† Blessed is our God always, as it is now, was in the beginning, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. ... in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Through the prayers of our holy Ancestors, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us and save us. Amen. Glory to You, our God, glory to You.

O Heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, You are everywhere and fill all things, Treasury of blessings, and Giver of life: come and abide in us, and cleanse us from every impurity, and save our souls, O Good One.

† Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us (three times).

† Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it is now, was in the beginning, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Discord 2

*New Beginnings*

Thus, we are not surprised to find that the New Testament Church is also rent by discord, division, and disruption in 1054; or that the churches today are following the same path as the Old Testament Church from 930 to 586 BC; nor, are we amazed to discover, when God returns to His temple around 6/4 BC, that nobody among the Jews is paying attention…. Oh, a handful of shepherds are paying attention, a few Persian astronomers are paying attention, Herod is paying attention. The archangel Gabriel, with Joseph, and Mary are certainly paying attention: but, the rest of humanity is asleep. So, what happened between 4 BC and 1054? Why did the Great Schism take place? We can assure you that 1054 was not the first inkling of discord in the Church. We could not possibly foresee that the Church would be splintered into 30,000 or more distinct bodies today.

*First Century*

The first century greets us with the assurance that discord, division, and disruption are sure to continue: expect them.

“Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.”[[1]](#endnote-1)

“I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves….”[[2]](#endnote-2)

“Beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues….”[[3]](#endnote-3)

“From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force.”[[4]](#endnote-4)

“… the enemy sowed tares….”[[5]](#endnote-5)

“Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.”[[6]](#endnote-6)

“And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them.”[[7]](#endnote-7)

“But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant.”[[8]](#endnote-8)

“Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the marketplaces….”[[9]](#endnote-9)

“Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses.”[[10]](#endnote-10)

“And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest.”[[11]](#endnote-11)

“Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat….”[[12]](#endnote-12)

“… the world hate you….”[[13]](#endnote-13)

“And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His Name.”[[14]](#endnote-14)

“And they stoned Stephen….”[[15]](#endnote-15)

“For I will shew [Paul] how great things he must suffer for My Name’s sake.”[[16]](#endnote-16)

“And he killed James the brother of John with the sword.”[[17]](#endnote-17)

“And when it was day, certain of the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul.”[[18]](#endnote-18)

“And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together.”[[19]](#endnote-19)

“I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.”[[20]](#endnote-20)

“[We] labor, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it:”[[21]](#endnote-21)

“For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds by Christ.”[[22]](#endnote-22)

“… if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased.”[[23]](#endnote-23)

“For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake;”[[24]](#endnote-24)

“Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.”[[25]](#endnote-25)

“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.”[[26]](#endnote-26)

So, discord was present in the New Testament Church from the outset. We have not referenced even half of the topic: a dozen times this many instances are easily found: strife is everywhere. Before the century is out, both Paul and Peter will be slain. However, “The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church.”

Jerusalem Ⅰ (circa 50),[[27]](#endnote-27) the First Ecumenical Church Council

*Second Century*

Even before the opening of the second century the Judaizers were trying to force Christians to be circumcised and conform to other Jewish rituals;[[28]](#endnote-28) Paul was already confronting Greek philosophies and philosophers;[[29]](#endnote-29) and John was condemning both Judaism and the Greek philosophies as being against Christ.[[30]](#endnote-30) In the second century or earlier, Gnosticism raised its ugly head, attempting to make Christianity into a secret-knowledge Mystery religion; major heretics such as Marcion, Valentinius, and Montanus were all active. Christianity was an illegal religion, now clearly separated from Judaism. Persecution of Christians was in full swing: many were martyred. Some, faced with torture, and death, folded under the pressure and renounced Christ to save their lives. As a result of persecution: few records were kept; many records were destroyed; organization and possibly even liturgics were kept simple.[[31]](#endnote-31)

*Third Century*

Christian persecution intensified with the Edict of Decius (250)[[32]](#endnote-32) which targeted Christianity as inherently disloyal to the Empire. The “Little Peace of the Church”[[33]](#endnote-33) followed until Diocletian’s Great Persecution (303).[[34]](#endnote-34) Other emperors were more tolerant. Christians who had buckled under pressure to Rome’s demands to worship idols were known as Lapsi;[[35]](#endnote-35) evidently, some of these were forced to be rebaptized.

Novatian (circa 200-258) was a somewhat troubled, if brilliant youth; his Baptism credentials were incomplete in that he does not appear to have received Confirmation (Chrismation)[[36]](#endnote-36); Pope Fabian made him a priest against protests. Novation became a leading elder: he was a profound scholar, the first to use Latin in Rome[[37]](#endnote-37), and an eloquent speaker. Pope Fabian was martyred and the Roman Papacy was vacant for a period: Novatian and other priests assumed papal leadership duties during this period. Novatian held that the Lapsi had committed unforgiveable[[38]](#endnote-38) sin; while most of the Church took a more moderate view, holding to justice in Church discipline without cruelty. It was complicated. Cornelius and Novatian were rivals competing for the Papacy (251). Novation died in 258: he was ultimately excommunicated and declared to be antipope. Nevertheless, this harsh judgmental approach eventually took the name Novatianism[[39]](#endnote-39); it rent and scarred the Church for many centuries to come.[[40]](#endnote-40)

[[41]](#endnote-41)

1. Matthew 7:15 [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Matthew 10:16; Luke 10:3 [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Matthew 10:17 [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Matthew 11:12 [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Matthew 13:25-30; 13:36-43 [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Matthew 16:6, 11, 12; Mark 8:15; Luke 12:1 [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Matthew 22:6, from 22:1-14 [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Matthew 23:11; Mark 9:34, 46 [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Mark 12:38; Luke 20:46 [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Luke 12:15 [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Luke 22:24, 26 [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Luke 22:31 [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. This is a transition from John 7:7, where the disciples were still identified with the world; the more they became identified with Christ, the more the world hated them. John 15:18, 19; 1 John 3:13 [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Acts 5:41 [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. Acts 7:59 [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. Acts 9:16 [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. Acts 12:2 [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. Acts 23:12 [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. Romans 8:17-18 [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. The essence of this error is not merely a difference of theological opinion, or simple disputation, which is one thing; this error seeks to divide the indivisible Body of Christ, on the basis of some felt need for a childish one-upmanship: as though it were possible for Paul, Apollos, Cephas, and Christ to be diverse in their theology: for, all were instructed in One Holy Spirit; all were equally members of the One Body of Christ. Christ suggests, rip your own bodies to shreds, not Mine (Matthew 5:29; 18:9; Mark 9:47). 1 Corinthians 1:12; 3:4 [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. 1 Corinthians 4:12 [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. 2 Corinthians 1:5-7 [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. Galatians 5:11; 6:12 [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. Philippians 1:29 [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. Philippians 3:2 [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. Colossians 2:8 [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Council_of_Jerusalem> [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. Acts 15 [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
29. Acts 17:22 [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
30. 1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 John 1:7; Revelation 2:9; 3:9; see also Romans 2:29 [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
31. For more detail: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity_in_the_2nd_century> [↑](#endnote-ref-31)
32. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Decian_persecution> [↑](#endnote-ref-32)
33. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Little_Peace_of_the_Church> [↑](#endnote-ref-33)
34. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diocletianic_Persecution> [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
35. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lapsi_(Christianity)> [↑](#endnote-ref-35)
36. Baptism and Chrismation are a single act, even if separated by more than a decade. Baptism symbolizes and emphasizes the washing away of the old life, the death of that which is corrupt. Chrismation (Confirmation) symbolizes and emphasizes the giving of the Holy Spirit, creating new life, which anoints all Christians as Prophets, Priests, and Kings. Without Chrismation, many view Baptism to be defective and incomplete. [↑](#endnote-ref-36)
37. Following Tertullian of Carthage (155-240) [↑](#endnote-ref-37)
38. The expression, “unforgivable sin”, incorporates a play on words, in which the “unforgivable sin” could very well be the failure and refusal to forgive. The core centrality of forgiveness is especially seen as a theme in Matthew; we believe it the main theme of Matthew: so, we believe the Great Commission is a mandate to proclaim forgiveness to the whole Gentile world. Having entered into the Kingdom of God’s forgiveness: Gentiles are to follow Jesus, be baptized, and taught in the Faith, without adherence to Judaism. This unwarranted practice of dogmatically putting names to “unforgivable sin” grows, as the Church becomes more and more like Judaism (Pharisaism). Matthew 6; 18; 25; 25; Acts 15 [↑](#endnote-ref-38)
39. It is more likely that the Novationists thought of themselves as Καθαροι, the Clean Ones, Purists, Puritans. [↑](#endnote-ref-39)
40. Heretical modern practices of rebaptism; though they obfuscate their true nature by claiming to bring a fullness to the rite, which is otherwise lacking, or some other paltry excuse for justification; all find their roots in Novatianism: all claim that they are somehow better than others. This is true of English Puritanism, as well as several other historic movements. All such movements and attitudes show blatant disregard for the Lord’s warning in Matthew 13:24-30.

    The unity of the Church is found in Christ’s blood and righteousness, in the Spirit, not in the human perfection of doctrine, praxis, or worship. The danger of rooting up and killing tender young plants exists even in the worst cesspool of religion: for who knows where Christ is pleased to sow seeds.

    Of the thirty thousand or more modern divisions of the Church; all are informed to some extent by Novatianism. How will we ever sort out who is right and who is wrong? This is a job only for angels.

    Those who have fallen aside are to be lifted up and restored (Matthew 6:6-15, especially verses 14-15, and the detailed meaning of the word, παραπτώματα: falling aside). If our understanding of παραπτώματα is correct, and it is, the only sinners that Novatianists ever successfully expelled from the Church were themselves: due to their hard and unforgiving hearts. As far as Novatian and the rest; we must and do forgive them all: we take pains that unforgiveness not scar or sear our consciences.

    The cure for Novatianism begins with confessing from the heart, along with Paul, the naked reality of being chief of sinners (1 Timothy 1:15). From this platform of honest humiliation, we then look up at everyone else, seeing them as superior to ourselves… even Novatianists. Consequently, when we come across another Christian in the ditch, our only desire is to help them get up. To accomplish this task, we have to get down in the ditch and look for survivors with signs of life.

    <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Novatianism>

    <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Novatian>

    <https://blogs.ancientfaith.com/orthodoxyandheterodoxy/2012/08/03/a-tale-of-two-bishops-st-cyprian-and-the-novatianists/>

    <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity_in_the_3rd_century>

    <http://www.lutheran-hymnal.com/lyrics/tlh342.htm> [↑](#endnote-ref-40)
41. If you have been blessed or helped by any of these meditations, please repost, share, or use any of them as you wish. No rights are reserved. They are designed and intended for your free participation. They were freely received, and are freely given. No other permission is required for their use. [↑](#endnote-ref-41)