

His-Story

Church history and why it matters to me

WHEN IN ROME, PART II AD 220-305

The Third Century Teachers of the Faith

I. Introduction

- A. The rapid progress of the gospel in the early days has ever been the amazement of the historian. Justin Martyr, about the middle of the second century wrote, "There is no people, Greek or barbarian, or of any other race, by whatever appellation or manners they may be distinguished, however ignorant of arts or agriculture, whether they dwell in tents or wander about in covered wagons, among whom prayers and thanksgivings are not offered in the name of the crucified Jesus to the Father and Creator of all things." –William Hendricksen, *New Testament Commentary, Colossians*
- B. We [Christians] are but of yesterday, and yet we already fill your cities, islands, camps, your palace, senate, and forum. We have left you only your temples. –Tertullian, *Plea For Allegiance*
- C. On the basis of all the data available it has been estimated that by the close of the Apostolic Period the total number of Christian disciples had reached half a million. –R. H. Glover, *The Progress of World-Wide Missions*

II. The rising of two important needs: What is the Bible? And what does the Bible teach?

- A. What is the Bible? (see pages 4-5)
- B. What does the Bible teach?
1. During the Apostolic period (120-220), Christian leaders wrote to address specific problems (in the churches) and specific heresies (or the seeds thereof)
 - a. In addition to Biblical letters, only small works on living the Christian life were used
 - *The Apostles' Creed* (authorship unknown)
 - § Created in the late Second Century whose
 - § Used as a baptismal creed in Rome
 - *Didache* (authorship unknown; probable originate in Syrian churches)
Didache means *teaching*
 - § A manual for Christian discipline teaching new Believers how to worship and live for God
 - § [The *Didache*] consists of a moral tract concerning the 'Two Ways' of life and of death, followed by sections about early procedures for baptism, the *agape* and the Lord's Supper. It is clear that the *agape* and Lord's supper included set prayers during a public gathering on the Lord's day, when Christians assembled 'to break bread and give thanks'. This was preceded by the confession of sins and offering gifts.
–Eerdmans' *Handbook to the History of Christianity*.
 - *Shepherd of Hermas*: written by a brother of the bishop of Rome in the middle of the Second Century, which discusses forgiveness of sin after one's baptism

Notes

- b. Nothing existed, in writing, to explain the totality of Christian orthodoxy
2. During the Third Century, heresies (and heretics) went un-checked
 - a. Heretics who gathered strong followings
 - b. Created their own systems of doctrine
3. In response to the heresies and varying beliefs, God raised up gifted teachers to organize Christian Doctrine

The heretics had created their own systems of doctrine, and to this the church at large had to respond by having some of its teachers offer equally cogent expositions of orthodox belief... This gave rise to the first writings in which one can find a fairly complete exposition of Christian truth. These are the works of Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and Origen.

—Justo L. González, *The Story of Christianity, Vol. 1*

III. Two important teachers

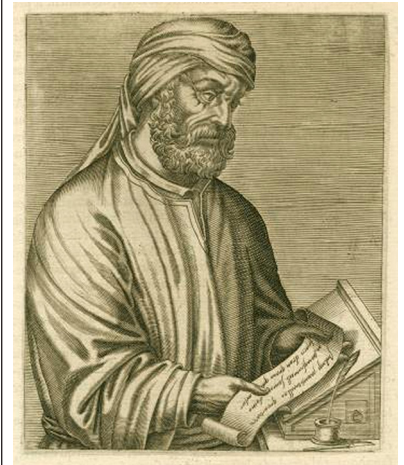
A. Tertullian: Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullianus, (c. 155 - c. 225 AD)

1. Brief biography
 - a. Born in Carthage (capital of the Roman province of north Africa) where he was well educated. Was trained in rhetoric and may have worked as a lawyer. His writings demonstrate a sharp legal mind.
 - b. Became a Christian in Rome around the age of 40
 - c. Returned to Carthage where he lived out most of his life
 - d. First Christian author to write in Latin
 - Wrote in a witty and lively style
 - Coined the phrase: “The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.”
2. Tertullian’s literary works
 - a. His writings addressed three main concerns
 - The relationship between the Christian living in a Roman world and culture
 - The defense of orthodoxy over and against heresy
 - The moral behavior of Believers
 - b. Famous for:
 - *Apology*: Tertullian’s masterpiece which argued Christianity should be tolerated
 - *Against Marcion*: a five-volume work defending the use of the Old Testament in the Christian church
 - *Against Praxeas*: Tertullian developed the doctrine of the Trinity
 - c. Minor works
 - *Exclusion of Heretics*: used an argument from Roman law to claim that the Scriptures belonged to the church
 - *On the Soul*: first Christian writing on psychology
 - *On Baptism*: One of the earliest surviving works about baptism

B. Origen of Alexandria: Origen Adamantius (c. 185 - 254)

1. Brief biography
 - a. Born into a Christian family in Alexandria and became a Believer at a young age
 - Grew up under the ministry of Clement of Alexandria
 - Origen’s father martyred under Septimus Severus when Origen was just a boy (he wanted to offer himself as a martyr too, but his mother hid his clothes from him, thus he had to remain at home)

Notes



God made this universe by his word, reason, and power... This Word, we have learned, was produced from God, and was generated by being produced, and therefore is called the Son of God, and God, from unity of substance with God. For God too is spirit.

When a ray is projected from the sun, it is a portion of the whole sun; but the sun will be in the ray because it is a ray of the sun; the substance is not separated but extended. So from spirit comes spirit, and God, as light is kindled from light.

—Tertullian, *Apology XXI*

- b. As a teenager, Origen displayed a brilliant mind and proved to be an excellent teacher
 - c. Demetrius, the Bishop of Alexandria, asked Origen to train the new catechumens (candidates for baptism)
 - d. Origen trained catechumens and then trained disciples how to lead the training
 - e. Started his own school on Christian philosophy (much like the Greek schools of Aristotle and Plato)
 - Origen quickly became famous for his genius
 - Lectured not just Christians (who came from afar), but also intellectual pagans (including the mother of the Roman emperor at the time)
 - f. Conflict with Demetrius caused Origen to move to Caesarea
2. Origen's literary works
- a. Created the *Hexapla*: An edition of the OT in six columns:
 - Hebrew OT
 - A Greek transliteration of the OT (how to pronounce the Hebrew)
 - Four different Greek translations of the OT
 - § Septuagint (Greek translation of the OT)
 - § Translations by Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion
 - b. Taught there are three levels of meaning for any biblical text:
 - The literal sense
 - The moral application (for the soul)
 - The allegorical (spiritual) sense
 - c. First Principles: A systematic presentation of the fundamental doctrines of the church: God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, creation, the soul, free will, salvation, and the scriptures

IV. Major characters and events (www.churchtimeline.com)

- 225 d. Tertullian
- 245 Conversion of Cyprian
- 247 Cyprian becomes Bishop of Carthage
- 249-251 The reign of Decius. He ordered everyone in the empire to burn incense to him. Those who complied were issued a certificate. Those who did not have a certificate were persecuted. Many Christians bought forged certificates, causing a great controversy in the church. Cyprian went into hiding during the persecution and ruled the church by letters
- 251 b. Anthony. One of the earliest monks. He sold all his possessions and moved to the desert. Athanasius later wrote his biography
- 253-256 Carthaginian Councils
- 254 d. Origen
- 254 Cyprian refuses to accept the validity of baptism by schismatic priests. The church in Rome is critical of Cyprian's view, and sends him scathing letters
- 258 Cyprian is martyred before the issue is settled
- 263 b. Eusebius of Caesarea. He was the first church historian. Many works of the early church survive only as fragments in Eusebius's writing
- 284 The beginning of the Diocletian persecution
- 286 b. Pachomius, Egyptian pioneer of cenobitic (communal rather than solitary) monasticism
- c. 297 b. Athanasius, the defender of Orthodoxy during the Arian controversy of the fourth century.
- 305 The end of the Diocletian persecution

Notes

V. Why this segment of history matters (or *should matter*) to me

- A. How does this lesson enhance your knowledge of God?
- B. In what new ways are you challenged in your own walk with Christ?
- C. How might knowing this information help you to flourish further in the grace of God?

Copies of New Testament Books compared with other Greek literature

Author/ Book	Date written	Earliest copies	Time gap	No. of copies	Percent accuracy of availab. MSS
Homer, <u>Iliad</u>	800 B.C.	c. A.D.1250	c. 2050 y.	1 compl., 643 fragm.	95
Sophocle. (Phil.)	496-406 B.C.	c. A.D. 750-850	c. 1250 y.	1	
Herodot. <u>History</u>	480-425 B.C.	c. A.D. 900	c. 1350 y.	8	
Thucy- dides, <u>History</u>	460 -400 B.C.	c. A.D. 900	c. 1300 y.	8	
Plato	400 B.C.	c. A.D. 900	c. 1300 y.	7	
Demos- thenes	300 B.C.	c. A.D. 1100	c. 1400 y.	200	
Caesar, <u>Gallic Wars</u>	100-44 B.C. (58 B.C. ff)	c. A.D. 900	c. 1000	10 good MS, some fragm.	
Livy, <u>History of Rome</u>	59 B.C.- A.D. 17	c. 370 A.D. (part.), mostly A.D. 950	c. 400 y. c. 1000 y.	1 partial, 19 copies	
Tacitus, <u>Annals</u>	A.D. 55- 130 (A.D. 100)	c. A.D. 1100	c. 1000 y.	20	
Pliny Secundus <u>Natural History</u>	A.D. 61- 113	c. A.D. 850	c. 750 y.	7	
New Testa- ment	A.D. 50- 90	c. 125 (fragm.) c. 200 (books) c. 250 (most of N.T.) c. 325 (complete N.T.)	c. 50 y. c. 100 y. c. 150 y. c. 225 y.	5465 50 compl. 39 papyr.	98

cf. N.L. GEISLER, W.E. NIX, A GENERAL INTRO TO THE BIBLE. CHICAGO: MOODY, 1986
 c modifications & additions H.F. BAYER, 1994

The early church recognizes the New Testament

AD 100
All dates approximate

Different parts of our New Testament were written by this time, but not yet collected and defined as 'Scripture'. Early Christian writers (for example Polycarp and Ignatius) quote from the Gospels and Paul's letters, as well as from other Christian writings and oral sources.

Paul's letters were collected late in the first century, Matthew, Mark and Luke were brought together by AD 150.

AD 200

New Testament used in the church at Rome
(the 'Muratorian Canon')

- Four Gospels
- Acts
- Paul's letters: Romans
- 1 & 2 Corinthians
- Galatians
- Ephesians
- Philippians
- Colossians
- 1 & 2 Thessalonians
- 1 & 2 Timothy
- Titus
- Philemon
- James
- 1 & 2 John
- Jude
- Revelation of John
- Wisdom of Solomon

To be used in private, but not public, worship
The Shepherd of Hermas

AD 250

New Testament used by Origen

- Four Gospels
- Acts
- Paul's letters: Romans
- 1 & 2 Corinthians
- Galatians
- Ephesians
- Philippians
- Colossians
- 1 & 2 Thessalonians
- 1 & 2 Timothy
- Titus
- Philemon

- 1 Peter
- 1 John
- Revelation of John

Disputed but well known
Hebrews
James
2 Peter
2 & 3 John
Jude
The Shepherd of Hermas
Letter of Barnabas
Teaching of Twelve Apostles
Gospel of the Hebrews

AD 300

New Testament used by Eusebius

- Four Gospels
- Acts
- Paul's letters: Romans
- 1 & 2 Corinthians
- Galatians
- Ephesians
- Philippians
- Colossians
- 1 & 2 Thessalonians
- 1 & 2 Timothy
- Titus
- Philemon

- 1 Peter
- 1 John
- Revelation of John (authorship in doubt)

Disputed but well known
James
2 Peter
2 & 3 John
Jude
To be excluded
The Shepherd of Hermas
Letter of Barnabas
Gospel of the Hebrews
Revelation of Peter
Didache

AD 400

New Testament fixed for the West by the Council of Carthage

- Four Gospels
- Acts
- Paul's letters: Romans
- 1 & 2 Corinthians
- Galatians
- Ephesians
- Philippians
- Colossians
- 1 & 2 Thessalonians
- 1 & 2 Timothy
- Titus
- Philemon
- Hebrews
- James
- 1 & 2 Peter
- 1, 2 & 3 John
- Jude
- Revelation

Part of the Pistic Sophia, a Gnostic work which circulated in the first centuries of the church.

Part of the last chapter of John's Gospel in Greek, from the 4th-century Codex Sinaiticus