

SECOND CENTURY TEACHERS OF THE CHURCH

Apologists

- ◆ **Aristides:** in 138 A.D. wrote an apology that has recently been rediscovered.
- ◆ **Justin Martyr:** Wrote: *Apology I and II*, around 155-160 AD, and *A Dialogue with Trypho*, a Jewish rabbi. He made it through torture for his faith, but died shortly thereafter, in 165, having been denounced to the emperor. Justin was a convert to Christianity, having searched through much philosophy before becoming a Christian. He attempted to show that the Logos of God through whom the universe was created, was the principle, as well, behind everything beautiful and worthy in pagan creation, thus attempting to build a bridge between Greek and Christian culture.
- ◆ **Athenagoras**, 177-180 wrote, *A Plea for Christians*, a treatise he sent to the emperor, arguing the truth of Christianity. You can find the whole document online. It is a remarkable document and well worth reading. Among other things, he shows the folly of the accusations of Christians eating babies hidden in loaves of bread when he writes: “*And when we say that those women who use drugs to bring on abortion commit murder, and will have to give an account to God for the abortion, on what principle should we commit murder? For it does not belong to the same person to regard the very fetus in the womb as a created being, and therefore an object of God's care, and then when it has passed into life, to kill it; (or on one hand) not to expose an infant, because those who expose them are chargeable with child-murder, and on the other hand, when it has been reared to destroy it. But we are in all things always alike and the same, submitting ourselves to reason, and not ruling over it.*” He also wrote a treatise called: *On the Resurrection of the Dead.*
- ◆ **Tatian**, one of Justin Martyr's students, and an Assyrian. He wrote, *An Address to the Greeks*; Tatian also wrote a harmony of the Gospels in 170 A.D., which is thought to be the first translation from the Greek of the Gospels into a local language, the Syriac language. He was proud to be an Asian. In his Address to the Greeks, he asks: “*Where did the Greeks learn their astronomy?*” he asks. “*From Babylon in Asia. Their alphabet? From the Phoenicians. Their poetry and music? From Phrygia in Asia Minor. Their postal system? From Persia. In every way the East excels and most of all in its religion, the Christian religion, which also comes from Asia and which is far older and truer than all the philosophies and crude religious myths of the Greeks.*” (Moffatt, Vol. 1, page 74).
- ◆ **Theophilus**, bishop of Antioch, wrote *Three Books to Autolytus*, which dealt with the doctrine of God, the interpretation of Scripture, and Christian life.

A word might be said here as to why these apologists would have to defend their faith against calumny. Some of the rumors circulated against Christians were these (Gonzales, pages 49-50):

- ◆ Christians gathered every week to celebrate a “love feast” to which only those having been baptized were admitted. They called each other brother and sister and referred to their spouses as their sisters. Joining these facts together, they were accused by the surrounding culture as joining in orgiastic celebrations in which Christians ate and drank to excess, put the lights out, and vented their lusts in indiscriminate and incestuous unions.
- ◆ Since Christians spoke of being nourished by the body and blood of Christ, and since they also spoke of him as a little child, some came to the conclusion that, as an initiation rite, Christians concealed a newborn in a loaf of bread, and then ordered the neophyte to cut the loaf. When this was done, they all joined in eating the warm flesh of the infant.
- ◆ Some also claimed that Christians worshiped an ass.

Teachers (also called Church Fathers):

- ◆ **Irenaeus of Lyons**, made bishop of Lyons in A.D. 178. He wrote extensively against false teaching. We still have two of his books: *Against Heresies*, (otherwise known as *Refutation of the So-Called Gnosis*) 185 AD; and *Demonstration of Apostolic Faith*. Among his arguments is that the teaching of the Gnostics was new; that it was not taught in the early church.
- ◆ **Pantaeus** founded a Catechetical School at Alexandria: in 180 AD he also visited the Mar Thoma Church on the west coast of India where he discovered the Gospel of Matthew in Hebrew, but little is known of him, except that he was widely loved and respected.
- ◆ **Clement of Alexandria**: he was a disciple of Pantaeus and flourished between 180-200 AD; he died in 215 AD. He succeeded Pantaeus as head of the Catechetical school in Alexandria. He wrote *Exhortation to the Pagans*. He had a profound effect.
- ◆ **Tertullian of Carthage**, (c. 160 – c. 220 AD) was a native of North Africa, possibly a Berber. He converted to Christ in Rome when he was about forty years old, though he lived most of his life in north Africa in Carthage in what is now Tunisia.
- ◆ **Origen**, disciple of Clement of Alexandria was born c. 185, probably in Alexandria, Egypt — died c. 254, Tyre, Phoenicia). We'll get to him next week.

APOSTLES CREED

Though most of the Creed was written in the 2nd century AD, some of the clauses originate from the 4th or 5th centuries. The present Creed, formulated around 450, is the end product of gradual development and may originally have been used as a pre-baptismal declaration of belief. Think about how some of the clauses here are direct refutations of gnostic teaching.

1. I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth:
2. And in Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, our Lord:
3. Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary:
4. Suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, dead and buried: He descended into hell:
5. The third day he rose again from the dead:
6. He ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty:
7. From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead:
8. I believe in the Holy Ghost:
9. I believe in the holy catholic church: the communion of saints:
10. The forgiveness of sins:
11. The resurrection of the body:
12. And the life everlasting. Amen.