of its claws, loving human dwellings, knowing the association of one home; when they have young, bringing forth their young together; when they fly abroad, remaining in their flights by the side of one another, spending their life in mutual intercourse, acknowledging the concord of peace with the kiss of the beak, in all things fulfilling the law of unanimity. This is the simplicity that ought to be known in the Church, this is the charity that ought to be attained, that so the love of the brotherhood may imitate the doves, that their gentleness and meekness may be like the lambs and sheep. What does the fierceness of wolves do in the Christian Breast? What the savageness of dogs, and the deadly venom of serpents, and the sanguinary cruelty of wild beasts? We are to be congratulated when such as these are separated from the Church, lest they should lay waste the doves and sheep of Christ with their cruel and envenomed contagion. Bitterness cannot consist and be associated with sweetness, darkness with light, rain with clearness, battle with peace, barrenness with fertility, drought with springs, storm with tranquillity. Let none think that the good can depart from the Church. The wind does not carry away the wheat, nor does the hurricane uproot the tree that is based on a solid root. The light straws are tossed about by the tempest, the feeble trees are overthrown by the onset of the whirlwind. The Apostle John execrates and severely assails these, when he says, *They went forth from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, surely they would have continued with us.* [1 John 2:19](#)

10. Hence heresies not only have frequently been originated, but continue to be so; while the perverted mind has no peace— while a discordant faithlessness does not maintain unity. But the Lord permits and suffers these things to be, while the choice of one's own liberty remains, so that while the discrimination of truth is testing our hearts and our minds, the sound faith of

those that are approved may shine forth with manifest light. The Holy Spirit forewarns and says by the apostle, *It is needful also that there should be heresies, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.* [1 Corinthians 11:19](#) Thus the faithful are approved, thus the perfidious are detected; thus even here, before the day of judgment, the souls of the righteous and of the unrighteous are already divided, and the chaff is separated from the wheat. These are they who of their own accord, without any divine arrangement, set themselves to preside among the daring strangers assembled, who appoint themselves prelates without any law of ordination, who assume to themselves the name of bishop, although no one gives them the episcopate; whom the Holy Spirit points out in the Psalms as sitting in the seat of pestilence, plagues, and spots of the faith, deceiving with serpent's tongue, and artful in corrupting the truth, vomiting forth deadly poisons from pestilential tongues; whose speech does creep like a cancer, whose discourse forms a deadly poison in the heart and breast of every one.

11. Against people of this kind the Lord cries; from these He restrains and recalls His erring people, saying, *Hearken not unto the words of the false prophets; for the visions of their hearts deceive them. They speak, but not out of the mouth of the Lord. They say to those who cast away the word of God, You shall have peace, and every one that walks after his own will. Everyone who walks in the error of his heart, no evil shall come upon him. I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. If they had stood on my foundation (substantia, νοστα Lord points out and designates these same, saying, They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and have hewed them out broken cisterns which can hold no water.* [Jeremiah 2:13](#) *Although there can be no other baptism but one, they think that they can baptize; although they forsake the fountain of life, they promise the grace of living and saving water. Men are not washed among them, but rather are made foul; nor are sins purged away, but are even accumulated. Such a nativity does not generate sons to God, but to the devil. By a falsehood they are born, and they do not receive the promises of truth. Begotten of perfidy, they lose the grace of faith. They cannot attain to the reward of peace, since they have broken the Lord's peace with the madness of discord.*

12. Nor let any deceive themselves by a futile interpretation, in respect of the Lord having said, *Wheresoever two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.* [Matthew 18:20](#) Corrupters and false interpreters of the Gospel quote the last words, and lay aside the former

ones, remembering part, and craftily suppressing part: as they themselves are separated from the Church, so they cut off the substance of one section. For the Lord, when He would urge unanimity and peace upon His disciples, said, *I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth touching anything that you shall ask, it shall be given you by my Father which is in heaven. For wheresoever two or three are gathered together in my name, I am with them;* showing that most is given, not to the multitude, but to the unanimity of those that pray. If, He says, *two of you shall agree on earth:* He placed agreement first; He has made the concord of peace a prerequisite; He taught that we should agree firmly and faithfully. But how can he agree with any one who does not agree with the booty of the Church itself, and with the universal brotherhood? How can two or three be assembled together in Christ's name, who, it is evident, are separated from Christ and from His Gospel? For we have not withdrawn from them, but they from us; and since heresies and schisms have risen subsequently, from their establishment for themselves of diverse places of worship, they have forsaken the Head and Source of the truth. But the Lord speaks concerning His Church, and to those also who are in the Church He speaks, that if they are in agreement, if according to what He commanded and admonished, although only two or three gathered together with unanimity should pray—though they be only two or three— they may obtain from the majesty of God what they ask. *Wheresoever two or three are gathered together in my name, I,* slays He, *am with them;* that is, with the simple and peaceable— with those who fear God and keep God's commandments. With these, although only two or three, He said that He was, in the same manner as He was with the three youths in the fiery furnace; and because they abode towards God in simplicity, and in unanimity among themselves, He animated them, in the midst of the surrounding flames, with the breath of dew: in the way in which, with the two apostles shut up in prison, because they were simple-minded and of one mind, He Himself was present; He Himself, having loosed the bolts of the dungeon, placed them again in the market-place, that they might declare to the multitude the word which they faithfully preached. When, therefore, in His commandments He lays it down, and says, *Where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am with them,* He does not divide men from the Church, seeing that He Himself ordained and made the Church; but rebuking the faithless for their discord, and commending peace by His word to the faithful, He shows that He is rather with two or three who pray with one mind, than with a great many who differ, and that

more can be obtained by the discordant **prayer** of a few, than by the discordant supplication of many.

13. Thus, also, when He gave the law of **prayer**, He added, saying, *And when you stand **praying**, forgive, if you have ought against any; that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.* And He calls back from the altar one who comes to the **sacrifice** in strife, and bids him first agree with his brother, and then return with peace and offer his gift to God: for God had not respect unto Cain's offerings; for he could not have God at peace with him, who through **envious** discord had not peace with his brother. What peace, then, do the enemies of the brethren promise to themselves? What **sacrifices** do those who are rivals of the **priests** think that they celebrate? Do they deem that they have Christ with them when they are collected together, who are gathered together outside the **Church of Christ**?

14. Even if such men were slain in confession of the Name, that stain is not even washed away by blood: the inexpiable and grave fault of discord is not even purged by suffering. He cannot be a **martyr** who is not in the **Church**; he cannot attain unto the kingdom who forsakes that which shall reign there. Christ gave us peace; He bade us be in agreement, and of one mind. He charged the bonds of **love** and charity to be kept uncorrupted and inviolate; he cannot show himself a **martyr** who has not maintained brotherly **love**. **Paul** the apostle teaches this, and testifies, saying, *And though I have **faith**, so that I can remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I give all my goods to feed the **poor**, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profits me nothing. Charity is magnanimous; charity is kind; charity envies not; charity acts not vainly, is not puffed up, is not easily provoked, thinks no **evil**; loves all things, **believes** all things, hopes all things, endures all things Charity never fails. Charity, says he, never fails.* For she will ever be in the kingdom, she will endure for ever in the unity of a brotherhood linked to herself. Discord cannot attain to the **kingdom of heaven**; to the rewards of **Christ**, who said, *This is my commandment that you **love** one another even as I have loved you: **John 15:12*** he cannot attain who has violated the **love** of Christ by faithless dissension. He who has not charity has not God. The word of the blessed Apostle John is: ***God**, says he, is **love**; and he that dwells in **love** dwells in **God**, and God dwells in him. **1 John 4:16*** They cannot dwell with God who would not be of one mind in God's Church. Although they burn, given up to flames

and fires, or lay down their lives, thrown to the wild beasts, that will not be the crown of **faith**, but the punishment of perfidy; nor will it be the **glorious** ending of religious valour, but the destruction of despair. Such a one may be slain; crowned he cannot be. He professes himself to be a **Christian** in such a way as the **devil** often feigns himself to be Christ, as the Lord Himself forewarns us, and says, *Many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ, and shall deceive many.* **Mark 13:6** As he is not Christ, although he deceives in respect of the name; so neither can he appear as a **Christian** who does not abide in the **truth** of His **Gospel** and of **faith**.

15. For both to prophesy and to cast out devils, and to do great acts upon the earth is certainly a sublime and an admirable thing; but one does not attain the kingdom **of heaven** although he is found in all these things, unless he walks in the observance of the right and just way. The Lord denounces, and says, *Many shall say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, and in Your name have cast out devils, and in Your name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, you that work iniquity.* **Matthew 7:22** There is need of righteousness, that one may deserve well of God the Judge; we must **obey** His precepts and warnings, that our merits may receive their reward. The Lord in His **Gospel**, when He would direct the way of our hope and **faith** in a brief summary, said, *The Lord your God is one God: and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength. This is the first commandment; and the second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.* **Mark 12:29-31** He taught, at the same time, **love** and unity by His instruction. He has included all the **prophets** and the law in two precepts. But what unity does he keep, what **love** does he maintain or consider, who, savage with the **madness** of discord, divides the **Church**, destroys the **faith**, disturbs the peace, dissipates charity, profanes the sacrament?

16. This **evil**, most faithful brethren, had long ago begun, but now the mischievous destruction of the same **evil** has increased, and the envenomed plague of heretical perversity and schisms has begun to spring forth and shoot anew; because even thus it must be in the decline of the world, since the **Holy Spirit Foretells** and forewarns us by the apostle, saying, *In the last days, says he, perilous times shall come, and men shall be lovers of their own selves, proud, boasters, covetous, blasphemers, disobedient to parents,*

*unthankful, **unholy**, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, hating the good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of **God**, having a sort of form of religion, but denying the power thereof. Of this sort are they who creep into houses, and lead captive silly **women** laden with **sins**, which are led away with various **lusts**; ever learning, and never coming to the knowledge of the **truth**. And as Jannes and Jambres withstood **Moses**, so do these also resist the **truth**; but they shall proceed no further, for their folly shall be manifest unto all **men**, even as theirs also was. Whatever things were predicted are fulfilled; and as the end of the world is approaching, they have come for the probation as well of the men as of the times. Error deceives as the adversary rages more and more; senselessness lifts up, **envy** inflames, **covetousness** makes blind, impiety depraves, **pride** puffs up, discord exasperates, **anger** hurries headlong.*

17. Yet let not the excessive and headlong faithlessness of many move or disturb us, but rather strengthen our **faith** in the **truthfulness** which has foretold the matter. As some have become such, because these things were predicted beforehand, so let other brethren beware of matters of a like kind, because these also were predicted beforehand, even as the Lord instructs us, and says, *But take heed: behold, I have told you all things.* **Mark 13:23** Avoid, I beseech you, brethren, men of this kind, and drive away from your side and from your ears, as if it were the contagion of death, their mischievous conversation; as it is written, *Hedge your ears about with thorns, and refuse to hear a **wicked** tongue.* And again, *Evil communications corrupt good manners.* **1 Corinthians 15:33** The Lord teaches and warns us to depart from such. He says, *They are blind leaders of the blind; and if the blind lead the blind, they shall both fall into the ditch.* **Matthew 15:14** Such a one is to be turned away from and avoided, whosoever he may be, that is separated from the **Church**. Such a one is perverted and **sins**, and is condemned of his own self. Does he think that he has Christ, who acts in opposition to Christ's **priests**, who separates himself from the company of His **clergy and** people? He bears arms against the **Church**, he contends against God's appointment. An enemy of the altar, a rebel against Christ's **sacrifice**, for the **faith faithless**, for religion profane, a disobedient servant, an impious son, a hostile brother, despising the **bishops**, and forsaking God's **priests**, he dares to set up another altar, to make another **prayer** with unauthorized words, to profane the **truth** of the Lord's offering by false

sacrifices, and not to know that he who strives against the appointment of God, is punished on account of the daring of his temerity by divine visitation.

18. Thus Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, who endeavoured to claim to themselves the power of sacrificing in opposition to Moses and Aaron the priest, underwent immediate punishment for their attempts. The earth, breaking its fastenings, gaped open into a deep gulf, and the cleft of the receding ground swallowed up the men standing and living. Nor did the anger of the indignant God strike only those who had been the movers (of the sedition); but two hundred and fifty sharers and associates of that madness besides, who had been mingled with them in that boldness, the fire that went out from the Lord consumed with a hasty revenge; doubtless to admonish and show that whatever those wicked men had endeavoured, in order by human will to overthrow God's appointment, had been done in opposition to God. Thus also Uzziah the king—when he bare the censer and violently claimed to himself to sacrifice against God's law, and when Azariah the priest withstood him, would not be obedient and yield—was confounded by the divine indignation, and was polluted upon his forehead by the spot of leprosy: he was marked by an offended Lord in that part of his body where they are signed who deserve well of the Lord. And the sons of Aaron, who placed strange fire upon the altar, which the Lord had not commanded, were at once extinguished in the presence of an avenging Lord.

19. These, doubtless, they imitate and follow, who, despising God's tradition, seek after strange doctrines, and bring in teachings of human appointment, whom the Lord rebukes and reproves in His Gospel, saying, *You reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your own tradition.*

*Mark 7:9* This is a worse crime than that which the lapsed seem to have fallen into, who nevertheless, standing as penitents for their crime, beseech God with full satisfactions. In this case, the Church is sought after and entreated; in that case, the Church is resisted: here it is possible that there has been necessity; there the will is engaged in the wickedness: on the one hand, he who has lapsed has only injured himself; on the other, he who has endeavoured to cause a heresy or a schism has deceived many by drawing them with him. In the former, it is the loss of one soul; in the latter, the risk of many. Certainly the one both understands that he has sinned, and laments and bewails it; the other, puffed up in his heart, and pleasing himself in his very crimes, separates sons from their Mother, entices sheep from their shepherd, disturbs the sacraments of God; and while the lapsed

has **sinned** but once, he **sins** daily. Finally, the **lapsed**, who has subsequently attained to **martyrdom**, may receive the promises of the kingdom; while the other, if he have been slain without the **Church**, cannot attain to the rewards of the **Church**.

20. Nor let any one marvel, beloved brethren, that even some of the confessors advance to these lengths, and thence also that some *others* **sin** thus wickedly, thus grievously. For neither does confession make a man free from the snares of the **devil**, nor does it defend a man who is still placed in the world, with a perpetual security from **temptations**, and dangers, and onsets, and attacks of the world; otherwise we should never see in confessors those subsequent frauds, and fornications, and adulteries, which now with groans and sorrow we **witness** in some. Whosoever that confessor is, he is not greater, or better, or dearer to God than Solomon, who, although so long as he walked in God's ways, retained that **grace** which he had received from the Lord, yet after he forsook the Lord's Way he lost also the Lord's **grace**. And therefore it is written, *Hold fast that which you have, lest another take your crown.* **Revelation 3:11** But assuredly the Lord would not threaten that the crown of righteousness might be taken away, were it not that, when righteousness departs, the crown must also depart.

21. Confession is the beginning of **glory**, not the full desert of the crown; nor does it perfect our praise, but it initiates our dignity; and since it is written, *He that endures to the end, the same shall be saved,* **Matthew 10:22** whatever has been before the end is a step by which we ascend to the summit of **salvation**, not a terminus wherein the full result of the ascent is already gained. He is a confessor; but after confession his peril is greater, because the adversary is more provoked. He is a confessor; for this **cause** he ought the more to stand on the side of the Lord's **Gospel**, since he has by the **Gospel** attained **glory** from the Lord. For the Lord says, *To whom much is given, of him much shall be required; and to whom more dignity is ascribed, of him more service is exacted.* **Luke 12:48** Let no one perish by the example of a confessor; let no one learn **injustice**, let no one learn arrogance, let no one learn treachery, from the manners of a confessor. He is a confessor, let him be lowly and quiet; let him be in his doings modest with discipline, so that he who is called a confessor of Christ may imitate Christ Whom he confesses. For since He says, *Whosoever exalts himself shall be abased, and he who humbles himself shall be exalted;* **Luke 18:14** and since He Himself has been exalted by the **Father**, because as the Word, and the strength, and the

wisdom of God the Father, He humbled Himself upon earth, how can He Love arrogance, who even by His own law enjoined upon us humility, and Himself received the highest name from the Father as the reward of His humility? He is a confessor of Christ, but only so if the majesty and dignity of Christ be not afterwards blasphemed by him. Let not the tongue which has confessed Christ be evil-speaking; let it not be turbulent, let it not be heard jarring with reproaches and quarrels, let it not after words of praise, dart forth serpents' venom against the brethren and God's priests. But if one shall have subsequently been blameworthy and obnoxious; if he shall have wasted his confession by evil conversation; if he shall have stained his life by disgraceful foulness; if, finally, forsaking the Church in which he has become a confessor, and severing the concord of unity, he shall have exchanged his first faith for a subsequent unbelief, he may not flatter himself on account of his confession that he is elected to the reward of glory, when from this very fact his deserving of punishment has become the greater.

22. For the Lord chose Judas also among the apostles, and yet afterwards Judas betrayed the Lord. Yet not on that account did the faith and firmness of the apostles fail, because the traitor Judas failed from their fellowship: so also in the case in question the holiness and dignity of confessors is not immediately diminished, because the faith of some of them is broken. The blessed Apostle Paul in his epistle speaks in this manner: *For what if some of them fall away from the faith, shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid: for God is true, though every man be a liar.* **Romans 3:3** The greater and better part of the confessors stand firm in the strength of their faith, and in the truth of the law and discipline of the Lord; neither do they depart from the peace of the Church, who remember that they have obtained grace in the Church by the condescension of God; and by this very thing they obtain a higher praise of their faith, that they have separated from the faithlessness of those who have been associated with them in the fellowship of confession, and withdrawn from the contagion of crime. Illuminated by the true light of the Gospel, shone upon with the Lord's pure and white brightness, they are as praiseworthy in maintaining the peace of Christ, as they have been victorious in their combat with the devil.

23. I indeed desire, beloved brethren, and I equally endeavour and exhort, that if it be possible, none of the brethren should perish, and that our rejoicing Mother May enclose in her bosom the one body of a people at agreement. Yet if wholesome counsel cannot recall to the way of salvation

certain leaders of schisms and originators of dissensions, who abide in blind and obstinate **madness**, yet do you others, if either taken in simplicity, or induced by **error**, or deceived by some craftiness of misleading cunning, loose yourselves from the nets of deceit, free your wandering steps from **errors**, acknowledge the straight way of the heavenly road. The word of the witnessing apostle is: *We command you, says he, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw yourselves from all brethren that walk disorderly, and not after the tradition that they have received from us.* **2** *Thessalonians 3:6* And again he says, *Let no man deceive you with vain words; for because of these things comes the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not therefore partakers with them.* *Ephesians 5:6* We must withdraw, nay rather must flee, from those who fall away, lest, while anyone is associated with those who walk wickedly, and goes on in ways of **error** and of **sin**, he himself also, wandering away from the path of the **true** road, should be found in like guilt. God is one, and Christ is one, and His Church is one, and the **faith** is one, and the people is joined into a substantial unity of body by the cement of concord. Unity cannot be severed; nor can one body be separated by a division of its structure, nor torn into pieces, with its entrails wrenched asunder by laceration. Whatever has proceeded from the womb cannot live and breathe in its detached condition, but loses the substance of health.

24. The **Holy Spirit** warns us, and says, *What man is he that desires to live, and would fain see good days? Refrain your tongue from evil, and your lips that they speak no guile. Eschew evil, and do good; seek peace, and ensue it.* The son of peace ought to seek peace and ensue it. He who **knows** and loves the bond of charity, ought to refrain his tongue from the **evil** of dissension. Among His divine commands and salutary teachings, the Lord, when He was now very near to His Passion, added this one, saying, *Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you.* *John 14:27* He gave this to us as an heritage; He promised all the gifts and rewards of which He spoke through the preservation of peace. If we are fellow-heirs with Christ, let us abide in the peace of Christ; if we are sons of **God**, we ought to be peacemakers. *Blessed, says He, are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the sons of God.* *Matthew 5:9* It behooves the sons of God to be peacemakers, gentle in heart, simple in speech, agreeing in affection, faithfully linked to one another in the bonds of unanimity.

25. This unanimity formerly prevailed among the **apostles**; and thus the new assembly of **believers**, keeping the Lord's commandments, maintained its charity. Divine Scripture proves this, when it says, *But the multitude of them which **believed** were of one heart and of one **soul**.* And again: *These all continued with one mind in **prayer** with the **women**, and Mary the mother of **Jesus**, and with His brethren.* **Acts 1:14** And thus they **prayed** with effectual **prayers**; thus they were able with confidence to obtain whatever they asked from the Lord's mercy.

26. But in us unanimity is diminished in proportion as liberality of working is decayed. Then they used to give for sale houses and estates; and that they might lay up for themselves treasures in heaven, presented to the **apostles** the price of them, to be distributed for the use of the poor. But now we do not even give the tenths from our patrimony; and while our Lord bids us sell, we rather buy and increase our store. Thus has the vigour of **faith** dwindled away among us; thus has the strength of **believers** grown weak. And therefore the Lord, looking to our days, says in His **Gospel**, *When the **Son of man** comes, think you that He shall find faith on the earth?* **Luke 18:8** We see that what He foretold has come to pass. There is no **faith** in the **fear** of **God**, in the law of righteousness, in **love**, in labour; none considers the **fear** of futurity, and none takes to heart the day of the Lord, and the **wrath** of **God**, and the punishments to come upon unbelievers, and the eternal torments decreed for the faithless. That which our **conscience** would **fear** if it **believed**, it fears not because it does not at all **believe**. But if it **believed**, it would also take heed; and if it took heed, it would escape.

27. Let us, beloved brethren, arouse ourselves as much as we can; and breaking the slumber of our ancient listlessness, let us be watchful to observe and to do the Lord's precepts. Let us be such as He Himself has bidden us to be, saying, *Let your loins be girt, and your lamps burning; and you yourselves like men that wait for their Lord, when He shall come from the wedding, that when He comes and knocks, they may open to Him. Blessed are those servants whom their Lord, when He comes, shall find watching.* **Luke 12:35** We ought to be girt about, lest, when the day of setting forth comes, it should find us burdened and entangled. Let our light shine in good works, and glow in such wise as to lead us from the night of this world to the daylight of **eternal** brightness. Let us always with solicitude and caution wait for the sudden coming of the Lord, that when He shall knock, our **faith** may be on the watch, and receive from the Lord the reward of our

vigilance. If these commands be observed, if these warnings and precepts be kept, we cannot be overtaken in slumber by the deceit of the [devil](#); but we shall reign with Christ in His kingdom as servants that watch.

## ON CONFESSION AND PENANCE

### **St. Ignatius of Antioch, Letter to the Philadelphians, 3:2 c A.D. 110**

Keep yourselves from those **evil** plants which **Jesus Christ** does not tend, because they are not the planting of the Father. Not that I have found any division among you, but exceeding purity. For as many as are of **God** and of **Jesus Christ** are also with the **bishop**. And as many as shall, in the exercise of repentance, return into the unity of the **Church**, these, too, shall belong to **God**, that they may live according to **Jesus Christ**. Do not **err**, my brethren. If any man follows him that makes a **schism** in the **Church**, he shall not inherit the **kingdom of God**. If any one walks according to a strange opinion, he agrees not with the passion [of Christ.].

### **St. Ambrose of Milan, Book One, Chapter VII v33, c A.D. 390**

And this confession is indeed rightly made by them, for they have not the succession of Peter, who hold not the chair of Peter, which they rend by **wicked schism**; and this, too, they do, wickedly denying that **sins** can be forgiven even in the **Church**, whereas it was said to Peter: *I will give unto you the keys of the **kingdom of heaven**, and whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound also in heaven, and whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed also in heaven.* **Matthew 16:19** And the vessel of divine election himself said: *If you have forgiven anything to anyone, I forgive also, for what I have forgiven I have done it for your sakes in the person of **Christ**.* **2 Corinthians 2:10** Why, then, do they read **Paul's** writings, if they think that he has erred so wickedly as to claim for himself the right of his Lord? But he claimed what he had received, he did not usurp that which was not due to him.

## ON THE CHURCH AND BAPTISM

### **St, Augustine, Treatise On Baptism Against the Donatists Bk 5, Ch 1, A.D. 400**

1. We have the testimony of the blessed Cyprian, that the custom of the **Catholic Church** is at present retained, when men coming from the side of **heretics** or schismatics, if they have received **baptism** as **consecrated** in the words of the gospel, are not **baptized** afresh. For he himself proposed to himself the question, and that as coming from the mouth of brethren either seeking the **truth** or contending for the **truth**. For in the course of the arguments by which he wished to show that **heretics** should be **baptized** again, which we have sufficiently considered for our present purpose in the former books, he says: "But some will say, What then will become of those who in times past, coming to the **Church** from **heresy**, were admitted without **baptism**?" In this question is involved the shipwreck of the whole **cause** of the **Donatists**, with whom our contest is on this point. For if those had not really **baptism** who were thus received on coming from **heretics**, and their **sins** were still upon them, then, when such men were admitted to communion, either by those who came before Cyprian or by Cyprian himself, we must acknowledge that one of two things occurred—either that the **Church** perished then and there from the pollution of communion with such men, or that any one abiding in unity is not injured by even the notorious **sins** of other men. But since they cannot say that the **Church** then perished through the contamination arising from communion with those who, as Cyprian says, were admitted into it without **baptism**— for otherwise they cannot maintain the validity of their own origin if the **Church** then perished, seeing that the list of consuls proves that more than forty years elapsed between the **martyrdom** of Cyprian and the burning of the sacred books, from which they took occasion to make a **schism**, spreading abroad the smoke of their **calumnies**—it therefore is left for them to acknowledge that the unity of Christ is not polluted by any such communion, even with **known** offenders. And, after this confession, they will be unable to discover any reason which will justify them in maintaining that they were bound to separate from the churches of the whole world, which, as we read, were equally founded by the apostles, seeing that, while the others could not have perished from any admixture of offenders, of whatsoever kind, they, thought they would not have perished if they had remained in unity with them, brought destruction on themselves in **schism**, by separating themselves from

their brethren, and breaking the bond of peace. For the sacrilege of **schism** is most clearly evident in them, if they had no sufficient **cause** for separation. And it is clear that there was no sufficient **cause for** separation, if even the presence of notorious offenders cannot pollute the good while they abide in unity. But that the good, abiding in unity, are not polluted even by notorious offenders, we teach on the testimony of Cyprian, who says that "men in past times, coming to the **Church** from **heresy**, were admitted without baptism;" and yet, if the **wickedness** of their sacrilege, which was still upon them, seeing it had not been purged away by **baptism**, could not pollute and destroy the **holiness** of the **Church**, it cannot perish by any infection from **wicked** men. Wherefore, if they allow that Cyprian spoke the **truth**, they are convicted of **schism** on his testimony; if they maintain that he does not speak **truth**, let them not use his testimony on the question of **baptism**.

#### References

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### **ON PRAYER FOR THE DEAD**

#### **(Acts of Paul and Thecla [c. AD 160] or ANF VIII:490)**

"And after the exhibition, Tryphaena again received her [Thecla]. For her daughter Falconilla had died, and said to her in a dream: 'Mother, you shall have this stranger Thecla in my place, in order that she may pray concerning me, and that I may be transferred to the place of the righteous'."

Abercius

"The citizen of a prominent city, I erected this while I lived, that I might have a resting place for my body. Abercius is my name, a disciple of the chaste Shepherd who feeds his sheep on the mountains and in the fields, who has great eyes surveying everywhere, who taught me the faithful writings of life. Standing by, I, Abercius, ordered this to be inscribed: Truly, I was in my seventy-second year. May everyone who is in accord with this and who understands it pray for Abercius." (Epitaph of Abercius [c. AD 190])

### **Tertullian(Monogamy 10 [A.D. 213)**

The faithful widow prays for the soul of her husband, and begs for him in the interim repose, and participation in the first resurrection, and offers prayers on the anniversary of his death .

### **ON THE SIGN OF THE CROSS**

#### **Tertullian The Chaplet ch 3 (160-240 AD)**

At every forward step and movement, at every going in and out, when we put on our our clothes and shoes, when we bathe, when we sit at table, when we light the lamps, on couch, on seat, in all the ordinary actions of daily life, we trace upon the forehead the sign.

#### **Acts of Xanthippe and Polyxena par 7, 10 (270 AD)**

7'..Xanthippe was always keeping watch through the doors into the streets of the city, and the [blessed Paul](#), the preacher and teacher and illuminator of the world, left Rome and came even into [Spain](#) by the fore-[knowledge](#) of [God](#). And coming up to the gates of the city he stood and [prayed](#), and [crossing](#) himself entered the city.

10...Then Xanthippe, considering these matters, put her hand on the foot of [Paul](#), and taking dust she called Probus to her, and placing her hand on his breast said, O Lord, my [God](#), who hast sought out me, lowly one and [ignorant](#) of you, send what is fitting into this heart. And [Paul](#) perceived her [prayer](#), and [made the sign of the cross](#), and for several days the people entered unhindered, and as many as had sick and vexed by unclean spirits brought them, and all were healed.

### **ON VENERATION OF SAINTS**

#### **Martyrdom of Polycarp 17,18(A.D. 157),in ANF,I:43**

"That it is neither possible for us ever to forsake Christ, who suffered for the salvation of such as shall be saved throughout the whole world (the

blameless one for sinners), nor to worship any other. For Him indeed, as being the Son of God, we adore; but the martyrs, as disciples and followers of the Lord, we worthily love on account of their extraordinary affection towards their own King and Master, of whom may we also be made companions and fellow disciples! The centurion then, seeing the strife excited by the Jews, placed the body in the midst of the fire, and consumed it. Accordingly, we afterwards took up his bones, as being more precious than the most exquisite jewels, and more purified than gold, and deposited them in a fitting place, whither, being gathered together, as opportunity is allowed us, with joy and rejoicing, the Lord shall grant us to celebrate the anniversary of his martyrdom, both in memory of those who have already finished their course, and for the exercising and preparation of those yet to walk in their steps."

**Hippolytus of Rome, On Daniel 11:30(A.D. 204),in OTT,319**

"[Appealing to the three companions of Daniel] Think of me, I beseech you, so that I may achieve with you the same fate of martyrdom"

**Tertullian, The Crown,3(A.D. 211),in ANF,III:94**

"As often as the anniversary comes round, we make offerings for the dead as birthday honours."

**Cyprian,To Clergy and People,Epistle 33(39):3(A.D. 250),in ANF,V:313**

"Nor is that kind of title to glories in the case of Celerinus, our beloved, an unfamiliar and novel thing. He is advancing in the footsteps of his kindred; he rivals his parents and relations in equal honours of divine condescension. His grandmother, Celerina, was some time since crowned with martyrdom. Moreover, his paternal and maternal uncles, Laurentius and Egnatius, who themselves also were once warring in the camps of the world, but were true and spiritual soldiers of God, casting down the devil by the confession of Christ, merited palms and crowns from the Lord by their illustrious passion. We always offer sacrifices for them, as you remember, as often as we celebrate the passions and days of the martyrs in the annual commemoration. Nor could he, therefore, be degenerate and inferior whom this family dignity and a generous nobility provoked, by domestic examples

of virtue and faith. But if in a worldly family it is a matter of heraldry and of praise to be a patrician, of how much greater praise and honour is it to become of noble rank in the celestial heraldry! I cannot tell whom I should call more blessed,--whether those ancestors, for a posterity so illustrious, or him, for an origin so glorious. So equally between them does the divine condescension flow, and pass to and fro, that, just as the dignity of their offspring brightens their crown, so the sublimity of his ancestry illuminates his glory."

## **WORSHIP ON SABBATH OR SUNDAY**

Some religious organizations (Seventh-day Adventists, Seventh-Day Baptists, and certain others) claim that Christians must not worship on Sunday but on Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath. They claim that, at some unnamed time after the apostolic age, the Church "changed" the day of worship from Saturday to Sunday.

However, passages of Scripture such as Acts 20:7, 1 Corinthians 16:2, Colossians 2:16-17, and Revelation 1:10 indicate that, even during New Testament times, the Sabbath is no longer binding and that Christians are to worship on the Lord's day, Sunday, instead.

The early Church Fathers compared the observance of the Sabbath to the observance of the rite of circumcision, and from that they demonstrated that if the apostles abolished circumcision (Gal. 5:1-6), so also the observance of the Sabbath must have been abolished. The following quotations show that the first Christians understood this principle and gathered for worship on Sunday.

### **The Didache** (*Didache* 14 [A.D. 70])

"But every Lord's day . . . gather yourselves together and break bread, and give thanksgiving after having confessed your transgressions, that your sacrifice may be pure. But let no one that is at variance with his fellow come together with you, until they be reconciled, that your sacrifice may not be profaned" .

### **The Letter of Barnabas** (*Letter of Barnabas* 15:6-8 [A.D. 74])

"We keep the eighth day [Sunday] with joyfulness, the day also on which Jesus rose again from the dead" .

### **Ignatius of Antioch** (*Letter to the Magnesians* 8 [A.D. 110])

"Those who were brought up in the ancient order of things [i.e. Jews] have come to the possession of a new hope, no longer observing the Sabbath, but

living in the observance of the Lord's day, on which also our life has sprung up again by him and by his death".

### **Justin Martyr**

*(Dialogue with Trypho the Jew 18, 21 [A.D. 155]).*

"We too would observe the fleshly circumcision, and the Sabbaths, and in short all the feasts, if we did not know for what reason they were enjoined on you—namely, on account of your transgressions and the hardness of your heart. . . . How is it, Trypho, that we would not observe those rites which do not harm us—I speak of fleshly circumcision and Sabbaths and feasts? . . . God enjoined you to keep the Sabbath, and imposed on you other precepts for a sign, as I have already said, on account of your unrighteousness and that of your fathers . . ."

*(First Apology 67 [A.D. 155])*

"But Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly, because it is the first day on which God, having wrought a change in the darkness and matter, made the world; and Jesus Christ our Savior on the same day rose from the dead" .

### **Tertullian***(An Answer to the Jews 2 [A.D. 203])*

"Let him who contends that the Sabbath is still to be observed as a balm of salvation, and circumcision on the eighth day . . . teach us that, for the time past, righteous men kept the Sabbath or practiced circumcision, and were thus rendered 'friends of God.' For if circumcision purges a man, since God made Adam uncircumcised, why did he not circumcise him, even after his sinning, if circumcision purges? . . . Therefore, since God originated Adam uncircumcised and unobservant of the Sabbath, consequently his offspring also, Abel, offering him sacrifices, uncircumcised and unobservant of the Sabbath, was by him [God] commended [Gen. 4:1–7, Heb. 11:4]. . . . Noah also, uncircumcised—yes, and unobservant of the Sabbath—God freed from the deluge. For Enoch too, most righteous man, uncircumcised and unobservant of the Sabbath, he translated from this world, who did not first

taste death in order that, being a candidate for eternal life, he might show us that we also may, without the burden of the law of Moses, please God" .

**The Didascalia** (*Didascalia* 2 [A.D. 225])

"The apostles further appointed: On the first day of the week let there be service, and the reading of the holy scriptures, and the oblation [sacrifice of the Mass], because on the first day of the week [i.e., Sunday] our Lord rose from the place of the dead, and on the first day of the week he arose upon the world, and on the first day of the week he ascended up to heaven, and on the first day of the week he will appear at last with the angels of heaven"

**Origen** (*Commentary on John 2:28* [A.D. 229]).

"Hence it is not possible that the [day of] rest after the Sabbath should have come into existence from the seventh [day] of our God. On the contrary, it is our Savior who, after the pattern of his own rest, caused us to be made in the likeness of his death, and hence also of his resurrection"

**Victorinus**(*The Creation of the World* [A.D. 300]).

"The sixth day [Friday] is called *parasceve*, that is to say, the preparation of the kingdom. . . . On this day also, on account of the passion of the Lord Jesus Christ, we make either a station to God or a fast. On the seventh day he rested from all his works, and blessed it, and sanctified it. On the former day we are accustomed to fast rigorously, that on the Lord's day we may go forth to our bread with giving of thanks. And let the *parasceve* become a rigorous fast, lest we should appear to observe any Sabbath with the Jews . . . which Sabbath he [Christ] in his body abolished"

**Eusebius of Caesarea**(*Church History* 1:4:8 [A.D. 312])

"They [the early saints of the Old Testament] did not care about circumcision of the body, neither do we [Christians]. They did not care about observing Sabbaths, nor do we. They did not avoid certain kinds of food, neither did they regard the other distinctions which Moses first delivered to

their posterity to be observed as symbols; nor do Christians of the present day do such things" .

"The day of his [Christ's] light . . . was the day of his resurrection from the dead, which they say, as being the one and only truly holy day and the Lord's day, is better than any number of days as we ordinarily understand them, and better than the days set apart by the Mosaic law for feasts, new moons, and Sabbaths, which the apostle [Paul] teaches are the shadow of days and not days in reality" (*Proof of the Gospel* 4:16:186 [A.D. 319]).

**Athanasius**(*On Sabbath and Circumcision* 3 [A.D. 345]).

"The Sabbath was the end of the first creation, the Lord's day was the beginning of the second, in which he renewed and restored the old in the same way as he prescribed that they should formerly observe the Sabbath as a memorial of the end of the first things, so we honor the Lord's day as being the memorial of the new creation"

**Cyril of Jerusalem**(*Catechetical Lectures* 4:37 [A.D. 350])

"Fall not away either into the sect of the Samaritans or into Judaism, for Jesus Christ has henceforth ransomed you. Stand aloof from all observance of Sabbaths and from calling any indifferent meats common or unclean" .

**Council of Laodicea**(Canon 29 [A.D. 360])

"Christians should not Judaize and should not be idle on the Sabbath, but should work on that day; they should, however, particularly reverence the Lord's day and, if possible, not work on it, because they were Christians" .

**John Chrysostom**

"When He [God] said, 'You shall not kill' . . . he did not add, 'because murder is a wicked thing.' The reason was that conscience had taught this beforehand, and he speaks thus, as to those who know and understand the point. Wherefore when he speaks to us of another commandment, not known to us by the dictate of conscience, he not only prohibits, but adds the reason. When, for instance, he gave commandment concerning the Sabbath— 'On the seventh day you shall do no work'—he subjoined also the

reason for this cessation. What was this? 'Because on the seventh day God rested from all his works which he had begun to make' [Ex. 20:10-11]. . . . For what purpose then, I ask, did he add a reason respecting the Sabbath, but did no such thing in regard to murder? Because this commandment was not one of the leading ones. It was not one of those which were accurately defined of our conscience, but a kind of partial and temporary one, and for this reason it was abolished afterward. But those which are necessary and uphold our life are the following: 'You shall not kill. . . . You shall not commit adultery. . . . You shall not steal.' On this account he adds no reason in this case, nor enters into any instruction on the matter, but is content with the bare prohibition" (*Homilies on the Statutes* 12:9 [A.D. 387]).

"You have put on Christ, you have become a member of the Lord and been enrolled in the heavenly city, and you still grovel in the law [of Moses]? How is it possible for you to obtain the kingdom? Listen to Paul's words, that the observance of the law overthrows the gospel, and learn, if you will, how this comes to pass, and tremble, and shun this pitfall. Why do you keep the Sabbath and fast with the Jews?" (*Homilies on Galatians* 2:17 [A.D. 395]).

"The rite of circumcision was venerable in the Jews' account, forasmuch as the law itself gave way thereto, and the Sabbath was less esteemed than circumcision. For that circumcision might be performed, the Sabbath was broken; but that the Sabbath might be kept, circumcision was never broken; and mark, I pray, the dispensation of God. This is found to be even more solemn than the Sabbath, as not being omitted at certain times. When then it is done away, much more is the Sabbath" (*Homilies on Philipians* 10 [A.D. 402]).

### **The Apostolic Constitutions**

"And on the day of our Lord's resurrection, which is the Lord's day, meet more diligently, sending praise to God that made the universe by Jesus, and sent him to us, and condescended to let him suffer, and raised him from the dead. Otherwise what apology will he make to God who does not assemble on that day . . . in which is performed the reading of the prophets, the preaching of the gospel, the oblation of the sacrifice, the gift of the holy food" (*Apostolic Constitutions* 2:7:60 [A.D. 400]).

## **Augustine**

"Well, now, I should like to be told what there is in these ten commandments, except the observance of the Sabbath, which ought not to be kept by a Christian. . . . Which of these commandments would anyone say that the Christian ought not to keep? It is possible to contend that it is not the law which was written on those two tables that the apostle [Paul] describes as 'the letter that kills' [2 Cor. 3:6], but the law of circumcision and the other sacred rites which are now abolished" (*The Spirit and the Letter* 24 [A.D. 412]).

## **Pope Gregory I**

"It has come to my ears that certain men of perverse spirit have sown among you some things that are wrong and opposed to the holy faith, so as to forbid any work being done on the Sabbath day. What else can I call these [men] but preachers of Antichrist, who when he comes will cause the Sabbath day as well as the Lord's day to be kept free from all work. For because he [the Antichrist] pretends to die and rise again, he wishes the Lord's day to be held in reverence; and because he compels the people to Judaize that he may bring back the outward rite of the law, and subject the perfidy of the Jews to himself, he wishes the Sabbath to be observed. For this which is said by the prophet, 'You shall bring in no burden through your gates on the Sabbath day' [Jer. 17:24] could be held to as long as it was lawful for the law to be observed according to the letter. But after that the grace of almighty God, our Lord Jesus Christ, has appeared, the commandments of the law which were spoken figuratively cannot be kept according to the letter. For if anyone says that this about the Sabbath is to be kept, he must needs say that carnal sacrifices are to be offered. He must say too that the commandment about the circumcision of the body is still to be retained. But let him hear the apostle Paul saying in opposition to him: 'If you be circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing' [Gal. 5:2]" (*Letters* 13:1 [A.D. 597]).

## **A short note about the early church fathers**

**St. Clement of Rome** was the third successor of Peter the Apostle as bishop of Rome, and therefore, our fourth Pope. St. Irenaeus, himself a Father of the Early Church, tells us that Clement "saw the blessed Apostles and conversed with them, and had yet ringing in his ears the preaching of the Apostles and had their tradition before his eyes, and not he only for many were then surviving who had been taught by the Apostles ". Similarly Epiphanius tells us that Clement was a contemporary of Peter and Paul. His service as Bishop of Rome was probably from about 92-101 A.D. There is a tradition that he was ordained by St. Peter and acted as a kind of auxiliary bishop to Linus and Anacletus, his predecessors in the papal chair.

**Ignatius of Antioch**, surnamed Theophorus, which in Greek means "God-Bearer," was probably a convert and disciple of St. John the Evangelist. We know nothing of his early life. The fourth-century Church historian, Eusebius, says that the Apostles Peter and Paul, who planted the faith in Antioch, left directions that Ignatius should succeed Evodius as bishop of that city; he states further that Ignatius retained the office for forty years, proving himself in every way an exemplary pastor.

**Polycarp of Smyrna** holds a very special and perhaps even unique position in the history of the Christian church. He was personally taught by the apostle John and therefore is important to the continuity of beliefs from the time of Christ through the apostolic age and beyond.

Polycarp is believed to have been born around the year 69 or 70. Not many details of his early life are known. According to Maxwell Staniforth's *Early Christian Writings*, he is thought to have been a native and lifelong resident of the Roman proconsular province of Asia, which became a new center for the Christian world after the fall of Jerusalem in 70. Many followers of Christ, possibly including Polycarp's family, left Judea to settle in the cities of Asia. In particular, writes Staniforth, the last surviving apostle, John, "had made his home in Ephesus, and his name and influence had become a magnet for all that was most vital in Christendom. The young Polycarp himself was one of his disciples, and in later life was fond of recalling his precious memories of the saint." Polycarp served as bishop of Smyrna for some six decades, from the closing years of the first century to the mid-second century.

**Saint Justin Martyr**, (born c. 100, Flavia Neapolis, Palestine [now Nāblus]—died c.65, [Rome](#) [Italy]; feast day June 1), one of the most important of the Greek philosopher-[Apologists](#) in the early [Christian](#) church. His writings represent the first

positive encounter of Christian revelation with [Greek philosophy](#) and laid the basis for a [theology](#) of [history](#).

A pagan reared in a Jewish environment, Justin studied [Stoic](#), [Platonic](#), and other pagan philosophies and then became a Christian in 132, possibly at [Ephesus](#), near modern Selçuk, Turkey. Soon after 135 he began wandering from place to place proclaiming his newfound Christian [philosophy](#) in the hope of converting educated pagans to it. He spent a considerable time in Rome. Some years later, after debating with the cynic Crescens, Justin was denounced to the Roman prefect as subversive and condemned to death. Authentic records of his martyrdom survive.

**Irenaeus (ca. 125-202)** was bishop of Lugdunum in Gaul, which is now Lyons, France. Irenaeus was born in Smyrna in Asia Minor, where he studied under bishop [Polycarp](#), who in turn had been a disciple of the [Apostle John](#). Leaving Asia Minor for Rome he joined the school of [Justin Martyr](#) before being made bishop of Lyons in Southern Gaul in about 178 AD.

Irenaeus is primarily noted for his refutation of early [Gnosticism](#). To this end he wrote his major work *Against Heresies*, in which also sought to expound and defend the orthodox Christian faith. A shorter later work is his *Proof of the Apostolic Preaching*, a brief summary of Christian teaching, largely concerned with Christ as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.

**Clement of Alexandria** (TITUS FLAVIUS CLEMENS, but known in [church history](#) by the former designation to distinguish him from [Clement of Rome](#)).

Date of birth unknown; died about the year 215. St. Clement was an early Greek [theologian](#) and head of the [catechetical school](#) of Alexandria. Athens is given as the starting-point of his journeyings, and was probably his birthplace. He became a convert to the Faith and travelled from place to place in search of higher instruction, attaching himself successively to different masters: to a Greek of Ionia, to another of Magna Graecia, to a third of Coele-Syria, after all of whom he addressed himself in turn to an [Egyptian](#), an Assyrian, and a converted Palestinian [Jew](#).

## The Catholic Church

Originally Christians weren't even called Christians. They were called "disciples" (i.e., "students") of Jesus of Nazareth. Later, in the city of Antioch, they received the name "Christians" (Acts 11:26). This probably happened in the A.D. 30s. This term spread very quickly—probably to the chagrin of those Jewish individuals who did not wish to acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah (Christ).

Ultimately, however, different groups began to break off from the Christian community, falling into either heresy or schism. These groups still wished to represent themselves as Christian—and many of them were, retaining valid baptism and a profession of faith in Christ. Consequently, a new word was needed to distinguish the Christians belonging to the Church that Christ founded from those belonging to the churches that had split off from it.

The term that was picked was *kataholos*, which means *according to the whole* or *universal* in Greek. The thought was apparently that these were Christians who believed and practiced according to what body of Christians as a whole did, in contrast to what some particular group thought or did. Over the course of time, *kataholos* came to be represented by the parallel English word "Catholic."

Ignatius of Antioch did not introduce *kataholos*. However, his letters contain the earliest known uses of it. It may well have been used in other Christian writings prior to this, but we have simply lost them. It *certainly* was in general use in speech before this point, because Ignatius writes in such a way that he already expects his readers to know this term and what it means. He also uses the term in more than one of his letters, meaning that he expects people in more than one place to know the term.

This indicates that in his day—at the beginning of the second century (circa A.D. 107)—the term was already in widespread use. For it to be used in such a broad manner, it would have required some time to pass into currency in the Christian community, meaning that the term probably was coined sometime in the second half of the first century. We don't know who first used it, but it was a suitable description of the Church Christ founded and so was already in general use by the time Ignatius wrote. [**Catholic Answers**]

