

THE R.U.S.H. BIBLE STUDY

THE CHURCH FATHERS



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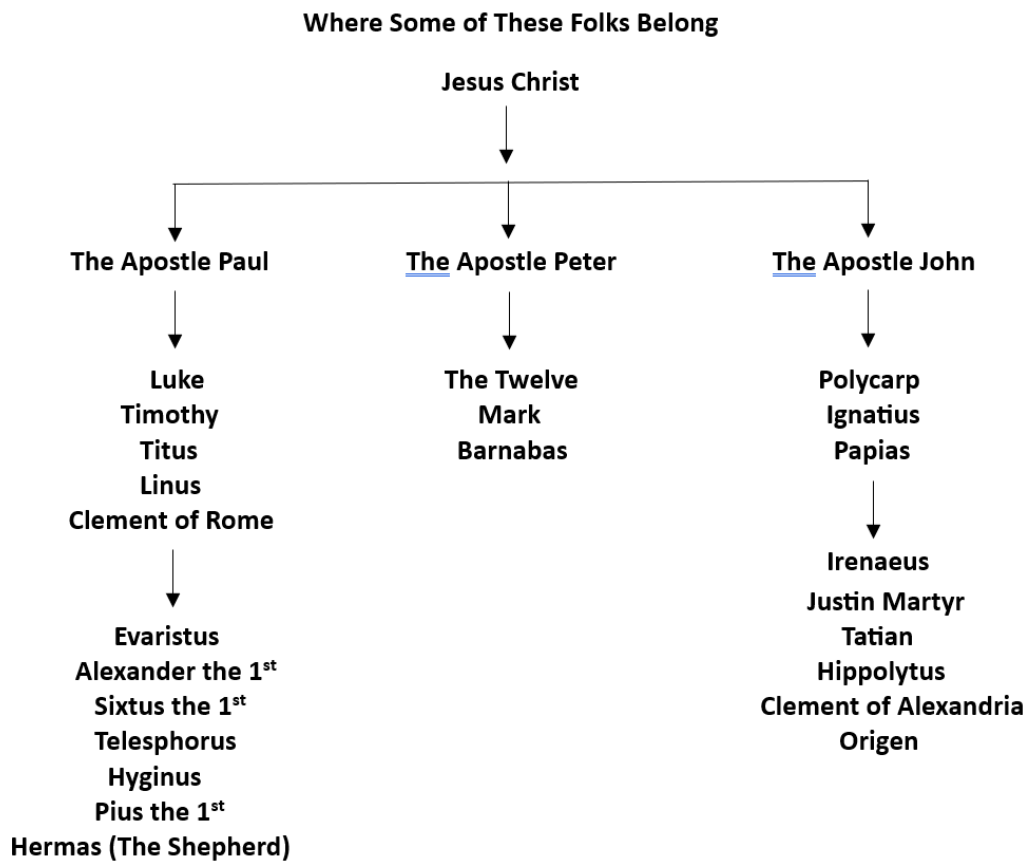
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EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITTINGS



The Didache (Teaching of the Twelve Apostles) (70-85AD)

The Didache is an early Christian manual of morals, worship, and church order. It offers insights into the practices and organization of the early church.

This is an example of an early church writing, not a person. Yet the Didache is also commonly referred to in most discussions of the early church fathers. Why? Because several texts from this document point to a very early tradition. Some scholars have presented good evidence that the Didache uses a very early form of Matthew's gospel. It also contains a very early trinitarian baptismal formula, yet does not dictate a mode of baptism:

“Use running water if available, if not a pool of water will do; if no pool is available, pouring or even sprinkling the water on the head is acceptable”.

The Apostolic Fathers

The earliest fathers of the church after the disciples and Paul passed, are these influential figures known as the **Apostolic Fathers**. They are so called because they were either direct disciples of the Apostles or were close in the generational line of discipleship. Their writings offer a window into a church still emerging from the era of the New Testament and working to sustain apostolic teaching.

1. Clement of Rome (c. 30-100AD)

- Known for his letter, commonly called “**1 Clement**,” addressed to the church in Corinth. This text references disputes within the congregation and urges unity and humility, echoing themes also found in the Pauline epistles.
- Clement’s letter illustrates continuity with New Testament doctrine. He writes extensively about order in the church and submission to God’s authority (cf. 1 Clement 40-44).
- Archaeological attestations (including ancient manuscripts preserved in Greek and additional language versions) affirm the long-standing significance of Clement’s writings in early Christian communities.
- Clement was taught by Paul, is mentioned in scripture several times by Paul, and much of his work quotes the Pauline epistles both directly, and word for word.
- According to apocryphal *acta* dating to the 4th century at earliest, Clement was banished from Rome to the Chersonesus during the reign of the Emperor Trajan and was set to work in a stone quarry. Finding on his arrival that the prisoners were suffering from lack of water, he knelt down in prayer. Looking up, he saw a lamb on a hill, went to where the lamb had stood and struck the ground with his pickaxe, releasing a gushing stream of clear water. This miracle resulted in the conversion of large numbers of the local pagans and his fellow prisoners to Christianity. As punishment, Clement was martyred by being tied to an anchor and thrown from a boat into the Black Sea.

The First Epistle of Clement

Attributed to Clement of Rome, this letter addresses divisions in the Corinthian church and emphasizes the importance of unity and apostolic authority.

Clement of Rome (Late 1st Century)

Author of 1 Clement, a letter to the Corinthians. He quotes Old Testament texts and echoes New Testament teachings, emphasizing unity and humility.

Contribution to Bible Dating: Clement's references to Paul's letters and Gospel themes suggest the New Testament books were already widely circulated by the end of the 1st century.

Clement of Rome is the name attached to two documents dating in the late first century: 1 & 2 Clement. This Clement was named by a few early church fathers as the first bishop of Rome after Peter (Tertullian writes that Clement was ordained by Peter, Jerome says this as well [*Illustrious Men* 15], Irenaeus [*Against Heresies* III,3]. Many early fathers pointed to Paul's mention of Clement (Phil 4:3) as this man, Clement the Roman bishop. **1 Clement** is a letter written by Clement to the Church in Corinth. Clement is scolding the Corinthian Church for dismissing their bishop - he says in this document that bishops are ordained by leadership for life. **2 Clement** is really more of a sermon.

2. Ignatius of Antioch (c. 35-108 AD)

- Bishop of Antioch and an influential leader who wrote several epistles to various churches while on his way to Rome, where he was martyred.
- He defended the divinity of Christ and emphasized the importance of the church's unity under its leaders. His letters to the Ephesians, Magnesians, Trallians, Romans, Philadelphians, Smyrnaeans, and to Polycarp illustrate a fervent devotion to Christ's lordship.
- His insistent calls for unity reflect John 17:21, where Christ prayed "*that they may all be one.*" Ignatius frequently alludes to apostolic teachings, confirming the continuity of doctrine as preserved by the church.

3. Polycarp of Smyrna (c. 69-155 AD)

- A disciple of the Apostle John, Polycarp's "Letter to the Philippians" addresses persecution, warns against heresies such as early Gnosticism, and encourages perseverance in faith. Polycarp's letter to the Philippians quotes extensively from New Testament texts.

Contribution to Bible Text: His references to Pauline letters and the Gospels confirm their early usage and acceptance as Scripture.

- His martyrdom, recorded in "The Martyrdom of Polycarp," was an early example of steadfast Christian testimony in the face of death.
- This account, preserved in several ancient manuscripts, has been referenced by early Christian historians, highlighting Polycarp as a crucial link between the Apostles and subsequent church generations.
- Polycarp was known as the bishop of Smyrna. What we know of Polycarp comes from several early sources: Ignatius of Antioch mentions him in a few of his letters, Irenaeus claims to have been a disciple of Polycarp and also relates a story of his interaction (and disagreement) with the Roman bishop over the celebration of Easter.
- We also know of Polycarp from a letter supposedly written by him to the church of Philippi.
- By far the most lasting account we have of the man is the document titled *Martyrdom of Polycarp*. This writing tells the story of the 86-year-old bishop being brutally treated and then executed by the Romans and his courage and faithful witness to Christ as he passed into the next life. This document probably dates into the 160's or 170's and became a very important document encouraging later second century Christians in the face of Roman persecution. Although the story has some legendary aspects, the basic story can be trusted and is a very challenging and inspiring one. Polycarp is pressured to deny Christ - he firmly gives witness to Christ. When asked why he wants to be burned alive Polycarp responds,

You threaten with fire that burns for a season and after a little while is quenched: for you are ignorant of the fire of the future judgment and eternal punishment, which is reserved for the ungodly. But why do you delay? Come, do what you wish. Martyrdom Polycarp 11.2

- When Polycarp was finally being placed on a stack of wood to be burned alive, the Roman officer told his soldiers to nail him to the middle stake to keep him from escape. Polycarp told the man not to nail him to the stake - God would give him strength to stay in the fire.

4. Barnabas (writing dated c. 80-128 AD)

- The traditional view is that the writer of **the Letter of Barnabas** was the traveling companion of the apostle Paul - Barnabas of the New Testament. This document adopts the basic theme of NT *Hebrews* - everything in the OT has been replaced by something better. Barnabas, however, has a consistent negative slant.
- Although most scholars do NOT believe NT Barnabas was the author of *Barnabas*, many early church fathers (at least Clement of Alexandria) quoted this document and referred to the author as the NT apostle by this name.

5. Ignatius of Antioch (c. 35-128 AD)

- Known for seven letters written on his way to martyrdom, Ignatius advocated for church hierarchy and explicitly referenced the divinity and humanity of Christ.
- Contribution to Bible Dating: Ignatius quotes from the Gospels, particularly Matthew and John, showing they were authoritative and recognized by the early 2nd century. **(100's AD)**

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Early Church Fathers

- We know of Ignatius from what is called **The Letters of Ignatius**, a collection of letters written by Ignatius, the bishop of Antioch, as he is being led by Roman soldiers to Rome for his trial and eventual martyrdom. These letters contain several important topical texts: early references to the deity/divinity of Jesus (use of John's "Logos" texts); references to what becomes known as "Docetism," an early Gnostic error; references to the belief that each city/region is to have one bishop; an early witness to what becomes The Apostle's Creed.

6. Irenaeus of Lyons (cir. 135-202)

- Irenaeus was a bishop in Gaul (modern day France) in the latter half of the second century and is mainly known for his work *Against Heresies* (cir 175-185AD). This work is a summary and brief history of all the heresies known by Irenaeus, focusing on Gnosticism. We learn from the author that he grew up in the faith and actually sat at the feet of Polycarp as a young boy (A.H. III.3,4).

- Eusebius gives us more from a letter of Irenaeus which no longer survives:

"For when I was a boy I saw you in lower Asia with Polycarp....I remember the events of that time more clearly than those of recent years. For what boys learn, growing with their mind, becomes joined with it; so that I am able to describe the very place in which the blessed Polycarp sat as he discoursed...the manner of his life, and his physical appearance...and the accounts which he gave of his intercourse with John and with the others who had seen the Lord. And as he remembered their words, and what he heard from them concerning the Lord, and concerning his miracles and his teaching, having received them from eyewitnesses of the 'Word of life,' Polycarp related all things in harmony with the Scriptures...I listened to them attentively, noting them down, not on paper, but in my heart. And continually, through God's grace, I recall them faithfully." (E.H. V.20,5-7)

7. Papias (cir 90-164AD)

- Papias, a 2nd-century bishop, is known for his fragments preserved by later writers. He provided early testimony about the authorship of the Gospels, particularly Matthew and Mark.

- We have snippets from a document supposedly written by Papias; thus we call these the Fragments of Papias.

- Papias is called the bishop of Hierapolis and died around the same time of Polycarp's death. This, however, is not certain. It is claimed that Papias knew Polycarp, was a friend with the apostle John, and knew "others who had seen the Lord."

- According to the sources we have (mainly Irenaeus and Eusebius), Papias wrote a five volume treatise called *"An Exposition of the Lord's Oracles"* in which he gives comments reflecting the early oral traditions of the gospels and their authors.

- This work did not survive, but we have isolated fragments preserved in quotations and references indicating that at least Irenaeus had some/all of Exposition in front of him.

- Papias is interesting because some of his early traditions give us details not known from anywhere else:

- Matthew initially wrote his gospel in Hebrew
- Mark wrote down notes, then augmented his notes with comments and notes from Peter
- It was Mark who first took the gospel to Egypt

The Ante-Nicene Fathers

Following the Apostolic Fathers, the next group, spanning about the mid-second century to the early fourth century, continued to expound Scripture, counter false teachings, and explain the faith to both pagans and Jews.

8. Apollinaris of Hierapolis (100's)

- Apollinaris, a 2nd-century bishop, defended Christianity in writings addressed to Emperor Marcus Aurelius. He also argued against heresies, including Montanism.

- Apollinaris was bishop of Hierapolis on the Maeander, and, Lightfoot thinks, was probably with Melito and Polycrates, known to Polycarp, and influenced by his example and doctrine. He addressed his *Apology*, which is honorably mentioned by Jerome, to M. Antoninus, the emperor. He also wrote *Adversus Gentes* and *De Veritate*; also against the Jews. Serapion calls him "most blessed."

- From an Unknown Book.

"This narration (says Eusebius, Hist., v. 5) is given" (it relates to that storm of rain which was sent to the army of the Emperor M. Antoninus, to allay the thirst of the soldiers, whilst the enemy was discomfited by thunderbolts hurled upon them) "even by those historians who are at a wide remove from the doctrines that prevail among us, and who have been simply concerned to describe what related to the emperors who are the subjects of their history; and it has been recorded also by our own writers. But historians without the pale of the Church, as being unfriendly to the faith, while they have recorded the prodigy, have refrained from acknowledging that it was sent in answer to our prayers. On the other hand, our writers, as lovers of truth, have reported the matter in a simple and artless way. To this number Apollinaris must be considered as belonging. Thereupon, 'he says, 'the legion which had by its prayer caused the prodigy received from the emperor a title suitable to the occurrence, and was called in the Roman language the Thunder-hurling Legion.'"

9. Abercius of Hierapolis (?-167)

- Abercius, a 2nd-century bishop, is remembered for the Inscription of Abercius, an epitaph that combines Christian and pagan elements, reflecting early Christian symbolism. Possibly the successor to Papias.

10. Justin Martyr (c. 100-165 AD)

- A philosopher converted to Christianity, he wrote "The First Apology" and "The Second Apology," addressed to Roman authorities. He provided reasoned defenses of Christian worship, the resurrection, and moral teachings.
- He referenced the Hebrew Scriptures extensively and highlighted their fulfillment in Christ (see Isaiah's prophecies quoted in his apologies).
- Justin's arguments and detailed citations of the Gospels and the Old Testament demonstrate the early church's reliance on Scripture as the supreme authority, echoing passages like 2 Timothy 3:16-17: "All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable."

11. Aristides of Athens (writings c. 125 when Hadrian visited Athens)

- Aristides was a Christian apologist whose work, Apology of Aristides, addressed pagan, Jewish, and Christian audiences, emphasizing the rationality of the Christian faith.
- The Apology of Aristides, mentioned by Eusebius, St. Jerome, and other ancient writers and said to have been the inspiration for the great works of St. Justin Martyr, was considered lost until the late Nineteenth Century, when an Armenian fragment was discovered.
- Then in 1889 the full text in Syriac translation was found in the library of St. Catherine's in the Sinai. Ironically, it was then realized that the work had never been lost at all: a slightly shortened version of it had been preserved in the well-known Life of St. Barlaam of India, by St. John of Damascus. (Since the numerous references to Greek gods would have made little impact on an Indian audience, one may assume that St. John, writing for a Greek readership which would have found a denunciation of Vedic or Buddhist deities equally meaningless, decided to insert the Apology of Aristides as a sort of rough equivalent of whatever Barlaam actually preached to the Brahmins.)

12. Quadratus of Athens (writings date 120-130)

- Quadratus, an early Christian apologist, wrote a defense of Christianity addressed to Emperor Hadrian. His work is one of the earliest known examples of apologetics.

[a.d. 126.] Quadratus is spoken of by Eusebius as a "man of understanding and of Apostolic faith." And he celebrates Aristides as a man of similar character. These were the earliest apologists; both addressed their writings to Hadrian, and they were extant and valued in the churches in the time of Eusebius.

From the Apology for the Christian Religion.

Our Saviour's works, moreover, were always present: for they were real, *consisting of* those who had been healed of their diseases, those who had been raised from the dead; who were not only seen whilst they were being healed and raised up, but were *afterwards* constantly present. Nor did they remain only during the sojourn of the Saviour *on earth*, but also a considerable time after His departure; and, indeed, some of them have survived even down to our own times.

13. Dionysius of Corinth (writings dated 170)

- Bishop of Corinth in the 2nd century, Dionysius was known for his letters to other churches, which provided pastoral guidance and affirmed the unity of the Christian community. [a.d. 170.]
- Eusebius is almost diffuse in what he tells us of this Dionysius, "who was appointed over the church at Corinth, and imparted freely, not only to his own people, but to others, and those abroad also, the blessings of his divine labours."
- He wrote "Catholic Epistles; "he addressed an epistle to the Spartans and the Athenians; and, as Eusebius says, Dionysius the Areopagite, the convert of St. Paul, was the first bishop of Athens. He wrote to the Nicomedians, refuting Marcion, and closely adhering to "the rule of faith."
- In an epistle to the Gortynians and others in Crete, he praises Philip for his courageous ministry, and warns them against the heretics. He seems to recognise Palmas as bishop of Amastis and Pontus, and adds expositions of Scripture, and rules regarding marriage, its purity and sanctity.
- He also inculcates tenderness to penitent lapsers and backsliders. With Pinytus, bishop of the Gnossians, he corresponds on similar subjects; but Pinytus, while he thanks him and commends his clemency, evidently regards him as too much inclined to furnish "food for babes," and counsels him to add "strong meat for those of full age." He also writes to Chrysophora, his most faithful sister, imparting spiritual instruction.

14. Hegesippus (writings dated 170)

- An early chronicler of church history, Hegesippus's works, cited by Eusebius, provide valuable insights into the early church's structure, tradition, and struggles against heresy.
- One of the sub-Apostolic age, a contemporary of Justin and of the martyrs of "the good Aurelius," we must yet distinguish Hegesippus from the apologists. He is the earliest of the Church's chroniclers-we can hardly call him a historian. His aims were noble and his character was pure; nor can we refuse him the credit due to a foresight of the Church's ultimate want of historical material, which he endeavored to supply.
- What is commonly regarded as his defect is in reality one of his greatest merits as a witness: he was a Hebrew, and looks at the Church from the stand-point of "James the Lord's brother."
- When we observe his christian spirit, therefore, as well as his christian orthodoxy; his sympathy with the Gentile Church and Pauline faith of the Corinthians; his abhorrence of "the Circumcision" so far as it bred sects and heresies against Christ; and when we find him confirming the testimony of the Apostolic Fathers, and sustaining the traditions of Antioch by those of Jerusalem,-we have double reason to cherish his name, and to treasure up "the fragments that remain" of his works.
- That touching episode of the kindred of Christ, as they appeared before Domitian, has always impressed my imagination as worthy to be classed with the story of St. John and the robber, as one of the most suggestive incidents of early Christian history.
- We must lament the loss of other portions of the Memoirs which were known to exist in the seventeenth century.
- He was a traveler, and must have seen much of the Apostolic churches in the East and West; and the mere scraps we have of his narrative concerning Corinth and Rome excite a natural curiosity as to the rest, which may lead to hopefully more gratifying discoveries.

15. Tatian the Assyrian (110-172)

- Tatian, a disciple of Justin Martyr, is best known for his Address to the Greeks, an apologetic work, and the Diatessaron, a harmony of the four Gospels. [a.d. 110-172.]
- he should be an appendix to his master, Justin Martyr; for he stands in an equivocal position, as half father and half heretic. His good seems to have been largely due to Justin's teaching and influence. One may trust that his falling away, in the decline of life, is attributable to infirmity of mind and body; his severe asceticism countenancing this charitable thought. Many instances of human frailty, which the experience of ages has taught Christians to view with compassion rather than censure, are doubtless to be ascribed to mental aberration and decay. Early Christians had not yet been taught this lesson; for, socially, neither Judaism nor Paganism had wholly surrendered their unloving influences upon their minds. Moreover, their high valuation of discipline, as an essential condition of self-preservation amid the fires of surrounding scorn and hatred, led them to practice, perhaps too sternly, upon offenders, what they often heroically performed upon themselves, -the amputation of the scandalous hand, or the plucking out of the evil eye.

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Early Church Fathers

- In Tatian, another Assyrian follows the Star of Bethlehem, from Euphrates and the Tigris. The scanty facts of his personal history are sufficiently detailed by the translator, in his Introductory Note. *"We owe to himself the pleasing story of his conversion from heathenism."* But I think it important to qualify the impressions the translation may otherwise leave upon the student's mind, by a little more sympathy with the better side of his character, and a more just statement of his great services to the infant Church.
- His works, which were very numerous, have perished, in consequence of his lapse from orthodoxy. Give him due credit for his *Diatessaron*, of which the very name is a valuable testimony to the Four Gospels as recognized by the primitive churches. It is lost, with the "infinite number" of other books which St. Jerome attributes to him. All honor to this earliest harmonist for such a work; and let us believe, with Mill and other learned authorities, that, if Eusebius had seen the work he censures, he might have expressed himself more charitably concerning it.

16. Bardesanes of Edessa (180-220)

- A 2nd-century theologian and poet, Bardesanes explored themes of free will and providence. His works influenced early Syriac Christianity, though some of his ideas were later deemed unorthodox.
- Eusebius of Caesarea writes of Bardesanes (*H. E.* 4.30):

In the same reign, as heresies were abounding in the region between the rivers, a certain Bardesanes, a most able man and a most skillful disputant in the Syriac tongue, having composed dialogues against Marcion's followers and against certain others who were authors of various opinions, committed them to writing in his own language, together with many other works. His pupils, of whom he had very many (for he was a powerful defender of the faith), translated these productions from the Syriac into Greek. Among them there is also his most able dialogue On Fate, addressed to Antoninus, and other works which they say he wrote on occasion of the persecution which arose at that time. He indeed was at first a follower of Valentinus, but afterward, having rejected his teaching and having refuted most of his fictions, he fancied that he had come over to the more correct opinion. Nevertheless, he did not entirely wash off the filth of the old heresy. About this time also Soter, bishop of the church of Rome, departed this life.

17. Polycrates of Ephesus (130-196)

- Polycrates was a 2nd-century bishop known for his defense of the Quartodeciman practice of celebrating Easter. His letter to Pope Victor I reflects early disputes on church tradition.
- This author comes in as an appendix to the stories of Polycarp and Irenaeus and good Anicetus, and his writings also bear upon the contrast presented by the less creditable history of Victor. If, as I suppose, the appearance of our Lord to John the Revelator on "the Lord's Day" was on the Paschal Sunday, it may at first seem surprising that this Apostle can be claimed by Polycrates in behalf of the Eastern custom to keep Easter, with the Jews, on the fourteenth day of the moon. But to the Jews the Apostles became "as Jews" in all things tolerable, so long as the Temple stood, and while the bishops of Jerusalem were laboring to identify the Paschal Lamb with their Passover. The long survival of St. John among Jewish Christians led them to prolong this usage, no doubt, as sanctioned by his example. He foreknew it would quietly pass away.
- The wise and truly Christian spirit of Irenaeus prepared the way for the ultimate unanimity of the Church in a matter which lies at the base of "the Christian Sabbath," and of our own observance of the first day of the week as a weekly Easter. Those who in our own times have revived the observance of the Jewish Sabbath, show us how much may be said on their side, and elucidate the tenacity of the Easterners in resisting the abolition of the Mosaic ordinance as to the Sunday worship, although they agreed to keep it "not with the old leaven."

18. Irenaeus of Lyons (c. 130-202 AD)

- Best known for "Against Heresies," a work that exposes and refutes various forms of Gnosticism, an early movement that distorted the nature of Christ and creation.
- Irenaeus emphasized the unity of the Old and New Testaments, showing a consistent thread of God's saving plan culminating in Christ's resurrection.
- He advocated a cohesive timeline from creation to Christ, supporting that Scripture, "the word of God," remains the only safe guide for doctrine. Irenaeus strongly aligned with John 1:1-3, underscoring Christ's eternal nature and role as Creator.

19. Tertullian (c. 155-220 AD)

- An early Latin theologian, Tertullian introduced powerful arguments against polytheism, affirming monotheism and the Trinity. He wrote extensively on the nature of God, morality, and Christian conduct.
- Known for coining the term "Trinity" (Latin: "Trinitas") to describe the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as one God in three persons.
- Tertullian stressed the authenticity and reliability of biblical manuscripts available to him, reflecting the early church's commitment to textual fidelity.

20. Clement of Alexandria (cir. 150-215)

- Clement's first major work is titled *Exhortation to the Greeks* and is basically a call to the educated Greco-Roman society to hear the gospel of Jesus.
- Another important work, *The Educator* appears to be something of a training manual for new Christians, covering how to eat, pray, dress and go about daily affairs as a Christian. Some scholars have argued that this document was used as a catechetical manual.
- Another significant work is *Miscellanies* a unique work covering a multitude of topics without any apparently clear outline. Clement attacks the various Gnostic leaders, mainly Basilides and Valentinus.

21. Tertullian (cir. 155-230)

- Tertullian's extensive corpus includes apologetic, polemical, and theological works, such as "*Apology and Against Praxeas*", which shaped Latin Christian theology.
- It is not known exactly when Tertullian was born, but he was born in Carthage, North Africa, the son of a Roman centurion.
- He was trained in law and apparently served as a lawyer in Rome for a while. We do not know how he came to faith, but he does seem to indicate in some of his writings that he was not always in the faith. Tertullian was a prolific writer and is the first early church father to write in Latin.
- His training as a lawyer prepared him well for his calling as an Apologist of the highest regard.
- He had a fiery temperament and that contributed to some very strong disagreements with others in church leadership, which he argued well.
- Tertullian falls into the rigorous camp in the issue of Christians who had failed to stand true under torture.

22. Julius Africanus (160-240)

- Julius Africanus, a 3rd-century chronographer, is best known for his "*Chronographiae*", a five-book work that provided a chronological framework for biblical and world history. **Sextus Julius Africanus** (c. 160 – c. 240; Ancient Greek: Σέξτος Ιούλιος ὁ Ἀφρικανός or ὁ Λίβυς) was a Christian traveler and historian of the late 2nd and early 3rd centuries. He influenced fellow historian Eusebius, later writers of Church history among the Church Fathers, and the Greek school of chroniclers.
- The Suda claims Africanus was a "Libyan philosopher," and Gelzer considers him of Roman and Ethiopian descent. Julius called himself a native of Jerusalem – which some scholars consider his birthplace and lived at the neighboring Emmaus. His chronicle indicates his familiarity with the topography of historic Judea.
- Little of Africanus's life is known, and all dates are uncertain. One tradition places him under the Emperor Gordianus III (238–244), others mention him under Severus Alexander (222–235). He appears to have known Abgar VIII (176–213).
- Africanus may have served under Septimius Severus against the Osroenians in 195. He went on an embassy to the emperor Severus Alexander to ask for the restoration of Emmaus, which had fallen into ruins. His mission succeeded, and Emmaus was henceforward known as Nicopolis.
- Africanus traveled to Greece and Rome and went to Alexandria to study, attracted by the fame of its catechetical school, possibly about the year 215. He knew Greek (in which language he wrote), Latin, and Hebrew. He was at one time a soldier and had been a pagan; he wrote all his works as a Christian.
- Whether Africanus was a layman or a cleric remains controversial. Louis-Sébastien Le Nain de Tillemont argued from Africanus's addressing the priest Origen as "dear brother" that Julius must have been a priest himself^[6] but Gelzer points out that such an argument is inconclusive.^[7]

23. Melito of Sardis (c. 100's) [his writings date 160-170-177.]

- Melito a bishop, wrote extensively on Christology and the Paschal mystery. His writings, including fragments of his homilies, reflect an early understanding of the Old Testament as a foreshadowing of Christ.
- Melito may have been the immediate successor of the "angel" (or "apostle") of the church of Sardis, to whom our Great High Priest addressed one of the apocalyptic messages. He was an "Apostolic Father" in point of fact; he very probably knew the blessed Polycarp and his disciple Irenaeus.
- He is justly revered for the diligence with which he sought out the evidence which, in his day, established the Canon of the Old Testament, then just complete.
- In the following fragments we find him called Bishop of Sardis, Bishop of Ittica, and Bishop of Ittica. He is also introduced to us as "the Philosopher," and we shall find him styled "the Eunuch" by Polycrates. It is supposed that he had made himself a coelebs "for the kingdom of heaven's sake," without mistaking our Lord's intent, as did Origen. He was not a monk, but accepted a single estate to be the more free and single-eyed in the Master's service.
- Melito, with Claudius Apollinaris and even Polycrates, may have been personally acquainted with Ignatius; of course, one with another. These lived not far from Smyrna; Asia Minor was, in the first century, the focus of Christian activity.
- We know of his visit to the East from his own account, preserved by Eusebius. The Christians of proconsular Asia were accustomed to such journeys. Even Clement of Alexandria may have met him, as he seems to have met Tatian and Theodotus.
- Melito vouches for the rescript of Hadrian, but his supposed reference to the edict of Antoninus does not bear close scrutiny as warrant for its authenticity.
- The Apology of Melito was addressed to Aurelius in his mid-career as a sovereign, about a.d.170. Justin, Melito, Athenagoras, and Theophilus all tell the same sad story of imperial cruelty. Even when Justin wrote to Antoninus, Marcus was supreme in the councils of the elder emperor.

24. Hermogenes (c.100's)

Hermogenes was a 2nd-century Christian philosopher known for his controversial views on creation, which were refuted by Tertullian in *Against Hermogenes*.

25. Hippolytus of Rome (180-230)

- Hippolytus was a theologian and martyr who wrote extensively on heresies, Scripture, and church liturgy. His work *Refutation of All Heresies* provides critical insights into early Christian theology and sects. I've included a short excerpt of his writings here because I thought it was cool that it was addressed to Theophilus, a different person than the person Luke addressed his gospel and Acts to. This quote is why some argue that Theophilus may be a greeting of legal respect. I personally just think they both shared a name.

As it was your desire, my beloved brother Theophilus, to be thoroughly informed on those topics which I put summarily before you, I have thought it right to set these matters of inquiry clearly forth to your view, drawing largely from the Holy Scriptures themselves as from a holy fountain, in order that you may not only have the pleasure of hearing them on the testimony of men, but may also be able, by surveying them in the light of (divine) authority, to glorify God in all.

26. Victor of Rome (c. 180's-mid 200's)

- Pope Victor I (late 2nd century) is notable for standardizing the celebration of Easter. He was the first Latin-speaking pope, and his efforts laid the groundwork for the growing authority of the Roman Church. Most notably his stewardship of early Christian writings.

27. Theophilus of Antioch (c. 100's Head of Antiochian churches 169-183)

- Theophilus, Bishop of Antioch in the late 2nd century, wrote apologetic works defending Christianity against pagan criticism. His writings include some of the earliest explicit references to the term "Trinity."

28. Serapion of Antioch (190–211 CE),

- Serapion, Bishop of Antioch is known for his writings against heresies, including his rejection of the Gospel of Peter as heretical. He emphasized the importance of apostolic tradition in determining orthodoxy. This guy's stuff is epic. - Different from the writer of the Mara Bar Serapion, Ser. Of Antioch, the 8th bishop there, he was a major defender of the faith. I love this guy.

29. Ammonius of Alexandria (Somewhere around here, ignore everything in Wikipedia on this guy, I read the documentation, all linked on our web site.)

-Ammonius of Alexandria was Origen's teacher according to Eusebius. He is credited with the first gospel synopsis, a work that placed parallel passages from the other three canonical gospels against the Gospel of Matthew. His work was the basis of the Eusebian canons, a division of the Gospels into numbered sections that cross-references the parallels to each other. Epic, epic, epic work. He would have been fun in the RUSH Bible Study.

-J. Quasten writes, "Ammonius, who seems to have been a contemporary of Origen, wrote a Harmony between Moses and Jesus. Eusebius (Hist. eccl. 6.19.10) mistakenly identified him with the Neo-Platonist Ammonius Saccas and St. Jerome (De vir. ill. 55) repeats the error. The treatise was probably composed in order to prove the unity of the Old and the New Testament, which many Gnostic sects denied.

-Possibly, Ammonius is the same as 'Ammonius the Alexandrian,' whom Eusebius mentions in his letter to Carpianus as the author of a Diatessaron or harmony of the gospels built on the text of Matthew. St. Jerome (De vir. ill. 55) is convinced of this identification." (*Patrology*, vol. 2, p. 101)

30. Narcissus of Jerusalem (99-216)

Narcissus, a bishop of Jerusalem, was noted for his holiness and miraculous deeds. He played a role in determining the date of Easter in the early church. Long life, tradition is he was made bishop in Jerusalem at 80 years old.

31. Origen of Alexandria (c. 185-254 AD)

- A prolific scholar, Origen dedicated himself to textual studies and wrote extensive commentaries on many books of the Bible.

- He compiled the "Hexapla," a massive comparative work featuring multiple versions of the Old Testament. Though some aspects of his theology were later critiqued, his dedication to Scripture's centrality proved influential for centuries.

- His meticulous approach suggests that the church upheld rigorous standards for preserving Scripture, consistent with the notion that its integrity was central to Christian faith and practice (cf. Revelation 22:18-19).

- My problem with Origen is his belief in the pre-existence of human souls. Nope.

32. Beryllus of Bostra (c. 200's)

- Beryllus, a bishop in the 3rd century, initially held views denying the preexistence of Christ. After a theological debate with Origen, he recanted and embraced orthodox Trinitarian theology.

33. Archelaus of Carrhae (c. 200's)

- Archelaus was a 3rd-century bishop who engaged in theological debates with the Manicheans. His works, though fragmentary, provide insights into early anti-heretical arguments.

- The acts of disputation of Archelaus, bishop of Cashar in Mesopotamia, with the heresiarch Manes

- Quotes & Excerpts

Sacred Tradition:

"For the things which we have received from the apostles, we teach, that they may be handed down to others in succession." –*The Acts of the Disputation with Manes, Chapter 9.*

Church Hierarchy:

"But the bishop is the one to whom the care of the Church is entrusted." –*The Acts of the Disputation with Manes, Chapter 18.*

Baptismal Regeneration:

"We believe that baptism is the regeneration of the soul, and through it, one is made a partaker of the divine nature." –*The Acts of the Disputation with Manes, Chapter 22.*

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"Manes: 'Is baptism given for the remission of sins?' Archelaus: 'Certainly.'" -The Acts of the Disputation with Manes, Chapter 22.

Referring to Priests and Bishops as "Father":

"For it is written in the gospel that the disciples are to call no man father, except their father in heaven, but we, in our time, have been taught by those who have authority over us, to call bishops and priests our fathers." -The Acts of the Disputation with Manes, Chapter 19

"One is called father as being the parent of children that he begot in a natural way, but in the case of the bishops, they are called fathers because they have begotten their children in the Spirit, through baptism and the word of God." -The Acts of the Disputation with Manes, Chapter 19.

34. Paul of Samosata (c. 200's)

- Paul, a 3rd-century bishop of Antioch, was known for his controversial Christological views, particularly his denial of Christ's preexistence. His teachings were condemned at the Synod of Antioch. He is noted here because I wanted you to be aware that the pastoral staff of the early church was accountable to obey the word of God as well as the laity. Here is the proof.

35. Malchion of Antioch (c. 200's)

- Malchion, a presbyter and scholar, is noted for his debates with Paul of Samosata, preserving early theological arguments against heretical Christology.

36. Heraclas of Alexandria (c. 231–248 CE)

- Heraclas was a bishop of Alexandria and a key figure in the Catechetical School of Alexandria. A student of Origen, Heraclas contributed to the intellectual rigor of early Christian theology, though few of his writings survive.

37. Firmilian of Caesarea (served the church c. 230-268)

- Firmilian, Bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, was a contemporary and ally of Cyprian of Carthage. He wrote against heresies and supported the rebaptism of heretics.

- Information on his life comes mainly from Eusebius (h.e. 6; 7 passim).

- Firmilian was one of the leading figures of the eastern church. He was in contact with Origen, whom he invited to his city and whom he himself visited in order to receive theological instruction. There was also a correspondence between them, beginning after 238.

- Firmilian fought against the Montanists of his province and was spokesman at the Synod of Antioch, which dealt with Novatian and his supporter Fabian of Antioch.

- In the controversy over heretical baptism between Cyprian and Stephen of Rome, Firmilian, along with most bishops of Asia Minor, sided with Cyprian. In this connection there is also a letter of Firmilian to Cyprian in autumn 256, which is an answer to a lost letter of Cyprian and is found, in a Lat. translation, among the letters of Cyprian (ep. 75). In it Firmilian approves Cyprian's attitude and attacks Stephen. Because of his position in the heretical baptism controversy Firmilian was excommunicated by Stephen, but there was a later restoration of communion with Rome.

- Firmilian presided at the first two synods of Antioch on Christology and the manner of life of Paul of Samosata.

- He died on the way to the third synod in 268.

- Basil the Great says Firmilian wrote a work called *Logoi* in which he held the same teaching on the Holy Spirit as Basil did (spir. 29.74). But these views of Firmilian, of which nothing else is known, are not described in detail." (*Dictionary of Early Christian Literature*, p. 237)

38. Alexander of Jerusalem (?-251)

Alexander, a bishop and theologian, contributed to the development of the library at Jerusalem and supported Origen's theological work.

39. Ambrose of Alexandria (before 212-250)

- A wealthy patron and early Christian theologian, Ambrose supported Origen and contributed to his works through sponsorship. He encouraged the allegorical interpretation of Scripture, which became a hallmark of Alexandrian theology.

40. Dionysius of Alexandria (c.200-265)

- Dionysius, also known as Dionysius the Great, served as Bishop of Alexandria during the mid-3rd century. His letters provide insights into early theological disputes, including the nature of Christ and the Trinity.

41. Anatolius of Alexandria, also of Laodicea (c.200's he was bishop in 268)

- Anatolius, a philosopher and theologian, is remembered for his mathematical and astronomical works, as well as his contributions to the Alexandrian school. He played a role in determining the Paschal date for Easter.

42. Lucian of Antioch (c. 200's-early 300's, was arrested around 303)

- Lucian was a theologian and martyr who founded a school of theology in Antioch. His emphasis on the literal interpretation of Scripture laid the groundwork for the Antiochene school of exegesis.

43. Commodianus (his writings c. 240-260)

- A 3rd-century Christian poet, Commodianus is known for his instructional poems, including *Instructiones*, which address moral behavior and eschatology in Christian life.

44. Methodius of Olympus (270-312)

- Methodius was a bishop and martyr whose works, such as *The Banquet of the Ten Virgins*, emphasized the resurrection and opposed Origen's teachings on the preexistence of souls.

45. Victorinus of Pettau (270-310)

- Victorinus, a bishop in the late 3rd century, is notable for his commentary on the Book of Revelation. His writings represent one of the earliest attempts at systematic eschatology.

46. Novatian of Rome (writings date 251-258)

- A 3rd-century theologian, Novatian wrote *On the Trinity*, one of the earliest Latin theological works. Though later considered a schismatic, his writings contributed to early Christian orthodoxy.

47. Sabellius (c.215-260)

- Sabellius, a 3rd-century theologian, proposed a modalist view of the Trinity, which was later condemned as heretical. His teachings sparked significant theological debates in early Christianity.

48. Pamphilus of Caesarea (c. 200's -309)

- Pamphilus was a presbyter and scholar who founded the library at Caesarea. He collaborated with Eusebius of Caesarea on biblical textual criticism and theological works.

49. Archelaus of Mesopotamia (c. 200's)

- Archelaus, a 3rd-century bishop, is known for his debates with the Manicheans, recorded in the Acts of Archelaus, which defended Christian orthodoxy against heretical teachings.

50. Anatolius of Laodicea (?-283)

- Anatolius, a 3rd-century bishop and scholar, wrote on astronomy and mathematics, contributing to the calculation of the Paschal date for Easter.

- Anatolius was born and raised in Alexandria, Egypt, during the early 3rd century.

- Prior to becoming one of the great lights of the Church, Anatolius enjoyed considerable prestige at Alexandria while working as a senator.

- According to Eusebius of Caesarea, he was credited with a rich knowledge of arithmetic, geometry, physics, rhetoric, dialectic, and astronomy.

- Eusebius states that Anatolius was deemed worthy to maintain the school of the Aristotelian succession in Alexandria. The pagan philosopher Iamblichus also studied among his disciples.

- Looking at his credentials and accolades kind of makes sense of Revelation 3's admonition to the church at Laodicea.

51. Hosius of Cordoba (256-359)

- Hosius was a key figure at the First Council of Nicaea (325 CE) and a trusted advisor to Emperor Constantine. He supported the Nicene Creed and opposed Arianism.

52. Gregory the Illuminator (c. 257-331)

- Gregory was instrumental in converting Armenia to Christianity in the early 4th century, making it the first nation to adopt Christianity as its state religion. He is considered the "Apostle of Armenia."

53. Theonas of Alexandria (same as Anatolius, was bishop from 282-300)

- Theonas was a bishop of Alexandria during a time of persecution. He is noted for his pastoral care and efforts to maintain the unity of the church under pressure from Roman authorities.

54. Pierius of Alexandria (c.? – 310)

- Pierius was a prominent scholar and presbyter in Alexandria. Known as "the younger Origen," he focused on exegesis and was noted for his asceticism. While his works are largely lost, he influenced early biblical interpretation.

55. Peter of Alexandria (300–311 CE)

- Peter, Bishop of Alexandria was a martyr and staunch defender of orthodoxy. His theological writings addressed the nature of the Trinity and other key doctrines, helping to shape early Christian theology.

56. Alexander of Alexandria (313–328 CE)

- Alexander was the Bishop of Alexandria and a key figure at the First Council of Nicaea (325 CE). He opposed Arianism and supported the Nicene Creed, helping to affirm the doctrine of Christ's divinity.

57. Phileas of Thmuis (?-306)

- Phileas, a bishop and martyr during the Diocletian persecution, is known for his letter defending the faith and urging perseverance among Christians facing martyrdom.

58. Arnobius of Sicca (writings date 297-310)

- Arnobius, a 4th-century apologist, authored "*Against the Heathen*", a defense of Christianity addressing pagan criticisms and emphasizing the rationality of the Christian faith.

- Claudio Moreschini writes, "The work *Against the Pagans* (*Adversus nationes*) was written under Diocletian. More precisely, since reference is made (4.36) to some specific measures such as the destruction of churches and the sacred books, it was written during the persecution, between 304 and 310.

- The first three books may have been written earlier, and it seems that books 1 and 2 may go back to 297-300. Like all defenses of Christianity, the *Against the Pagans* is both a defense and a polemical work." (*Early Christian Greek and Latin Literature*, vol. 1, p. 393)

59. Lactantius (writings date 303-316)

- Lactantius, known as the "Christian Cicero," wrote *Divine Institutes*, a systematic defense of Christianity that combined classical rhetoric with theological arguments.

Post-Nicene Fathers

After the pivotal Council of Nicaea (AD 325), crucial debates regarding Christ's divinity and the unity of the Godhead led to further theological refinement. Figures in this group continued to safeguard Christian orthodoxy against heresies, such as Arianism, and clarified core doctrines.

Arianism (Koine Greek: Ἀρειανισμός, *Areianismós*) is a Christological doctrine that rejects the traditional notion of the Trinity, teaching that Jesus was created by God and is therefore distinct from God. It is named after its proponent Arius (250 or 256 – 336) and is regarded as heretical by most modern mainstream branches of Christianity.

Arianism is held by a minority of modern denominations, although some of these groups espouse related doctrines such as Socinianism, and others avoid the term "Arian" because of its historically negative connotations.

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Modern cults sometimes associated with the teaching include Jehovah's Witnesses, some churches within the Churches of Christ (among them the movement's founder, Barton W. Stone), and certain Hebrew Roots Christians and Messianic Jews, although many Messianic Jews adhere to Nicene Christianity.

60. Athanasius (c. 296-373 AD)

- Bishop of Alexandria and a resolute defender of Christ's full deity. He firmly opposed Arianism, a teaching that denied Christ's coeternity with the Father.
- Athanasius wrote the "Festal Letters," in one of which he famously listed the 27 New Testament books we recognize today, thus demonstrating the early consensus on the canon.
- With unwavering conviction in the bodily resurrection of Christ, he echoed passages like 1 Corinthians 15:14: "And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is worthless, and so is your faith."

61. Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 300-340)

- Known as the "Father of Church History," Eusebius documented the development of early Christianity and preserved numerous writings of earlier Church Fathers. His work remains an invaluable resource for historical theology. He is why we have all this information. He is the father of church librarians. I Love him.

62. Aphrahat (280-345) also Aphraates

- Aphrahat, also known as the Persian Sage, was a 4th-century Christian author. His Demonstrations provide valuable insights into early Syriac Christianity and its interpretation of Scripture.

63. Marcellus of Ancyra (?-374)

- Marcellus was a bishop and staunch opponent of Arianism. His writings emphasized the unity of God but were later considered controversial for their perceived rejection of the distinct persons of the Trinity.

64. Gregory Thaumaturgus (c. 365-382)

- Gregory, also known as Gregory the Wonderworker, was a bishop in the 3rd century renowned for his miracles. His theological writings contributed to the development of Trinitarian doctrine

65. John Chrysostom (c. 349-407 AD)

- Known as "Golden-Mouthed" for his eloquent preaching, Chrysostom offered expository sermons on numerous books of Scripture, emphasizing moral purity and practical holiness.
- His homilies on Matthew, John, and the Pauline Epistles exemplify early verse-by-verse teaching, reflecting a deep desire to amplify Scripture's meaning and encourage godly living.
- Contemporary manuscripts of his sermons reveal that the Scripture text he quoted is remarkably consistent with the earliest extant manuscripts, supporting continuity and accuracy.

66. Augustine of Hippo (354-430 AD)

- A North African bishop, philosopher, and theologian. Augustine's works, such as "Confessions" and "The City of God," substantially guided Western Christian thought.
- His reflections on grace, salvation, and the nature of evil were important in forming widely accepted Christian doctrine and remain influential to this day.
- Augustine upheld the reliability of the Gospels and Old Testament prophecies, pointing out how they foreshadowed Christ's atoning work, pointing wholeheartedly to verses like Luke 24:44:

"These are the words I spoke to you while I was still with you ... everything written about Me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled."

67. Davidicus Hobrathicus of Rushicus (1960-?)

- Born to Pentecostal Nazi's in Cleveland, Ohio. He saw Jimi Hendrix live, Pink Floyd, and Led Zeppelin while they were still young and skinny, and the Canadian trio RUSH many times. He wrote this paper. If you mention in class that you read the whole thing he will probably give you a free pen.

