

Introduction to the New Testament History and Literature

Lecture 25: Ecclesiastical Institutions: Unity, Martyrs, and Bishops

Transcript

<https://oyc.yale.edu/religious-studies/rfst-152/lecture-25>

Overview

The Epistle of Jude can be dated to somewhere during post-apostolic Christianity and before the formation of the Canon. It refers to the apostles as representing a prior generation, yet it quotes from texts later excluded (perhaps, for example, by 2 Peter) from the Canon. The letters of Ignatius of Antioch contain evidence of a move toward the institutionalization of early Christianity. It mentions, for example, three different church offices: bishops, presbyters, and deacons. It also heavily emphasizes the authority held by those with these titles. The Didache contains liturgical and ritual instructions for rites such as baptism, the Lord's Prayer, and the Eucharist. All these documents show the change in early Christianity toward greater church structure and institutionalization.

1. The Struggle to Maintain Unity in the Early Christian Social Movement

[1] *Professor Dale Martin:* Okay we're going to talk about several different things today, several different texts, because we're coming up to the end of the semester. I often conclude with two different lectures that talk about the rise of institutionalism and institutionalization of the church, but I've decided this year to combine them into one. That's why your reading list, your reading for today, had some canonical material, the letters of Ignatius, you're also asked to read the Didache, another non-canonical early Christian writing because I want to pull different themes together. So next time, the last class of the course, the last lecture, I want to then address the kinds of big questions you might have been having all semester, which can be something like, how did this little bitty group of people following this unknown Jew in Syrian Palestine in the first century become this huge world religion? What's the continuity, if any, because I've been stressing all—in the whole semester the differences between contemporary notions about Christianity, what Christianity is, what is orthodox Christianity for people in our day and age, what people assume Christianity is all about. I've been talking about how that's very different from the canonical Christianity that we see in the New Testament, and it's even

more different from some of the non-canonical Christianity that we've seen in things like the Acts of Paul and Thecla. Next time I will talk about the bigger issue of the growth of Christianity from this fledgling little movement and a few house churches scattered around in Greek cities in the Eastern Mediterranean.

[2] I'll also talk next time a little about what is post-modern interpretation of scripture. I did talk a bit about the theological interpretation of scripture and how that's different from the historical critical interpretation of scripture that you're learning in this semester. If you really want to get into theological interpretation of scripture in an academic environment you need to do that through something like the Divinity School or in a seminary because that's, of course, where they're supposed to be teaching people how to interpret this text for contemporary Christians. That's not what we're going to talk about in this course most of the time. I have hinted at that, but there's also a way of approaching scripture that might be considered not the canonical traditional way of theological interpretation and also not the modernist way of modern historical criticism, and that's what we might call post-modern approaches to the text, and even to the text as scripture itself. Next time I'll address some of those bigger

issues about the New Testament that I've kind of put on the side for the whole semester. Today we're taking a first step toward that because I'm going to look at some canonical material in this lecture, but I'm also going to look at the letters of Ignatius and the Didache to show you how the church started becoming institutionalized in ways that look more familiar to us after the period of the New Testament composition.

- [3] How do you create and maintain unity in a social movement? That's what early Christian leaders had to face pretty quickly. We've already seen that in Paul's letters, right? In 1 Corinthians shows a church that is at odds with itself. People disagreeing about what the basic nature of the Gospel is, and Paul writes 1 Corinthians in order, the whole theme of 1 Corinthians is, you are the united body of Christ now start acting like it. And so Paul's trying to get a fractured church to see so it's united. There are different ways you can see this being done in early Christianity. Paul, of course, didn't have church structures to appeal to. Paul couldn't say something like, if you have a question go to your bishop. He also couldn't say, look at the New Testament, he was writing it at the time. There wasn't anything like that to look at. Paul exercised his own charismatic authority. By that, we mean that in the sort of Weberian sociological sense of an authority that doesn't derive from an office, from any kind of official office that Paul had, but it derives from simply his force of character. When someone has a leadership position that derives more from their personality, their force of character, their ideas than it does from an official office then that's charismatic authority as opposed to an official kind of institutional authority. That's what Paul had to deal with. That's what all the earliest leaders of these little house churches had to deal with. They had to push their own ideas of what the church meant, of what the body of Christ meant, of what was proper ethics, of what proper interpretation of scripture, and they had to do it on the strength of their own character and their force of personality. That was one way that people tried to create unity in this early fledgling movement.

- [4] Gradually, of course, you have other ways of developing. Another way of developing unity that we see around this time is hierarchical

leadership. You have officers, you have people who are either elected or appointed as officers, and they control unity and enforce unity from the top down. And you can see this, therefore, in modern Christianity, modern religious movements. The Roman Catholic Church has bishops, and cardinals, and the Pope. And everybody who knows anything about Roman Catholicism knows that what the Pope and the cardinals say goes, or it's supposed to. American Roman Catholics and a lot of northern western European Catholics sometimes don't go along with The Vatican on many things, but the structure of the Roman Catholic Church is intended to help maintain unity by the means of an official hierarchical leadership structure.

- [5] You also have different Protestant ways to do this which are constitutional kinds of systems. When say, the Presbyterians, have debates about whether to ordain homosexuals, whether to allow gay marriages, the ordination of women, which was the debate that really rocked the Presbyterian church and many other churches back in the 1970s, most of them got over that by now; now the thing that's rocking them is sexuality. When they had disagreements they would go to the general convention, which occurs every year, and you have people elected out of different local churches and parishes, and presbyteries, they call them the Presbyterian Church, and those people who are themselves basically elected from their local churches and their local presbyteries are representatives to the general convention. It looks very much like American politics. It's not much of an accident. The American Constitution to some extent, is based on what was a more Presbyterian Protestant kind of church polity, of having different houses of representatives and this sort of thing. So American denominations, Protestant denominations, which were growing up at the same time, as different Protestant movements were growing up, and at the same time as American constitutionalism was growing up, all influenced each other. That's another way to maintain unity that Protestant churches tend to use.

- [6] Then you have other churches in America that are very free churches. I grew up in a denomination that didn't even call itself a denomination because it considered itself simply the Church, called the Church of

Christ, and the Churches of Christ don't have any national offices, no place you can go anywhere in the world like there are for most other denominations that have a national office with officers and set rules and decide on hymn books and decide on Sunday school materials. There's nothing like that anywhere in the world. These churches are all completely autonomous and individual to themselves. They appoint their own officers, they decide what is doctrine and what is not doctrine, they hire and fire their own ministers, and not even the ministers of these churches are the highest authorities. They basically preach and teach, but they're not the ones who actually run the churches, so each individual church—there are lots of churches like that in the United States. There are a lot of Baptist churches that aren't even part of the Southern Baptist Convention. There are lots of free churches and some of them would even have “free” as part of their name. Of course in America this is not at all unusual. Anybody can rent out a storefront and start their own church, and many people have done so.

were in Asia. It was amazing. You would go in, and although everything was in Japanese, it was exactly like it was back in Texas. There was no organization forcing this. It was just the cohesiveness of the socialization of these different groups.

2. *The Letter of Jude: The Move towards Institutionalization*

[7] These kinds of churches, it's remarkable that the denomination I grew up in, although there's no meta-congregational organization that runs this, it's amazing how much alike they are. When I was a kid I would travel to Alabama, or to Maryland, or to St. Louis, Missouri, and you would go to a Church of Christ, as long as it said it on its sign and it was one of the same kinds we went to, and the services would be the same, They sing the same songs, they have the same doctrine. It's almost like somebody wrote it all out and said, this is what you'll do on Sunday morning. The amazing thing was nobody had written it all out. It was just done by the sheer nature of these churches of being very close knit and sort of ruling each other by threatening to dis-fellowship you if you didn't do like everybody else did. There was a great amount of cohesiveness. In fact, I remember being astounded when I was twenty years old, and I was in a rock band at my college, and we did a two-month tour for the USO playing on military bases all over—in Japan, Taiwan, Okinawa, Hawaii, the South Pacific, different places, the Philippines. And we would actually—because the college I went to was a Church of Christ College we would often visit a Church of Christ in Tokyo or wherever we

[8] What we're going to see today is the move in early Christianity, the very beginnings of the move from this freewheeling, charismatic, structureless kind of organization structure and authority practice that we see in Paul's letters and in other documents we've looked at so far, and we're going to see a move towards more institutionalization. It's not going to be the Catholic Church yet, it's not going to be what becomes Christianity in the fourth and fifth centuries, when it does become much more highly organized. But we're going to start seeing that move. We see the move a little bit already in the letter of Jude, so open your Bibles and look with me at Jude.

[9] Jude claims to be the brother of James, and scholars think most of the time what he's trying to do is claim that he's the brother of James, who was the head of the Jerusalem Church, that is, James the brother of Jesus. Jude, by that figuring, would also make himself the brother of Jesus. Mark 6:3 or Matthew 13:55 links these guys together. What most scholars think is that this pseudonymous, you won't be surprised now to know that we don't think the brother of Jesus or the brother of James actually wrote this text. What we know of Judas, who would have been and of course as I think I've explained already, “Jude” is simply the Anglicization of the Greek name Judas, which is simply a Greek version of the Hebrew name Judah, so they all refer basically to the same name. Jude, or Judas, or Judah was—if he was a brother of Jesus as the Gospels seem to imply, then he was an illiterate fisherman, and we don't think someone with his background, with his lack of education would have been able to write this letter. So that's the reason we basically assign it to pseudonymity.

[10] He's dealing with some divisions; I'm not going to go through the letter very much because I want to move ahead to some of these other documents. There are signs, like I talked

about with 1 and 2 Peter last time, that this is a post-apostolic letter. One of those is verse 3:

[11] Beloved while eagerly preparing to write you about the salvation we share, I find it necessary to write and to appeal to you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.

[12] This faith is this thing that was delivered to the saints at one time. He also talks in verse 17 about the Apostles,

[13] But you, beloved, must remember the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus; for they said to you, "In the last time there will be scoffers indulging their own ungodly lust."

[14] So he sees himself living in the last times, but he didn't see the apostles living in the last times. Even though Peter, and James, and John saw themselves as living in the last times, he's living far enough after them so that he could put them in a prior time, a sort of apostolic stage of the church, and now he's writing in the last times. So this is a post-apostolic letter. But it's also pre-canonical, as I said last time talking about 2 Peter. Remember I talked about how 2 Peter uses this letter of Jude as a model for his own letter, and he quotes stuff out of out, takes stuff out of it.

[15] One of the things, though, 2 Peter did was, he took out the stuff that he found in Jude that was not canonical, that he didn't believe was part of the real Bible. But Jude has it in there. In verse 9, "But when the archangel Michael contended with the devil and disputed about the body of Moses," and he goes on says what happened. Well, why does this happen? Is this in your Bible? Nope, it's not in your Bible. Michael never disputed about what to do with the body of Moses after Moses died according to our Bible. It is in a Jewish document we call the Assumption of Moses. He's citing a Jewish document that's not in the Bible that we use, and it may be that that's why the 2 Peter took that reference out. He didn't want the Assumption of Moses being cited in this text. He also, as I said last time, he cites some Enoch material in verses 14 and 15.

[16] It was also about these that Enoch in the seventh generation from Adam prophesied saying, "See the Lord is coming with ten thousands of his Holy ones."

[17] What we have now, literature, under the name of Enoch, which was written probably written over a period of a few centuries, was an accumulation of several different documents, but it started being written in the third century BCE and then was added onto in the centuries after that. So he cites materials from the Assumption of Moses and Enoch, which demonstrates that he's still living in a time when what's considered scripture by these early followers of Jesus is still in a state of flux, so he's not writing in a time where the Canon, even the Jewish Canon, the Hebrew Bible Canon, has been set yet.

[18] He's also writing in a time when some of the Eucharistic practices may also be not like they were later. Look at verse 12, "These are blemishes on your love feast [your agapes] whilst they feast without fear, feeding themselves," and he goes on and condemns the people. These agapes probably refer to the taking of the Communion, The Lord's Supper, but in the context of a bigger meal as we've seen was the case also in Corinth. In 1 Corinthians 11, Paul talks about them coming together and having the meal, and as part of that meal they would have the wine and the bread of the Lord's Supper.

[19] So Jude represents an in between time in early Christianity that's post-apostolic, so it's not of the apostolic period as Paul's letters are, Paul's authentic letters, but it's also not quite to the firm ecclesiastical institutions that now for the rest of today and next time I'll talk about become formed. You don't have here, at this point yet, bishops, set creeds, set liturgies, and set scripture. All of those things will later be used to settle disputes. What did I say? Bishops, creeds, liturgy, and scripture. Those are four things that come to be used as, you might call them, technologies of unity, technologies of control in bringing unity out of this wild diversity of early Christianity that we've been making a theme of this course all along the way.

3. *The Letters of Ignatius and Martyrology*

[20] Then the next thing we want to talk about is the letters of Ignatius, because he then represents another stage in this process, and especially the use of the office of the bishop itself. First, you notice how much Ignatius makes himself out to be this great martyr. Part

of his authority derives simply from the fact that he's been arrested and he's being taken from Antioch, where he was bishop, to Rome to stand trial and then to be killed. Along the way, he writes these letters when he's going through Asia Minor, to different cities in Asia Minor, sort of like the author of Revelation had done. Notice what he does: he plays on the idea that he's going to die and he makes so much out of it that it becomes pretty much gross. Look, for example, at the Letter to the Romans if you can find it in your packet. I need to have a Bible song for Ignatius' letters so we'll know where to find them. It's toward the last one. The Letter to the Romans from Ignatius. Look at chapter 4:

[21] For my part I am writing to all the churches and assuring them that I am truly in earnest about dying for God, if only you yourselves put no obstacles in my way.

[22] So he's telling the Romans, when I'm getting tried and put before the beast, don't you try to intervene and save me, don't try to save me, he's saying.

[23] I must implore you to do me no such untimely kindness. Pray, leave me to be a meal for the beasts, for it is they who can provide my way to God. I am his wheat, ground fine by the lions' teeth, to be made purest bread for Christ. Better still, incite the creatures to become a sepulcher for me. [He wants the lions' bodies to be his tomb.] Let them not leave the smallest scrap of my flesh so that I need not be a burden to anyone after I fall asleep. [I'll just sleep here in the dark don't worry about me.] When there is no trace of my body left for the world to see, then I shall truly be Jesus Christ's disciple. So intercede with him, that is with God, for me that by their instrumentality [that is the instruments of the lions] I may be made a sacrifice to God. However, I am not issuing orders to you as though I were a Peter or a Paul [a little bit of modesty here] they were apostles. I am just a condemned criminal. They were free men. I am still a slave. Though if I suffer Jesus Christ will give me liberty and in him I shall rise again as a free man. For the present, these chains are schooling me to have done with earthly desires.

[24] Look at the next chapter, chapter 5 and about halfway down. I don't have page numbers here. "How I look forward," this becomes

almost morbid. Modern people reading Ignatius' letters, and he looks like he's morbid in his craving for martyrdom. That's how odd it looks to us modern people.

[25] How I look forward to the real lions that have been got ready for me! All I pray is that I might find them swift. I am going to make overtures to them, so that unlike some other wretches, whom they have been too spiritless to touch, they may devour me with all speed. And if they are still reluctant I shall use force to them. [He's going to pull the lion's teeth right toward his chest.] You must forgive me but I do know what is best for myself. This is the first stage of my discipleship, and no power, visible or invisible, must grudge me my coming to Jesus Christ. Fire, crosses, beast fighting, hacking, and quartering, splintering of bone and mangling of limb, even the pulverizing of my entire body, let every horrid and diabolical torment come upon me, provided only that I can win my way to Jesus Christ.

[26] This is martyrology stuff, folks. This is the beginning of the entire cult of the martyrs in Christianity that becomes so important in early Christianity and then for hundreds of years. Now Paul had also talked about chains, his chains being something that was good. He gloried in his chains and being in prison. Ignatius takes this from Paul and just runs with it even more. In Ephesians, the eleventh chapter of Ephesians, the letter not of Paul to the Ephesians but the letter of Ignatius to the Ephesians, he talks about his chains as pearls. In the first chapter of this letter of Ignatius to the Romans, he talks about the chains of Jesus. Then also, I mentioned that he sees himself, in his martyrdom, as getting closer to Jesus, and in this he's becoming himself—he calls himself in the first part of this and the second chapter of the letter to the Romans, the *logos theou*. What do we know that means? We've seen this *logos* stuff before, right? Transliterated, remember what *logos* means? The "word," correct, *theou*, anybody know? "Of God": Ignatius himself is the word of God. This is what the Gospel of John called Jesus; Jesus was the Word of God. Ignatius can even claim, for himself, the status that he, especially to his martyrdom is the Word of God. Where does he get all this? Well this is this developing martyrology kind of ideology in literature.

[27] The idea was, in most of early Christianity, if you're good Christian people, when you die you won't immediately go to heaven. It's not like popular thinking about Christian doctrine. True Christian doctrine doesn't say that you immediately go to heaven. necessarily. It says that you may be sleep or do something, but you have to wait for the resurrection of the body. That's why you confess things like in the Nicene Creed, if you confess the resurrection of the body or the resurrection of the flesh. That's because, according to Christian doctrine, that's the true afterlife experience, not just the immortal soul living forever, but the resurrection of your body, it's a newly made body. But what happens before the resurrection? Because we all know that comes at the end of time. Well, most Christians believed you slept somewhere, or maybe your soul, your spirit, would go to some kind halfway house. This develops into the notion of purgatory or some kind of Hades-type place, a place where you would either sleep or your soul will go someplace else, and you'd wait for the resurrection.

[28] Well, according to developing Christian ideas, martyrs didn't have to wait for the resurrection. Once they were martyred, as a reward for their martyrdom, their spirit goes straight to heaven to be with Jesus immediately. You bypass some bad waiting room type experience if you're martyred. This became even so important that people who were condemned to be martyred but then weren't actually killed, for whatever reason, sometimes people would be condemned, and maybe the beasts weren't hungry that day. After being thrown to the beast they might be turned loose later, or they might be imprisoned for awhile, or they might have a different governor who comes along and decides to pardon people or release them. What do you do with people who are condemned to martyrdom but not actually martyred? Well, they were very close to martyrdom so that makes them very close to God. Remember, if martyrs, right after they die go to heaven to be with Christ, they're right there in heaven, and therefore you can kind of pray to martyrs to intercede with God or Christ for you because they're in heaven already.

[29] This idea that martyrs could be intercessors for living Christians develops. This even carries over to where if you are condemned to

martyrdom but you don't actually get martyred, you become what they call a confessor. This is because people can confess to you, they can confide in you, they can help you. So even people who are not actually martyred that have been condemned to death at some point for their faith, they attained a certain kind of closeness to God through that activity, and they gained therefore a certain kind of authority. Now this was not an official ecclesiastical authority. No institution of the church granted these confessors their authority, but they developed this authority because people respected them and trusted them. Confessors became somewhat of like charismatic authority figures in the early church.

4. *The Letters of Ignatius and Church Office*

[30] Now this caused problems in a few places. Because what if you have a bunch of people going out to see some monk who's now a confessor because he was condemned to martyrdom but then still lived, and they're asking his opinions about, should I eat meat on Friday? What days of the week should I pray on? Is it okay to do this? Is it okay to do that? What if the confessor gives a different answer from the bishop? Well some people might think the confessor, who is closer to God after all, has more authority even than the bishop. Well, bishops don't like this of course, they consider themselves the authority in that location, and so you get sometimes problems of who's the greater authority? The confessor, the martyr type figure, or the ecclesiastical official figure of the bishop?

[31] Notice what Ignatius does with this, though. He spends a lot of time in his letters claiming the authority of a martyr because he's on his way to being killed. He says, don't save me, I want to be killed as a martyr. But Ignatius also is one of the earliest people we have in Christianity who claims great authority also for himself as bishop. Now he wouldn't necessarily have authority as a bishop over anywhere except the region he was actually a bishop. He wasn't the bishop of the world; he was the bishop of Antioch, the town in the east where Paul and Barnabas spent a good bit of their time. His actual official ecclesiastical authority as bishop was only in Antioch and its environs. He's playing up his martyrology

kind of authority so that he can exercise a bit of authority even over these other churches that he's writing too. That gives him a little bit of a reach of authority.

administering the Eucharist in the mass, and baptizing, and under that will be deacons who have other kinds of duties in church, and they're in that 1, 2, 3 hierarchy.

[32] Notice what he does then with all this bishop stuff, and here we see the beginnings of the development of the Catholic Church structure at this very early time. This is early because we think that Ignatius is writing these letters around the year 110. If you have this developing episcopacy, that's just the Greek sort of sounding word for bishop or bishopric or something like that. If you have this developing office of the bishops—then that's happening at a fairly early time in Christianity. Look therefore at the Letter to the Trallians, and its right before the Letter to the Romans, chapters 2 and 3.

[37] The deacons, too, who serve the mysteries of Jesus Christ must be men universally approved in every way, since they are not mere dispensers of meat and drink, but servants of the church of God, and therefore under obligation to guard themselves against any slur or imputation as strictly as they would against the fire itself. Equally, [this is paragraph 3] it is for the rest of you to hold deacons in as great respect as Jesus Christ, just as you should look upon the bishop as a type of the Father, and the clergy as the apostolic circle forming his counsel.

[33] Your obedience to your bishop, as though he were Jesus Christ [wow talk about raising the bishop up] shows me plainly enough that yours is no worldly manner of life but that of Jesus Christ himself, who gave his life for us that faith in his death might save you from death. At the same time however, it is essential that you should never act independently of the bishop as evidently you do not. You must also be no less submissive to your clergy.

[38] Notice what we've got then, you've got a Trinity, almost, of offices that are matched by something like a trinity of these figures. The bishop, is the Father, the deacons are Jesus Christ, and the presbyters—he calls them an apostolic council. What he's doing is he's actually setting up these offices of the early church to look kind of like a law court. Where you have a judge and you would have other officials. So he's imitating Roman official legal and political government structures by having regional bishops presiding over a plurality of priests who then are also over a plurality of deacons.

[34] The Greek word here is literally “presbyters.” Remember we've already seen this word come up, which means “elders” more literally in Greek. Now it's starting to be used for particular kinds of clergy in the church. So we see here the bishop, presbyters, which will come to be priests,

[39] What makes it really odd is that he equates Jesus, the Father, and Apostles with deacons, bishop, and clergy. He's giving these men in these offices a great deal of power. In fact, it's giving them way more power and authority than most of us historians think they actually had at this point. We know from other historical documents that bishops didn't have that much power until much later. Presbyters didn't have that much until way later. So Ignatius is trying to pump up what is actually a fairly new structure of authority and institutional structure in these. He says all the time things like, don't do anything without the bishop. He talks about, in the Letter to the Magnesians, paragraph 6, he talks about “the bishop's authority is the authority of God the Father.” He says in Magnesians paragraph 7, “the bishop is to be regarded it as the Lord Himself.”

[35] ... and mind them as apostles of Jesus Christ, our hope in whom we shall one day be found if our lives are lived in him. The deacons, too ...

[36] So now we have this other office. We've seen these before, right? We saw presbyters and deacons, and bishops in a certain sense, in the Pastoral Epistles, but they weren't carefully formed into a three-tiered institution of offices. Now we're getting it in Ignatius. What will become later basic church structure, that lasts up until the Reformation, will be bishops on top, appointed to a particular location, so the bishop will be over a city and all the churches over this city. Then under that will be priests, who have certain duties, for example

- [40] What is he doing here? He's writing these to these different churches, and even in fact scriptural interpretation—the main thing about modern Protestantism is the idea that every Christian is responsible only to the reading of scripture, scripture only. Your responsibility is to find the will of God through scripture, though the revelation of scripture. Ignatius totally disagrees with that. He says there should be no individual interpretation of scripture apart from your bishop. Why? Ignatius knows what we've all learned ourselves, that you make a text mean anything you want, and as we see from Protestantism, fracturing up into a million different denominations in churches, all claiming to be following the Bible, you can make the Bible say whatever you want it to say, and everybody does. So Ignatius also, he says, you can't even interpret scripture on your own. You have to do that in an agreement the bishop.
- [41] What have we seen here going on? We see Christianity, this fledgling movement, starting to imitate the structures of the Roman Empire. It's no longer a bunch of simply house churches that are loosely federated by the fact that they send letters back and forth, and have emissaries between them. It's no longer an authority structure where Paul simply has to exert his authority as much as he can through his own force of will and his charismatic authority, and claim authority as an apostle, although he doesn't have paper. Nobody ever gave Paul a diploma that said, "Paul is now an Apostle." He couldn't refer to his Princeton Seminary, theological seminary diploma to prove his authority. He just had to depend on this claim that he had that he had seen the risen Jesus, that he had had this revelation experience. We're moving from that kind of charismatic exercise of authority to what is now much more institutional kinds of hierarchy structure of authority.
- [42] Medieval Christianity would itself, therefore, imitate the structures of monarchy and empire. Who elects the Pope? We'll see later that, in this period, bishops seem to actually have been elected by the people, at least by the presbyters. In bishops weren't often elected. Bishops in the modern Roman Catholic Church are not elected by the people, they're appointed by the Vatican. Who elects the Pope? Well the cardinals. So if the Pope is elected, but by only a limited number of men, old men who themselves were appointed by previous Popes. This is not a democratic system that the Roman Catholic Church is structured on. What is it structured on? It's structured on monarchical and imperial ideas of politics. The— in the ancient world, in the Middle Ages, so you have an emperor and you have a pope and they come to hold their power in remarkably similar ways. They each have a court, the emperor or the king has a court of officials with knights and that sort of thing that advise him and carry out his will. The Pope has a house with cardinals and bishops. The Reformation comes along and things change. The Reformers, of course, sort of claim that what they were doing was simply getting back to the biblical model. That's not really right. What they were doing was reflecting what was a rising bourgeoisie form that was at least a bit more like Republican or Democratic political structures.
- [43] Protestant churches have their different kinds of ways of structuring themselves, which are not free from political influence either, they just represent the early modern political structures that arose as the bourgeoisie in Europe developed more and more power and took more powers onto itself. The growth of a mercantile middle class, and the decline of the aristocracy in Europe, led to more Democratic tendencies, first in towns, and then in countries overall. It led to Republicanism. The Dutch were the first to completely get rid of kings and have a modern republic. And then of course the United States becomes the most famous of modern republics in the beginning. In place of having the king or the emperor in control, you're supposed to have constitutional controls. Things that bodies of people come together to make laws and constitutions, and then you use that constitutional control to bring about unity. Now of course, as we've seen in our own modern politics, you can't always depend upon the constitutions to protect you from certain rulers, but that's the ideal reflecting a modern movement.
- [44] That's one of the ways that you see how Christianity both comes out in the ancient world, changes in the medieval period and then changes again in the early modern period. It's reflecting the changes that are going on also in politics in society, which we of course shouldn't be surprised about.

5. *The Didache and the Development of Liturgy*

- [45] The other thing that we can see developing too is, and we see this more from the *Didache*, the other document I asked you to read today, the shift toward trying to control things like liturgy. The *Didache* is simply a Greek work meaning “the teaching,” because this document purports to be the teaching of the twelve apostles. Now it wasn’t actually written by the twelve apostles. It was written much later. It may have been written around the same time as the letters of Ignatius. Most people place it around the turn of the first century, so around the year 100 or a little bit after that. It’s called, *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, and it’s the first time we get in Christian literature something like a manual on how to do it. Here’s how you’re supposed to do worship service, here’s how you’re supposed to do a baptism, here’s how you’re supposed to do the Eucharist to the mass. Here’s what authority structures you have. It was discovered in 1873, so really it’s a very modern discovery, didn’t exist from the ancient period. As far as we know, it was discovered in a monastery in Istanbul, Constantinople that is, now Istanbul. The importance of the discovery of this document is hard to overestimate because it’s just a great, great document for seeing how early Christians actually practiced their liturgy. It’s very dependent upon the Gospel of Matthew and the letter of James in the New Testament. It shows a lot of things like that, it’s also dependent upon certain Greek philosophical and Hellenistic Jewish ideas.
- [46] Now let’s just look at some of the things it says. Look on chapter 7 of the *Didache*. We get hints about how early Christians did baptisms from different places. We think most of the time that baptism, in the earliest period, was not sprinkling the water or dipping a little water on somebody, but putting people all the way under the water. We also get hints maybe that they had people do it at night, and they had people do it naked. So you took off your clothes, you went down into the water, you were baptized, you came up, and they put a white robe or something else on you. We have a few hints about this, but this is the earliest document we have with anything like these instructions. It says now about baptism: “This is how to baptize. Give public instruction on all these points, and then baptize in running water... .” Notice, it actually says “living water” in the Greek, but what it means is, try to baptize in a river or something that has actual running water and not in still water, if you can.
- [47] ... in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and the Holy Spirit. [so you have Trinitarian formula as part of the baptism] If you do not have running water, baptize in some other. If you cannot in cold, then in warm [so they had to be baptized in cold water]. Before the baptism moreover, the one who baptizes and the one being baptized must fast, [so you have fasting ahead of time] and any others who can, and you must tell the one being baptized to fast for one or two beforehand.
- [48] Then he goes into fasting, here’s how you’re supposed to fast:
- [49] Your fast must not be identical with those of the hypocrites. They fast on Mondays and Thursdays but he should fast on Wednesdays and Fridays.
- [50] Who are the hypocrites? Probably Jews. He’s probably trying to say, I don’t want you Christians to fast in the same fast days of the weeks that Jews are fasting on, so he gives them other days to fast. Notice what he says: he gives the Lord’s Prayer, which is familiar to most modern people.
- [51] Our Father in heaven, hallowed by your name. Your kingdom come, you will be done on Earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our bread for the tomorrow. Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. Do not lead us into temptation but save us from the evil one, for yours is the power and the glory forever.
- [52] That sounds a lot like the Lord’s Prayer that you yourself may often say in church if you ever go to church. If you notice carefully, this prayer is actually more like what most modern Christians pray in church than is either the version of the Lord’s Prayer in Matthew or Luke. In other words, he’s closer to what we actually pray today than either the prayer version in Matthew or Luke, which is a very interesting fact in itself, that our prayer comes more from a tradition, it’s closer to the *Didache*, than it is to the Bible.

- [53] Notice that he gives them instructions on the Eucharist. One of the interesting things is if you go to a church nowadays, usually what they do is, they bless the bread first and then the cup of wine. He actually has it the other way around. He says, you give the cup first and then the bread. You have, first, prayers of thanksgiving, and it's this word thanksgiving that we actually get the term "Eucharist," and that just comes from the Greek word "thanksgiving." If you go to different Christian denominations, they'll call this differently. Some places call it the Lord's Supper, some people call it just the Communion, and if you—some churches, especially Episcopal churches, will call it the Eucharist. Catholic Churches, they usually call it the Mass, but they're all referring basically to the same thing, the sharing of the bread and the wine.
- [54] He gives instructions on that. Notice it says the Eucharist is to be restricted to only baptized Christians. You don't give the bread and wine to people who are not baptized. Then he gives some prescribed prayers in chapter 10, and it's interesting. Now we're not in a time where people are just allowed to pray any old way they want too, he actually gives written prayers that he wants them to use. Again, don't exaggerate this guy's control, whoever's writing this. We don't believe that this document was actually controlling behavior of all Christians of this time. He's trying to bring about some unity and conformity in a time when, we historians assume, there was a still a huge amount of diversity. By publishing this document and telling people even how to pray he's trying to bring about this kind of unity.
- [55] In chapter 14, it's interesting because he's give the different events that would take place on the Lord's Day, that is Sunday. For example, you're supposed to have confession, you confess your sins, you're supposed to reconcile with anybody that you're not in agreement with, and then you have the Eucharist, which he talks about as a sacrifice. Paul had never talked about sort of The Lord's Supper as being something alike a sacrifice. In later Christianity it will be considered something like a sacrifice, and so that's why you can only have a priest do it because it actually changes the elements and something real is going on there. The Eucharist has by this time started becoming considered something like a sacrifice for Christians who don't have any other form of sacrifice, because Christians don't go around sacrificing lambs or anything else.
- [56] Then you have different leaders, he has in chapter 11 roles for apostles, and he also has roles for prophets. Notice what he said in chapter 11, and I think is really interesting. This is a time when there seems to be regular sorts of officers, but then there are these non-sort of regular officers.
- [57] Now about the apostles and prophets, act in line with the gospel precept. Welcome every apostle on arriving as if he were the Lord. But he must not stay beyond one day; in case of necessity, however, the next day too. If he stays three days he is a false prophet. On departing, an apostle must not accept anything, save sufficient food to carry him until his next lodging. If he asks for money he is a false prophet.
- [58] So he's kind of mixing these words—apostle and prophet. Remember "apostle" just means "one who is sent out" in Greek. What he's talking about are roving prophets who go around to different churches. And it's really interesting. He says, let him stay with you two or three days. If he's going to stay longer than that he's going to have to start working for his bread. And if you have a prophet who says, I'm getting a message, I'm getting a message, oh yeah you're supposed to give me \$5, Jesus says so. Then you know he's a false prophet and you kick him out. It's a nice way to figure out which are genuine prophets and which are false prophets. If this were followed in most modern Christianity, it would have a lot of false prophets not on TV. Unfortunately, it doesn't work in modern Christianity, so we have a lot of false prophets on TV asking for a lot of money.
- [59] There's also in chapter 12, this is not just true for prophets. He talks about how to treat other travelers. The churches are becoming something almost like hotels, which makes sense, because in the ancient world there aren't really very many hotels. You couldn't just check in at the Motel 6 or the Holiday Inn, when you're traveling around. You have to stay with friends. There are a few taverns, yes, some brothels, but they're not very safe. In fact they're very unsafe, and they're not respectable places for a good person to stay.

They're houses of ill repute. And so what do you do if you're good respectable Christian and you want all your other fellow Christians to know that you haven't been sleeping around when you're on your business trip? Well, you have to either stay with friends or, now increasingly, you can stay with the church. But, he says, if you have these travelers who come in and they want to stay more than two or three days, then they have to get a job, and they have to start supporting themselves. You see him developing this church as a networked organization. Again, we have more and more organization coming into play here, that has defined offices and some others that aren't so well defined, like these traveling prophets which he's trying to regularize. He's trying to give rules for an institution of the prophet, because that itself is not an institutional kind of office in early Christianity.

[60] So, with Ignatius and with the Didache, we have moved a long way from this tiny little band of followers of a Jewish apocalyptic prophet named Jesus of Nazareth. In fact, we've even moved a good ways away from the informal charismatic kind of house churches planted by the apostle Paul. We're now seeing the institution. We've not yet arrived at what will become Christianity. That is, with all the trappings of late antiquity, full church structures, creeds, doctrines, social networks, monasticism, this will be a big thing that starts developing especially in the third, fourth, and fifth centuries, the rise of monasticism as another form of Christianity that provides a very important structure for it that will last all

the way through the medieval period. We don't have that yet. We don't have a Canon yet. We don't have a Canon even of the Old Testament, much less of the New Testament yet. We see developing in the letters of Ignatius and in the Didache the beginnings of this later development and to what will become a more mature Christianity.

[61] The move from that late antique Christianity though, say, to the Christianity of the fourth century when we get the major creeds, like the Nicene Creed, and the Creed of Chalcedon, to modern Christianity, and it being what we call a "world religion," is itself centuries away though. I'll talk about that next time. What we've done this whole semester is barely scratch the surface of what would be the history of Christianity. The main point of the scratching has been to get you to see that, at the very beginning, the first one hundred years of this Christian movement—because that's basically all we've covered, and not all that either, but the basic first one hundred years—this was not anything like the religion it came to be. It was diverse, it was widely different across geographic areas, it had lots of different doctrines. There wasn't anything called orthodoxy yet and heresy yet. That all develops later. This is the very beginnings of it. Any questions, comments, or outbursts? Okay I'll see you next time. We will also hand out the final paper instructions next time in class.

[end of transcript]