

Chapter 1 : History Of Christianity

The Bible is the holy scripture of the Christian religion, purporting to tell the history of the Earth from its earliest creation to the spread of Christianity in the first century A.D.

Enjoy the Famous Daily Eastern and western Christianity: The emperors, based in Constantinople, continue to assert their authority in the east. Under one of them, Justinian , that authority is even extended again into part of the west, in Italy and north Africa though this will be more than counteracted, in the next century, by Losses to Islam. But in Gaul, Spain and the British Isles, and beyond the boundaries of the empire into Germany, the only civilizing influence comes not from emperors but from leaders of the church - popes and bishops, soon followed by missionaries from the new monastic orders. When popes make alliances with the secular rulers of the west - as with Pepin in , or with Charlemagne in - they do so as equal partners in a relationship of value to both sides. In anointing or crowning these kings, the popes bestow on them a new status. The position of the pope is very different from that of an eastern bishop, whose predecessors were raised to high office by emperors. The result, long before any doctrinal split, is a clear distinction between eastern and western Christianity. The patriarch in Constantinople is part of the machinery of state of a semi-divine emperor. The pope in Rome views a secular ruler as something between a colleague and a political opponent. Greek Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism: With hindsight it may appear that the Greek Orthodox and the Roman Catholic churches go their separate ways quite early in Christian history. As early as the bishop of Constantinople is given equal status with the bishop of Rome. Differences both of practice and of doctrine gradually evolve within the two spheres of influence. The most evident differences in practice concern the sacraments of ordination and of the Eucharist. In the Greek Orthodox church a married man may be ordained a priest, and the congregation receives both the bread and the wine in the communion service. In Roman Catholicism only the celibate may be ordained, only the bread is given to the laity until the 20th century. The Western church believes so, adding the word Filioque to the Nicene creed in the 6th century. The Greek Orthodox see this as a distortion of the doctrine of the Trinity. Even so, at no point does the dispute lead to a declared schism. More harmful in the relationship between the two churches are various events which give good cause for affront. Rome is grievously offended by the Byzantine emperor Leo III, who in introduces the policy of iconoclasm and in transfers southern Italy, Greece and much of the Balkans from papal jurisdiction to that of Constantinople. Both sides clash in the 10th century in their rival efforts to convert the Slavs. In the Greeks are outraged when Rome decides to excommunicate the patriarch of Constantinople. In the Greeks are again given profound cause for resentment when the fleet of the fourth crusade , launched by Rome, is diverted to capture and sack Constantinople. At every stage of this prolonged quarrel the two sides continue to express the hope that reunion will be possible. If anything, it is not so much mutual antagonism which separates them as the successful spread of each faith. The missionary achievements of both eastern and western Christianity exaggerate the apparent split, as vast new territories are converted which lack any understanding of the rival culture. Roman Catholicism is the first to go its own way, bringing northwest Europe into the fold - including eventually those most energetic of medieval marauders, the Vikings. Meanwhile the Greeks convert the Slavs in the eastern Balkans, to be followed subsequently by Russia. Clashes in central Europe: Germans, pressing towards the east, meet onslaughts from Slavs and Magyars moving westwards. Missionaries from Rome confront their rivals from Constantinople, competing for pagan souls with their rival brands of Christianity. The rulers of new kingdoms, emerging in this region at this period, decide which alliance and which religion to adopt. The frontiers established in these conflicts remain sensitive throughout European history. The struggle between Roman and Byzantine Christianity crystallizes here. The district is first evangelized by Roman missionaries from Bavaria, but the king of Moravia, resenting German pressure, wants his people to receive the faith in their own Slavonic tongue. He sends to Constantinople for missionaries, and receives in the brothers Cyril and Methodius. They introduce a Slavonic liturgy. It is later outlawed by German clerics, who in association with Rome impose the Latin rite on the region. In neighbouring Hungary there are similar swings of faith, though here the Magyar royal family takes

the opposite line. The Magyars, established in Hungary from about 895, overwhelm the Moravian kingdom soon after and become a major threat to the Germans until defeated near the Lech river in 955. By that time many of their chieftains are Greek Orthodox Christians. In 1000 he and his family are baptized in the Roman Catholic faith, initiating a lasting link between Hungary and Rome. An even closer link with Rome is forged by Mieszko, the founder of the Polish kingdom. Deciding that his best hope of security lies in a western alliance, he adopts Roman Catholic Christianity in 1000 and makes subtle use of the feudal system to win himself powerful protection. He accepts the German emperor Otto I as his feudal lord, and shortly before his death goes one step better - placing Poland directly under the authority of the pope in Rome. A much disputed border between Roman and Greek influence falls within the region known for much of the 20th century as Yugoslavia. Croatia, in the west, is Roman Catholic. Christian from the 7th century, it is an established duchy by 1000; in 1093 a Croatian ruler receives his crown directly from the pope. By contrast the ruler of Serbia, in the east, adopts the Greek Orthodox faith. In 963 he invites disciples of Cyril and Methodius to educate his people. This ancient division between two closely linked groups of Slavs is evident in their writing. Their shared language called in recent times Serbo-Croatian is written in the Roman script by the Croats and in Cyrillic by the Serbians. The rulers of both, according to tradition, weigh up the attractions of Rome and Constantinople. They choose the glories of the east. The Bulgarian decision appears to be primarily political. The ruler, Boris I, is baptized in the Greek Orthodox church in 864, but for the next five years he plays Rome and Constantinople off against each other. In 893, when it is plain that Rome will not accept an independent Bulgarian patriarch, he brings his mainly pagan nation within the Byzantine fold which allows greater independence to provincial churches. The decision of the Russian ruler to embrace Greek Orthodoxy is presented in the traditional account as aesthetic rather than political. In 988 the prince of Kiev, Vladimir, commissions a report which persuades him of the attractions of Byzantine Christianity. It is a decision of profound importance for Orthodox Christianity, which in Russia finds its third great empire. Constantinople, the Christian seat of the Roman empire, becomes thought of as the second Rome. After its fall to the Turks, in 1453, Moscow is in place to take on the sacred mantle - describing itself proudly as the third Rome. But the same period also sees the first settled kingdoms in the region. By 900 Denmark has a king powerful enough to make a treaty with the Franks, and in the following century a Danish king, Harald Bluetooth, becomes the first Scandinavian ruler to convert to Christianity. He is baptized in about 960. A few years later a Norwegian king, Olaf I, takes the same step - between 960 and 970. Iceland becomes Christian in about 1000. Denmark and Norway, linked in the 11th century in the empire of Canute, are by this time unshakably Christian kingdoms. But in the forests of Sweden the twin processes - unification and the defeat of paganism - begin later and take longer. He and his successors struggle for more than a century against pagan rulers, whose most famous and jealously defended shrine is at Uppsala. Not until Uppsala is established as an archbishopric, in 1163, can Sweden be securely classified as Christian. But with the approach of the first millennium, in the late 10th century, Christian churches introduce dramatic effects in the Easter liturgy to enliven the theme of resurrection. The gospels describe Mary Magdalene and two other women visiting the tomb of Jesus and finding it empty. In 1001 the bishop of Winchester, eager to emphasize this important moment, introduces a custom which is already in use he says in certain French monasteries. During the Easter morning service in Winchester three monks enact the arrival at the tomb of the three women, while another as the angel in the story sits beside the high altar the holy sepulchre. The angel, intoning in Latin, asks the women whom they are seeking? Jesus of Nazareth, they chant in reply. He says Jesus is not here, he has risen, go and tell the people. The three turn to the choir with a joyous Alleluia! From these small beginnings there develops the great tradition of medieval Christian drama. More and more scenes are enacted during church services, some quite boisterous. Herod, in particular, tends to make a lot of noise.

Chapter 2 : Christianity, A History of Christianity

A New History of Christianity provides a definitive overview of the many persons, places, movements, and events necessary for the telling of our story, the story of the Church. It is a story told within the complex contexts of larger world events and world cultures, but defined and simplified by attention to those developments that have proven.

Much of the impetus for this new religion rested in issues in the Jewish religion, including a long-standing belief in the coming of a Messiah and rigidities that had developed in the Jewish priesthood. Whether or not Christianity was created by God, as Christians believe, the early stages of the religion focused on cleansing the Jewish religion of stiff rituals and haughty leaders. It had little at first to do with Roman culture. Christianity arose in a remote province and appealed particularly to the poorer classes. It is not easy, as a result, to fit Christianity neatly into the patterns of Roman history: It was deliberately separate, and only gradually had wider impact. Christianity originated with Jesus of Nazareth, a Jewish prophet and teacher who probably came to believe he was the Son of God and certainly was regarded as such by his disciples. Jesus preached in Israel during the time of Augustus, urging a purification of the Jewish religion that would free Israel and establish the kingdom of God on earth. He urged a moral code based on love, charity, and humility, and he asked the faithful to follow his lessons, abandoning worldly concern. Many disciples believed that a Final Judgment day was near at hand, on which God would reward the righteous with immortality and condemn sinners to everlasting hell. Jesus won many followers among the poor. He also roused suspicion among the upper classes and the leaders of the Jewish religion. These helped persuade the Roman governor, already concerned about unrest among the Jews, that Jesus was a dangerous agitator. Jesus was put to death as a result, crucified like a common criminal, about A. His followers believed that he was resurrected on the third day after his death, a proof that he was the Son of God. This belief helped the religion spread farther among Jewish communities in the Middle East, both within the Roman Empire and beyond. As they realized that the Messiah was not immediately returning to earth to set up the Kingdom of God, the disciples of Jesus began to fan out, particularly around the eastern Mediterranean, to spread the new Christian message. Initially, Christian converts were Jewish by birth and followed the basic Jewish law. Their belief that Christ was divine as well as human, however, roused hostility among other Jews. When one early convert, Stephen, was stoned to death, many disciples left Israel and traveled throughout western Asia. By the 4th century A. As it spread, Christianity connected increasingly with larger themes in Roman history. With its particularly great appeal to some of the poor, Christianity was well positioned to reflect social grievances in an empire increasingly marked by inequality. Slaves, dispossessed farmers and impoverished city dwellers found hope in a religion that promised rewards after death. Christianity also answered cultural and spiritual needs - especially but not exclusively among the poor - left untended by mainstream Roman religion and culture. Roman values had stressed political goals and ethics suitable for life in this world. They did not join peoples of the empire in more spiritual loyalties, and they did not offer many emotionally satisfying rituals. As the empire consolidated, reducing direct political participation, a number of mystery religions spread from the Middle East and Egypt, religions that offered emotionally charged rituals. Worship of gods such as Mithra or Isis, derived from earlier Mesopotamian or Egyptian beliefs, attracted some Roman soldiers and others with rites of sacrifice and a strong sense of religious community. Christianity, though far more than a mystery religion, had some of these qualities and won converts on this basis as well. Christianity, in sum, gained ground in part because of features of Roman political and cultural life. Political stability and communications over a wide area aided missionary efforts, while the Roman example helped inspire the government forms of the growing Christian church. Bishops headed churches in regional centers and supervised the activities of other churches in the area. Bishops in politically powerful cities, including Rome, gained particular authority. Roman principles also helped move what initially had been a religion among Jews to a genuinely cosmopolitan stance. Under the leadership of Paul, converted to Christianity about A. Rather, in the spirit of Rome and of Hellenism, the new faith was seen as universal, open to all whether or not they followed Jewish practices in diet, male circumcision, and so on. Paul was Jewish, but he had been born in a Greek city and was familiar

with Greco-Roman culture. He helped explain basic Christian beliefs in terms other adherents of this culture could grasp, and he preached in Greece and Italy as well as the Middle East. Paul essentially created Christian theology, as a set of intellectual principles that followed from, but generalized, the message of Jesus. Paul also modified certain initial Christian impulses. They began to develop a body of Christian writings beyond the Bible messages written by the disciples of Jesus. Ironically, as the Roman Empire was in most respects declining, Christianity produced an outpouring of complex thought and often elegant use of language. In this effort, Christianity redirected Roman culture never known for abundant religious subtlety but also preserved many earlier literary and philosophical achievements. Adherents of the new religion clashed with Roman authorities, to be sure. Christians, who put their duties to God first, would not honor the emperor as a divinity and might seem to reject the authority of the state in other spheres. Several early emperors, including the mad Nero, persecuted Christians, killing some and driving their worship underground. Persecution was not constant, however, which helps explain why the religion continued to spread. It resumed only in the 4th century, when several emperors sought to use religious conformity and new claims to divinity as a way of cementing loyalties to a declining state. Christianity had more to do with opening a new era in the history of the Mediterranean region than with shaping the later Roman Empire. Yet important connections did exist that explain features of Christianity and of later Roman history.

Chapter 3 : What is the history of Christianity?

"A New History of Early Christianity" is an interesting and informative book that, as its title suggests, presents new views on the history of the early Church. Read more Published 12 months ago.

What is the history of Christianity? The history of Christianity is really the history of Western civilization. Christianity has had an all-pervasive influence on society at large—art, language, politics, law, family life, calendar dates, music, and the very way we think have all been colored by Christian influence for nearly two millennia. The story of the church, therefore, is an important one to know. Jesus had promised that He would build His church Matthew The initial converts to Christianity were Jews or proselytes to Judaism, and the church was centered in Jerusalem. Because of this, Christianity was seen at first as a Jewish sect, akin to the Pharisees, the Sadducees, or the Essenes. However, what the apostles preached was radically different from what other Jewish groups were teaching. It is quite proper to say that Christianity has its roots in Judaism. The Old Testament laid the groundwork for the New, and it is impossible to fully understand Christianity without a working knowledge of the Old Testament see the books of Matthew and Hebrews. The New Testament, then, is all about the coming of Messiah and His work to save us from sin. In His life, Jesus fulfilled over specific prophecies, proving that He was the One the Old Testament had anticipated. The evangelist Philip preached to the Samaritans Acts 8: The apostle Paul the former persecutor of the church spread the gospel all over the Greco-Roman world, reaching as far as Rome itself Acts For the next years, Christians were persecuted by Rome—sometimes at random, sometimes by government edict. In the 2nd and 3rd centuries, the church leadership became more and more hierarchical as numbers increased. Several heresies were exposed and refuted during this time, and the New Testament canon was agreed upon. Persecution continued to intensify. About 70 years later, during the reign of Theodosius, Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire. Bishops were given places of honor in the government, and by A. After Constantine, then, Christians were no longer persecuted. Such forced conversions led to many people entering the church without a true change of heart. The pagans brought with them their idols and the practices they were accustomed to, and the church changed; icons, elaborate architecture, pilgrimages, and the veneration of saints were added to the simplicity of early church worship. About this same time, some Christians retreated from Rome, choosing to live in isolation as monks, and infant baptism was introduced as a means of washing away original sin. As the Roman Empire grew weaker, the church became more powerful, and many disagreements broke out between the churches in the West and those in the East. The Western Latin church, based in Rome, claimed apostolic authority over all other churches. This did not sit well with the Eastern Greek church, based in Constantinople. History of Christianity - The Middle Ages During the Middle Ages in Europe, the Roman Catholic Church continued to hold power, with the popes claiming authority over all levels of life and living as kings. Corruption and greed in the church leadership was commonplace. From to the popes endorsed a series of bloody and expensive crusades in an effort to repel Muslim advances and liberate Jerusalem. History of Christianity - The Reformation Through the years, several individuals had tried to call attention to the theological, political, and human rights abuses of the Roman Church. All had been silenced in one way or another. But in , a German monk named Martin Luther took a stand against the church, and everyone heard. Although Catholicism made a comeback in Europe, and a series of wars between Protestants and Catholics ensued, the Reformation had successfully dismantled the power of the Roman Catholic Church and helped open the door to the modern age. History of Christianity - The Age of Missions From to , the church showed an unprecedented interest in missionary work. Colonization had opened eyes to the need for missions, and industrialization had provided people with the financial ability to fund the missionaries. Missionaries went around the world preaching the gospel, and churches were established throughout the world. The evangelical church is strongly independent and rooted firmly in Reformed theology. The church has also seen the rise of Pentecostalism, the charismatic movement, ecumenicalism, and various cults. Each of us is responsible to know what the Scripture says and to live by it. When the church forgets what the Bible teaches and ignores what Jesus taught, chaos reigns. There are many churches today, but only one gospel. May we be careful to

preserve that faith and pass it on without alteration, and the Lord will continue to fulfill His promise to build His church.

History of Christianity: The Arrival of Jesus Christ History of Christianity -- With this cultural and religious backdrop, the ministry of Jesus began. Jesus was a Jew.

Visit Website When he was around 30 years old, Jesus started his public ministry after being baptized in the Jordan River by the prophet known as John the Baptist. For about three years, Jesus traveled with 12 appointed disciples, teaching large groups of people and performing what witnesses described as miracles. Some of the most well-known miraculous events included raising a dead man named Lazarus from the grave, walking on water and curing the blind. Some of the main themes that Jesus taught, which Christians later embraced, include: Love your neighbor as yourself. Forgive others who have wronged you. Ask God for forgiveness of your sins. Jesus is the Messiah and was given the authority to forgive others. Repentance of sins is essential. The Kingdom of God is near. According to the Bible, Jesus was arrested, tried and condemned to death. Roman governor Pontius Pilate issued the order to kill Jesus after being pressured by Jewish leaders who alleged that Jesus was guilty of a variety of crimes, including blasphemy. Jesus was crucified by Roman soldiers in Jerusalem, and his body was laid in a tomb. Authors in the Bible say the resurrected Jesus ascended into Heaven. The Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament, which is also recognized by followers of Judaism, describes the history of the Jewish people, outlines specific laws to follow, details the lives of many prophets, and predicts the coming of the Messiah. These letters offer instructions for how the church should operate. The final book in the New Testament, Revelation, describes a vision and prophecies that will occur at the end of the world, as well as metaphors to describe the state of the world. Most of the first Christians were Jewish converts, and the church was centered in Jerusalem. Shortly after the creation of the church, many Gentiles non-Jews embraced Christianity. Early Christians considered it their calling to spread and teach the gospel. One of the most important missionaries was the apostle Paul, a former persecutor of Christians. Paul preached the gospel and established churches throughout the Roman Empire, Europe and Africa. In addition to preaching, Paul is thought to have written 13 of the 27 books in the New Testament. Persecution of Christians Early Christians were persecuted for their faith by both Jewish and Roman leaders. Many were brutally tortured and killed during this time. Under Emperor Domitian, Christianity was illegal. If a person confessed to being a Christian, he or she was executed. Starting in A. This became known as the Great Persecution. During this time, there were several groups of Christians with different ideas about how to interpret scripture and the role of the church. He later tried to unify Christianity and resolve issues that divided the church by establishing the Nicene Creed. The Catholic Church In A. Catholics expressed a deep devotion for the Virgin Mary, recognized the seven sacraments, and honored relics and sacred sites. When the Roman Empire collapsed in A. The Crusades Between about A. In these battles, Christians fought against Muslims to reclaim holy land in the city of Jerusalem. The Christians were successful in occupying Jerusalem during some of the Crusades, but they were ultimately defeated. The Reformation In , a German monk named Martin Luther published 95 Theses—a text that criticized certain acts of the Pope and protested some of the practices and priorities of the Catholic church. As a result, Protestantism was created, and different denominations of Christianity eventually began to form. Christian Denominations Christianity is broadly split into three branches: Catholic, Protestant, and Eastern Orthodox. The Catholic branch is governed by the Pope and Catholic Bishops around the world. The Orthodox or Eastern Orthodox is split into independent units each governed by a Holy Synod; there is no central governing structure akin to the Pope. There are numerous denominations within Protestant Christianity, many of which differ in their interpretation of the Bible and understanding of the church. Some of the many denominations that fall under the category of Protestant Christianity include:

Chapter 5 : Christianity - ReligionFacts

The history of Christianity concerns the Christian religion, Christendom, and the Church with its various denominations, from the 1st century to the present. Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Christianity spread to all of Europe in the Middle Ages.

But it also caused a problem because his detailed discussions of the gospels and how they differed from each other was difficult for me to follow since I have little knowledge of the New Testament. If you are I am interested in the cultural history of religion, particularly in ancient times and the middle ages--the interactions between pagans, Jews, Christians and Muslims, for instance. If you are interested the history of Christian theology, I imagine this would be an important read. This is the book on the history of early Christianity that I have wanted to read for years--nay, decades. I have read several books and essays about the first couple of centuries, especially the period during and just after the lifetime of Jesus. Freeman gives a straightforward account that relies on historical evidence and eliminates any supernatural explanations. He supports his arguments with scriptural references where available. His arguments are in line with other historians of the period, which he references. One of the main arguments of the book, which some would dispute but for which he provides ample evidence, is that theological certainty is impossible to achieve. In the early days of Christianity there was no orthodoxy and hence no heresies, and communities had different sets of belief and methods of worship. The turning point came with the adoption of Christianity by Emperor Constantine in The church, with the state in full support, challenged and eventually suppressed learning and free debate, abdicated reasoned thought, crushed independent thinking, and denigrated empirical evidence. It ushered in a couple hundred years or so of ignorance known as the Dark Ages. One story he tells he admits has thin evidence, but he believes is nevertheless plausible. What could possibly have been his motivation? As Freeman explains, for the ancient Jews under the thumb of Roman occupation, the messiah they waited for was one who would free them from underneath the yoke of the Romans. For them, the messiah was seen as a political, not spiritual, leader. Messiahs arose periodically, created some rebellious excitement, and were usually quickly crushed. Jesus, then, was not only a threat to the status of Caiaphas and other Jewish leaders; more importantly he threatened to arouse a revolt against the Romans that would result in the Romans viciously tightening their screws on the Jews in Judea, which is precisely what happened when Jewish rebellions led to the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in 70 and Rome, after an overwhelming and brutal victory, forbade Jews from entering Jerusalem after Caiaphas feared that the followers of Jesus would take his body from the tomb and use the corpse to incite the restless mob, inviting a devastating Roman response. He is on much firmer ground with many other disclosures equally contrary to what Christians are taught to believe. Two facts to note about Paul: He eventually formulated his own theology, evidently different from the Jerusalem Jews who actually knew and lived with Jesus and did not believe him divine. When Paul claimed a quasi-divine status for Jesus he initiated a break with his Jewish past and, at least theologically, with James. He did this though he remained under the jurisdiction of James. The passages referring to the resurrection in Mark were added decades if not centuries later. Matthew adds the virgin birth and the resurrection. He gives Peter a higher status, reflects a greater respect for Judaic Law than did Paul, used Hebrew scripture as prophecies fulfilled by Jesus. Luke also used Mark as the foundation of his narrative. Luke gets the birth of Jesus wrong, muddling it with a census that did not occur. He has one of the few references to the Trinity, but with no indication that that the three elements are equal. He presents Jesus as subordinate to God, not his equal. None of them assume Jesus is divine. The collection of the canonical took several centuries to complete. Freeman notes that the four gospels were chosen, from a total of at least 20 gospels, as the canonical texts by Irenaeus, bishop of Lyon in Gaul, around , and he gave them their names to associate them with the apostles and early followers of Jesus. His selection in favor of these four was arbitrary. The selection of these four was to prove problematic since there are contradictions among them, especially John versus the three synoptic gospels. Even in the 1st century there were already fissures among different Christian communities, e. The conflict between these two communities eventually led to a sharp schism and the eventual triumph of the view advocated by the Pauline

Christians that Jesus was in some sense a deity in what sense remained controversial, as we will see over the Jewish Christian view that denied the divinity of Jesus and saw him as someone who was wholly human but had special relationship with God. In the second century there was still no set of settled theological beliefs or organized institutional church. The bishop of Rome exercised no authority beyond his own local churches. The bishops succeeded in converting a quite a few people, but the vast majority was in the eastern portion of the Roman empire. Among the views that believers held, some argued that God bestowed divinity on Jesus after his birth; others that he was solely divine, still more believed that Jesus was purely divine without any taint of human nature sullyng his spiritual purity. None of these beliefs, and others, among the Christian communities was considered heretical since there was no institutional orthodoxy that could declare them heretical. He also tried to establish a succession of bishops in Rome, whose names he made up, to make it the leading church in his version of Christianity. By this time any Jewish influences had pretty much disappeared. Philosophy began to play a large role in the theological debates starting in the late second century and into the third century, at least in the east. Many Christians in the Latin west, unimpressed or ignorant of philosophy, denied the compatibility of faith and reason and regarded the rational underpinning of faith as unnecessary. In the east, however, Greek Christians enjoyed rational discussion. The wealth and status of bishops grew, and many of them were recruited by the state. Beginning with him, emperors began to play a role in defining church doctrine. When rival bishops could not settle doctrinal disputes, Constantine called a council at his residence of Nicene in 325. The bishops attending were almost exclusively from the east. Arius, bishop of Alexandria, had argued that Christ was created by God, was inferior to God though still a divine creation that could mix with the material world, a view that many Christians came to believe. Stepping in to halt the chaos of having different views, Constantine suggested that the correct way to describe the relationship between Father and Son is they are one substance, a word not found in scriptures. The idea was to isolate Arius and his supporters with a proposal they would never accept. The problem that immediately arose for the newly-accepted doctrine was how should it be understood that two different divine personalities are made of the same substance yet also distinct as Father and Son? In its initial formulation, the Nicene Creed did not include the Holy Spirit as the third person in a Trinity. No one imagined, even after the creed was modified in 381 at Constantinople to resemble its present day form, that it would become the core of the Christian faith.

Chapter 6 : CATHOLIC ENCYCLOPEDIA: Christianity

Answer: The history of Christianity is really the history of Western civilization. Christianity has had an all-pervasive influence on society at large—art, language, politics, law, family life, calendar dates, music, and the very way we think have all been colored by Christian influence for nearly two millennia.

It has dominated western culture for centuries and remains the majority religion of Europe and the Americas. Christian beliefs center on the life of Jesus of Nazareth , a teacher and healer who lived in first century Palestine. The primary source of information about the life of Jesus are the Gospels, which were written sometime between 20 and years after his death and became the first four books of the New Testament. The Gospels describe a three-year teaching and healing ministry during which Jesus attracted 12 close disciples and other followers who believed him to be the Messiah Christos. Along with some of his teachings, his growing popularity with the masses was seen as dangerous by Jewish religious leaders and the Roman government, leading to his execution by crucifixion. Christians believe Jesus rose from the dead three days later, and in so doing made it possible for those who believe to be forgiven of sin and attain eternal life. Much of Christian belief and practice centers on the resurrection of Christ. The New Testament contains 27 books: Nearly all Christians regard the Bible as divinely inspired and authoritative, but views differ as to the nature and extent of its authority. Some hold it to be completely without error in all matters it addresses, while others stress its accuracy only in religious matters and allow for errors or limitations in other areas due to its human authorship. Christianity has divided into three major branches. Roman Catholicism represents the continuation of the historical organized church as it developed over the centuries, and is headed by the Pope. Eastern Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism separated in , when the Patriarch of Constantinople and the Pope excommunicated each other. Eastern Orthodoxy which includes the Greek and Russian Orthodox Churches and several others differs from Catholicism in its refusal of allegiance to the Pope, its emphasis on the use of icons in worship, and the date it celebrates Easter. Other cultural, political, and religious differences exist as well. Protestantism arose in the 16th century. Protestants do not acknowledge the authority of the Pope, reject many traditions and beliefs of the Catholic Church, and emphasize the importance of reading the Bible and the doctrine of salvation by faith alone. Protestantism encompasses numerous denominational groups, including Baptists, Methodists, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Pentecostals and Evangelicals. Christian practices vary by denomination, but common elements include a Sunday worship service, private and corporate prayer, study and reading of the Scriptures, and participation in the rites of baptism and communion. Distinctive Catholic practices include recognition of seven sacraments, devotion to Mary and the saints, and veneration of relics and sacred sites associated with holy figures. Eastern Orthodoxy holds many practices in common with Catholicism, but is especially distinguished by the central role of icons. The 40 days prior to Easter form the Lenten season, a time of fasting and repentance. Another holiday that has become important is Christmas, which commemorates the birth of Jesus on December 25 January 6 in Orthodox Churches. Some of these, such as St.

Chapter 7 : Christianity - HISTORY

A New History of Early Christianity shows how our current debates are rooted in the many controversies surrounding the birth of the religion and the earliest attempts to resolve them. Charles Freeman's meticulous historical account of Christianity from its birth in Judaea in the first century A.

Share via Email The provocative subtitle alerts you to the fact that this is going to be much more than a textbook. Diarmaid MacCulloch begins with what turns out to be one of many tours de force in summarising the intellectual and social background of Christianity in the classical as well as the Jewish world, so that we can see something of the issues to which the Christian faith offered a startlingly new response. Greco-Roman religion had ended up with an uneasy mixture of the cult of the emperor increasingly odd as the empire became a military dictatorship constantly changing hands after bloody conflicts and a chaotic plurality of local rites and myths. The Jewish world was marked by a lively tension over how Jewish identity was to be understood. What Christianity brought into all this was a definition of Jewish identity that opened up to become a definition of human identity independent of any particular state apparatus; it created, you could say, the very idea of a religion as a form of belonging together that did not depend on political loyalties. Of course, Christians rapidly worked out how to deploy political power and to enforce conformity. But MacCulloch resists the glib narrative of decline and fall which is always going to tempt the sceptical historian of the church. Instead, he traces the sheer variety of ways in which the basic forms of Christian life and faith were fleshed out. As a serious historian, he brushes aside the luxuriant growths of conspiracy theory - the Gnostics plus Mary Magdalene plus Knights Templar fantasy world. He is fair, remarkably comprehensive, neither uncritical nor hostile; what is more, he shows an extraordinary familiarity with specialist literature in practically every area. Also outstanding are his treatments of the achievements and limitations of European Christian mission he describes India as the "greatest failure" of Protestant mission effort, given the political advantage with which it worked, of the intimidatingly complex stories of Protestants, Catholics and Orthodox in the borderlands of the Russian empire, from the 17th to the 20th centuries, and of the distinctive legacy of Calvin, whom he rightly sees as setting out not just to carry through piecemeal reforms of an existing institution but to reimagine the Catholic religion itself on the basis of the same biblical and traditional material that others used to defend the papal church. Time and again, there are glimpses of lost worlds, possibilities that flickered and disappeared - not only the Christian empire of China in the 13th century and the Unitarian commonwealth of Poland in the 16th, but the Islamic republic of central America a short-lived proposal for anti-Spanish cooperation between Elizabeth Tudor and Morocco. MacCulloch does what a good historian should in helping you to see developments as both intelligible and by no means inevitable he is specially good on the papacy in this respect. He also makes it plain that a good many of these lost possibilities were own goals - lost because of internal Christian conflict, including the interference of Christian colonial powers. Inevitably there are a few slips in detail. And there are, equally inevitably, some gaps. If Rembrandt is, as has been said, the greatest Protestant commentator on the Bible, we might have expected more of a nod in his direction. And, most puzzling, Dante does not merit a discussion. But these are small flaws in a triumphantly executed achievement. This book is a landmark in its field, astonishing in its range, compulsively readable, full of insight even for the most jaded professional and of illumination for the interested general reader. It will have few, if any, rivals in the English language. The story is told with unobtrusive stylishness as well as clarity. The first three thousand years do not seem likely to be also the last. Language, Faith and Fiction is published by Continuum.

Chapter 8 : A New History of Christianity in China - Daniel H. Bays - Google Books

"A History of Early Christianity is a masterful book, and a pleasure to read. Freeman narrates the development, diversity, and spread of Christianity with originality and verve. Freeman narrates the development, diversity, and spread of Christianity with originality and verve.

Galerius , who had previously been one of the leading figures in persecution, in issued an edict which ended the persecution. Victory allowed him to claim the emperorship in the West. How much Christianity Constantine adopted at this point is difficult to discern. Roman coins minted up to eight years later still bore the images of Roman gods. Constantine supported the Church financially, built various basilicas, granted privileges e. It had overtly Christian architecture, contained churches within the city walls, and had no pagan temples. Constantine also played an active role in the leadership of the Church. In , he acted as a judge in a North African dispute concerning the Donatist controversy. More significantly, in he summoned the Council of Nicaea , the first Ecumenical Council. Constantine thus established a precedent for the emperor as responsible to God for the spiritual health of their subjects, and thus with a duty to maintain orthodoxy. The emperor was to enforce doctrine, root out heresy, and uphold ecclesiastical unity. Some, such as John Chrysostom and Athanasius , suffered exile, persecution, or martyrdom from Arian Byzantine Emperors. Germanic Christianity A popular doctrine of the 4th century was Arianism , the denial of the divinity of Christ, as propounded by Arius. Though this doctrine was condemned as heresy and eventually eliminated by the Roman Church it remained popular underground for some time. In the late 4th century Ulfilas , a Roman bishop and an Arian, was appointed as the first bishop to the Goths , the Germanic peoples in much of Europe at the borders of and within the Empire. Ulfilas spread Arian Christianity among the Goths firmly establishing the faith among many of the Germanic tribes, thus helping to keep them culturally distinct. They were mostly concerned with Christological disputes. Christianity as Roman state religion [edit] An Eastern Roman mosaic showing a basilica with towers, mounted with Christian crosses , 5th century AD, Louvre On 27 February , with the Edict of Thessalonica put forth under Theodosius I , the Roman Empire officially adopted Trinitarian Christianity as its state religion. After its establishment, the Church adopted the same organisational boundaries as the Empire: The bishops, who were located in major urban centres as per pre-legalisation tradition, thus oversaw each diocese. Among the sees, five came to hold special eminence: Rome , Constantinople , Jerusalem , Antioch , and Alexandria. The prestige of most of these sees depended in part on their apostolic founders, from whom the bishops were therefore the spiritual successors. Though the bishop of Rome was still held to be the First among equals , Constantinople was second in precedence as the new capital of the empire. Theodosius I decreed that others not believing in the preserved "faithful tradition", such as the Trinity, were to be considered to be practitioners of illegal heresy , [49] and in , this resulted in the first case of capital punishment of a heretic, namely Priscillian. A particular consequence of this perspective was that Mary could not be properly called the mother of God, but could only be considered the mother of Christ. The most widely known proponent of this viewpoint was the Patriarch of Constantinople Nestorius. Since referring to Mary as the mother of God had become popular in many parts of the Church this became a divisive issue. Many churches who followed the Nestorian viewpoint broke away from the Roman Church, causing a major schism. The Nestorian churches were persecuted and many followers fled to the Sasanian Empire where they were accepted. The Sasanian Persian Empire had many Christian converts early in its history tied closely to the Syriac branch of Christianity. The Empire was officially Zoroastrian and maintained a strict adherence to this faith in part to distinguish itself from the religion of the Roman Empire originally the pagan Roman religion and then Christianity. Christianity became tolerated in the Sasanian Empire and as the Roman Empire increasingly exiled heretics during the 4th and 6th centuries, the Sasanian Christian community grew rapidly. This church evolved into what is today known as the Church of the East. Oriental Orthodoxy In the Council of Chalcedon was held to further clarify the Christological issues surrounding Nestorianism. The resulting schism created a communion of churches, including the Armenian, Syrian, and Egyptian churches. Christian monasticism Monasticism is a form of asceticism whereby one renounces worldly pursuits and goes off alone

as a hermit or joins a tightly organized community. It began early in the Church as a family of similar traditions, modelled upon Scriptural examples and ideals, and with roots in certain strands of Judaism. John the Baptist is seen as an archetypical monk, and monasticism was also inspired by the organisation of the Apostolic community as recorded in Acts 2. Eremetic monks, or hermits, live in solitude, whereas cenobitics live in communities, generally in a monastery, under a rule or code of practice and are governed by an abbot. Originally, all Christian monks were hermits, following the example of Anthony the Great. However, the need for some form of organised spiritual guidance lead Pachomius in to organise his many followers in what was to become the first monastery. Soon, similar institutions were established throughout the Egyptian desert as well as the rest of the eastern half of the Roman Empire. Women were especially attracted to the movement.

Chapter 9 : BBC - Religions - Christianity: The basics of Christian history

Christianity originated in the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, who was born circa 4 B.C.E. in Roman-occupied Palestine, a Jewish province of the Roman Empire.

Guisepi On a late afternoon, in about the year AD 30, two men were walking from Jerusalem to the nearby village of Emmaus. Their conversation centered on notable events that had occurred the previous week. As they journeyed, they were joined by a stranger who seemed ignorant of these events. Surprised, they asked him: Our chief priests and rulers handed him over [to the Roman authorities] to be sentenced to death, and [they] crucified him. But we were hoping that he was the man to liberate Israel. Suddenly the stranger spoke: And how slow to believe all that the prophets said. Was not the messiah bound to suffer thus before entering upon his glory? For the stranger was Jesus of Nazareth, of whom the two had been speaking. It claims more than one billion members in all parts of the world. In the late 20th century, it is divided into hundreds of groups, or denominations, the largest of which are the Roman Catholic church, the Eastern Orthodox churches, and innumerable Protestant churches. Expectation and Reality The two men on the road to Emmaus were not disinterested bystanders. They were followers called disciples, or learners of Jesus who had known him for at least three years. During this period they had listened to all he said and had witnessed his amazing actions, such as healing the sick, giving sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf, and even bringing individuals back to life. They had become convinced that he was "the one who was to redeem Israel. This small Jewish nation, located in the eastern part of the Roman Empire, had for centuries looked forward to a time when their God would, through some decisive action, free it from outside domination and establish it as the preeminent nation in the world. One way he might do this was by sending a messiah Christos in Greek who would deliver them from their enemies and become their king. Christians believe that Jesus, from the small town of Nazareth in Galilee, was that messiah. They also believe that what he accomplished far exceeded the expectations of Israel. The Jews looked for a messiah exclusively for themselves, though his power would be such as to draw other nations to a belief in their God. His work is to be considered inclusive of everyone in all times and places. The Man and the Message With all the differences in beliefs in the many denominations of Christianity, it is impossible to set out one list of teachings that apply to all Christians everywhere. The reason for this is fairly simple. Jesus, along with his life and work, are for Christians objects of faith; and the objects of faith are thought of by different people in different ways and differently in various periods of history. No one has ever succeeded in distilling an "essence of Christianity. He was also, in some incomprehensible way, God. And by his ministry, death, and resurrection he had accomplished a universal salvation available to all who believe in him. From what Jesus said and did, his followers came to believe that God was perhaps acting through him in a very special way. It was reasonable that they should think this, for they too were Israelites; and they saw in his words and deeds what portended to be the dawning of a new age. What dashed their hopes was his ignoble death, for crucifixion was a punishment reserved for criminals. Then came the great surprise: He was raised from the dead and appeared to them again over a period of 40 days. This stunning event required a complete reassessment of what Jesus was all about. It is this reassessment that forms the basis for the writings of the New Testament. The Gospels themselves are part of it, but it is more strikingly conveyed by the other 23 books, all written by his followers over the subsequent decades after he had left them. For he had left them. How and where to could only be explained as his returning to the God who had sent him. But he did not leave them forever: He promised that he would one day return, and he gave them a mission to perform--to carry the message about his life and work to the whole world. The Assembly of Believers: The word Christian came into use years later and was at first a derogatory term applied by outsiders. When the books of the New Testament were written, the word used to name the believers was simply assembly. The Greek word is ecclesia and denotes any assembly of people, though it often had political connotations. Much later, probably in the 3rd or 4th century, the word church came into use to denote the specific kind of assembly that the believers composed. The term church is also of Greek origin, from the word kuriakon, meaning "belonging to the lord. The word is also frequently applied to denominations, a usage now so common as to be

unavoidable. Denominations are, however, institutional arrangements based on specific viewpoints and traditional practices. They exist as a result of long historical development, doctrinal diversity, and geographical separation. The assembly of believers separated themselves from the religion of Israel; they formulated an extensive assessment of what the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus meant; new congregations of believers were founded in all parts of the Roman Empire; and the believers improvised organizational arrangements and forms of worship that were to remain influential. The early Christians were all Jews. They remained in Jerusalem and partook of the religious observances in the Temple. They differed from their fellow Jews only in that they believed that the Messiah had come. Had they remained quiet about their conviction, they might well have remained a sect within Judaism. However, they insisted on preaching to all who would listen that the Jesus whom the Jewish authorities had persecuted was the one Israel had long awaited. This preaching aroused great hostility on the part of religious leaders, and the early Christians were persecuted. Yet these Christians had no thought of venturing beyond the confines of Israel with their message. It was only with the appearance of a man named Saul of Tarsus that the assembly of believers enlarged its horizons to include the whole known world. Saul, a strict Jew, was a persecutor of the church. He was nevertheless converted, and, after changing his name to Paul, began what is called the mission to the gentiles. The word gentile is simply a cover-all term for all non-Jewish peoples. It was this man who, more than any other, pulled the church out from temple and synagogue and set it apart as a separate institution. But the separation was, for Paul, more than a physical one. It was also doctrinal. Christians, he asserted, did not have to become Jews. This, perhaps more than any other factor, aroused the intense hostility of the Jews and led to a definitive separation of the two camps. The first issue that had to be settled was whether Jesus was for Israel only. The answer, already noted, was no. The first verse of the Book of Hebrews states: But in this, the final age, he has spoken to us in the Son whom he has made heir to the whole universe, and through whom he created all orders of existence. This represented a whole new way of thinking about God. Somehow this Jesus was one with the creator. This notion is abhorrent to both Judaism and Islam, which are strictly monotheistic religions for whom God is one and cannot be divided. But the Christians had to deal with this problem, and from what they believed about Jesus they could come to no other conclusion. They claimed it to be true, even though they could not understand or explain it. They simply believed it and stated it in their early confession: How could this man have achieved such status? The writers of the New Testament answer: But how could these events, occurring as they did in a remote part of the Roman Empire, have a universal significance? Yet it was stated as true by all early Christians. They believed that Jesus, by his death, had paid a universal penalty for all human unbelief and disobedience toward God. They further asserted that the resurrection was the first act by which God was restoring the whole creation. This was the message the earliest Christians took, first to Israel, then to the rest of the world. Mission to the gentiles. Paul and his associates took this message to most of the urban centers of the Mediterranean world. By the end of the 1st century there were strong congregations in Alexandria, Ephesus, Antioch, Corinth, Thessalonica, and even at Rome, the capital of the empire. Jerusalem, the mother church, was dispersed when the Roman legions destroyed the city in AD 70 during a Jewish uprising. It is unlikely that the early Christians intended to devise structures that would endure for centuries. But any institution, to operate successfully, must organize itself. Of first importance in the church were the apostles, those who had been with Jesus during his lifetime. To their number Paul was later added. They were the living and authoritative voices that could be appealed to on all questions of belief. To assist them, deacons, or attendants, were appointed to help in preaching and in the everyday operation of the congregations. Later, there developed other leaders called elders in Greek, presbyteroi, from which the modern Presbyterian denomination gets its name and leaders called episkopoi literally meaning "overseers"--the word episcopal is derived from it--normally translated as bishops. The early church had no clergy; it had people who performed specific functions--leading worship, preaching, collecting offerings, and feeding and clothing the poor among them. But as centuries passed, the three functions of bishop, elder priest, and deacon became arranged in a hierarchy. The bishop became the overseer for a city or region. He was, as well, the authoritative person in matters of doctrine. In time these functionaries came to be set apart from the rest of the membership by a process called ordination--suggesting that they were a special order within the church.