

# EARLY CHURCH HISTORY

The First 300 years

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**Period Three**

***“Second Century Apologists”***

## ***How were early Christians perceived?***

### **Accusations**

- **Atheism**
- **Lack of Patriotism**
- **Cause of Disasters**
- **“Haters of Mankind”**
- **Superstition**
- **Cannibalism**
- **Immorality/Incest**

## ***2<sup>nd</sup> Century Apologists***

### **1. Justin Martyr (100-165)**

#### A. Life

- studied various philosophies; a Platonist
- converted to Christ in 132; school of true philosophy in Rome
- martyred in 165—refused to offer sacrifice

#### B. Writings

- wrote two *Apologies* and *Dialogue with the Jew Trypho*
- defended Christianity from pagan attacks—demanded justice, defended morality, good citizens, reasonableness of Christianity

#### C. Use of Philosophy

- doctrine of *Logos*—human mind shares in universal reason that under girds all reality
- Plato & Socrates were “Christians” because their wisdom came from *Logos*

## ***2<sup>nd</sup> Century Apologists***

### **2. Irenaeus (130-200)**

#### A. Life

- Disciple of Polycarp (speaks often of him)
- Bishop of Lyons in 177

#### B. Works

- Main work was *Against Heresies*—a thorough refutation of Gnosticism
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### **Gnosticism:**

- special, mystical *gnosis* (knowledge) for those with true understanding; key to salvation
  - dualism—matter is evil; goal is for the eternal spirit to escape the body
  - Jesus came as a heavenly messenger to give secret *gnosis*; appeared as man (Docetism)
  - \*Marcion—unique form of gnosticism
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#### C. Response

- Goes against teaching of “Scripture”
- Gospel is an open, public tradition
- Succession from the Apostles

# ***Quartodecimanism***

(The Date of Easter Controversy)

## **1. Paschal Celebration**

- “The Christian Passover”—the earliest annual feast of the church
- Preceded by fasting and penitence

## **2. Controversy**

- a) Asia Minor—celebrated the Christian Passover on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan
  - Fasted on this day; closed the fast with a communion meal and celebration
  - Focus was on the crucifixion
- b) Roman Church—celebrated the crucifixion on a Friday and the resurrection on the Sunday following the March full moon
  - Fast lasted until Sunday
  - Emphasis was on the resurrection

***Issue:*** whether the Jewish Passover or the Christian Sunday should control the emphasis and timing of this important festival

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**Period Four**

***“Third Century Teachers”***