LESSON 3

THE CHURCH'S STRUGGLES IN THE SECOND CENTURY

Introduction

The death of the Apostle John closed the Apostolic Age and ended an era in church history. The next period, the first half of the second century (actually beginning in A.D. 96), is referred to sometimes as the age of the "Apostolic Fathers." The era is extended to 170 by some historians and is called the "post-apostolic era" because the leadership of the Church during this time was entrusted largely to men who had enjoyed intercourse with and instruction from the apostles. These leaders stood close to the tradition of the apostles and believed that their task was to perpetuate that tradition. The material in this lesson will carry us a few years beyond the post-apostolic era.

The limited information concerning the Church in this period comes from the following surviving Christian sources:

The First Epistle of Clement of Rome to the Church of Corinth (about A.D. 96)
The Epistles of Ignatius (about 116)
The Teachings of the Twelve Apostles (*The Didache* - about 120)
The Epistle of Barnabas (about 120)
The Shepherd of Hermas (about 140)
The Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians (before 155)
The Epistle to Diognetus (about 160)

In addition, only fragments of five books, "Expositions of the Oracles of the Lord," by Papias (about A.D. 60–130), who was bishop of Hierapolis in Asia Minor, survive as recordings of quotations by other writers. Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* has made a significant contribution to our knowledge of this period, and the letters of Pliny and Trajan have contributed some information.

A student of history will profit from noting the doctrinal emphases of the Apostolic Fathers in comparison and in contrast to the doctrines of the New Testament. Their teachings must be understood in the light of social and political events during their time; therefore, a survey of the emperors, relevant military activities, and legislation affecting Christianity will be given. In spite of intermittent persecution, the Church continued to expand in the second and third centuries.

Political and Social Influences in the Second Century

Between the death of Domitian in A.D. 96 and the death of Marcus Aurelius in 180, the Roman Empire reached its maximum territorial extent, population, and material prosperity. Peace characterized the period in contrast to the age following in which civil strife was renewed and economic difficulties arose. Christianity continued to make progress in spite of persecution by Roman officials.

Nerva (A.D. 96–98) succeeded Domitian and led the Empire for two years. He needed a military leader as heir and successor in order to control the praetorian guard; therefore, he adopted Trajan as his prospective successor. *Trajan* (A.D. 98–117) automatically became emperor upon the death of Nerva. He possessed the unusual qualifications of affability, modesty,

The men who were instructed by the apostles and succeeded them as leaders of the Church were called the A_____ F_____

(Apostolic Fathers)

The Christian sources listed in the second and third paragraphs of the text indicate that the following were Apostolic Fathers:

C_____ of Rome

I_____

B_____

P_____

D_____

P_____

authors of the S_____ of H_____

(Clement, Ignatius, Barnabas, Polycarp, Diognetus, Papias, Shepherd, Hermas)

diligence, and conscientiousness which gained for him the respect of the Senate, the civilians, and the soldiers. He proscribed secret societies which included Christian churches. He, along with Tacitus (a Roman historian) and Pliny (governor of Bithynia-Pontus, 111–113), had little understanding of Christianity and agreed that it was a "bad and immoderate superstition." His attitude was revealed in about 112 when he responded to Pliny's letter inquiring about policies in judging Christians.

As governor of Bithynia, Pliny was faced with judging Christians who were accused before him. He stated that he had never had anything to do with the trials of Christians; therefore, he did not know the degree of punishment deserved with regard to guilt, age, and recantation (renouncing Christian faith). His procedure was to question those brought before him as to whether they were Christians and to punish them with death if they obstinately refused to curse Christ and offer sacrifice to the gods, including the emperor's image. Pliny recommended that the procedure should be standardized and should give special consideration to those who first confessed but later rejected Christianity. Pliny had learned that when the Christians met for worship, they recited hymns and vowed not to commit crime but to abstain from theft, robbery, adultery, and a breach of the faith. He saw no wrong in their oath, but he did object to the Christians' obstinacy in refusing to renounce Christ and to worship the image of the emperor.

Trajan agreed with Pliny's recommended procedure and unwittingly shaped the policies of the Roman government towards Christianity for nearly two hundred years. It seems that Trajan was not a wanton persecutor, but as ruler he was determined to uphold the laws of the State. He instructed Pliny that Christians were not to be sought out, but they should be punished when accused and convicted. Christianity was an illegal religion, but officials were not required to prosecute Christians unless an informer brought them to trial. If those accused proved by worshipping Roman gods that they were not Christians, they were to be pardoned.

In spite of the lenient sound of Trajan's response to Pliny, some of the provincial governors used severe measures against Christians. Even the humane Pliny told about placing women on the rack. Severe persecution was experienced in Syria and Palestine. Simeon, bishop of Jerusalem and kinsman of Jesus, was accused by fanatical Jews and crucified in 107. About the same time (between 107 and 116), Trajan went to Antioch and threatened with persecution all who refused to sacrifice to the gods. Bishop Ignatius was tried for the crime of refusing to offer sacrifices. Ignatius proudly confessed his loyalty to Christ. He was condemned by Trajan, transported to Rome, and thrown to the wild beasts in the Colosseum. The beasts immediately fell upon him and left nothing but a few of his bones. No other acts of persecution related to Traian are known.

The Jews revolted in 115 while Trajan was advancing to the Persian Gulf in an eastern campaign. The spirit of Zealotism was revived, and the Jews of Egypt, Cyrene, and Cyprus rose up against Rome. Thousands of Jews died during the rebellion. For a time in Alexandria, they had the upper hand but eventually were defeated with much bloodshed. The insurrection was quelled by Trajan's general Turbo. Jews were proscribed from Cyprus.

Hadrian (117–138) followed Trajan as emperor. He had little confidence in the popular religions but showed much interest in foreign cults. He opposed the outbursts of hatred against Christians which had become common by the time of his reign. During pagan festivals, mobs sometimes rioted and clamoured for the death of Christians. He instructed the proconsul of Asia to reject all accusations against Christians except those which invol-

Underline the correct word or words.

During Trajan's rule as emperor, the Christian churches (prospered, were prohibited).

(were prohibited)

Pliny saw no wrong in the Christians' oath but objected to their worship of_____ rather than the_____.

(Christ, emperor)

Is this statement true or false?

Trajan instructed Pliny not to seek out Christians but to punish them when they were accused and convicted.

_____

(Compare your answer with the text.)

The emperor who opposed outbursts of hatred against Christians and tried to protect them against slanderous informers was_____.

(Compare your answer with the text.)

ved transgressions of the Roman law and disturbance of the peace. The slanderous informer was to be punished with heavier penalties in proportion to the gravity of his offence. Hadrianís purpose was not to protect Christians but to prevent unjust judgements against innocent people. In 117, he issued an imperial edict, forbidding circumcision, the observance of the Jewish Sabbath, and the public reading of the Mosaic Law. This action contributed to a third Jewish war fifteen years later. The founding of a Roman colony at Jerusalem with an altar to Jupiter on the site of the former Temple and the continued identification of nationalism and devotion to God provided additional motivation for renewing the struggle with Rome.

Shortly before the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, a Jewish rabbi named Johanan, a pupil of Hillel, left Jesusalem and gained permission from the Romans to settle at Jabneh (Jamnia). Other scholars joined him, and the pharisaical emphasis- strict observance of the Law- enabled Judaism to survive though the Temple was destroyed and the sacrificial system had ceased.

Akiba, a subsequent scholar at Jabneh who codified the Jewish law, emphasized Israel's peculiar relation to God: "My Beloved is mine, and I am His." The Jews were willing to undergo martyrdom for the sake of their God, that is, for the right to continue circumcision which sealed the Covenant. Akiba travelled to various Jewish settlements in the Empire and encouraged Jewish national solidarity. He found a leader in Simon of Cozeba who was ready to take up the struggle against Rome. Akiba acclaimed him as the messiah, "a Star out of Jacob" (Num. 24:17). He renamed him Son of the Star (Bar-Cochba) and encouraged him to lead fierce guerilla warfare against Rome from 132-135. The purpose of the revolt was to prevent Jerusalem from being made into a Graeco-Roman city. The Christian Jews rejected the new messiah; however, other Jews stood united in taking up arms for religious and national freedom. They avoided open battle but sallied from hiding places and attacked their enemies. Hadrian dispatched Severus, one of his best generals, who hunted down small units in their places of refuge and annihilated the rebels. Jerusalem was retaken by the Romans. The last struggle for Jewish freedom was at Beth-ther, southwest of Jerusalem. The fortress fell in 135. Half a million Jews are said to have perished from the famine and the sword of the Romans. Many were sold as slaves in the market of Hebron.

The destruction of fifty fortresses and hundreds of villages left Judaea like a desert. In rebuilding Jerusalem, the Gentiles placed the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus on the site where the Temple had stood. Temples of Bacchus, Serapis, and Venus were constructed as well as theatres. Jews were not permitted to enter the city; however, each year they came begging and bribing the Roman guards to permit them to linger and weep.

Antoninus Pius (138-161) succeeded Hadrian as emperor. He is described as one of the wisest and most upright of emperors. His reign was free of civil and hostile bloodshed; however, public calamities occurred such as famine, the flooding of the Tiber, earthquakes, and conflagrations at Rome, Antioch, and Carthage. These disasters aroused the people against the Christians who were blamed with the calamities because they had made the gods angry by not worshipping them. The Emperor attempted to protect the Christians from popular rage, but he was not completely successful.

The tradition that Antoninus issued an edict rebuking the pagans for their violence against Christians is probably spurious. The tradition states Antoninus reasoned that if the Christians had offended the gods, the gods ought to be left to take vengeance for themselves. In 155 under Antoninus, the martyrdom of Polycarp,

The last Jewish struggle for freedom from Rome was led by the guerilla warfare leader

_____ in _____
(years)

(Bar-Cochba, 132-135)

Jews were not permitted to enter the rebuilt Jerusalem but bribed the Roman guards to let them stop and_____.

(weep)

The emperor who was described as one of the wisest and most upright was A _____
P_____.

(Compare your answer with the text.)

venerable bishop of the church at Smyrna in Asia Minor, took place. Polycarp was a personal friend and pupil of the Apostle John and a teacher of Irenaeus of Lyons. Since he died at the age of 86, he must have been born in A.D. 69 and he and John may have enjoyed a friendship of twenty years or more.

When Polycarp was brought to trial, he was urged to say "Lord Caesar" and to offer sacrifices to the Roman gods in order to save his life. He refused to recant and was taken to the stadium where a great crowd had gathered. Before the proconsul, he was again asked to renounce Christ. He replied, "Eighty and six years have I served him, and he never did me wrong; and how can I now blaspheme my King that has saved me?" Polycarp steadfastly confessed before the multitude that he was a Christian. According to the account in Eusebius, Jews helped to gather the straw and wood with which to burn him. They did not nail him but bound him to the stake. After Polycarp gave thanks to God for being worthy to share in the martyr's death, his executioners kindled the fire.[1]

Marcus Aurelius (161–180) served first as a junior partner in the principate with Antoninus and then as sole emperor. Antoninus adopted him as his son and successor in 139 and caused the Senate to confer upon him the tribunician authority in Rome and the imperium outside of Rome. Aurelius was a junior partner in the principate from 146 to 161.

Marcus Aurelius was by nature a student and philosopher and a devoted follower of Stoicism. His musings are revealed in his *Meditations*. He was devoted to peace but was forced to battle the Parthians, the tribes on the frontier of the Danube, and the Moorish tribes in Mauretania. Although he was a well educated, just, kind, and amiable emperor, his emphasis on self-reliance caused him to have no sympathy for Christianity, and he probably regarded it as an absurd and fanatical superstition. The steadfastness of the Christians during persecution did not appear to him as fidelity to a higher principle but as obstinacy and disobedience to Roman authority. His prejudice against Christianity was reinforced by the Cynic philosopher Crescens, the bitter opponent of Justin Martyr.

Although Aurelius had little respect for the state religion, he, like Hadrian, regarded its maintenance as a political necessity. Rather than protecting Christians from mob violence as Trajan did, he encouraged and promoted their persecution. His reign was likewise filled with natural calamities such as earthquakes, floods, famines, pestilences, insurrections, and invasions on the frontiers. These calamities added to the rage of the populace against the Christians whose impiety towards the gods was interpreted as making the gods angry. Christians interpreted the disasters as divine judgement on the pagan population and the iniquitous government which encouraged their persecution. Such an interpretation further irritated their pagan enemies.

During the reign of Aurelius, a law was passed which exiled anyone endeavouring to influence the peoples' minds with fear of the divine. This law was probably aimed at the Christians. In southern Gaul, a large number of Christians were brought before the authorities and charged with incestuous orgies, cannibalism, and atheism. They were exposed to horrible tortures, thrown to wild beasts, and subjected to other cruel types of death. Their refusal to worship idols brought the charge of atheism. The un-

Fill in the blanks with the facts about Polycarp.

1. He was the Bishop of _____

2. He was a friend and disciple of _____

3. He died a m_____ at the age of _____.

(1. Smyrna, 2. John, 3. martyr, 86)

Marcus Aurelius was a devoted follower of

_____.

(Compare your answer with the text.)

Underline the word which makes this statement correct.

Aurelius (prevented, promoted) persecution of Christians.

(promoted)

A law prohibiting proselyting was passed during the reign of_____.

(Aurelius)

[1] Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 4, 15.

willingness to worship the Emperor brought the accusation of treason. They were accused of being immoral because of a confusion of erotic love with agape love. They were accused of cannibalism because of their observance of the Lord's Supper. As a result of these false accusations, a new type of Christian literature came into being–apologies– which defended the Christian faith. Perhaps the apologists did not alter the opinions of the heathen populace or the Emperor, but their writings strengthened Christian convictions and aided in the development of theology.

Sanctus of Gaul was subjected to cruel tortures but continued to confess that he was a Christian. Finally, hot plates of brass were fastened to the tender parts of his body. "But he continued unsubdued and unshaken, firm in his confession . . . but the corpse itself was evidence of his sufferings, as it was one continued wound, mangled and shrivelled, that had entirely lost the form of man to the external eye."[2]

In order to justify the persecution of Christians, heathen slaves were forced by threat of the rack to declare that their masters practised all manner of unnatural vices. At the age of 90, Bishop Pothinus was cast into a dismal dungeon where he died in two days. The virgin Blandina, a slave, refused to recant under the most cruel tortures and was at last thrown to a wild beast in a net. A boy of fifteen steadfastly confessed his Saviour in spite of various cruelties. The corpses of the martyrs lined the streets. They were shamefully mutilated and then burnt, and the ashes were cast into the Rhone River. Eventually, the people grew weary of slaughter. Even though numerous Christians had fallen, a considerable number survived.

The philosopher Justin, who was an important literary defender of Christianity, was martyred in Rome in about 165. His death is commonly ascribed to the machinations of Crescens, a disreputable Cynic philosopher. Tradition states that six companions suffered with him.

Marcus Aurelius was succeeded by *Commodus (180–192)*, his cruel and contemptible son. "Cowardly, cruel, and sensual, he pursued a life of pleasure and left the government in the hands of a succession of favourites who used their power to further their own interests."[3] Like Nero, he sought to win the favour of the mob by dancing, singing, and appearing in the arena as a hunter of wild beasts or as a gladiator, but he incurred no risk in killing his opponent. Christians were spared persecution under him, however, as a result of Marcia, a concubine.

A new dynasty came to rule in *Septimius Severus (193–211)*. The effect of his reign upon the Christians and that of his successors will be left to a subsequent lesson.

The Results of Persecution

There is no evidence that a general persecution was launched throughout the Roman Empire during the second century. However, persecution was severe in some areas, and many Christians were put to death. Marcus Aurelius did issue a decree which encouraged informers by allowing them to take the property of the accused, and he made it possible for officials to enrich themselves by confiscation. Also, torture was employed as a means of forcing Christians to renounce their faith and to worship

During the reign of Commodus, Aurelius' son, Christians were spared_____

(persecution)

Unscramble the letters below. They are the key words for five results of the persecution of Christians. See if your can write each result. Three are on this page and two are on the next page.

1.____ _____ ____ ____

___ _____.

TEDAH

2. ____ ____ _____ ____

YERTOPRP

_____.

3. _____ ____ _____

TERUTOR

(Many Christians were put to death. Many lost property to informers. Torture was employed.)

[2] Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 5, 1.

[3] Arthur E. R. Boak and William G. Sinnigen, *A History of Rome to A.D. 565* (London: Collier–Macmillan Limited, 1965), p. 336.

idols. The response of believers under torture varied. The Church was not of one opinion concerning the degree of compromise permitted under torture. A deep regard developed for those whose loyalty brought martyrdom, and many centred their religious devotion in relics of former martyrs. Others became fanatical in their desire for martyrdom and suffering. Since bishops as leaders of the churches symbolized to Rome the Christian movement, they were sought out for special persecution. At the same time, this action elevated their position. "The many courageous bishops who died for the faith enhanced the office of bishop as a rallying point for Christian faithfulness."[4]

Persecutions by Marcus Aurelius brought forth many written apologies in behalf of persecuted Christians. He gave little or no heed to them. Christianity was an illegal religion, and the emperors could not understand nor appreciate the fanatical beliefs which caused Christians to choose martyrdom rather than compromise. Many Christians were martyred, but the number was relatively small compared to the third and fourth centuries.

CONTINUE THE RESULTS OF THE PERSECUTION

4.___ ____ _____ _____

DARGER

___ _____ _____ _____

_____

5. The_____ _____

_____ _____

HOSIPBS

_____ _____ _____

(A deep regard developed for those who suffered maryrdom. The attention placed on bishops elevated ttheir position.)

Doctrinal Trends Reflected by the Apostolic Fathers

Clement of Rome (A.D. 96)

Clement, who was bishop in Rome, wrote an epistle to the church in Corinth. A serious schism had occurred in which the younger members had rebelled against the leaders. Since the problem was of a practical nature concerning the organization of the church, he wrote an epistle giving advice rather than theology. Nevertheless, it had theological implications.

Clement was a highly esteemed leader, and his epistle was considered part of the New Testament Canon in Egypt and Syria. It reflects Paulinism primarily but also contains emphases of Hellenistic Judaism. The Corinthian church did not ask help from Rome, but the Roman church intervened because of its position in the Imperial City and because of the tradition that Peter and Paul had been associated with it. These factors laid the foundation for the Roman bishop's advice which evolved eventually into papal authority.

Clement reminded the Corinthians of their blessings and of their past reputation of faith, piety, and submission. That reputation was being threatened because jealousy had gained control of some of the members. He emphasized that humility is a cardinal virtue. The offenders must repent and submit in obedience to the leaders. Clement's emphasis on moralism linked him with Hellenistic Judaism and with Stoicism. Abraham was for him a pattern of obedience, hospitality, and humility. For Paul, Abraham was an example of faith. The letter reflects the movement away from the Pauline–type of faith to a Christianity in which ethical interests and concerns for law and order predominated.

Clement argued that church order had a divine origin. The Master commanded sacrifices and services to be performed, not carelessly and haphazardly but at the designated seasons and hours. Those who followed correct procedures did not sin– the priests and Levites. Likewise, laymen had their rules and should

Clement wrote an epistle to the church in _____.

(Corinth)

[4] Robert Baker, *A Summary of Christian* History (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1959), p. 23.

not overstep them. In this argument, Clement began to move away from the New Testament distinction in function between clergy and laity by making a distinction in position. He argued that God sent Christ who chose the apostles, and they appointed the first converts to be bishops and deacons. Clement said: "Those therefore who were appointed by them are afterward by other reputable men with the consent of the whole church, these men we consider as being unjustly removed from their ministry."

Implications in Clement's epistle included:

1. The beginning of Roman leadership. Clement's attitude was that his position as leader of the church at Rome gave him the right to extra authority.
2. The beginning of a church order or structure which was not to be tampered with. Laymen were not to challenge the bishops who were authorities in what the apostles taught.
3. The maintenance of unity. Apostolic succession (bishops appointed by the apostles and their successors) appeared to be the best device for maintaining unity.
4. A new definition of Christian virtue. For Clement, virtue was achieved by submission to the clergy rather than by the Pauline doctrine of righteousness by faith.
5. Apostolic authority. Since the bishops were successors of the apostles, they had an authority which placed them above judgement and dismissal by the church.
6. The appearance of two-level ethics. Clement argued that according to Scripture it was always the lawless (laity) who attempted to cast out holy men (leaders). He implied that the laity lived on a lower level than the clergy.
7. The beginning of a hierarchical view of the ministry. The Roman Catholic system grew out of this view.

Use the following words to complete the implications of Clement's epistle:

virtue, ethics, leadership, unity, authority, structure, hierarchical

1. The beginning of Roman _____
2. Beginning of a church _____
3. Emphasis on _____.
4. New definition of Christian _____.
5. Emphasis on apostolic ____
6. Expression of two-level _____.
7. Beginning of a _____ view of the ministry.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

The Epistles of Ignatius (about 116)

When Trajan came to Antioch, Ignatius, bishop of Antioch and pupil of the Apostle John, was tried for refusing to sacrifice to the gods. He was condemned to be thrown to the lions at Rome. He was bound in chains and taken over land and sea by ten soldiers to Rome by way of Seleucia, Smyrna, Troas, and across the Adriatic. Along the way, he was received by Christians who expressed respect and concern, but he would not allow them to avert or even delay his martyrdom.

On the journey, he was met and received warmly by Polycarp of Smyrna and Christians from neighbouring congregations. He wrote four letters to the churches of Ephesus, Magnesia, Tralles, and Rome, begging them not to intervene with the pagan authorities and deprive him of martyrdom. Upon arriving at Troas, he wrote three additional letters to Polycarp and to the churches of Philadelphia and Smyrna.

His letter to the Ephesians emphasized unity and orthodoxy in the Church. He warned against schism and Docetism. His letter indicates that local congregations were ruled by one bishop who was supported by presbyters and deacons. First Clement reveals that presbyters governed the churches and were subject only to apostolic figures. Ignatius depicted the bishop as the leading person in a church without whom a service could not be held. The bishop was teacher, ruler, and prophet. He did not base the authority of the bishop on apostolic succession but on the argument that the earthly office is based on a heavenly pattern. The bishop represented God, and the presbyters, the apostles, and the deacons represented Christ. He did emphasize the divinity of Christ, stating that He is our God who was incarnated and who suffered, died, and was resurrected.

Ignatius brought the Greek concept of God into Christianity.

Ignatius was the bishop in _____.

He was a pupil of the A_____

J_____.

He was condemned to be thrown to the _____.

(Antioch, Apostle John, lions)

Ignatius' letters emphasized _____ and _____ in the Church.

(unity, orthodoxy)

Is this statement true or false?

Ignatius depicted the bishop as the leader of the church and the earthly office as based on a heavenly pattern.

_____

(Compare your answer with the text.)

Before God revealed Himself in Christ, He was a silent and unknown Ideal. Ignatius emphasized Christ's two natures– divine and human. At Smyrna he had come into contact with Docetism and recognized its danger. He emphasized that the human side of our Lord came from David's line, and His passion was no sham. After His resurrection, Jesus was in the flesh– an emphasis on the eternal manhood of Christ.

Ignatius conceived of community life as central in the church. He gave no attention to the individual Christian life apart from the community of believers and affirmed that there was no salvation outside the church. The hearing of the gospel, Christian fellowship, and encouragement to moral living came from the church. Because the church is so important in the Christian's life, its unity had to be maintained. Ignatius was the first one to speak of the catholic Church (universal church). In order to maintain unity, all were to follow the bishop and to be obedient to him as Christ was to the Father. The deacons and presbyters represented Jesus Christ who submitted to the rule of the Father, and the bishop represented the Father who was over Christ. No one was to do anything with regard to the Church without the bishop's approval. The Lord's Supper (Eucharist) was valid only when celebrated by the bishop or one authorized by him. Baptism or a love feast was not to be conducted without the bishop: "He who acts without the bishop's knowledge is in the devil's service."

Ignatius recognized one bishop or overseer of a church and separated the bishop from the presbyters. This distinction appears in his analogy of the heavenly pattern in which the bishop corresponded to the Father, the deacons to Christ as servants, and the presbyters or elders to apostles. The bishop was ultimate in the Universal Church. His authority came directly from God, not from apostolic succession or election by a congregation.

Teachings of the Twelve Apostles (about 120)

This document is a short manual on morals and Christian practice. The first six chapters describe "the two ways" –way of life and way of death. Quotations from the Sermon on the Mount are included. Chapters 7–15 contain instructions on baptism, fasting, prayer, and the Eucharist, and how to treat prophets, bishops, and deacons. Chapter 16 is a prophecy of the antichrist and the second advent.

This document was frequently called the *Didache*. It prescribed baptism by immersion if possible, otherwise by threefold affusion (pouring). It appears to have been a baptismal manual or a catechism.

The central emphasis is on morals. The best Christian life can be lived on a higher level than that on which most people live. The writer was concerned about the problem of sin in the Church. He did not follow Paul's view of bondage in sin but believed that one can do good. He advised two ways: (1) if one can, he should live perfectly; (2) if he cannot be perfect, he should do the best he can on a lower moral level.

The Epistle of Barnabas (about 120)

Clement of Alexandria ascribed this document to the Apostle Barnabas. It contains a strong attack on Judaism, stating that animal sacrifices and the material Temple were blind Jewish mistakes. The writer claimed that the purpose of Jewish practices was to prepare for Christianity. Christians and not Jews are the true heirs of the Covenant. Christians are able to understand the Old Testament because of having received a special *gnosis* (knowledge).

The Shepherd of Hermas (about 140)

This document was written by a member of the Roman

A short manual on morals and Christian practice, written about 120, was called the _____.

(Compare your answer with the text.)

Two ways of life prescribed in the Didache are:

1. If a person can, he should live _____.
2. If he cannot be perfect, he should do the best he can on a lower_____ _____.

(1. perfectly, 2. moral level)

church and was so named for the angel who, in the form of a shepherd, was recorded to have communicated its contents to Hermas. It is composed of five visions, twelve mandates, and ten similitudes. It emphasizes the need of repentance. The book is attributed to a certain Hermas whose brother was Pius, bishop of Rome (139–154). It was probably written about 140.

Hermas was cast in the role of a prophet who received revelation from the angel. The message reflected the belief that baptism removed previous sins but did not provide for future forgiveness. In struggling with the problem of sin committed after baptism, the author suggested different categories of sin:

1. Trivial sins, such as wrong thoughts and unbrotherly attitudes, could be forgiven.
2. Serious sins, such as dishonestly, adultery, greed, and acts of violence, could be forgiven once. "If a man have a believing adulterous wife, and she repent, he shall receive her back. If he receives her not back, he sinneth a great sin; . . . for there is one repentance to the servants of God."
3. Mortal sins, such as murder and idolatry, could not be forgiven after baptism and remission of former sins.

Papias (about A.D. 60–130)

Papias was bishop of Hierapolis in Asia Minor. All that is known of him comes from Irenaeus who stated that he was a disciple of one "John" and a companion of Polycarp. Knowledge of his "Expositions of the Oracles of the Lord" (five books) is limited to quotations in the works of Irenaeus and Eusebius. These quotations reveal that his works contained many oral traditions and legendary accounts. The most famous fragments are about the origin of the Gospels of Matthew and Mark. Papias stated that Mark was the interpreter of Peter and set down accurately, though not in order, everything he remembered of the words and actions of the Lord. He based his statement on the authority of "the Elder." He further stated that Matthew composed "the oracles" in Hebrew and each one translated them as best he could. These statements have gained wide attention from New Testament interpreters.

Threats of Doctrinal Corruption

Marcion

Events in the early life of Marcion are difficult to establish. What is known about him comes from the writings of his opponents–Justin Martyr, Hippolytus, Irenaeus, Epiphanius, and Tertullian. He is said to have been a native of Sinope, a seaport in Pontus, and a wealthy ship-owner. He was the son of a bishop; therefore, he was raised under Christian influence. However, he was excommunicated by his father on grounds of immorality. He made his way to Rome about 139 and became associated with the church there. After making a generous gift to the church, he began teaching distinctive views which attracted quite a following. His views, however, did not gain acceptance by the mojority. He and several members were excommunicated after a few years, probably about 144. He appears to have been sincere in his conviction that his views were needed to reform the church.

His teacher is said to have been Cerdo who taught that the God of the Old Testament could not be the Father of Jesus Christ, for one was known and the other unknown, and one was just while the other was good. Marcion used this concept to develop a complete distinction between Christianity and Judaism. He was convinced that the retributive justice found in the Old Testament

Hermas' message reflected the belief that baptism removed previous_____ but did not provide for future_____.

(sins, forgiveness)

According to Hermas, there are three categories of sin after baptism:

1. T_____ sins
2. S_____ sins, which could be forgiven once
3. M_____ sins, which could not be forgiven

(1. Trivial, 2. Serious, 3. Mortal)

Papias was a disciple of one "_____" and a companion of_____.

The most famous fragments are about the origin of the Gospel of_____ and _____.

(John, Polycarp, Matthew, Mark)

Identify Papias' statements by placing *Matthew* or Mark in the blanks.

1. _____ was the interpreter of Peter.
2. _____ wrote in Hebrew.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Marcion was excommunicated from the

_____ _____.

(Roman church)

could not be reconciled with the love and goodness of the Father described by Jesus. Marcion saw the ceremonial law and the low standard of morality in the Old Testament fitted to the God of creation who commanded fire to come down and consume man. He concluded that the Old Testament God is the Demiurge who is creator and Lord of all men; however, His chosen people are the Jews.

Marcion turned to the writings of Paul and a modified edition of Luke's Gospel as the bases for Christian teachings. He emphasized that mercifulness and lofty morality were revealed by the life and teachings of Christ. He denied that God is an object of fear and emphasized that He is love and requires only love of His children. Christ could not have been perfect and part of the kingdom of the Demiurge as well; therefore, Marcion concluded that His birth, physical life, and death were merely apparent (Docetic Christology). Christ was an embodiment of the Father, the known God. Christ's suffering and death were the work of the creator God, the Old Testament Demiurge.

Marcion differed from Valentinus (see next topic) by not exalting knowledge above faith. He emphasized the redemptive work of Christ rather than esoteric knowledge. He strongly emphasized that the Jews were in error and that Judaism was evil. He regarded matter as intrinsically evil; therefore, he practised a rigorous asceticism. Marcion gained greater influence than the Valentinians and other Gnostic groups. He was especially dreaded by the orthodox.

Valentinus (about 160)

This important Gnostic teacher lived in Rome from about 136 to 165. According to Epiphanius, he was born in Egypt and educated in Alexandria.

His teachings were a Hellenistic syncretism,, and they had their foundation in Platonic dualism. He separated the divine world of ideas from the material world of phenomenon: man stands between the two realms, partaking of both. His problem was how to bridge the chasm in order to be able to obtain the higher goal and to be released from the lower, the material.

Valentinus' view of existence began in the realm of ideas and held that Wisdom was the "artist" who ordered matter. His speculative system began with the Fundamental Reality: Death (*Bythus*) and Silence (*Sige*) as the eternal male and his female consort. These produced Mind (*Nous*) and Truth (*Aletheia*) that in turn produced four offsprings: *Logos* (Word), *Zoe* (Life), *Anthropos* (Man), and *Ekklesia* (Church). Man and Church produced twelve aeons of which the last was Wisdom (*Sophia*). The female *Sophia* was jealous of *Nous* (Mind) because he could create and she could not. She tried to create and produced *Kenoma* (the world of phenomena, a negative element) which in turn brought forth the offspring Achemoth (shapeless mass). Word and Life brought forth the *Pleroma* (the world of ideas). *Achemoth* (the shapeless material mass) threatened the existence of *Pleroma*. *Bythos*, the Fundamental Reality, intervened and caused *Nous* (Mind) to create new realities: Christ and the Spirit. These two organized *Achemoth* and freed *Sophia* so that she could return to the *Pleroma*. Her attempt to create had led to an abortion (the shapeless mass). This miscarriage remained with passion. Her grief became matter, her confusion the devil, and her fear the psychic mind. This psychic mind was a semi-divine being, the Demiurge which was the Creator of the world. This system explains how passion, grief, and confusion are related to the world of phenomenon.

Valentinus' system was built on the typical Gnostic view of explaining the origin of the Demiurge, the creator of this material

Use the following words to complete Marcion's beliefs and teachings:

Jesus Christ, creator, God, Demiurge, Father

The_____ of the Old Testament could not be the_____ of_____ _____ but is the_____ who is the _____.

(God, Father, Jesus Christ, creator, Demiurge)

Marcion believed that Christ's physical life and death were only an_____.

(apparition)

Valentinus was a_____ teacher in _____.

(Compare your answer with the text.)

Valentinus separated—

the_____ world of_____

from

the_____ world of_____.

(divine, ideas, material, phenomenon)

world which is evil, by a series of emanations from the Fundamental Reality. This Demiurge thought that he was the Fundamental Reality, but he was identified with the Old Testament God who made an evil world. The Supreme Reality, *Bythos*, was responsible for the coming forth of Christ who freed the divine life of *Pleroma* (the world of ideas). This Christ joined Himself to the man Jesus at His baptism to bring men the true Gnosis whereby they could escape the realm of the Demiurge and return to the *Pleroma*. This deliverance required the liberation of the spiritual nature in man from evil material existence and from the passions by which it was enslaved.

The teachings of Valentinus were popular and gained a wide following. Irenaeus of Lyons in Gaul wrote his five books "Against Heresies" (about 185), refuting the heretical views of Valentinus.

Montanism

The defence of Christianity against perversions of legalism and philosophy did not end the struggle. Montanism, a second century movement, threatened Christianity with a new legalism. Montanus of Phrygia in Asia Minor (about 135–160) reacted against Gnosticism and paganism by calling Christians to stricter living. His zeal was based on a vivid belief in the early end of the world and the establishment of an ideal society in Jerusalem. He spoke against the emphasis on knowledge at the expense of faith and denounced laxity of discipline and morals in the churches. He opposed the growth of the hierarchy and upbraided Christians for following human leadership, instead of the Holy Spirit, in church life and organization.

According to Jerome, Montanus was formerly a priest of Cybele, a mystery religion in Asia Minor which majored on wild enthusiasm. He sought an involuntary ecstasy in which his submission to the Godhead would result in his becoming a will-less instrument of prophecy. He was joined by the prophetesses Prisca and Maximilla. They proclaimed that the heavenly Jerusalem would soon descend near Pepuza in Phrygia, and Christ would reign a thousand years. People sold their houses and fields, and one congregation went into the wilderness to meet Him. In preparation for the fast-approaching consummation, very strenuous asceticism was practised–celibacy, fasting, and abstinence from meat. This vigorous attitude won response as a protest against the growing worldliness of the Church. Virginity and womanhood were exalted, sins were arbitrarily divided into mortal and venial, and undue exaltation was given to martyrdom. The present life was pictured as insignificant except as a preparation for the life beyond.

After Montanus denounced clergymen as worldly, opposition arose and he and his group were cut off from many Phrygian churches. The movement, which had begun as a reform and was almost approved by the orthodox, ended in a schism. The movement, however, attracted many of the more earnest Christians throughout the Empire, and the Montanistic churches multiplied in Asia Minor, Africa, and the remote East.

Valentinus' explanation of the origin of the Demiurge, creator of this material world, was by a series of emanations from the

F _____ R _____

(Fundamental Reality)

Montanus' reaction against _____

brought about a new _____

(Gnosticism, legalism)

The emphasis of Montanus was the insignificance of the present life because of the fast approach of

the_____ of_____.

(end, time)

Defenders of the Faith

Introduction

The literary defenders of Christianity were divided into those who appealed to government officials for toleration (apologists) and those who addressed the doctrinal attacks of Gnosticism and legalism (polemists). Apologists, who addressed the Emperor and other government officials, included Quadratus,

Aristides, Justin, Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus, Hermias and Melito. These men were trained in the philosophies of their time and used their training to defend the gospel. Their writings contributed to the respectability of Christianity and stimulated Christian thought. They defended Christians against charges of atheism, licentiousness, and cannibalism. It should be recalled that Christians were accused of atheism because they rejected the pagan gods and refused to sacrifice to and use images. Pagans could not understand the existence of a god without these accessories. Christians were charged with licentiousness because they met in secret places at night and demonstrated great affection one for another. Pagans had little concept of love which was defined as sacrificial giving rather than erotic getting. The charge of cannibalism arose from a misunderstanding of the statements of Christians about eating the body and drinking the blood of Christ.

Justin (about 100–165)

Justin was the foremost apologist. He was born of pagan parents at Neapolis in Samaria. He searched for truth in the pagan philosophies of Stoicism, Aristotelianism, Pythagoreanism, and Platonism. He embraced Christianity in about 130 and later taught at Ephesus where he engaged in a disputation with Trypho the Jew (about 135). Still later he moved to Rome and opened a Christian school. He had Tatian as one of his pupils.

His "First Apology" was addressed to Emperor Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius, his adopted son (about 155). It explained first why Christians should not be condemned without a fair hearing and trial– they were innocent of all crime. Christians were not atheists, for they worship God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. He agreed that they should be punished if legitimately convicted of crime, but the fact that they preferred death to falsehood proved their innocence. Since Christ's Kingdom is not of this world, the Emperor had nothing to fear from Christians. He pointed out that actually Christians were good men because of the change Christ wrought in their characters.

Second, he argued that the truth was taught only by Christians, that the Son of God was truly incarnate, and that the fables of paganism were invented by demons to discredit the advent of Christ. The third section explained the Christian ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper.

In "The Dialogue with Trypho the Jew," Justin refuted the opinion of the Jews concerning the Law, showed that the true Son who was begotten by God became incarnate and was crucified for sinful man, and argued that the calling of the Gentiles and the constitution of the Church by Christ were predicted in the Old Testament. In the "Second Apology" he anticipated his own martyrdom and defended Christians who had certain charges brought against them. Christianity had grown to the point that the pagan society could not ignore it; therefore, pagans were making false accusations against Christians.

Justin taught that before creation God began Rational Power (the Logos). This Logos was eternal and infinite Wisdom, not created but rather a divine attribute. At a certain time before creation, it became a separate being or entity, but it did not have a beginning in time. The Logos was personal and, at a particular point in history, Christ took on a human body. God, who was depicted in Greek terms as unrelatable and unrelated, became immanent in the Logos. One of His primary functions was to reveal God the Father. God is righteous and has commanded man to act morally. He has made His will known in the Old and New Testaments. The Logos (Christ) revealed a more complete and new law which is inward rather than outward. Christ gives us

Match the literary defenders of Christianity and their methods.

a. polemists
b. apologists

____1. appealed to government officials for toleration

____2. addressed the doctrinal attacks of Gnosticism and legalism

(b–1, a–2)

Justin's "First Apology" was addressed to Emperor_____ _____ and his adopted son _____ _____.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Justin explained that Christians were not _____. He stated they should not be punished except for_____ committed.

(Compare your answers with the text. See beginning of paragraph on previous page.)

Justin argued that the truth was taught only by _____.

(Christians)

Underline the correct words.

Justin taught that Logos was infinite wisdom, which _____

(was created, was a divine attribute).

At a certain point in history, Logos took on a human body to reveal_____.

(God)

knowledge and inspires us to obedience. Justin emphasized the moral aspects of Christianity.

Justin was the first Christian thinker to seek to reconcile the claims of faith and reason. He recognized that pagan thinkers had traces of truth, since all men shared in the "generative" or "germinative" Word *(Logos spermatikos)*. Complete truth, however, was in the Word which became incarnate; therefore, Christianity alone contained full truth. The Word became incarnate to teach men the truth and to redeem them from the power of demons. "Justin's stress on the transcendence of God (derived from his Platonism) led him into subordinationism in his doctrine of the Son (or Logos); but in intention his theology was orthodox."[5]

Tatian referred to Justin as "the most admirable Justin' and stated that the Cynic Crescens laid snares for him.[6] Justin and some of his disciples were denounced as Christians (about 165). Upon refusing to sacrifice to the Roman gods, they were scourged and beheaded. An authentic record of their martyrdom survives and is based on an official court report.

Irenaeus (about 130–202)

While the apologists wrote in times of persecution in order to ward off danger from without, the polemical writers, such as Irenaeus, wrote to counteract the spread of error under the guise of Christian truth. Irenaeus wrote five books "Against Heresies" (about 185) which were directed primarily against Gnostic teachers.

Irenaeus was born in Asia Minor and was a disciple of Polycarp. His writings indicate that he was acquainted with the leading Greek classics. Also, he was a diligent student of the Old and New Testaments and was acquainted with all the earlier Christian writings. His writings reveal a knowledge of heretical literature and give us much of what is known today about Gnosticism.

When Pothinus was martyred in 177, Irenaeus became bishop of the church in Lyons. He had been a missionary in the region for a number of years. It appears that as persecution relaxed in that area, false teachers accelerated their efforts in spreading error. Irenaeus undertook the task of establishing in clear simplicity the belief in one God and faith in the redemption of the human race through Christ. His writings have served as valuable sources for classic doctrines of the atonement. He was the first great systematic theologian of the Church, but he did not write a system of theology. He wrote to meet the situation of his day, the errors of the Gnostics.

The fact that Irenaeus was a student of Polycarp, whom he had heard reminisce about the Apostle John, gives to his writings much authority. The first of Irenaeus' books describes Gnostic heresies, and the second shows their absurdity. In contrast to heretical teachings, he presented a declaration of the faith of the catholic (universal) Church. He emphasized that:

> the Church received from the apostles and their disciples its faith in one God, the Father Almighty, who made the heaven, and the earth, and the sea, and all that is in them,

[5] F. L. Cross, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), p. 757.

[6] Tatian was a disciple of Justin who wrote an apology denouncing paganism in addition to the "Diatessaron," a history of the life of Christ compiled from the four Gospels. Unfortunately, Tatian later turned to Gnosticism.

Justin was the first Christian thinker to seek to reconcile the claims of_____ and_____.

(faith, reason)

READ ALL OF THE TOPIC ON IRENAEUS ON THIS PAGE BEFORE DOING THE FOLLOWING EXERCISE.

Fill in the blanks with the following important facts about Irenaeus.

1. Irenaeus was born in_____ _____.
2. He was a disciple of_____.
3. He became bishop of_____.
4. His writings have served as valuable sources for classic doctrines of the _____.
5. He was the first great systematic _____ of the Church.

(1. Asia Minor, 2. Polycarp, 3. Lyons, 4. atonement, 5. theologian)

> and in one Christ Jesus, the Son of God, who was made flesh for our salvation, and in the Holy Spirit, who through the prophets proclaimed the dispensation of God– the comings, the birth of a virgin, the suffering, the resurrection from the dead, and the bodily reception into the heavens of the beloved, Christ Jesus our Lord and God and Saviour and King, according to the pleasures of the invisible Father.

Since the Church was responsible for preserving this truth, apostolic authority was important. Ignatius had held that the authority of the bishop came directly from God, but in refuting Gnostics, Irenaeus sought for truth which could be traced back to the teaching of the apostles. He emphasized the importance of apostolic succession. Since tradition associated both Peter and Paul with the church at Rome, this church was given a special place as a standard by which other churches should measure themselves. The presence of Peter and Paul in Rome assured the authenticity of the teachings of that church; therefore, other churches should be followers of Rome. In the face of heretical threats, Irenaeus considered the chief function of a church to be that of guarding and transmitting the gospel. The bishop was the one in a church appointed to preserve and guard the apostolic tradition; therefore, it was unthinkable that one should disagree with him. It was not enough to have the written Gospels and Epistles of the New Testament, but their oral interpretations ("The Rule of Truth"), which were needed also.

Irenaeus gave the first clear statement that *God* is creator of both matter and form. In his description of God, he combined justice, mercy, righteousness, and love. With regard to *salvation*, he taught that Christ died to emancipate us from the power of the devil and to reconcile us with God. Christ voluntarily submitted Himself to Satan, but Satan discovered that Christ was different from most men: He was not guilty and did not deserve to be under Satan's control. Christ broke Satan's power by His perfect obedience and freed us. In Christ, God became what we are, so that we might become what He is. In Christ, God's love was revealed, especially in His suffering. Both the humanity and deity in Christ suffered. Irenaeus was unique in speaking of God's suffering.

Irenaeus emphasized the importance of_____ _____ and the authenticity of the teachings from the church at_____.

(apostolic succession, Rome)

The Muratorian Fragment

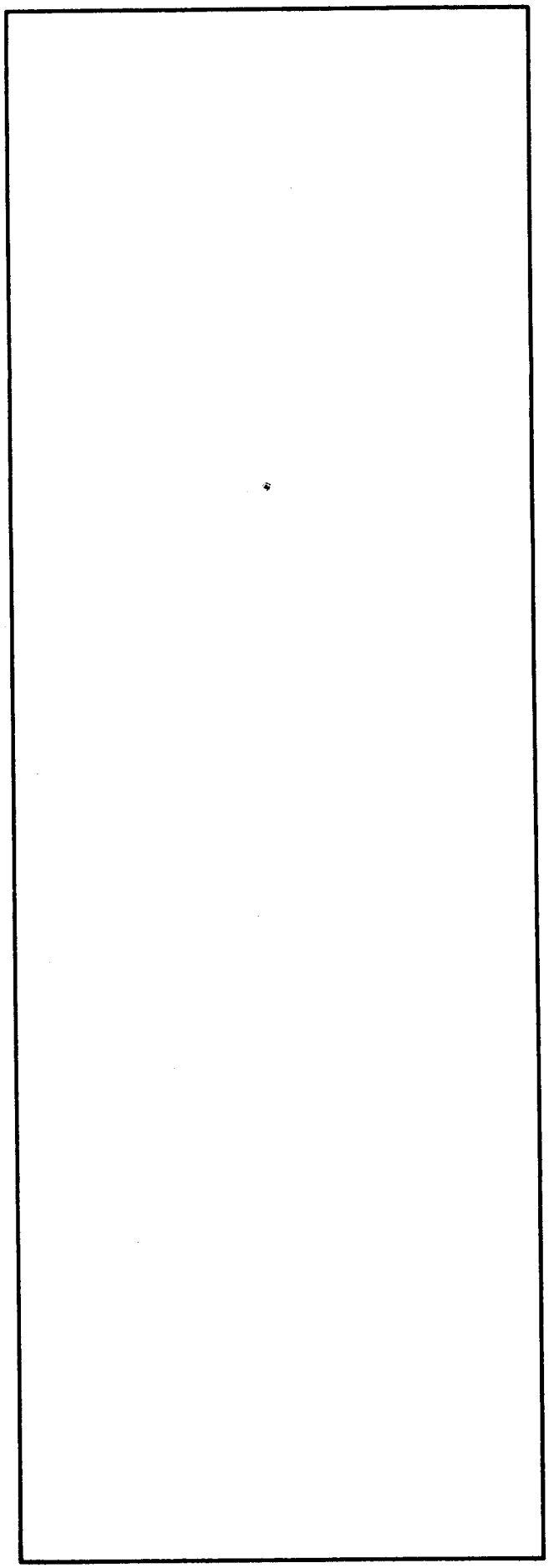
This fragmentary Latin writing deserves to be mentioned because of the information it gives concerning the Canon. It was discovered in the Ambrosian Library at Milan in the early eighteenth century. It was part of a collection of manuscripts of the seventh or eighth century but is generally held to date originally from the latter part of the second century (about 170) because Pius I, Hermas, Marcion, Vasilides, and Montanus are mentioned as contemporaries of the author. It was written perhaps in Rome by an unknown author.

Since the manuscript is mutilated, it begins with the last words of a sentence which probably referred to Mark. It states that Luke stands third in order, having been written by Luke, the physician. In the fourth place is the Gospel of John. The author regarded all four Gospels as essentially one in purpose and inspiration: "In all of them all things are declared by one Sovereign Spirit." He mentioned Acts next and noted that Luke omitted the martyrdom of Peter and the journey of Paul to Spain. Thirteen epistles are attributed to Paul—nine to churches and four to individuals. He mentioned that John wrote to seven churches. The order of the Pauline Epistles to churches is: 1 and 2 Corinthians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Galatians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, and Romans. The ones to individuals are: the

The Muratorian Fragment is a mutilated manuscript of about 170. It lists books of the New Testament with the exception of H_____, J_____, 1 and 2 P_____, and 1 J_____. The only book added which is not in our Canon is the A_____ of P_____.

(Hebrews, James, Peter, John, Apocalypse, Peter)

Epistle to Philemon, the Epistle to Titus, and the two Epistles to Timothy. In addition, he mentioned an epistle to the Laodiceans, another to the Alexandrians forged under the name of Paul and having a bearing on the heresy of Marcion, and others which could not be received into the catholic Church. The author mentioned all of the New Testament books except Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter, and 1 John. The Apocalypse of Peter is the only one added which is not in our Canon. The fragmentary condition of the text may account for the omission of Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, and 1 John. By the time of the writing of the Muratorian Fragment in about 170, only 2 Peter, an apocryphal book, was still in doubt with regard to canonization.



Home Study Exercise

Basic activity (Levels 1, 2, and 3). After reading the study guide text, answer the following questions.

1. Who were the Apostolic Fathers? _____

2. What was Trajan's attitude towards Christians? _____

3. How was Pliny instructed to treat the Christians? _____

4. What was Hadrian's attitude towards Christians? _____

5. Who was Bar-Cochba? _____

6. Who was Polycarp? _____

7. What was the attitude of Aurelius towards Christians? _____

8. List five results of the persecution of Christians. _____

9. Who was Clement and what were the implications of his Epistle? _____

10. Who was Ignatius and what is important in his writings? _____

11. Explain the two ways of life in the Didache. _____

12. How did the Shepherd of Hermas deal with the problem of sin after baptism? _____

13. What do we learn about Matthew and Mark from Papias? _____

14. Who was Marcion and what did he teach? _____

15. Who was Valentinus? _____

16. Who was Montanus and why was he important? _____

17. Who was Justin? _____

18. What did Justin teach about the Logos? _____

19. Who was Irenaeus and why is he important? _____

20. What is the Muratorian Fragment and why is it important? _____

Supplementary activity (Levels 2 and 3). Read pages 13–22 in *A Summary of Christian History* by Baker and answer the following questions.

1. List the Roman emperors in the second century who persecuted Christians and tell why.

2. What effect did physical persecution have upon Christianity?

3. Explain who the Apologists were.

Advanced activity (Level 3). Read pages 6–18 and 39–44 in *Documents of the Christian Church* by Bettenson and answer the following questions.

1. What was Trajan's policy towards Christians according to his letter to Pliny?
2. What was Justin's view of Christ?
3. Contrast the attitudes of Tertullian and Clement of Alexandria towards philosophy.
4. What were Hadrian's instructions concerning the trial of Christians?
5. What information do Irenaeus and the Muratorian Fragment give concerning the Canon?
6. What was Irenaeus' doctrine of Christ?

Seminar Discussion

1. Who were the "Apostolic Fathers" and what does the student of history learn from them?
2. Which emperors of the second century favoured Christianity and which opposed it?
3. How did persecution affect Christianity?
4. What can be learned about the development of church order and doctrine from Clement of Rome's letter?
5. What was the primary concern of Ignatius with regard to the Church?
6. What emphases are given in the Didache and the Shepherd of Hermas?
7. What information did Papias give concerning the Gospels?
8. Who was Marcion and what did he teach?
9. Who was Valentinus and what did he teach?
10. What was the emphasis of Justin Martyr's writings?
11. What is the significance of Irenaeus?
12. What is the significance of the Muratorian Fragment?