

This meeting covered a range of theological and philosophical topics, particularly focusing on the nature of evil, the development of Christian traditions, and the relationship between oral tradition and scripture. Here's a breakdown and analysis of the key points:

## 1. Apostles' Creed and its Development:

- **Topic:** The Apostles' Creed and its evolution.
- **Key Discussion:** The document distributed likely explored the historical development of the Apostles' Creed and how it became the standardized prayer that Christians recite today. This is important for understanding the development of Christian doctrine and liturgy.
- **Analysis:** This is a significant theological topic as the Apostles' Creed has been a foundational statement of Christian belief since at least the early church. This topic could lead to discussions about the importance of creeds in establishing orthodoxy and maintaining unity in the early Christian community.

## 2. Oral Tradition in the Church:

- **Topic:** Oral tradition in the church.
- **Key Discussion:** A document on oral tradition was handed out, suggesting the group is exploring how oral tradition shaped early Christian teachings before they were written down in scripture.
- **Analysis:** Oral tradition played a key role in the early church, especially in the transmission of teachings, stories, and practices that eventually became part of the New Testament canon. This discussion might touch on the reliability and authenticity of oral traditions, the role of the apostles in preserving teachings, and the challenges of passing on accurate doctrine without written texts.

## 3. Portrayal of Jews in the New Testament:

- **Topic:** The derogatory portrayal of Jews in the New Testament.
- **Key Discussion:** A question was raised about why Jews are sometimes depicted negatively in the New Testament, particularly considering that Jesus and the apostles were Jewish.
- **Analysis:** This is a complex issue, often related to the historical tensions between early Christians and Jewish communities. The New Testament,

especially in texts like the Gospels, sometimes portrays Jewish religious leaders in opposition to Jesus, which has historically contributed to anti-Semitic views. The question also raises issues of how early Christian identity was shaped in contrast to Judaism and how this tension has been interpreted over time.

#### 4. Identity of Early Christians:

- **Topic:** Early Christians defining themselves as distinct from Jews.
- **Key Discussion:** The question about whether early Christians called themselves "Christians" to distinguish themselves from Jews suggests a focus on the emergence of Christian identity in the first few centuries CE.
- **Analysis:** The term "Christian" was likely used to distinguish followers of Jesus from Jews, especially as Christianity evolved and became a distinct religious movement. This question ties into the broader historical development of Christian identity and the formation of ecclesial boundaries.

#### 5. The Nature of Evil:

- **Topic:** What is evil?
- **Key Discussion:** Michael raised the question of what constitutes evil, breaking it into three distinct areas:
  - Recognizing evil in oneself
  - Recognizing evil in others
  - Responding to evil
- **Analysis:** This is a deep and philosophical discussion. The exploration of these three categories encourages personal reflection, moral evaluation, and ethical responses. It indicates a concern not only with understanding evil but also with how individuals should behave when confronting it.

#### 6. Subtopics on Evil:

- **Is it not following the Ten Commandments?**
- This suggests a moral framework where evil is equated with disobedience to divine law. The Ten Commandments, as foundational ethical principles, would serve as a basis for identifying actions that are contrary to God's will.
- **Are there degrees of evil?**
- This question invites a discussion about whether all evil acts are equal or if some are more severe than others. This is an important theological and moral

issue, as many traditions have nuanced views about different kinds of sin and evil.

- **Is the absence of understanding what is wrong evil?**
- This reflects a more psychological or moral theological approach: if someone doesn't understand that their actions are wrong, are they still committing evil? This could lead to discussions on culpability, intention, and moral ignorance.
- **Irenaeus' Quote: "For the glory of God is the living man, and the life of man is the vision of God."**
- This quote from Irenaeus touches on the concept of human dignity and the idea that humanity, in its true form, reflects God's glory. This could be used to frame evil as a distortion or perversion of what God intends for humanity.
- **Is all evil a sin?**
- This reflects a theological debate about whether all evil actions are inherently sinful. The distinction between "evil" as a moral failure and "sin" as a transgression of divine law is significant in many theological frameworks.
- **Is evil a form of insanity, or can it be intentional?**
- This is a philosophical question that has been discussed extensively, particularly in the context of moral psychology. Is evil a result of mental illness (insanity), or can it be an intentional act of malice? This discussion could touch on the nature of free will and responsibility.
- **Are all evil acts insane acts?**
- This extends the previous question. Some traditions might argue that evil actions, while not always insane, might stem from a disordered mind or soul. This question touches on the nature of human will and mental health in moral theology.
- **Is evil done for malice toward others?**
- This brings up the motivation behind evil. Malice is often considered the root of many evil actions, but it might not be the only factor. This would involve a discussion of intention and whether evil can occur without direct malice (e.g., through ignorance or negligence).
- **The difference between having evil thoughts and doing evil.**  
This question differentiates between the internal (mental or emotional) and the external (physical or behavioral) dimensions of evil. Many religious and ethical traditions consider sin or evil to involve both actions and thoughts, so this distinction could lead to a conversation on the nature of sin.
- **Our acts can lead to evil.**

This suggests a focus on how our actions contribute to evil in the world, either individually or collectively. This point could open a discussion on the consequences of actions and the role of human agency in perpetuating evil.

## **Conclusion:**

This meeting covered a broad spectrum of theological and philosophical topics, with a central focus on understanding evil in both its internal and external forms. There were several key issues discussed, such as the development of Christian tradition, the role of oral tradition, the theological reflections on evil, and questions surrounding sin and morality.

The depth of the discussion on evil reflects an important exploration of how individuals and communities recognize, respond to, and understand the nature of evil, as well as how these concepts relate to Christian beliefs about sin, redemption, and the human condition.

The discussions around the Ten Commandments, the degrees of evil, and the philosophical implications of evil suggest an environment of deep inquiry, where participants are encouraged to think critically and reflectively about both personal and communal aspects of morality.