

Church History – Early & Medieval – Definitions

Docetism – The doctrine that Christ's body was not human but either a phantasm or of real but celestial substance, and that therefore His sufferings were only apparent.

Gnosticism – A prominent heretical movement of the 2nd century Christian Church, partly of pre-Christian origin. Gnostic doctrine taught that the world was created and ruled by a lesser divinity, the demiurge, and that Christ was an emissary of the remote supreme divine being, esoteric knowledge (gnosis) of whom enabled the redemption of the human spirit.

Asceticism – Severe self-discipline and avoidance of all forms of indulgence, typically for religious reasons.

Logos - the Word of God, or principle of divine reason and creative order, identified in the Gospel of John with the second person of the Trinity incarnate in Jesus Christ.

Montanism – A prophetic movement in Phrygia in the 150s/170s. Heavily focused on spiritual gifts and asceticism.

Confessors – Those who stayed faithful during persecution.

Lapsed – Those who wavered during persecution by either denying Christ altogether or buying fake certificates or handing over Christian literature (Scripture).

Monarchianism – Meaning one rule was a common word for monotheism (one God).

Dynamic Monarchianism – A development of adoptionism (Jesus was fully human but not divine), where Jesus was so worthy that God adopted Him as a Son, either at the resurrection, His baptism or in the foreknowledge of His virtues at birth.

Modalist Monarchianism/Sabellianism/Patrispassionism – God takes on different modes or wears different masks as the situation demands. God is only one essence and one being and there is no distinction among persons (Father, Son, Holy Spirit). Sabellianism is named after Sabellius (3rd century).

Manichaeism – A Christian heresy that combined Christian, Buddhist and Zoroastrian doctrines to create a religious system. Similar to Gnosticism where the material world is evil and god-particles must be released from their material prison. Named after Mani (3rd century).

Monasticism – Christians unhappy with the pomp of the imperial church sought to live ascetic, simple lives, away from society.

Donatism – Those who believed ordinations, baptism and communion were not valid if done by a bishop, elder, priest etc. that had not remained faithful during persecution. Named after Donatus of Casae Nigrae (4th century).

Arianism – Jesus Christ is the highest created being, created timelessly, before Genesis 1:1. The Son is eternally subordinate to the Father.

Homoousios – Of the same substance.

Homoiousios – Of similar substance.

Latin Vulgate – The first Bible to be translated into Latin by Jerome.

Pelagianism – The theological doctrine of Pelagius and his followers, in particular the denial of the doctrines of original sin and predestination, and the defense of innate human goodness and free will.

Semi-Pelagianism - Unlike the Pelagians, who denied original sin and believed in perfect human free will, the semi-Pelagians believed in the universality of original sin as a corruptive force in humanity.

Apollinarianism – Jesus had a human body in which dwelled a divine spirit. Named after Apollinaris of Laodicea (mid-late 4th century).

Nestorianism/Dyophysitism - The doctrine that there were two separate persons, one human and one divine, in the incarnate Christ. It is named after Nestorius, patriarch of Constantinople (428–31), and was maintained by some ancient churches of the Middle East.

Eutychianism – Christ had only one nature (a form of Monophysitism). Named after Eutyches (5th century).

Visigoths, Ostrogoths, Vandals, Burgundians, Franks, Heruli, Goths – Germanic Tribes that invaded the Western Roman Empire in the 5th and 6th centuries.

Monophysitism – Jesus Christ has only one nature (blended deity and humanity).

Chalcedonian – Those holding to the Chalcedon Creed's definition of the nature of the hypostatic union (Christ has two natures but is one person).

Monothelitism - The theological doctrine that Christ had only one will even though he had two natures (human and divine); condemned as heretical in the Third Council of Constantinople (7th century).

Shia Muslim – A minority group within Islam that believed the leader of Islam should be a direct descendent of Muhammad.

Sunni Muslim – A majority group within Islam that believed the leader of Islam should be elected by the people or appointed by the current leader.