

From Christ to the Fall of Rome. (476 A.D.) 8b

1. First were the APOSTLES, taught by Christ. -- The APOSTOLIC FATHERS were taught by the Apostles. The CHURCH FATHERS followed the Apostolic Fathers.
2. APOLOGISTS - Those who defend what they believe to be the truth; in this case, the Word of God.
3. HISTORY - In the first two centuries there was a great attack upon the church and the word of God.
 - A. In the last half of the second century two heresies (departure from the truth) became a menace.
 - (1). GNOSTICISM - too intellectual to believe that Christ was God and the Savior. They went as far as to maintain that Christ never dwelt on this earth in human form.
 - (2). MONTANISM - taught that Christ's promise of the Holy Spirit (Comforter) had not been fulfilled on Pentecost, but that the coming of the Holy Spirit was now at hand and that the end of the world was near.
 - B. The Heresies of Gnosticism and Montanism brought forth what is known as the APOSTLES' CREED.
 - (1). Creed comes from the Latin, "credo," meaning "I believe." A creed is a statement of belief in opposition to these heresies
 - (2). The Apostles Creed - so-called, NOT because it was composed by the apostles, but because it is a summary of the apostles' teachings.
4. The APOLOGISTS:
 - A. Justin (Martyr). His mother and father were heathen. He was born in Shechem in the province of Samaria.
 - (1) He studied Philosophy and was converted after a study of the Old Testament Prophets.
 - (2) He wrote several books defending Christianity.
 - (3) About the year 153, while in Rome, he wrote his famous "Apology." He battled the heretic, Marcion.
 - (4) About 165 while in Rome, he was beheaded for his faith. For that reason he is called Justin Martyr.
5. The APOSTOLIC FATHERS - They lived in the first half of the second Century. We know the names of five of them:
 - A. Clement of Rome.
 - B. Hermas of Rome (A.D. 95).
 - C. Ignatius of Antioch, who was bishop there about 70 - 110 A.D.
 - (1). He knew well the disciples and was a disciple of Polycarp. He was martyred for his faith.
 - (2). His 7 epistles contain:

Matthew	Ephesians	1 & 2 Thessalonians
John	Philippians	1 & 2 Timothy
Acts	Galatians	1 Peter
Romans	Colossians	
1 Corinthians	James	

D. Polycarp of Smyrna, who was bishop there about 110 A.D.

E. Barnabas, probably of Alexandria.

F. Hippolytus (A.D. 170-235) has written more than 1300 references to the Bible.

A brief inventory at this point will reveal that there were some 32,000 citations of the New Testament prior to the time of the Council of Nicea (325). These 32,000 quotations are by no means exhaustive, and they do not even include the 4th Century writers. Just adding the number of references used by one other writer, Eusebius, who flourished prior to and contemporary with the Council of Nicea will bring the total citations of the New Testament to over 36,000.

G. Why are the quotations of the Fathers important?

(1) Apostolic Fathers (75-150 A.D.). Taught by Apostles or students of the Apostles.

(2) Church Fathers (approx. 150 A.D. to 400 A.D.). Successors to the Apostolic Fathers.

- a. Quantity of their writings was enormous, yet much is lost; however, in what is still existing much of the Old Testament and practically all of the New Testament can be reproduced from their quotes.
- b. Quotations for the Fathers go from approximately 20 years before completion of New Testament until the time of our earliest manuscript copies.

(3) The Fathers are a great proof of the accuracy of the text we have today. We know:

— When and where they lived.

— THEY COULD NOT HAVE QUOTED FROM A TEXT THAT DID NOT EXIST!

6. The CHURCH FATHERS - Of these outstanding men were Irenaeus and Tertullian in the western part of the Roman Empire; and Clement and Origen in the eastern part of the Empire.

A. IRENAEUS - born sometime between 115 and 142 A.D.

- (1) He was raised in Smyrna. There he saw Polycarp and heard him preach. He quotes from: Matthew, Mark, Luke, Acts, 1 Corinthians, 1 Peter, Hebrews, Titus.
- (2) He moved to Lyons in Gaul (France) and became bishop of the church there.
- (4) In the year 200 A.D. he suffered a martyr's death.

B. TERTULLIAN - born between 105-155 in Carthage, North Africa.

- (1) He studied law and practiced in Rome. He was a great student of Philosophy and History and had an excellent legal mind. He quotes the Gospels 3,800 times and the rest of the New Testament 3,200 times.

(2) After his conversion he returned to Carthage and became a presbyter in the church.

(3) He was a great defender of the person and work of Jesus Christ and of Christianity.

C. CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA - a teacher in the theological school in Alexandria, Egypt.

D. ORIGEN. A pupil of Clement who became more famous than his teacher. He compiled over 6,000 works and used over 18,000 quotes from the New Testament.

(1) The greatest scholar the church had produced up to this time. (185-253 A.D.).

(2) He was a deep and original thinker and wrote many large and learned Books.

(3) His book, "Against Celsus," was a brilliant answer to this heretic.

Note: Celsus was a heathen who, in the year 177 A.D., wrote a book entitled "True Discourse, which was against Christianity. He had a keen mind and many of his arguments are still used by unbelievers today.

E. CYPRIAN - was a great defender- of Christianity. He cited the Old Testament about 740 times and the New Testament 1,030 times.

(1) He was born in Carthage, North Africa, about 200 A.D. and lived in that city all of his life.

(2) In 246 A.D. he was converted to Christianity.

(3) He was a rich and well-educated man and became a famous teacher of rhetoric (speech).

(4) In 248 A.D., he became bishop in that city.

(5) In 258, he was beheaded as a Christian martyr.

(6) He wrote, "There is one God, and Christ is one; and there is one Church and one Chair." By "one chair," he meant "one center of authority."

7. THE BATTLE OVER THE DOCTRINE OF THE DEITY OF CHRIST. Was Christ actually God in human flesh?

A. The two giants who opposed each other concerning this great and important fundamental doctrine were ARIUS (against) and ATHANASIUS (who endorsed the doctrine).

B. ATHANASIUS stated: "Jesus, whom I know as my Redeemer, cannot be less than God.

(1) This was the all-important and basic: doctrine upon which rests the salvation of all humanity. If Christ is not God, then we have no Savior or salvation. The only one who can pay for the sin of someone else is the One who is sinless; that is Jesus Christ, who is God manifest in human flesh. (2 Corinthians 5:21 and Philippians 3:9).

C. ARIUS - His Philosophy.

(1) His Character - He was a pious man of a blameless life and an able preacher..

(2) The heathen believe in many gods and Arius reasoned that, if the Son is God and the Father is God, it would mean there are two Gods; therefore, falling back into heathenism.

- (3) His Teaching - He taught that Christ was somewhat like God, but not fully God. -- That Christ is the first and highest of all created beings. Christ does not exist from eternity and is not of the same substance or essence as the Father.
- (4) This is human reasoning as opposed to the word of God, of which are Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, New Age Philosophy, and many other such cults.

D. THE COUNCIL OF NICAEA (325) was called by the Emperor Constantine to settle the matter, as the controversy raged.

- (1) Nicaea, a small town in Asia Minor", on the shores of the Bosphorus, about 45 miles from Constantinople.
- (2) They met in a great hall in the emperor's palace, where more than 300 bishops were present.
- (3) The decision was that the views of Arius were condemned as heresy and a statement of the true doctrine that Christ was fully God in human flesh was adopted as the faith of the church, and is known as the NICENE CREED.
- (4) Arius himself, and a few bishops, refused to sign the Nicene
- (5) Athanasius, until the day of his death he had to battle continuously for the doctrine of the Deity of Christ. We have the same battle today, which has been raging for almost 2,000 years.

8. From the last half of the 4th century to the first half of the 5th century, three great Church Fathers who defended the faith were:

A. AMBROSE - (340-397) Born in the western part of Germany and educated in Rome. He was fearless in his defense of Christian living.

- (1) He resided in the city of Milan, Italy, and became bishop there in 374 A.D.

B. JEROME - (340-420) The last years of his life he spent in Bethlehem as a monk (386-420). He was about the only western churchman who knew Hebrew. He learned it from Jewish Rabbis when he lived in Antioch and Bethlehem.

- (1) He translated the Old Testament from the Hebrew into the Greek, known as the "Vulgate."
- (2) It was his noblest achievement.

C. AUGUSTINE - (354-430 A.D.) Born in Tagaste, North Africa. He was schooled in Carthage, became a learned professor, and accomplished public speaker.

- (1) He became bishop of Hippo in his native country of North Africa and was a vigorous defender against heretics.