Evolution of Christianity

In about 2000 B.C., many displaced tribes were wandering through Middle East throughout the Middle East because of the political upheavals that accompanied the collapse of Akkadian kingdom and coming of the Babylonians. These patriarchal tribes, under guidance of the oldest and most respected male members, founded communities united by bloodlines, economic interests, and folk traditions. One of these tribes known as Hebrews, led by Abraham settled in the territory called Canaan, a region identified loosely with ancient Israel. These tribes believed that Abraham was guided by supernatural force, and this supernatural force made a covenant, or solemn agreement with Abraham to protect his family and bring prosperity to his offspring if they agreed to obey his divine commands. These Hebrews enjoyed many prosperous decades in Canaan, and in 1500 B.C. moved to Egypt at time when it was overrun by Hyksos until Egypt reconquered their land and enslaved them. In about 1250 B.C. a leader, Moses led Hebrews to Exodus from Egypt. These events were recorded on Hebrew scriptures, and it described Moses as a savoir sent by God. Their religion valued human life as sacred, because it was given by God, who created and owned all things. The core of Mosaic law was the Ten Commandments, which set forth the proper behavior of human beings. Hebrews were called Jew later, and they started to incorporate two new features into their religion which are eschatology, or the concern with the end of the world, and apocalypse or prophecies about the coming of God and a day of judgment. This future world would be led by a Messiah, or Anointed One, who would bring peace and justice to all. Christianity takes its roots from Judaism, and it gained much of its power from tremendous moral force of its central beliefs and values. The surviving sources for the origin of Christianity are writing in Greek by early believers who were openly partisan. According to them, Christianity began within the Jewish believers of Jesus. The outline of Jesus’ life is described in books called Gospels. The writers of these Gospels were Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, and only two these evangelists who are Matthew and John, were witnesses of Jesus life on earth. There was a belief at that time that in order to become Christian you first had to become a Jew. This view of course was changed by Paul, a Jew converted to Christianity after Jesus’ death. He welcomed led a group who welcomed gentile, or non-Jewish members. Mark’s Gospel was written in part to support Paul’s gentile faction. Paul was a citizen of Rome, and therefore he was able to preach freely Greek-speaking Jew, and Jewish converts scattered across the Roman Empire. Paul addressed theological concerns in epistles, or letters which he directed to churches he either founded or visited across Roman Empire. Paul interpreted Jesus’ life as “Suffering Servant” who was noble and guiltless but misunderstood and punished on behalf of others. He said that Jesus suffered for our sin we inherited from Adam and Eve. He also said that human redemption could be obtained only through believing in Jesus Christ and his sacrifice. The New Testament which was created after Jesus’ coming to earth, started from Gospels, which talked about Jesus’ life and his teachings, and ended with Revelation, that talked about the end of the world, and the Judgment Day.

**Adoption of Christianity.**

Christianity was adopted by Emperor Constantine of Rome in 313 A.D. as a official religion of the Roman Empire. The adoption of Christianity enabled most priests to join army units, and bishops to attend imperial courts, because they didn’t want to join or attend before. Emperor Constantine restored faith, returned confiscated property to the church, built new churches, and gave tax exemptions to bishops during his reign. He dedicated an entire city to Christianity and named it after his name Constantinople. Constantine’s successors supported the spread of Christianity, and by 395 A.D. most of the population was Christian. Christianity adapted to Rome’s values, promising victory to Roman armies and a bountiful life to believers. There were many controversies in Christianity. Distressed by these controversies, Constantine tried to end major controversy over relationship of Jesus to God. The first group, who were followers of priest Arius, said that Jesus wasn’t the Son of God, and that he was a %100 man. Another group lead by bishop Athanasius argued that Jesus was %100 divine. In 325, under the guidance of Constantine this issue was settled at a church council at Nicaea in Asia Minor in favor of Atrhanasius. Even though Arianism was condemned, it divided the church for decades and remained strong in church’s ruling hierarchy. Many believe that the adoption of Christianity by Constantine lead to the collapse of the Roman Empire. The fall of Rome came when a leader of troop of German called Odoacer, defeated a Roman army in 476, and later the entire Roman Empire was divided into small Germanic kingdoms. The Roman Empire was already weak by this time because, after the Roman Empire was divided into two parts with two rulers on each side, it was reunited as one Empire. And this of course didn’t last long.