

EARLY CHRISTIANITY: TRANSITIONS, CONTINUITIES

CH 3XF3/5XF5/6XF6

McMaster Divinity College

Fall term 2023

Wednesday

2:00pm–3:50pm

Fyfe Room

Instructor: James R. Payton, Jr.

**paytonjj@mcmaster.ca**

Specializations: CW/CC/PS

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course considers the paths taken by early Christianity as it moved through significant transitions while seeking to proclaim and defend the apostles' message. We will examine evidence for the post-apostolic leaders' determination to adhere to and pass on that message and the means they used to do so. This will lead to investigating how the doctrinal controversies in early Christianity related to the apostolic message as it had been embraced and transmitted, and the significance for all this of the ancient creeds. (Students who already have facility in Greek will be able to use some primary sources with Greek and English on facing pages.)

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

Knowing...

- to acquaint students with leading figures and main emphases in early Christianity
- to examine and evaluate the patristic claim to fidelity to apostolic teaching
- to help students appreciate the significance and importance of this period of the Church's history

Being...

- to stimulate an awareness of and appreciation for the early history of the Church
- to develop a sense of being rooted today in the apostolic message passed on in Christian antiquity and confessed in the ancient creeds

Doing...

- to develop in each student an ability to assess documents from a historical perspective
- to help students acquire the ability to enter into and express in a historically responsible fashion the ways the church fathers expressed and defended the apostolic message

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Textbooks:

- Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity: Vol. 1*, revised edition (HarperOne, 2010). {"G" in the assigned readings below.}
- Frances Young, *The Making of the Creeds* (SCM Press, 2002). {"Y" in the assigned readings below.}
- Ben Myers, *The Apostles' Creed: A Guide to the Ancient Catechism* (Lexham Press, 2018). {"M" in the assigned readings below.}

Primary sources:

- Andrew Louth and Maxwell Staniforth, trans., *Early Christian Writings: The Apostolic Fathers*, rev. ed. (Penguin Classics, 1987). {"ECW" in the assigned readings below.}
- Alistair C. Stewart, trans., *Melito of Sardis, On Pascha*, 2nd edition {Greek/English} (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2016).
- John Behr, trans., *St. Irenaeus of Lyons, On the Apostolic Preaching* (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997).
- John Behr, trans., *St. Athanasius, On the Incarnation* {English only} (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2011). → CW
- Ignatius Green, trans., *St. Gregory of Nyssa, Catechetical Discourse: A Handbook for Catechists* {Greek/English} (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2019). → CC
- Graham Neville, trans., *St. John Chrysostom, Six Books on the Priesthood* (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1996). → PS

METHOD:

Instructor's Presentations:

Most classes will have a presentation by the professor. This presentation will seek to build on and further develop what students will have learned from the readings assigned for the class, as well as exploring other themes not in the assigned readings.

Readings:

All readings are to be completed before the class begins. These readings are critical for understanding how ancient church history unfolded and will regularly be discussed in class.

Discussions:

In each class, students should be prepared to discuss the readings insightfully, bringing questions and offering comments about them. Sometimes the instructor will offer questions to provoke further reflection on the readings or will point to implications of a reading which have not yet come up in that class's discussion. On days when papers are due, students will be invited (and

expected) to discuss, informally, what they have found and/or learned in preparing their papers. Participation in all these discussions will be counted toward the discussion/participation grade.

Format: This class will meet in person at McMaster Divinity College (with livestream available if and as needed).

MDiv/MTS REQUIREMENTS:

- **Tradition Paper:** Students will prepare (and discuss in class) a 3-page paper on their view of the role tradition has had and should have on their faith and worship practice. **Due September 27.**
- **Transmission Paper:** Students will prepare a 5-page paper evaluating the way the apostolic tradition (as discussed in class to that point) is handled in either Melito of Sardis, *On Pascha*, or Irenaeus of Lyons, *On the Apostolic Preaching*. **Due October 18.**
- **Specialization Paper:** Students will prepare a 6-page paper summarizing the approach taken in and content of the patristic primary source they read for their specialization (CW, CC, PS) and comment on the way(s) this might influence their approach to or practice of their specialization going forward. **Due November 8.**
- **Research Paper:** Students will write a 10-page research paper on a topic related to their personal research interests. The paper's focus must be on a primary source from one of the church fathers, presenting the content of that source against the backdrop of secondary sources on the particular church father and patristic writing. The church father and primary source will be chosen in consultation with the professor. **Due December 6.**
- **Discussion/Participation:** Students will be expected to participate regularly, extensively, and insightfully in class discussions.

GRADING:

- **Tradition Paper: 10%**
- **Transmission Paper: 15%**
- **Specialization Paper: 20%**
- **Research Paper: 45%**
- **Participation: 10%**

DPT REQUIREMENTS

- **Literature Review:** Students will develop an annotated bibliography of approximately **15–20 sources (4000 pages)** related to the patristic content of the course and how it might relate to your research project; each annotation should be approximately 100 words. (The required texts and primary sources for the course can be included as part of this book list.) The literature review will be approximately **2000 words**. This assignment is **due October 18** and will account for **25%** of the final grade.

- ****Research Presentation:** Students will present to the class the research they are working on for the major paper described below. This will include an introduction describing what is being investigated, the area of the student's DPT practice-led research, and the patristic source(s) being used. The bulk of the presentation will lay out what a careful consideration of the early Christian source(s) offers as insight or contribution for the student's particular research program. The presentation should be approximately 25 minutes in length, with 10–15 additional minutes for class discussion. This assignment is **scheduled for November 15** and will account for **25%** of the final grade.
- ****Major paper:** Each student will prepare a major paper of approximately **5000 words** on a topic related to course content, dealing with at least one primary early Christian source, and related to your area of DPT practice-led research. This paper should reflect both theological depth and insight regarding that relationship. Use and document (via footnotes) a minimum of 15 scholarly resources. This assignment is **due December 6** and will account for **40%** of the final grade.
- **Class participation:** Students will be expected to participate in class discussions. This will account for **10%** of the final grade.

MA/PhD REQUIREMENTS

- **Literature Review:** Students will develop an annotated bibliography of **10–12 volumes (including the textbooks) and 10–12 journal articles or chapters in edited volumes (5000–6000 pages)** related to the topic of the course; each annotation should be approximately 100 words. (The required texts and primary sources for the course can be included as part of this book list.) The literature review will be approximately **2000 words**. This assignment is **due October 18** and will account for **25%** of the final grade.
- ****Research Presentation:** Students will present to the class the research they are working on for the major essay described below. This will include an introduction describing what is being investigated (and why it is important), the approach taken to examine the question, and the results of the investigations. The presentation should be approximately 30 minutes in length, with 10 additional minutes for class discussion. This presentation is **scheduled for November 15** and will account for **25%** of the final grade.
- ****Major paper:** Each student will prepare an academic thesis paper of approximately **6000 words** on the topic presented in class, to be written at the level of a peer-reviewed journal article. The focus of the paper should be on some facet of early Christian endeavors to preserve and hand on the apostolic message. This assignment is **due December 6** and will account for **40%** of the final grade.
- **Class participation:** Students will be expected to participate in class discussions. This will account for **10%** of the final grade.

**The focus for each of these papers, including church fathers, patristic source(s) and/or emphases, and theme of each paper will be chosen in consultation with the professor.

GENERAL COMMENTS:

Academic Honesty

Academic dishonesty is not qualitatively different from other types of dishonesty. It consists of misrepresenting the ownership of written work by deception or by other fraudulent means. In an academic setting this may include any number of forms such as: copying or using unauthorized aids in tests, examinations; plagiarism, i.e., submitting work that is not one's own (regardless of the means of its production) but passing it off as if it is; submitting work for credit in a course for which credit is being or has already been given, unless the previously submitted work was presented as such to the instructor of the second course and has been deemed acceptable for credit by the instructor of that course; aiding and abetting another student's dishonesty; giving false information for the purposes of gaining admission or credit; giving false information for the purposes of obtaining deferred examinations or extension of deadlines; forging or falsifying McMaster University or McMaster Divinity College documents.

AODA

In accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), the content of this course is intended to be accessible to all students who are enrolled in the course, including those with disabilities. If a student requires accommodation to participate fully in this course, that student is to contact SAS at McMaster University, who will then work directly with the McMaster Divinity College Registrar to negotiate reasonably appropriate accommodation for the student. The MDC Registrar will communicate with faculty regarding necessary accommodations. Please note that an accommodation is not retroactive and must be requested in advance to allow sufficient time for implementation.

Gender Inclusive Language

McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all its publications. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected, but you will need to use gender-inclusive language for humans, and you will need to quote from a gender-inclusive version such as, for example, the following: NRSV (2021), NCV (1991), TEV/GNB/GNT (1992), CEV (1995), NLT (1996), NIV (2011), and the CEB (2011).

Bookstore

All required textbooks for this class are available from the Hurlburt Family Bookstore located beside the entrance to the Nathaniel H. Parker Memorial Chapel of McMaster Divinity College. To purchase in advance, you may contact the bookstore manager, Bernice Quek, by phone at 416.620.2934 or 416.668.3434 (mobile); or by email at books@readon.ca. The Hurlburt Family Bookstore also carries other books and merchandise and is open throughout the academic year during posted hours.

Submitting Papers

Papers must be submitted at least 30 minutes before the beginning of the class on the day they are due. Students may be exempted from the late penalty of 5% per day (not including Sunday) if they attach to their paper a letter explaining the genuine emergency that delayed them. Late assignments (even ones with an extension) will not receive comments and constructive criticism from the professor.

All written work must conform to the *McMaster Divinity College Style Guidelines for Essays and Theses*. Failure to use appropriate form will result in grade reductions. Further, failure to abide by the “Usage Guidelines” posted on Avenue to Learn by the instructor will result in grade reductions.

- Please turn off your cell phone and/or pager before the class begins.
- Please do not attend class if you are ill and contagious (e.g., the flu or symptom of Covid 19).

CLASS SCHEDULE (dates when assignments are due are marked with an asterisk [*]):

- Sept. 13** Introduction to the class
New Testament Perspectives for Church History
- Sept. 20** NT Perspectives, cont'd; Transitions in the 1st century
G: introduction & chapters 1–3 (30 pp.)
ECW: Didache (10 pp.)
- Sept. 27*** **Tradition Paper Due**
Concern for Continuity
G: chapters 4–6 (28 pp.)
ECW: First Epistle of Clement (37 pp.)
- Oct. 4** Passing on the Apostolic Message
G: chapters 7 & 8 (24 pp.)
ECW: Epistles of Ignatius (Trallians, Smyrneans) & Epistle of Polycarp (26 pp.)
- {Oct. 9–15: Reading week—no classes}**
- Oct. 18*** **Transmission Paper Due**
DPT Literature Review Due
MA/PhD Literature Review Due
Evidence from the Post-Apostolic Church
G: chapters 9 & 10 (22 pp.)
ECW: Epistle to Diognetus & Epistle of Barnabas (48 pp.)
- Oct. 25** Evidence, cont'd
G: chapters 11 & 12 (24 pp.)
Y: introduction, chapters 1 & 2 (37 pp.)

- Nov. 1** Controversy: Deity of Christ & Council of Nicaea
 G: chapters 13–15 (44 pp.)
 Y: chapter 3 & 4 (32 pp.)
- Nov. 8*** **Specialization Paper Due**
 Controversy: Deity of Spirit & Council of Constantinople
 G: chapters 16–19 (36 pp.)
 Y: chapters 5 & 6, conclusion (40 pp.)
- Nov. 15*** **DPT & MA/PhD Research Presentations/Guest lecture**
- Nov. 22** Controversy: Humanity of Christ
 G: chapters 20–22 (24 pp.)
 M: preface, introduction, article 1 (35 pp.)
- Nov. 29** Controversy: Christ as one Person & Council of Ephesus
 G: chapters 23–26 (28 pp.)
 M: article II (62 pp.)
- Dec. 6*** **Research Paper Due**
DPT & MA/PhD Papers Due
 Controversy: Christ with two Natures & Council of Chalcedon
 M: article III (36 pp.)

Please note: This syllabus is the property of the instructor and is prepared with currently available information. The instructor reserves the right to make changes and revisions up to and including the first day of class.

Selected Bibliography for Early Christianity: Transitions, Continuities

- Anatolios, Khaled. *Athanasius: The Coherence of His Thought*. New York: Routledge, 2005.
- _____. *Retrieving Nicaea: The Development and Meaning of Trinitarian Doctrine*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011.
- Arand, Louis A., trans. *St. Augustine: Faith, Hope and Charity*. Ancient Christian Writers, No. 3. Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1947.
- Ayres, Lewis. *Nicaea and its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Behr, John. *Irenaeus of Lyons: Identifying Christianity*. Christian Theology in Context. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- _____. *The Way to Nicaea*. The Formation of Christian Theology, volume 1. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001.
- _____. *The Nicene Faith, Part One: True God of True God*. The Formation of Christian Theology, volume 2, part 1. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2004.
- _____. *The Nicene Faith, Part Two: One of the Holy Trinity*. The Formation of Christian Theology, volume 2, part 2. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2004.
- _____, trans. *St. Irenaeus of Lyons, On the Apostolic Preaching*. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997.
- _____, trans. *St. Athanasius, On the Incarnation (Greek & English)*. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2011.
- Benedict XVI, Pope. *The Fathers*. 2 vols. Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2008, 2010.
- Bird, Michael F., and Scott D. Harrower. *The Cambridge Companion to the Apostolic Fathers*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2021.
- Brock, Sebastian, trans. *St. Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns on Paradise*. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1990.
- Brown, Peter. *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, new ed. Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2000.
- Chadwick, Henry. *The Early Church*, rev. ed. The Penguin History of the Church, vol. 1. New York: Penguin Books, 1993.

- Chitty, Derwas J. *The Desert a City: An Introduction to the Study of Egyptian and Palestinian Monasticism under the Christian Empire*. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1995.
- Chryssavgis, John. *The Way of the Fathers: Exploring the Patristic Mind*, 2nd rev. ed. Minneapolis, MN: Light & Life Publishing Company, 2003.
- Cohick, Lynn H., and Amy Brown Hughes. *Christian Women in the Patristic World: Their Influence, Authority, and Legacy in the Second through Fifth Centuries*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017.
- Damick, Andrew Stephen. *Bearing God: The Life and Works of St. Ignatius of Antioch, the God-Bearer*. Chesterton, IN: Ancient Faith Publishing, 2017.
- Edwards, James R. *From Christ to Christianity: How the Jesus Movement Became the Church in Less Than a Century*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2021.
- Ehrman, Bart D. *Lost Christianities: The Battles for Scripture and the Faiths We Never Knew*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Fairbairn, Donald. *Life in the Trinity: An Introduction to Theology with the Help of the Church Fathers*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009.
- Florovsky, Georges. *The Eastern Fathers of the Fourth Century*, trans. Catherine Edmunds. Volume 7 of The Collected Works of Georges Florovsky. Belmont, MA: Büchervertriebsanstalt, 1987.
- Gilbert, Peter, trans. *On God and Man: The Theological Poetry of St. Gregory of Nazianzus*. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001.
- Gonzalez, Justo L. *The Story of Christianity, Volume I: The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation*, rev. ed. New York: HarperOne, 2010.
- Grant, Robert M. *Irenaeus of Lyons*. New York: Routledge, 1997.
- Green, Ignatius, trans., *St. Gregory of Nyssa, Catechetical Instruction: A Handbook for Catechists (Greek & English)*. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2019.
- Greenslade, S.L., ed. *Early Latin Theology: Selections from Tertullian, Cyprian, Ambrose, and Jerome*. Library of Christian Classics. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1956.

- Guarino, Thomas G. *Vincent of Lérins and the Development of Christian Doctrine*. Foundations of Theological Exegesis and Christian Spirituality. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013.
- Hall, Christopher A. *Learning Theology with the Church Fathers*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002.
- Hanson, R.P.C. *Tradition in the Early Church*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2009 (reprint of SCM Press, 1962).
- Hardy, Edward R., ed. *Christology of the Later Fathers*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1954.
- Harkins, Paul W., trans. *St. John Chrysostom on the Incomprehensible Nature of God*. The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation, vol. 72. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1984.
- Hart, David Bentley. *The Story of Christianity: A History of 2,000 Years of the Christian Faith*. New York: Quercus, 2009.
- Hill, C.E. *Who Chose the Gospels? Probing the Great Gospel Conspiracy*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Holmes, Michael W., ed. *The Apostolic Fathers in English*, 3rd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005.
- Hunter, David G., trans. *A Comparison Between a King and a Monk/Against the Opponents of the Monastic Life—Two Treatises by John Chrysostom*. Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity, vol. 13. Queenston, ON: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1988.
- Kelly, J.N.D. *Early Christian Creeds*, 3rd ed. New York: Routledge, 2014.
- _____. *Early Christian Doctrines*, 2nd ed. New York: Harper & Row, 1960.
- _____. *Golden Mouth: The Story of John Chrysostom—Ascetic, Preacher, Bishop*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995.
- _____, trans. *Rufinus: A Commentary on the Apostles' Creed*. Ancient Christian Writers, No. 20. Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1955.
- Köstenberger, Andreas J., and Michael J. Kruger. *The Heresy of Orthodoxy: How Contemporary Culture's Fascination with Diversity Has Reshaped Our Understanding of Early Christianity*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010.

- Kreider, Alan. *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church: The Improbable Rise of Christianity in the Roman Empire*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016.
- Kruger, Michael J. *Christianity at the Crossroads: How the Second Century Shaped the Future of the Church*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2018.
- Litfin, Bryan M. *Getting to Know the Church Fathers: An Evangelical Introduction*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2007.
- Luibheid, Colm, trans. *John Cassian: Conferences*. Classics of Western Spirituality. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1985.
- Malherbe, Abraham J., and Everett Ferguson, trans. *Gregory of Nyssa: The Life of Moses*. Classics of Western Spirituality. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1978.
- Maloney, George A., trans. *Pseudo-Macarius: The Fifty Spiritual Homilies and the Great Letter*. Classics of Western Spirituality. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1992.
- McGrath, Alister. *The Landscape of Faith: An Explorer's Guide to the Christian Creeds*. London: SPCK, 2018.
- McGuckin, John Anthony. *The Westminster Handbook to Patristic Theology*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004.
- _____, trans. *Saint Gregory Nazianzen: Selected Poems*. Oxford: SLG Press, 1986.
- _____, trans. *St. Cyril of Alexandria: On the Unity of Christ*. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2000.
- McKenna, Stephen, trans. *Saint Hilary of Poitiers: The Trinity*. The Fathers of the Church, vol. 25. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 1954.
- Meredith, Anthony. *The Cappadocians*. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1995.
- _____. *Gregory of Nyssa*. New York: Routledge, 1999.
- Minns, Denis. *Irenaeus: An Introduction*. New York: T & T Clark, 2010.
- Myers, Ben. *The Apostles' Creed: A Guide to the Ancient Catechism*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018.
- Neville, Graham, trans. *St. John Chrysostom, Six Books on the Priesthood*. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1996.

- Nichols, Stephen J. *For Us and For Our Salvation: The Doctrine of Christ in the Early Church*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007.
- Osborn, Eric. *Irenaeus of Lyons*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- Papandrea, James L. *The Earliest Christologies: Five Images of Christ in the Postapostolic Age*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016.
- _____. *Reading the Early Church Fathers: From the Didache to Nicaea*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2012.
- Parry, Ken, ed. *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Patristics*. Chichester, West Sussex, UK: Wiley Blackwell, 2019.
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- _____. *Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 2: Fathers of the Second Century—Hermas, Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus, and Clement of Alexandria (Entire)*. Peabody, MS: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004 (1885 reprint).

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- Wallis, Ernest A, ed. *The Paradise or Garden of the Holy Fathers, Being Histories of the Anchorites, Recluses, Monks, Coenobites, and Ascetic Fathers of the Deserts of Egypt Between A.D. 250 and A.D. 400: Compiled by Athanasius, Archbishop of Alexandria; Palladius, Bishop of Helenopolis; Saint Jerome, and Others*. 2 vols. New York: Burt Franklin, 1972 (1907 reprint).
- Webber, Robert E. *Ancient-Future Faith: Rethinking Evangelicalism for a Postmodern World*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999.
- Wilken, Robert Louis. *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought: Seeking the Face of God*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003.
- Williams, D.H. *Evangelicals and Tradition: The Formative Influence of the Early Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005.
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- Young, Frances. *The Making of the Creeds*. London: SCM Press, 1991.
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