

# Slow Religion: The Foundations of Christian Faith in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

*Where is God in the Whirlwind or Exile of Today?*

The Slow Religion: The Foundations of Christian Faith explores the core beliefs and experiences of the Christian faith and invites reflection in our 21st Century/Covid-19 pandemic context. The series is led by Joe Jennings and the Rev. Zoila Schoenbrun and organized into two sets: first, the historical context and development of the faith; and, second topical examinations of belief and how to apply those today. The Topics include: God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, Incarnation, Resurrection, Forgiveness of Sins and Eternal Life. Each subject will include a brief presentation to give historical and textual content, readings in the Bible, creeds and prayers from multiple sources, and then questions for reflection and discussion.

## **Pre-Christian Origins and Context**

Pre-Christian context for the new religion: Greek, Pagan, and Jewish views of God, early creeds and prayer life. Sources include the Old Testament and Roman and Greek texts. We will reflect on how do we respond when God seems distant, and modernity attempts to crowd out religious faith?

## **Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit**

Life, ministry, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, and the increasing prominence of the Holy Spirit as witnessed in the Gospels. Comparative views of the evolution of the creed and prayer life from 1st century Judaism to Jesus. Sources include Gospels and Roman texts. We will reflect on how do we discern God's presence and command and how do we respond when God becomes active in our lives?

## **The Early Church**

How the early Christian community experienced the Holy Spirit, expanded its communal prayer life, built the foundation of the Church and creeds (confession and profession of faith) and differentiated and defended itself from the influences of Judaism and Greek philosophy. We will reflect on how do we connect with the Holy Spirit in our lives, experience God's love and acceptance, and find the strength to love and serve God in the world around us?

## **Follow-on Meetings: Do I believe in \_\_\_\_\_? And How Do I Apply It Today?**

1. God
2. Jesus Christ
3. The Holy Spirit
4. Incarnation
5. Resurrection
6. Forgiveness of Sins
7. Eternal Life

## Pre-Christ Origins and Competition

Pre-Christian context for the new religion: Greek, Pagan, and Jewish views of God, early creeds and prayer life. Sources include the Old Testament and Roman and Greek texts. We will reflect on how do we respond when God seems distant, and modernity attempts to crowd out religious faith?

### Cultural backgrounds

- Jewish
- Greek
- Pagan

### Brief Historical overview

- Israel
- Roman Empire

### Comments on death and resurrection

- Greek/Roman
- Jewish

## Readings (NRSV)

### Jewish/OT Context

Gen 1:1-2 “1 In the beginning when God created[a] the heavens and the earth, 2 the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God[b] swept over the face of the waters.”

Deut 6:4-5 “Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone.

5 You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.

Deut 26:5-9 “A wandering Aramean was my ancestor; he went down into Egypt and lived there as an alien, few in number, and there he became a great nation, mighty and populous. 6 When the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, by imposing hard labor on us, 7 we cried to the Lord, the God of our ancestors; the Lord heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. 8 The Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with a terrifying display of power, and with signs and wonders; 9 and he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey.”

### Jewish On Resurrection<sup>1</sup>

Israel's exile and restoration -- Ezekiel 37:1-14 the vision of the valley of the dry bones

Resurrection begins life and is about a return from exile -- Isaiah 26:16-21

Martyrs, and resurrection focused on their vindication -- Daniel 12, 2 Maccabees, 2 Macc 7:1-23

Restoration of state after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD: 4 Ezra 7, 1 Enoch and 2 Baruch

Important in Pharisaic theology: Josephus (War 2:163; Ant. 18:14) and the New Testament (Acts 23:7-8) “Resurrection functioned for the Pharisees<sup>2</sup>, not as an abstract doctrine about what happens to God's people (or to anybody) after death, but as a statement about the great turn-around within Israel's fortunes that would shortly take place, and about the fact that when this event happened those who had been loyal to Torah, but had died ahead of time would be raised to share in the blessings of the Age to Come.” Pharisaic belief, in other words, is to be seen as a development of the same underlying story that we see in Daniel and 2 Maccabees.

---

<sup>1</sup> N.T. Wright: Christian Origins and the Resurrection of Jesus: The Resurrection of Jesus as a Historical Problem

<sup>2</sup> N.T. Wright: Christian Origins and the Resurrection of Jesus: The Resurrection of Jesus as a Historical Problem

Wisdom of Solomon 3:1-3, 7-8.

“The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no torment will ever touch them. In the eyes of the foolish they seemed to have died, and their departure was thought to be a disaster, and their going from us to be their destruction; but they are at peace.” (3:1-3)

“In the time of their visitation they will shine forth, and will run like sparks through the stubble. They will govern nations and rule over peoples, and the Lord will reign over them forever.” (3:7-8)

Two views during first century CE Jewish religious leadership:

- Sadducees, who seem to have denied any doctrine of post-mortem existence Mark 12:18; Josephus, War 2:165
- Pharisees, who affirmed a future embodied existence, resurrection

### **Greek/Roman Context**

“It is hard to find the maker and father of the universe, and having found him it is impossible to speak of him at all.” Plato, *Timaeus*

“Plato’s Demiurge is the operation of Reason (Logos) in the universe.”<sup>3</sup> “And man attains a vision of the Good by “pure intelligence”. By dialectic, the highest principle of the soul is raised to “the contemplation of what is best in existence.”

“In view of these considerations, it would appear that we are forced to conclude that (a) we are certain as to the dialectic approach, and (b) we are uncertain to any mystical approach (in Plato’s philosophy).”

“He breaks away from the de facto materialism of the pre-Socratic world; asserting the existence of immaterial and invisible Being, which is not a shadow of this world but is real in a far deeper sense than the material world is real... there is True Being, a stable and abiding reality, which can be known, which indeed is the supreme object of knowledge...”

### **Rome**

Polytheistic, and highly religious, the Romans ascribed their military, economic and political success to fidelity to the Gods. The religion was practical and transactional, *do ut des*, “I give that you might give.” There was no concept of separation of Church and State and many political leaders also held high positions in the religious world of Rome.

The State had a founding myth, but the religion had no creation myth of similar power. There were upper heaven gods, underworld gods, and many earthly deities. As the empire grew it absorbed local religions as a mean of maintaining local social order. The Romans absorbed the Etruscan religion and then the Greeks, and grew out from there.

### **Greek/Roman on Resurrection**

Death was a one way street<sup>4</sup>. No resurrection. There was a underworld. But death was all powerful and no one escaped death.

For those who wanted an afterlife:

1. Those who wanted a new body
2. Those who wanted a spiritual experience – Platonists

Resurrection meant new body after death

Not a concept that made sense in the Greek/Roman theological worldview

### **OT Prayers**

Exodus 3:4-14 4 When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush... “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.”... I know their

---

<sup>3</sup> Frederick Copleston, A History of Philosophy, Vol.1, Greece and Rome pp 203-26

<sup>4</sup> NT Wright Resurrection Lecture Notes

sufferings, 8 and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians... I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt."... "I am who I am."... '(Say) I am has sent me to you."

1 Kings 19:11-15 11 Elijah at the cave on Horeb. "Now there was a great wind... but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; 12 and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence. 13 When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then there came a voice to him that said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" ... "Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus."

Isaiah 6:8 "8 Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I; send me!"

Isaiah 57:15-16

"For thus says the high and lofty one  
who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy:  
I dwell in the high and holy place,  
and also with those who are contrite and humble in spirit,  
to revive the spirit of the humble,  
and to revive the heart of the contrite.

1 Chronicles 29: 10-14 David said: "Blessed are you, O Lord, the God of our ancestor Israel, forever and ever... all that is in the heavens and on the earth is yours; yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head above all.... 14 "But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to make this freewill offering? For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you."

1 Kings 8:27-30 (A prayer of Solomon) "27 "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Even heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you, much less this house that I have built! 28 Regard your servant's prayer and his plea, O Lord my God, heeding the cry and the prayer that your servant prays to you today; 29 that your eyes may be open night and day toward this house, the place of which you said, 'My name shall be there,' that you may heed the prayer that your servant prays toward this place. 30 Hear the plea of your servant and of your people Israel when they pray toward this place; O hear in heaven your dwelling place; heed and forgive."

Psalms 36:9 "For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light."

Psalms 46:10 ""Be still, and know that I am God!  
I am exalted among the nations,  
I am exalted in the earth."

Psalms 31:5 "Into your hand I commit my spirit;  
you have redeemed me, O Lord, faithful God."

Psalms 18:1 "I love you, O Lord, my strength.  
2 The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer,  
my God, my rock in whom I take refuge,  
my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold."

### Reflection

We will reflect on how do we respond when God seems distant, and modernity attempts to crowd out religious faith?

How does prayer change when we go from asking to listening for God?

## Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit

Life, ministry, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, and the increasing prominence of the Holy Spirit as witnessed in the Gospels. Comparative views of the evolution of the creed and prayer life from 1<sup>st</sup> century Judaism to Jesus. Sources include Gospels and Roman texts. We will reflect on how do we discern God's presence and command and how do we respond when God becomes active in our lives?

### Outline

Outline (from Alan Richardson, "Creeds in the Making" Notes)

Christianity is a historical religion

1. Central facts of Christianity are the life, character, teaching, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ

The central facts of Jesus remain:

1. He lived in a certain time, lived in a certain way, and taught certain things,
2. Was crucified under Pontius Pilate and died
3. He was widely believed to have risen from the dead
4. His followers founded a society that has played an enormous part in the subsequent history of the world

Attempts to have Christianity without Jesus, seen as a school of thought and morality/system of ideas has issues:

1. It is the character and life of Jesus which authenticate his teaching about God and man;
2. It is the actual circumstances of his life and death and resurrection that guarantee the truth of the system of ideas and turns it into a religion

The historical Christian religion has always been a faith in a person – a personal relation to the God revealed in Jesus, not a mere intellectual acceptance of certain teachings about God given by Jesus.

Historical Christianity (the development of Christian thought between 1<sup>st</sup> century CE and 21<sup>st</sup> century CE is consequently not a system of ideas, but an attitude towards a historical person; and for this reason it is not possible or desirable for us to attempt to separate the religion of Jesus from the religion about Jesus.

The content of the Gospels is Jesus himself, not a doctrine or creed about Jesus. The acceptance of Christianity as our personal religion is not a mere assent to an individual proposition, but the living response of our whole personality to the fact of Jesus

### Christians<sup>5</sup> on Resurrection

Heaven and hell – the early Christians did not talk about their own personal futures – they spoke about transforming the present – the kingdom of God was here, now – God was doing something new now.

Christian modifications to Jewish thought on Life After Death:

1. Jews had no consistent belief in life after death – Christians were completely consistent in believing in it – they believed in the resurrection of Jesus Christ as a historical event
2. In Second Temple Judaism resurrection was just not that important – it was talked about but not central to the faith. Christians made resurrection central to the new faith in Jesus Christ.
3. Christians gave Resurrection a much more precise, and different meaning than the Jewish thought before them. Resurrection means the body has been transformed by death and resurrection. It has new properties. Most importantly it is incorruptible – won't decay and rot.
4. Christians split resurrection into two:
  - a. Jesus had already been bodily resurrected
  - b. Rest of would resurrect later
5. Collaborative Eschatology (Wright and Crossan)
  - a. God had raised Jesus Christ
  - b. Now all Christians were called to participate in Jesus mission
6. Redefinition of the Resurrection

---

<sup>5</sup> NT Wright on Resurrection Lecture Notes

- a. Jews meant resurrection for Israel
  - b. Christians gave it new meaning
    - i. Baptism of the individual into the Holy Spirit and the Christian Community
    - ii. Ethical obedience to Jesus Christ and God through the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts and lives
7. Messiahship
- a. Jewish
    - i. Jews expected a Messiah to be a military/political leader who would throw off the oppressor (the Romans) and reestablish the state of Israel. They did not expect the Messiah to die, much less be executed by the Romans.
    - ii. Past Jewish messianistic movements all ended with the leader being killed, the followers scattering or picking a new leader. None claimed that their leader had been seen again, had been raised from the dead. Dead was dead.
  - b. Christians
    - i. Redefined Messiahship, God was acting in the world to create a new world order here on earth, through spiritual leadership not political or military leadership.
    - ii. Christians found in the OT texts that described the messiah dying and rising after death.
    - iii. Christians jumped from Jesus Christ (Messiah in Greek is Christ) to Lord – meaning overlord of all earthly political and military leaders –thus they expressed allegiance to a new and different King.
8. Point of Resurrection
- a. Death was defeated – earthly powers that use death and the threat of death to maintain power were defeated

Why did the early Christians modify the Jewish concept of Resurrection?  
What can we say about the early resurrection stories in the Gospels?

4 Gospels do not fit neatly together – they reflect different oral traditions/stories about the same event.

For such a remarkable event it is not expected that there would be more than one version of what happened and in what order.

4 Strange Features about the 4 Gospel's Resurrection Stories:

1. Resurrection stories have few OT references in them. The rest of the gospels are full of OT references. “according to the scriptures” is added later by Paul. All 4 gospels tell the story from their own author and communities perspectives based on their own oral tradition. But they do not support the resurrection by citing the OT.
2. All 4 gospels list women as the first witnesses to the resurrection.
  - a. In the first century CE women were not admissible witnesses in court or public opinion. And by the time Paul writes 1 Cor 15 he has airbrushed them out of the story.
  - b. Having the women in the Gospel rings true because no one would have put them into the stories if they were trying to improve believability.
3. Portrait of Jesus himself
  - a. He is not like Daniel “shining like a star”
  - b. Jesus Christ appears with a normal body, that is different from how he had been before the resurrection. His body has been transformed. Comes and goes from locked rooms. Often not recognized.
  - c. He is not perceived to be a ghost or spirit – he is a transformed body.
4. The gospel resurrection stories do not present a future hope (heaven) for the Christians
  - a. Instead they are given the Holy Spirit and through baptism they are accepted into the body of Christ
  - b. but their charter is to carry on Jesus work to the ends of the earth.

What can we conclude?

1. The resurrection stories are every early oral traditions from the early Christian communities
2. They pre-exist Paul
3. They have very little polish to them – they are more or less reported as remembered

4. Same portrait, different artists

Resurrection boils down to two statements:

1. The Tomb was empty
2. Disciples encountered the risen Jesus Christ

### **The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit<sup>6</sup>**

The Christian religion in its beginnings owed a great deal to Judaism and very little to the Greek philosophical view. Christian's viewed God as ever-present and ever-active in the world. But whereas the Jews limited God to the Chosen Race, Christian's viewed God's activities as taking place across all people and all time and all place. This ceaseless activity of God in the world, the early Christian movement, ascribed to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

Early Christians after the resurrection carried the good news all over the known world. They experienced the continued experience of God leading and guiding them, encouraging and sustaining them. Wherever they went, and regardless of who they met, they felt the presence and power of God.

The early Christians felt a direct experience of God mediated by Jesus, their Risen Lord, whose spirit now filled the world. Their experience was with a living communion with the Master who had led them from Galilee to Jerusalem. Flavored with the personality of the historical Jesus whom the original disciples and followers had known in his earthly life.

God was now seen to possess the character and quality of God.

Thus the Holy Spirit in the NT is God in action in the lives of humans. He is God, sanctifying, inspiring and enabling mankind. The doctrine of the Holy Spirit retains this early, first hand shared community experience, of the Holy Spirit. The early church recognized God the Father, Jesus the son and the Holy Spirit as God's will through Jesus in the world.

### **Readings**

#### **Jesus**

1 John 1:3 "3 we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us."

Mark 8:29 "29 He asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Messiah." [h] "

1 Cor 15:17 "17 If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins."

1 Cor 15: 3-8 "3 For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, 4 and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, 5 and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. 6 Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters [c] at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. [d] 7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. 8 Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me."

#### **Mark 1: 1, 9-11**

1 The beginning of the good news [a] of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. [b]

9 In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 10 And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. 11 And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; [h] with you I am well pleased."

#### **Acts 2 (NRSV)**

---

<sup>6</sup> Source: Alan Richardson, "Creeds in the Making"

## Peter Addresses the Crowd

14 But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, “Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. 15 Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o’clock in the morning. 16 No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

17 ‘In the last days it will be, God declares,  
that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,  
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,  
and your young men shall see visions,  
and your old men shall dream dreams.  
18 Even upon my slaves, both men and women,  
in those days I will pour out my Spirit;  
and they shall prophesy.  
19 And I will show portents in the heaven above  
and signs on the earth below,  
blood, and fire, and smoky mist.  
20 The sun shall be turned to darkness  
and the moon to blood,  
before the coming of the Lord’s great and glorious day.

21 Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’  
22 “You that are Israelites,[a] listen to what I have to say: Jesus of Nazareth,[b] a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know— 23 this man, handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law. 24 But God raised him up, having freed him from death,[c] because it was impossible for him to be held in its power. 25 For David says concerning him,

‘I saw the Lord always before me,  
for he is at my right hand so that I will not be shaken;  
26 therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced;  
moreover my flesh will live in hope.  
27 For you will not abandon my soul to Hades,  
or let your Holy One experience corruption.  
28 You have made known to me the ways of life;  
you will make me full of gladness with your presence.’

29 “Fellow Israelites,[d] I may say to you confidently of our ancestor David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. 30 Since he was a prophet, he knew that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would put one of his descendants on his throne. 31 Foreseeing this, David[e] spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah,[f] saying,

‘He was not abandoned to Hades,  
nor did his flesh experience corruption.’

32 This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses. 33 Being therefore exalted at[g] the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you both see and hear. 34 For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says,

‘The Lord said to my Lord,  
“Sit at my right hand,  
35 until I make your enemies your footstool.”’

36 Therefore let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah,[h] this Jesus whom you crucified.”

**John 1**  
**New Revised Standard Version**

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being 4 in him was life,[a] and the life was the light of all people. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. 8 He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. 9 The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.[b]

10 He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. 11 He came to what was his own,[c] and his own people did not accept him. 12 But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

14 And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son,[d] full of grace and truth. 15 (John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.'") 16 From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. 17 The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. 18 No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son,[e] who is close to the Father's heart,[f] who has made him known.

**John 3:16-21 (NRSV)**

16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

17 "Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. 18 Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. 19 And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. 20 For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. 21 But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God." [j]

## **Holy Spirit**

Gen 1:1-3 1 In the beginning when God created[a] the heavens and the earth, 2 the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God[b] swept over the face of the waters. 3 Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.

Matthew 1:18 Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. (Luke 1:35)

Matthew 3:11 "I baptize you with water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." (Mark 1:8)

Matthew 28:19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,"

Mark 13:11 "When they bring you to trial and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say; but say whatever is given you at that time, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit."

Luke 3:22 and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

John 14:26 But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you.

John 20:22 When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

Acts 1:2 until the day when he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen.

Acts 1:5 for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

Acts 1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Acts 2:4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

Acts 2:38 Peter said to them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 9:31 Meanwhile the church throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and was built up. Living in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers.

## **Reflections**

### **Early Church**

How the early Christian community experienced the Holy Spirit, expanded its communal prayer life, built the foundation of the Church and creeds (confession and profession of faith) and differentiated and defended itself from the influences of Judaism and Greek philosophy. How do we connect with the Holy Spirit in our lives, experience God's love and acceptance, and find the strength to love and serve God in the world around us?

### **Outline**

### **Readings**

### **Reflections**

Bibliography

Alan Richardson, *Creeds in the Making*

Robert F. Evans, *Making Sense of the Creeds*

Henry Chadwick, *The Early Church (The Penguin History of the Church)* (v. 1