

## OVERVIEW OF CHURCH HISTORY IN 36 ILLUSTRATED LECTURES

### LECTURE 2 – (1) APOSTOLIC FATHERS; (2) C2 APOLOGISTS

We'll start with part of a prayer by Polycarp, the Bishop of Smyrna, who met and corresponded with Ignatius, whom we will meet at page 6 of these Notes. We'll meet Polycarp, and the reason for his martyrdom, in Lecture 7.

O Lord, Almighty God, Father of your beloved and blessed Son Jesus Christ, through whom we have received the perfect knowledge of you, I bless you, I glorify you through the eternal and heavenly High Priest, Jesus Christ, your beloved Son, through whom be glory to you, together with him and the Holy Spirit, both now and for the ages to come, Amen.

I wonder whether we could pray like that, while soldiers were lighting a fire to burn us to death.

The rest of this page is an outline of this lecture.

#### 1. APOSTOLIC FATHERS

- 1.1 'Tunnel period' from 70 to 100
- 1.2 Apostolic Fathers
- 1.3 Four characteristics of period 100-150
- 1.4 Two of the documents:

*Didache* (Teaching of Twelve Apostles)

Letters of Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch

#### TOPIC - RECONSTRUCTION OF A TYPICAL C2 SUNDAY SERVICE

#### 2. SECOND-CENTURY APOLOGISTS

- 2.1. A dozen letters preserved from mid to late C2
- 2.2 Target audiences

Jews; to show that Jesus was Messiah

Greeks; to win Gentiles for Christ

Romans; to show that Christians were not anti-social, no threat to State, and that Rome need not fear and persecute Christians

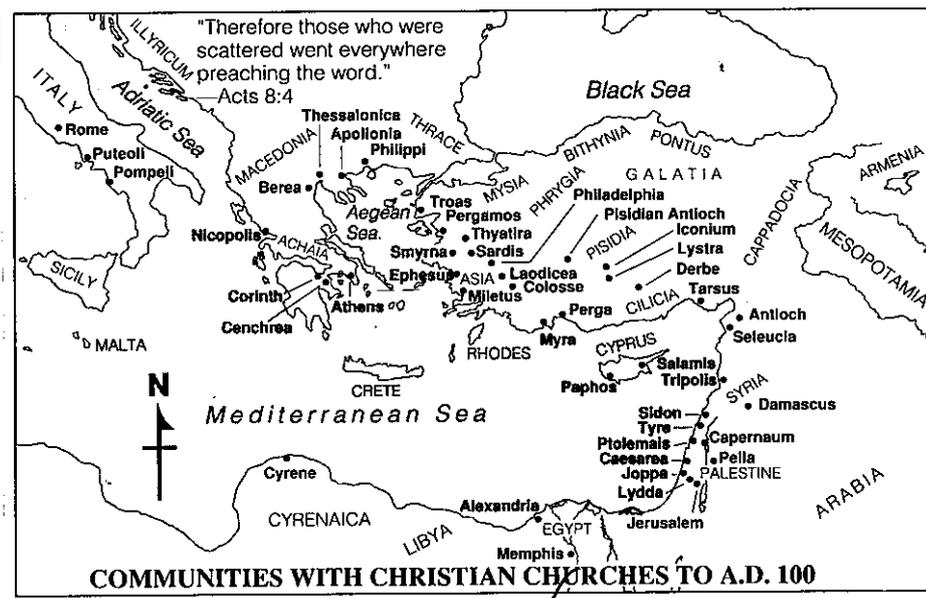
- 2.3 Justin Martyr

## 1. APOSTOLIC FATHERS (Cairns, 74-9; Olson, 40-42, 52; Vos, 9-13; Lane, 12-13)

The first part of this lecture is about a group of writers known as the Apostolic Fathers, Church leaders who wrote between the years 100 and 150, basically addressing and encouraging fellow Christians. The last of the apostles had died by about the year 100, but the young Church was growing and needed leadership. This was provided from c100 through to c150 by people we call the Apostolic Fathers – details on the next page. These are the earliest extant Christian writings that are not part of the NT and, like the NT, they were written in Greek.

### 1.1 ‘Tunnel period’ from c70 to c100

Before we look at them we should note that historians call the years from c70 to c100 a ‘tunnel period’ - like a car or a train going into the dark of a tunnel and then coming back into the light. We don’t know much about Church History for these thirty years, and then, starting about the year 100, we come to the Apostolic Fathers.



### 1.2 ‘Apostolic Fathers’

The authors were aware they were not apostles – they had not seen Christ, they had not been personally commissioned by him (which was the definition of an apostle) – they knew that they had neither the authority nor the ability of the apostles, but they had been taught by the apostles, so they appealed to the authority of Paul and Peter and the others, and that’s why they are called the Apostolic Fathers.

The Apostles had defined the ‘centre’ of the Christian faith; it fell to later generations to define the ‘boundaries’.

We’ll look at two of them in a minute, the two in bold type on the chart on the next page. The point is that from these documents we can get some idea of Church life in the years which followed the death of the last of the Apostles.

The following are not the only documents we have from the early C2; we have so-called Gospels of Philip and Thomas and Peter, the Acts of John, the Acts of Thomas, the Apocalypse of Peter and the Apocalypse of Paul, and many others. If you had strange ideas, and wanted to publicise them, what better way than to write a book and attribute it to an apostle – but the Christian Church recognised that these were forgeries, and accepted only the ones listed on this chart.

‘THE APOSTOLIC FATHERS’

| AUTHOR                             | DATE        | PLACE                   | WRITINGS  | NOTABLE FACTS   |
|------------------------------------|-------------|-------------------------|---|---|
| Clement                            | c96         | Rome                    | Letter to the church at Corinth   | Perhaps mentioned in Phil. 4:3. Martyred under Domitian. Letter sent to heal schism in Corinth.   |
| Unknown                            | c100        | ?Antioch                | <b>The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles (The <i>Didache</i>)</b>                                       | <b>First surviving manual of Church practice; first account of the Lord’s Supper after the NT.</b>  |
| Hermas                             | c100        | Rome                    | The ‘Shepherd’  | Contemporary of Clement; saw visions; can one be forgiven for serious sin after baptism?; a former slave, probably Jewish.                            |
| <b>Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch</b> | <b>c110</b> | <b>On route to Rome</b> | <b>Letters to churches at Ephesus, Magnesia, Trallia, Rome, Philadelphia, Smyrna, and to Polycarp</b> | Scapegoat for earthquake at Antioch; sent under guard to Rome – see map on page 6. First to distinguish between bishops and elders; martyred at Rome. |
| Polycarp                           | c110        | Smyrna                  | Letter to church at Philippi  | An acquaintance of the apostle John; compiled and preserved letters of Ignatius; martyred c155.   |
| Papias                             | c130        | Hierapolis              | Fragments from five books, ‘Explanations of the Sayings of the Lord’                                  | An acquaintance of the apostle John. Held premillennial views; claimed Mark’s Gospel was based on Peter’s words.                                      |
| Barnabas                           | c135        | Alexandria              | Letter of Barnabas  | Not Barnabas of NT; probably an Alexandrian Jew; showed why Christianity superior to Judaism.   |
| Unknown                            | c140        | ? Corinth               | An Ancient Christian Sermon   | Earliest surviving sermon after the NT; dealing with moral combat which confronts Christian in world  |
| Unknown                            | 155         | Smyrna                  | Martyrdom of Polycarp   | Earliest account of martyrdom after the NT. A neighbouring church asked Smyrna to send details – see map on page 6.                                   |

## Apostolic Fathers (continued)

We know little about the authors, but the documents are a fascinating insight into the Church during its critical transitional stage as apostles died. Apostolic Fathers are sometimes criticised by evangelicals because they do not emphasise NT concept of salvation by faith or because they do not teach certain doctrines. That is not fair - their purpose was to build up and strengthen the young Church, so they wrote about issues and challenges of their day. What was not in dispute is touched on, but not developed. For example, there was no challenge at that time to belief in Triune God; Christ as Saviour who is at once human and divine; inerrancy of Scripture; fallen condition of humanity; need for and possibility of redemption; sacraments of baptism and eucharist. If one's purpose is to exhort to higher Christian living, one will not need to stress any of these nor how individuals become Christians.

### 1.3 Four characteristics of period 100-150:

- All the Apostles had died, John was probably the last, shortly before the year 100, so issues could no longer be referred to them for authoritative decision; individual Christians and churches began to exercise leadership, so questions of authority arose.
- The Church continued to grow rapidly, which was good, but converts from pagan and Gentile backgrounds came with strange ideas, which had to be answered or refuted – they had to be taught. Who could teach them, now the Apostles had died? The challenge was to train new teachers. Parallel today.
- Itinerant (wandering) teachers and prophets multiplied; if someone came to your town and claimed that he had a Word from the Lord, how did you verify his credentials and teaching? We'll see the answer to that one in a moment, in the *Didache* 11.
- New forms of organisation were required. Someone had to correspond with other churches, in name of the local church, to receive delegates from other churches, to travel to represent his community at ceremonies elsewhere, to arbitrate on local disputes, and, perhaps the most compelling reason of all, to challenge false teaching. This meant the most able man in the local church became its recognized leader. Ignatius (to be studied at 1.4.2 below) applied the word 'bishop' to this man, with the consequences described on pages 6 and 7.

#### 1.4.1 Book known as *Teaching of Twelve Apostles* (often cited by its Greek name, *Didache* – not really 'the Twelve' – they were dead) (Cairns, 79; Olson, 44-46; Vos, 12)

This is a composite handbook of Church life and discipline, dealing with many aspects of Early Church. Various dates from before 70 to century later - probably c100. Probably compiled in Syria (perhaps at Antioch), it shows Church still in close proximity with Judaism, but entirely free from Mosaic law, and developing its distinctive institutions. The selections on the next page show a Church grappling, usually successfully, with challenges presented by new circumstances in which it found itself. Highly valued in early communities, reckoned by many early Fathers on par with Scripture.

## Excerpts from *Didache*

### Chapter 7. Concerning Baptism.

Concerning baptism, baptise this way: having first said all these things, baptise into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, in running water. But if you have no running water, baptise in other water; and if you cannot do so in cold water, do so in warm. But if you have neither, pour out water three times upon the head into the name of Father and Son and Holy Spirit.

### Chapter 9. The Eucharist.

Now concerning the eucharist, give thanks this way.

First, concerning the cup: We thank thee, our Father, for the holy vine of David Thy servant, which You made known to us through Jesus Thy Servant; to Thee be the glory.

And concerning the broken bread:

We thank Thee, our Father, for the life and knowledge which You made known to us through Jesus Thy Servant; to Thee be the glory for ever. Even as this broken bread was scattered over the hills, and was gathered together and became one, so let Thy Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into Thy kingdom; for Thine is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ for ever.

But let no one eat or drink of your Eucharist, unless they have been baptized into the name of the Lord; for concerning this also the Lord has said, 'Give not that which is holy to the dogs.'

### Chapter 11. Concerning Teachers and Prophets.

Whosoever comes and teaches you all these things that have been said before, receive him. But if the teacher himself turns and teaches another doctrine to the destruction of this, hear him not. ... But if he remains three days, he is a false prophet. And when he goes away, let him take nothing but bread. If he asks for money, he is a false prophet.

### Chapter 12. Reception of Christians.

But receive everyone who comes in the name of the Lord, and prove and know him afterward; for you shall have understanding right and left. If he who comes is a wayfarer, assist him as far as you are able; but he shall not remain with you more than two or three days, if need be. But if he wants to stay with you, and is an artisan, let him work and eat. But if he has no trade, according to your understanding, see to it that, as a Christian, he shall not live with you idle. But if he wills not to do, he is a Christ-monger. Watch that you keep away from such.

### Chapter 14. Christian Assembly on the Lord's Day.

But every Lord's Day gather yourselves together, and break bread, and give thanksgiving after having confessed your transgressions, that your sacrifice may be pure. But let no one who is at odds with his fellow come together with you, until they be reconciled, that your sacrifice may not be profaned.

### Chapter 15. Elders and Deacons

Appoint, therefore, for yourselves, elders and deacons worthy of the Lord, men meek, and not lovers of money, and truthful and proved; for they also render to you the service of prophets and teachers. Therefore do not despise them, for they are your honoured ones, together with the prophets and teachers.

## 1.4.2 Letters of Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, c110.

(Cairns, 76; Olson, 46-48; Lion 83, 118-120; Vos, 11, 47; Hanks, *70 Great*, 9-14.)

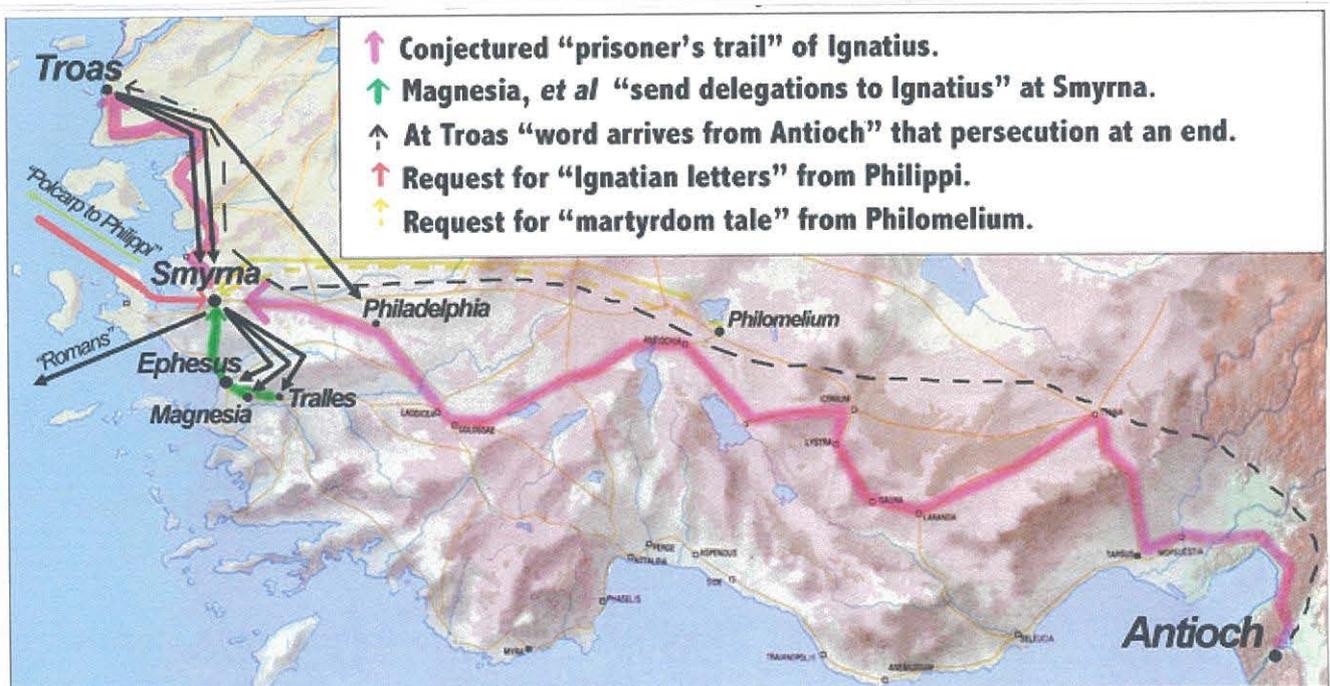
Before we look at the text, a word about Ignatius. During Emperor Trajan's visit to Antioch c110, there was a terrific earthquake, and (as mentioned earlier) pagans blamed Christians for natural calamities, saying gods were angry because Christians wouldn't sacrifice to them. A big disaster demanded a big sacrifice, so the Bishop, c70 years old, was condemned as the scapegoat and sent to Rome under guard for execution. Unlike Paul, who went by sea, Ignatius was taken overland, so he met Christians along the way.

The pink line on the map shows his conjectured route. He knew he would be killed when he reached Rome, so at Smyrna and at Troas (left of map), he wrote farewell letters to six churches and a personal letter to Polycarp at Smyrna.

A major theme of his letters, seen in the excerpts on the next page, was that every local church should have one leader, whom he called the bishop (mono-episcopacy). Without bishop, local church could not baptise, celebrate Eucharist or solemnise marriage. At all times, congregation must be subject to their bishop. (Because of the four points on p. 4.)

Now that's quite a development from NT, where leadership and pastoral care seems to have been provided through elders/bishops (1 Tim 3.1-7) and deacons (1 Tim 3.8-13), and in *Didache* about year 100. It seems that sometimes NT calls elders *episkopos* (from which we get the word 'bishop') and sometimes it calls them *presbuturos* (from which we get the words 'presbyter' or 'elder'), apparently the same office, Acts 20:17 (elders) and 28 (bishops); Titus 1.5-9, perhaps using *episkopos* in churches with a Gentile background, and *presbuturos* in churches with Jewish background, where the leaders in the synagogues were known as 'elders'. (Cairns, 83, 112)

By late C2, Ignatius' church order, threefold ministry of one bishop, many elders/presbyters and deacons (? 7), was generally accepted throughout Church. But note (1) Ignatius was urging churches to accept this, so it clearly wasn't universal c110, and (2) he wanted one bishop per local church, not one bishop having authority over others.



Ignatius' journey, Antioch to Troas, and churches to whom he sent letters.

Excerpts from Letters of Ignatius to churches in Smyrna, Ephesus, Magnesia and Trallians, written c110, which show his ideas about bishops, elders and deacons.

1. To Smyrna

Follow your bishop as Jesus Christ followed the Father, and follow your presbyters as the apostles; and respect the deacons as you would respect God's commandment. Let no one do anything in the church apart from the bishop. Holy communion is valid when celebrated by the bishop or by someone the bishop authorises. Where the bishop is present, there let the congregation gather, just as where Jesus Christ is, there is the Church.

2. To Ephesus

I hasten to urge you to harmonize your actions with God's mind. For Jesus Christ - that life from which we can't be torn - is the Father's mind, as the bishops too, appointed the world over, reflect the mind of Jesus Christ.

Hence you should act in accord with the bishop's mind, as you surely do. Your presbytery, indeed, which deserves its name and is a credit to God, is as closely tied to the bishop as the strings to a harp. Wherefore your accord and harmonious love is a hymn to Jesus Christ.

3. To Magnesia

I had the good fortune to see you, in the persons of Damas your bishop (he's a credit to God!), and of your worthy presbyters, Bassus and Apollonius, and of my fellow slave, the deacon Zotion. I am delighted with him, because he submits to the bishop as to God's grace, and to the presbytery as to the law of Jesus Christ.

Now, it is not right to presume on the youthfulness of your bishop. You ought to respect him as fully as you respect the authority of God the Father. Your holy presbyters, I know, have not taken unfair advantage of his apparent youthfulness, but in their godly wisdom have deferred to him - nay, rather, not so much to him as to the Father of Jesus Christ, who is everybody's bishop.

4. To the Trallians

Hold the deacons in as great respect as Jesus Christ; just as you should also look on the bishop as a type of the Father, and the clergy as the apostolic circle forming His council; for without these three orders no church has any right to the name. ... You will be safe enough so long as you do not let pride go to your head and break away from Jesus Christ and your bishop and the apostolic institutions. To be inside the sanctuary is to be clean; to be outside it, unclean. In other words, nobody's conscience can be clean if he is acting without the authority of his bishop, clergy, and deacons.

Note: Ignatius used (possibly coined) two new words, (1) 'Catholic' (*katholikos* = 'universal', (lecture 1, page 4) and (2) 'Christianity' (*Christianismos*).

TOPIC - RECONSTRUCTION OF A TYPICAL C2 SUNDAY SERVICE was taken at this point in the Lecture; here, it is printed at the end of the Notes for this Lecture.

## 2. SECOND-CENTURY APOLOGISTS (Cairns, 74, 103-6; Olson, 54-67; Vos, 14-16)

### 2.1 A dozen letters preserved from mid to late C2

We move now from the Apostolic Fathers to the authors of about a dozen documents written between 150 and 200. They are collectively known as the ‘C2 Apologists’.

The word ‘Apology’ did not have modern sense of ‘apologise’, admitting action was wrong and asking for pardon; Greek *apologia* meant ‘a speech for defence in a trial’ and, more generally, ‘a written explanation/justification of a course of action’. Hence ‘*apologia*’ for Christianity, or ‘Christian apologetic writing’, is reasoned defence of Christian faith and behaviour, trying to persuade outsiders to accept the Christian faith, or at least not to persecute Christians for following it. By using such literary styles, Christians showed that Christianity had attracted educated minds.

These writers are invaluable to us because they explain what C2 Christians believed and how they behaved. The Apostolic Fathers, our first category, had written basically to encourage fellow Christians, but the next generation, the Apologists, looked outward and wrote for the general public, to explain and to expand the Christian faith. We are going to look in detail at only Justin Martyr, who is marked with bold type in the following chart.

### Second-Century Apologists

| NAME                 | DATES           | PLACES OF MINISTRY                     | REPRESENTATIVE WRITINGS (* = Lost)  | NOTABLE FACTS   |
|----------------------|-----------------|--|---|---|
| QUADRATUS            | early C2        | Athens                                 | Apology*  | Bishop of Athens.<br>His <i>Apology</i> was addressed to Emperor Hadrian.<br>Contrasts Christianity with Jewish and pagan worship.  |
| ARISTIDES            | early C2        | Athens                                 | Apology*  | His <i>Apology</i> was addressed to Emperor Hadrian.<br>Shows strong Pauline influence.   |
| <b>JUSTIN MARTYR</b> | <b>c100-165</b> | <b>Palestine<br/>Ephesus.<br/>Rome</b> | <b>First Apology<br/>Second Apology<br/>Dialogue with Trypho the Jew<br/>Against Heresies*<br/>Against Marcion*</b> | <b>Trained in philosophy.<br/>Itinerant lay teacher.<br/>Personally opposed Marcion.<br/>Developed concept of <i>logos spermatikos</i>.<br/>Argued for Christianity on basis of prophecy, miracles, and ethics.<br/>Beheaded in Rome.</b> |
| TATIAN               | 110-172         | Assyria<br>Syria<br>Rome               | Diatessaron<br>To the Greeks  | Pupil of Justin.<br>Argued temporal priority of Christianity over other religions.<br>Produced first harmony of Gospels.<br><i>Later fell into Gnosticism.</i>  |
| ATHENAGORAS          | C2              | Athens                                 | Apology<br>On the Resurrection of the Dead  | Platonist.<br>Wrote in classical style.   |
| THEOPHILUS           | d. 181          | Antioch                                | To Autolytus  | Severe polemicist against pagan philosophers. Bishop of Antioch.  |
| MELITO               | d. 190          | Sardis                                 | c20 works, all lost   | Bishop of Sardis. Supported Quartodecimans in Easter debate   |
| HEGESIPPUS           | C2              | Syria<br>Greece<br>Rome                | Memorials*  | A converted Jew.<br>Collected information on early history of church to prove its purity and apostolicity.<br>Blamed all heresies on Judaism.   |

## The Arguments of the Apologists

### JEWISH ARGUMENTS VS. CHRISTIANITY

Christianity is a deviant form of Judaism.

The humble carpenter who died on a cross does not correspond to the Messiah prophesied in the Old Testament.

The deity of Christ contradicts the unity of God.

### RESPONSES OF APOLOGISTS

The Jewish law is by nature temporary and points to the new covenant.

The Old Testament predicted both the sufferings and the glory of the Messiah.

The Old Testament indicates a plurality of persons within the unity of the Godhead.

### APOLOGISTS' ARGUMENTS AGAINST JUDAISM

Old Testament prophecy is fulfilled in Christ.

Old Testament types point to Christ.

The destruction of Jerusalem showed God's condemnation of Judaism and vindication of Christianity.

### PAGAN ARGUMENTS VS. CHRISTIANITY

The doctrine of the Resurrection is absurd.

There are contradictions in the Scriptures.

Atheism is widely held.

Christianity is the worship of a criminal.

Christianity is a novelty.

Christianity evidences a lack of patriotism.

Christians practice incest and cannibalism.

Christianity leads to the destruction of society.

### RESPONSES OF APOLOGISTS

There were eyewitnesses in Gospels.  
The effect on disciples was profound.  
There is analogy in natural cycles (e.g., seasons).

Harmonies like Tatian's *Diatessaron* answer contradictions.

Even Plato favored an unseen god.

Jesus' trial violated law.

Christianity had been in preparation for all eternity.  
Moses antedated pagan philosophers.

Christians obey all laws that do not violate conscience.

Observe the lifestyle of Christians, particularly examples of martyrs.

Natural calamities are really the true God's judgment against false worship.

### APOLOGISTS' ARGUMENTS AGAINST PAGANISM

Pagan philosophers plagiarized, stealing their best ideas from Moses and the prophets.

Polytheism is a philosophical absurdity and moral disaster.

Pagan philosophers contradict one another and even themselves.

### APOLOGISTS' ARGUMENTS FOR CHRISTIANITY

All truth found in pagan philosophers anticipates Christianity and is brought together by it.

Miracles performed by Christ, the apostles, and other Christians prove its truth.

The spread of Christianity despite overwhelming obstacles shows it to be true.

Christianity alone is suited to meet the deepest needs of human beings.

## 2.2 Target audiences

Apologists had three target audiences:

- (1) to persuade Jews to accept Christ as Messiah,
- (2) to explain faith to Greek and Roman unbelievers, to win people to Christ
- (3) to persuade Roman authorities that Christians were no threat to public order.

### (1) Explanations to Jews

First critics of Church were orthodox Jews. For long time, they were prime focus of Christian apologists. Letter to Hebrews was written for Jewish Christians, to justify Christianity, focusing on suffering and death of Jesus instead of Jewish sacrificial system. In C2, Christians wrote many pamphlets to defend Christianity against Jewish objections to it. Did prophets point to Christ? Could Messiah have been crucified? Mutual antagonism was commonplace.

Best known and most substantial work is Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*, written c155. It claimed that Christianity is universal religion, to which OT prophets looked forward, and that Judaism was only prefiguration of Christ and Church. Typical of these works is gathering together of OT texts, to demonstrate Christianity has superseded Judaism and fulfilled messianic prophecies. Justin regarded fulfilment of prophecy as his most cogent argument - quoting 29 times from Isaiah 53 and 26 times from Psalm 22. The biography of Justin follows on the next page

### (2) Explanations to Gentiles

These had two purposes. One was to answer the allegation that because Christianity was new, it could not be taken seriously – mind-set of antiquity that new was not likely to be true. So they claimed the Word (*logos*), as in John 1.1, 'In the beginning was the Word ...', had inspired best of Greek thinking in times past, although the Greeks didn't know this, but it was now fully revealed in Christ. They argued that no one ancient author had found the whole truth, because earlier writers had distorted the Word; where philosophers had some understanding about the nature of the soul, the origin of world, life after death, etc., it was because the Word had been active in all that was best in Greek philosophy. The Word had now come in flesh, and what the ancients had struggled to understand had now been revealed in Christ. We may not find it a convincing argument but it served its purpose, demonstrating that what Christ taught was not entirely new, but was a fuller and now complete revelation of what the ancients had struggled to understand.

The second purpose was to win people over to Christian faith. Many in Hellenistic world aspired after ethical life, and were open to gospel provided it could be explained in language they understood. So Justin's *First Apology* contrasted immoral and cruel lives found in idolatry, with joy and love, chastity and humility of Christians 'who stand aloof from demons and follow the only begotten God through his Son' (1 *Apol.* 14).

### (3) Explanations to the Roman authorities

Christians were popularly believed (through misunderstanding of eucharist and secrecy of their meetings) to practice cannibalism and magic. Apologists rebutted these charges, by describing in detail what took place at Christian baptism and eucharist. On Christians' refusal to worship gods honoured as protectors of cities and refusal to take part in many secular activities, they wrote 'open' letters (Apologies) addressed to Emperors. Whether these reached them did not matter – they were public letters, to explain what Christians did, because few people knew a Christian, and so believed worst.

2.3 Justin Martyr (Cairns, 103-105, Olson, 59-61; Lion, 94; Vos, 5; Lane 14-15; Hanks, *Great Events*, 47-53)

Justin was born in the first decade of the second century, to wealthy pagan Greek parents in Sichem (map below), modern Nablus, in Samaria (where Jesus spoke with the woman at the well). As a young man, he made the rounds of the philosophic schools, like many other young men, in search for truth – he started with Stoics, then Aristotelians, Peripatetics (from habit of walking while teaching, but shocked when teacher his was more interested in his fees than teaching), then Pythagoreans, all without success, and finally Platonists. For time, he believed he had found his goal with Platonists, but eventually was left dissatisfied.

c132, at Ephesus (map below), he met an elderly Christian, who told him that inner peace could be found only in the Hebrew Scriptures and the Christ about whom they spoke. Justin wrote "Immediately a fire was kindled in my soul" and he embraced Christianity as "the only safe and beneficial philosophy" That's important - he didn't break with his philosophic past, he used it - he was the first Christian after the New Testament to expound the relationship between faith and reason, between church and educated society. Justin then went to Rome (map below), where he founded a school teaching that Christianity was the only true philosophy.

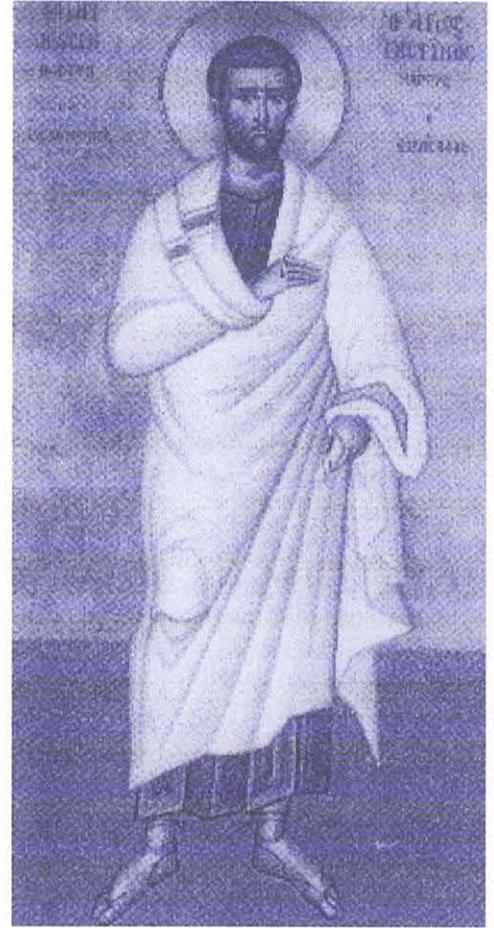


Map to illustrate the life of Justin Martyr (c100-165)  
 (Cairns, 103-105)  
 Born in Sichem, c100  
 Converted at Ephesus, c132  
 At Rome from c138, martyred there 165.

Justin was the first highly educated Gentile to use learning to defend Christianity. We have his *First Apology*, c150. It was a public document, addressed to the emperor, to show that the slanders circulating about Christians, that they ate flesh and drank blood, were not true – these were caricatures of the Communion Service; Justin described what really happened at Baptism and Communion - invaluable insights for us into contemporary church life.

Some years later, c165, Justin issued a *Second Apology*, this time addressing it to the Roman Senate. It expressed Justin's indignation at the recent beheading of three Christians at the instigation of a dissolute pagan, whose Christian wife had censured him for his immoral life. Justin answered the slanders and concentrated on the courage of Christians and the superiority of Christianity as the revelation of God's truth. This led to his arrest and, refusing to sacrifice to the pagan gods, he and six other Christians were beheaded - hence the title Martyr.

Whether this picture is authentic, we don't know; circular halo behind his head, called *nimbus*, is how respected people were painted.



His other work, *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*, comes between the two Apologies, c160, and records an actual discussion with a Jew named Trypho, where Justin showed from the Old Testament that Christ is the Messiah and the Church is the true Israel.

To sum up: Justin embodied the work of the Apologists, 'presenting a rational basis for the Christian faith, defending the faith against objections, and exposing the perceived flaws of other world views'

His writings provide a mass of information about the second century church, as he patiently explained its practices to Jew and Greek and Roman, in language appropriate to them, partly to avert persecution and partly to persuade them to become Christians.

The chart on the next page summarises the background and target audiences of the second-century Apologists. Note the five characteristics listed at the top of the chart, which will be contrasted in lecture 4 with the background and the characteristics of the next generation of 'Apologists', who wrote in the third century and who are generally described as 'Defenders of the Faith'. The second-century Apologists, whom we have looked at in this lecture:

- grew up in a Christian culture,
- focused on heretics within the church,
- used the New Testament primarily,
- attacked political ideas,
- wrote polemical rather than apologetic literature.

## Defense of the Faith

### Apologists **EXPLAINED FAITH**

Converted from paganism  
 Faced external persecution  
 Used the Old Testament primarily  
 Defended or explained Christianity  
 Apologetic or dialogical literary forms

#### To Heads of State

Answer false charges  
 Athenagoras

Good qualities of  
 Christians demand  
 tolerance

#### To Jews

Justin Martyr:  
*Dialogue With Trypho*

#### Against Pagan Intellectuals

Refutation of  
 pagan idolatry  
 and immorality

Christianity  
 is superior,  
 e.g., prophecy

# OVERVIEW OF CHURCH HISTORY IN 36 ILLUSTRATED LECTURES

## TOPIC FOR LECTURE 2 – C2 CHURCH WORSHIP

### RECONSTRUCTION OF A TYPICAL C2 SUNDAY SERVICE<sup>1</sup>

#### Part One: Service of the Word (singing, reading and sermon – open to all)

1. Opening greeting by bishop and response by congregation. Usually bishop said, ‘The Lord be with you’, and congregation responded, ‘And with your spirit’.
2. Scripture reading: OT. A deacon gave readings. In larger congregations, deacon chanted Scripture passage rather than simply read it – a practice probably derived from Jewish synagogue worship.
3. Psalm or hymn.
4. Scripture reading: NT First NT reading was from any book between Acts and Revelation.
5. Psalm or hymn.
6. Scripture reading: NT Second NT reading was from one of Gospels. This pattern of three readings, from OT, Acts-Revelation, and Gospels, goes back to earliest times. From C3, ‘lectionaries’ were drawn up which specified exactly which passages of Scripture should be read on each Sunday of year.
7. Sermon. Bishop preached this in a sitting posture. Sitting was accepted posture for preaching and teaching in early Church. Everyone else stood throughout - in early Church and for centuries afterwards.<sup>2</sup>
8. Dismissal of all but baptised believers.

#### Part Two: Eucharist (prayers, Lord’s Supper – open to baptised believers only)<sup>3</sup>

1. Prayers. ‘Prayer leader’ - in West, bishop; in East, senior deacon - announced topic for prayer. Congregation knelt and prayed silently for a time. Then they were exhorted to stand, and leader, with spoken prayer, summed up congregation's petitions on that topic. Leader then announced another topic; congregation knelt and prayed silently; then they stood as leader summed up again with spoken prayer. And so on, for quite lengthy time.
2. Holy communion.
  - (1) Greeting by bishop, response by congregation, and ‘kiss of peace’ - men kissed other men, women kissed other women. (It is likely that following pattern of Jewish synagogue, men and women sat in different sections of meeting place.)
  - (2) ‘Offertory’. Every church member brought a small loaf and flask of wine to communion; deacons took/

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<sup>1</sup> Reconstruction based on Justin Martyr’s *First Apology* (lecture 2); put together by Needham, N.R, 1997, *2000 Years of Christ’s Power*, Part One, London. Grace Publications, pp 66-73. See also Cairns, 84-5; Lion, 127-9.

<sup>2</sup> Only in C14 did Western Church provide pews (fixed seats) and Eastern Church never has - people who got tired during early church services sat around the edges of building – (this is where phrase ‘go to the wall’ originated – weak and tired went to have seat), but everyone stood to pray, as early Christians considered standing was only proper posture for public prayer. Early Christian art records that when praying, Christians spread out their arms with upturned palms, and kept their eyes open, looking upwards to heaven.

<sup>3</sup> Early Church did not allow unbelievers to be present when congregation prayed. This was because, in early Church thinking, congregation at prayer was participating by Holy Spirit in glorified Christ’s own heavenly ministry of prayer. This was something in which unbelievers could not share, for they lacked the Spirit.

# OVERVIEW OF CHURCH HISTORY IN 36 ILLUSTRATED LECTURES

## TOPIC FOR LECTURE 2 – C2 CHURCH WORSHIP

### RECONSTRUCTION OF A TYPICAL C2 SUNDAY SERVICE<sup>1</sup>

#### Part One: Service of the Word (singing, reading and sermon – open to all)

1. Opening greeting by bishop and response by congregation. Usually bishop said, ‘The Lord be with you’, and congregation responded, ‘And with your spirit’.
2. Scripture reading: OT. A deacon gave readings. In larger congregations, deacon chanted Scripture passage rather than simply read it – a practice probably derived from Jewish synagogue worship.
3. Psalm or hymn.
4. Scripture reading: NT First NT reading was from any book between Acts and Revelation.
5. Psalm or hymn.
6. Scripture reading: NT Second NT reading was from one of Gospels. This pattern of three readings, from OT, Acts-Revelation, and Gospels, goes back to earliest times. From C3, ‘lectionaries’ were drawn up which specified exactly which passages of Scripture should be read on each Sunday of year.
7. Sermon. Bishop preached this in a sitting posture. Sitting was accepted posture for preaching and teaching in early Church. Everyone else stood throughout - in early Church and for centuries afterwards.<sup>2</sup>
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#### Part Two: Eucharist (prayers, Lord’s Supper – open to baptised believers only)<sup>3</sup>

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deacons took these gifts and spread them out on Lord's Table. Flasks of wine were all emptied into one large silver cup.<sup>4</sup>

(3) Bishop and congregation engaged in 'dialogue' with each other, for example:

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Bishop: The Lord be with you.           | Congregation: And with your spirit.     |
| Bishop: Lift up your hearts.            | Congregation: We lift them to the Lord. |
| Bishop: Let us give thanks to the Lord. | Congregation: It is fitting and right.  |

Bishop then led congregation in prayer, for example:

We thank You, O God, through Your beloved Servant Jesus Christ, Whom in these last times You have sent to us as Saviour, Redeemer, and Messenger of Your counsel, the Logos Who comes from You, through Whom You have made all things, Whom You were pleased to send from heaven into the womb of the Virgin, and in her body He became flesh, and was revealed as Your Son, born of the holy Spirit and the Virgin. To fulfil Your will and prepare a holy people for You, He stretched out His hands [on the cross] when He suffered, so that He might release from suffering those who have believed in You. And when He delivered Himself willingly to suffering, to loose the bonds of death and break the chains of the devil, to tread down hell and enlighten the righteous, to set up the boundary stone and manifest the resurrection, He took a loaf, gave thanks and said, "Take, eat, this is My body which is given for You." In the same way He took the cup and said, "This is My blood which is poured out for you. Whenever you do this, you remember Me."

Remembering, therefore, His death and resurrection, we offer to You the loaf and the cup, and give thanks to You that You have counted us worthy to stand before You and serve You as priests [*note, all members are described as priests*]. And we pray to You, that You will send down Your Holy Spirit on this offering of the church. Unite it, and grant to all the saints who partake of it that we may be filled with the Holy Spirit and strengthened in our faith in the, truth, so that we may praise and glorify You through Your Servant Jesus Christ, through Whom be glory and honour to You in Your Church, now and for ever. Amen.

(4) Bishop and deacons broke loaves. (In some places, wine was served first.)

(5) Bishop and deacons distributed bread and offered cup to congregation. Something would be said to each person as he received bread and wine - for example, in Roman church, deacon said, 'The bread of heaven in Christ Jesus' as he offered bread; church member replied, 'Amen'. Communion was always received in standing posture. Church members took home bread and wine that had not been consumed, and used them on weekdays for celebration of communion in home.

### 3. Benediction.

A phrase such as 'Depart in peace' was spoken by a deacon.

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<sup>4</sup> All church members brought their own bread and wine to be used in communion. Early Christians attached great significance to this provision of communion bread and wine by every church member – it was whole church offering itself to God, as together all its members presented to Him the fruits of His creation. When deacons placed loaves and wine on Lord's Table, they were (in a symbolic sense) laying congregation itself on table through its gifts, thus consecrating people to Christ.

Explanation about these notes on the reconstruction of a typical C2 Sunday service.

As mentioned in the comments following Topic 1, students were normally given only a title and a brief introduction to the Topic on which they were to speak. However, since the Course papers were not given out until the first day, students couldn't prepare for the first couple of Topics – there were usually two lectures on the same day. These are therefore some explanatory comments which I gave about the 'reconstruction'.

When pagans accused the early Christians of immoral behaviour – for example, cannibalism (because the Communion service was misrepresented by pagans as eating flesh and drinking blood) – Christian writers responded: 'No, you've got it wrong – here's what really happens', and they set out in detail how Christians met for worship. From these and other writings, we can put together a picture of what took place.

Christians met on Sunday, the day on which the Lord Jesus had risen from the dead. Like the Jewish Sabbath, the Lord's Day began, not at midnight as in modern usage, but at 6 pm, sunset, on the previous day, so the Lord's Day was 6 pm Saturday to 6 pm Sunday. To enable working Christians to attend, Christian worship began after 6 pm on Saturday and continued during the hours of darkness of Saturday night and, in some cases, until the next morning. Tertullian (to whom we're coming in Lecture 5) advised Christian women to marry only Christian husbands, for otherwise their husbands would protest about their weekly departure from home after 6 pm every Saturday for many hours away from home for the worship service.

In the early years of Christian worship, individual churches had their own orders of service, but as communication improved between different regions, services became increasingly standardized, for one good reason. Many early Christians couldn't read, so to hear the same words repeated, week after week, wherever they went, burned every word into their memories.

The two main ingredients were (1) singing and the reading and expounding of Scripture, which was open to everyone, and then (2) the celebration of the Lord's Supper, which was for baptised believers only. Compared with many Churches today, the Lord's supper had a high place – it formed a large part of every service. Some early Christians called Sunday 'the Eucharist day'.

The NT practice of holding a full meal – the love-feast (NT *agape*) – side by side with the Lord's Supper - had been discontinued by the end of the first century. As we read in the Letters to the Corinthians, it led to problems there and perhaps elsewhere as well – in any event, the early Church soon stopped trying to combine a normal meal with the Lord's Supper.

In the C2, the most common form of singing was 'responsive', that is one person (a leader) sang something, and the congregation responded, either with a single word, like 'Alleluia', or a chorus that was easy to remember. There were no hymnbooks, and, in any event, many of the congregation couldn't read, so a simple response was appropriate. The hymns were often the Psalms of the Old Testament, or the poetic parts of the New Testament (like Mary's praise of God in Luke 1:46-55 or 'Glory in the highest', based on Luke 2:14.) There was sometimes solo singing, but full congregational singing, that is everyone singing hymns written by other Christians, didn't become popular until the 4th Century.

There were no musical instruments to accompany the singing, for many centuries. The early Church looked on musical instruments as being part of Jewish or pagan worship, and not part of the apostolic tradition of Christian worship.

For Part Two, the commonest description in the C2 was 'Eucharist' (from Greek, thanksgiving). This word, in its verb form 'to give thanks', was used to translate the accounts of Jesus' Last Supper with his disciples in Matthew 26.27 and was applied to the prayer of thanksgiving (*Didache* 9), and to the elements for which thanks were said (Justin) and to the whole of this part of the service (Ignatius). The earlier name, 'breaking of bread', could refer to the opening act of an ordinary meal as well as to a religious ceremony. The Pauline term 'Lord's Supper' did not prevail in Christian terminology, perhaps as separation occurred between memorial of Christ and evening meal. *Amenmesis*, memorial or remembrance and *koinonia*, communion, were also used.

Those who are unused to what is now called 'liturgy', fixed exhortations and responses, may be surprised to find this at such an early date, but we will come in Lecture 3 to a presbyter at Rome called Hippolytus. He challenged the bishop there, Callistus, about Callistus' innovations in church practice; Hippolytus wanted the church in Rome to following the 'offertory' with the exact words of the dialogue set out here – that's where we get them from.

However, liturgy did not at this stage rule out 'free prayer' by the bishop (praying his own prayers, notonly those written in the liturgy); there was a mixture of both.

A typical service lasted about 3 hours, but it could be longer.

See also Lion, 127-8.