

men from sin. He (Jesus) was wiser and better than most of us, but was not God. To make his work easier he received "Christ", a Divine spirit, who also left him before the cross enactment. There are some interesting traditional accounts of Cerinthus, preserved in Eusebius, and I will probably tell you about it...if not, ask about John and the public bath.

II.2.d Christian Centers

Christian Centers

The Christianity of the first centuries centered around key cities..it was an urban movement. In the early church the hub was Jerusalem until its fall under the military movements of Titus in 68-70 AD. Its prominence diminished after this and even more after the bar Cochba rebellion in the second century. The ban on Jews living in Jerusalem which followed these wars affected the church to some point although the "bishop" of Jerusalem was a respected person throughout the Apostolic age. It would return in importance in the 4th/5th centuries but would eventually lose this status after the Islamic conquests.

Alexandria rose as a center for the church in the latter part of the first century. Due to its prominence as an educational and cultural center, it soon had a strong Christian community. From it would come great impetus to Christian schools, literature, and monasticism.

Rome was the largest city in the western world and the most important in the Empire. It quickly became a Christian center (read Romans 16) and soon had the largest congregation of Christians. The "Peter tradition" clearly gained a great grip on Rome and as other centers eventually disappeared or lost prominence. Through changing economic and political conditions, Rome became increasingly prominent. There is no reason to doubt that Peter was in Rome--that does not make the claim of the Roman church any more authoritative--. The facts of history and the claims of Rome are very different matters...one may be correct and the other completely beyond the facts...case by case.

Antioch in Syria was a very important center and was also strong in education. Carthage became the strong Christian center in North Africa and Ephesus had considerable influence in Asia Minor.

These centers often were jealous one of the other...a situation that did not advance the church's health.