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**THE CHRISTIAN APOLOGISTS OF THE SECOND CENTURY
THEIR MESSAGE AND MISSION**

**A Thesis presented to the
Faculty of Concordia Theological Seminary
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Divinity**

by

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When the Christian religion first began to spread through the Roman world, it met much opposition. This was partly due to the three chief lines of thought of the time: Judaism, the various schools of philosophy, and the religion of the empire. The Jews were the first to foment persecution of the Christians. Already during the missionary journeys of the Apostle Paul they sent out Judaistic teachers to hinder his work (1). By the beginning of the second century the opposition of the Jews had waned to some extent, since the Christian Church had turned to the Gentiles; but some of it still existed, as we see from Justin's DIALOGUE WITH TRYPHO. This book shows us that the Jewish people still regarded Christ as an impostor, and were then still expecting a Messiah who would be a glorious ruler. It also indicates that the traveling opponents of Christianity were still exerting their influence. Therefore the Christian apologists of the second century had to keep the Jews in mind. In dealing with them Justin argues from the Old Testament, to show that the prophecies of the Messiah can be fulfilled only in Jesus Christ; he also attacks their ceremonialism and formalism. Thus apologetics against the Jews in the second century is still of the same nature as it was in the days of the apostles.

But although Jewish influence was no longer strong at this time, it was replaced by the opposition to Christianity that issued from the philosophers. This marks the second

(1) Acts 14, 19; 17, 13

school of thought which the early apologists had to meet. Many varieties of philosophy were in vogue at the time. Justin studied in the schools of the Peripatetics, the Stoics, Pythagoras, and Plato. Many of the philosophers in the second century held to eclectic systems based on combinations of the most important schools. Farrar characterizes the philosophy of the times as "a chaos of conflicting opinion" (1). But although the forms of philosophy were many, there was one feature common to them all: pride in regard to reason. Therefore Christianity, with its fundamental teaching of the vicarious atonement, was "unto the Greeks foolishness". To the philosopher, Christianity was "not a problem to be investigated, but an extravagance to be laughed at" (2). Therefore the Christian religion was treated with scorn and ridicule by the philosophers. Lucian, one of them, wrote his TRUE HISTORY which shows his opinion of the Bible. This book contains the story of a group of adventurers on a ship being swallowed by a sea monster -- ship and all -- and living inside the monster for several days, watching the birds build nests in the trees which had sprung up inside the creature. The adventurers even met an old man who had been living within the monster for twenty-seven years! The obvious purpose of such stories is to parody the Biblical narratives. Lucian as much as says: "Your story of Jonah is quite entertaining; but I can do even better than that." This ridicule of the philosophers the Christians did

(1) LIVES OF THE FATHERS, p. 127

(2) David Smith in THE EXPOSITOR, 1900, p. 303

not attempt to answer; silence is the best antidote to such attacks. However, the apologists did appeal to the philosophers on other grounds. The first apologies were addressed to the emperors as philosophers. Their argumentation stressed points on which they agreed with the philosophers: pure morality, monotheism, hope of life beyond death, and the doctrine of the Logos. Philosophy they regarded as correct insofar as it goes on these points; but it is incomplete revelation. In this way the Christian apologists of the second century defended their beliefs before the philosophers.

The third school of thought which was opposed to Christianity in the second century was the pagan religion of the Roman empire. True, the intellectuals and rulers generally did not believe the superstitions which this religion thrust upon them; but the plebs held to it quite strongly. The paganism of Rome was a mixture of polytheism and superstition. Demons, fauns, genii, manes, and lares shared honors as gods with the emperors and the deities of foreign religions. Morality was of little concern to this paganism; in fact, quite often lasciviousness was an integral part of its system. The chief duty upon which paganism insisted was the offering of sacrifices (1). The early Christian apologists made no concessions to the paganism of the day. They denounced it especially for its immorality and polytheism.

(1) For a detailed account of Roman religion, cf. Glover: THE CONFLICT OF RELIGIONS IN THE EARLY ROMAN EMPIRE, p. 1ff.

But the worst enemy of Christianity in its youth, and the one which made apologetic work necessary, was misunderstanding. The emperors were too busy to give their personal attention to the persecutions of Christians, and found it difficult to get correct information on what this religion really was. There were many reasons why the heathen misunderstood the Christian religion. They were so steeped in idol-worship that it was hard for them to conceive of a God Who was not an idol (1). Then, too, since Christianity arose out of Palestine, it was regarded as a form of the despised Judaism; in fact, it was considered a degraded form, for its leader had been crucified. The language of the Christians was misconstrued. The coming destruction of the world by flame was regarded as an incendiary plot. Conversation concerning the "King" led to accusations of sedition, emphasized when the Christians refused to worship the emperor. Also the acts of the Christians in their secret meetings were misinterpreted. The agape was regarded as a drunken orgy, the kiss of peace as an indication of sexual promiscuity, the Eucharist as cannibalism. To correct these false impressions, and to show the emperor -- who had power to stop persecution -- what Christianity in reality was, some of the more prominent Christians wrote the early apologies. Some of these were addressed to the emperor, others to individuals or groups that misunderstood the Christian religion. But the apologists were not con-

(1) Juvenal said of the Jew: "Nihil praeter nubes et caeli numen adorat", SAT. xiv, 97; quoted by Farrar, op. cit., p. 124

tent merely to refute false charges. They took the offensive, and attempted to show the heathen the proof which they could offer for their belief. The chief line of argument in this respect was from prophecy. Although the heathen were well acquainted with ambiguous prophecy through their oracles, they were not familiar with definite prophecies that were always fulfilled. This argumentation, however, was weakened because of the general lack of acquaintance with the Old Testament among the heathen. Another proof of Christianity was that from miracles; but this was used with reserve, since the charlatans among the pagans also claimed miracles. There was also the strong argument based on the rapid spread of Christianity. Finally, the chaste lives of the Christians presented a sound foundation for the claims of the apologists' religion.

We do not today have the works of all the apologists who were active for the cause of Christianity in the second century. However, through the writings of other fathers in the early Church we know which men rose to the defense of Christianity. Both Eusebius and Jerome have enumerated the leaders in the early Church and their writings. The list of apologists (1) includes the names of Quadratus, Aristides, Agrippa Castor, Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, Theophilus, Apollinaris, Melito of Sardis, Miltiades, Hermias, Tatian, Hegesippus, Dionysius of Corinth, and the author of

(1) This list is taken from Farrar, LIVES OF THE FATHERS, pp. 123ff.

the Epistle to Diognetus. Tertullian and Minucius Felix, who began apologetic work in the Latin language, form a bridge between the second and third centuries. For the sake of completeness we shall also consider their apologies.

We shall now proceed to a study of the lives and works of the individual second-century apologists whose writings we have today.

... a discourse, which he had composed in defence of our religion, because certain wicked men were endeavouring to molest our people. The treatise is still to be found in the hands of very many of the brethren, as indeed it is in ours also. From it we may gather striking proofs of the author's understanding and of his own catholic conscience in the faith. The work itself reveals the early state at which he lived in the following account.

Some modern historians doubt whether Theophilus is correct in stating that the apology was presented to Hadrian because there is some evidence that Antoninus Pius was its recipient. However, most of the evidence favors Theophilus' account.

The apology, which was written about 135, is now lost. The only fragment which is extant is that quoted by Eusebius as follows (2):

"But the words of our Savior were always present (for they were genuine); namely, those who were healed, those who were freed from the devil, who were not only seen in the act of being healed or raised, but were also always present; and yet never said that the Savior was in error, but after his departure as well, they lived for a considerable time; inasmuch that some of them survived even to our own day."

[1] Cf. Lactantius, *On the Death of Persecutors*, p. 27
[2] Hist. Eccl., 4.3
[3] Ibid.

QUADRATUS

We know very little about the first Christian apologist. The name "Quadratus" is a common one, and therefore it is doubtful whether Jerome (1) is correct in stating that the apologist was bishop at Athens. Our most definite information comes from Eusebius (2):

"To him (Hadrian) Quadratus dedicated and addressed a discourse, which he had composed in defence of our religion, because certain wicked men were endeavouring to molest our people. The treatise is still to be found in the hands of very many of the brethren, as indeed it is in ours also. From it we may gather striking proofs of the author's understanding and of his apostolic soundness in the faith. But he himself reveals the early date at which he lived in the following account".

Some modern historians doubt whether Eusebius is correct in stating that the apology was presented to Hadrian because there is some evidence that Antoninus Pius was its recipient. However, most of the evidence favors Eusebius' account.

The APOLOGY, which was written about 126, is now lost. The only fragment which is extant is that quoted by Eusebius as follows (3):

"But the works of our Savior were always present (for they were genuine): namely, those who were healed, those who rose from the dead; who were not only seen in the act of being healed or raised, but were also always present; and not merely when the Savior was in earth, but after His departure as well, they lived for a considerable time; insomuch that some of them survived even to our own day".

(1) Cf. Lamson: CHURCH OF THE FIRST THREE CENTURIES, p. 27
 (2) HIST. ECCLES. 4,3
 (3) *ibid.*

ARISTIDES

Until the nineteenth century we knew very little about this apologist. He lived at the time of Quadratus, for Eusebius imparts this information: "And Aristides too, a faithful follower of our religion, has left behind him an apology which, like Quadratus, he dedicated to Hadrian on behalf of the faith. And his book also is to this day preserved in the hands of very many". (1). Jerome refers to Aristides as "philosophus eloquentissimus" (2), and tells us that while a Christian he wore the philosopher's garb. Various theologians up till the ninth century referred to this apology (3), and then it disappeared from history. However, in 1889 J. Rendel Harris of Cambridge found a Syriac version of Aristides' APOLOGY in the Monastery of St. Catherine on Mt. Sinai (4). He translated this into English, and then it was discovered that a Greek version was incorporated in the early Christian romance THE LIFE OF BARLAAM AND JOSAPHAT (5).

The APOLOGY addresses Hadrian as a philosopher rather than as king. It was presented at the same time as that of Quadratus. The purpose of these two works was to have the emperor investigate Christianity rather than regard it eo ipso as a crime. Therefore Aristides does not use doctrinal arguments, but defends Christianity by its good results. He begins by elaborating upon the nature of God, that He is eter-

(1) HIST. ECCL. 4,3

(2) DE VIR. ILL. 20; cited in Cath. Encycl. s.v.

(3) Cath. Encycl. s.v. "Aristides"

(4) Wolff in HARVARD THEOLOGICAL REVIEW, 1937, p.237

(5) *ibid.*

nal and perfect(1); here he has common ground with the philosopher. He continues by enumerating the four races of men: Barbarians, Greeks, Jews, and Christians. Then he summarizes the Gospel to explain the origin of Christianity; the reader is referred to a written Gospel for a fuller account (2). The greater part of his APOLOGY is composed of attacks upon false religions. The Barbarians are attacked for worshiping creatures (the elements, the sun, man) instead of the Creator(3). He censures the Greeks who worship immoral and ridiculous gods. (4). He assails the Egyptian superstitions, especially animal-worship (5). He attacks the ceremonialism of the Jews, yet gives them credit for worshiping the true God (6). The last three chapters describe the moral life of the Christians by explaining the Ten Commandments and the prayers of the Christians, and referring to the Judgment which they must face (7).

JUSTIN MARTYR

Justin Martyr is the greatest of the early Christian apologists. Since more of his writings have been preserved to us than from the other second-century apologists, we have a more extensive knowledge of his life. Most of our information comes through autobiographical references in his works.

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- (1) APOLOGY, ch. 1; division follows Carrington
 - (2) *ibid.* 2
 - (3) *ibid.* 3-7
 - (4) *ibid.* 8-11
 - (5) *ibid.* 12-13
 - (6) *ibid.* 14
 - (7) *ibid.* 15-17

Justin tells us that he was born at Flavia Neapolis, in Samaria (1). This is a city near Schechem, now known as Nablous. His parents were Greek colonists in this city. We know the names of his father and grandfather, which were respectively Priscus and Bacchus. Justin had an ardent thirst for knowledge, and was especially attracted by philosophy. Therefore he attached himself to a member of the school of Zeno the Stoic. However, he soon withdrew from this group because it did not offer enough knowledge of God. Then he wished to join the Peripatetics; but when he discovered that they charged a fee for learning, he became disgusted with them. Next he became acquainted with a follower of Pythagoras, who impressed him very highly; but this philosopher demanded of his pupils an extensive knowledge of music, astronomy, and geometry. Lacking this background, Justin was required to forego instruction in this school. The effect of this vain search now began to dishearten Justin. He was on the verge of relinquishing his interest in philosophy when he became acquainted with a Platonist. The stress which this school laid on idea appealed to Justin. He decided to retire to a secluded spot near the sea, there to contemplate, and perhaps to rise to a vision of the Divinity. On the way to the sea he met an old man, a Christian, who exposed the absurd pretensions of the philosophers. This man directed Justin to study the Hebrew prophets, and then went away.

Having previously admired the courage of the Christians

(1) Where not otherwise indicated, biographical data is taken from the DIALOGUE WITH TRYPHO

in the face of death, and believing them innocent of the many charges raised against them, Justin now decided to study the books of the Christians. This led him to the conviction that the Christians had the *μόνην φιλοσοφίαν ἀσφαλῆ τε καὶ σύμφορον*. He now became active in the cause of Christianity, though continuing to wear the coarse philosopher's garb throughout his life (1). Most of his later years were spent in Rome, although Eusebius places the scene of his **DIALOGUE** in Ephesus (2). He suffered martyrdom in Rome, probably ca. 165 A.D., as a result of his opposition to the philosopher Crescens, who was urging the emperor to further persecution of the Christians. The prefect who condemned him was Rusticus; Marcus Antoninus was emperor at the time (3).

Many writings have been attributed to Justin, but most of these are regarded by the ablest critics as not authentic (4). Generally accepted works include: **FIRST APOLOGY**, **DIALOGUE WITH TRYPHO**, **SECOND APOLOGY**, and two lost works -- one against all heresies and the other against Marcion. Justin's style is vigorous, none too orderly, and lacks exactness as to detail. He is at times a victim of false exegesis (5), and sometimes uses the allegorical method of interpretation (6). Nevertheless he is one of the boldest confessors

(1) Eusebius: **HIST. ECCL.** 4, 11

(2) *ibid.* ch. 18

(3) *ibid.* ch. 16; also **ACTS OF THE MARTYRDOM OF JUSTIN**

(4) Kaye: **THE FIRST APOLOGY OF JUSTIN MARTYR**, p. 3

(5) E.g., the origin of demons from angels and women, based on false exegesis of Gen. 6, 2

(6) E.g., he makes almost every stick in the Old Testament symbolical of the cross

of Christ, defending Christianity in the face of certain death.

The FIRST APOLOGY was probably written about 139 A.D. It is addressed to Antoninus Pius and his son Veronicus, and to Lucius Verus -- all of them philosophers. Justin begins by stating that the Christians do not deserve persecution; their persecution, like that of the philosophers, is of the devil. The Christians are not atheists; they worship God instead of devils (idols). The Christians are not evildoers; like Plato, they expect a judgment. The Christians are not revolutionists; the kingdom which they await is not of this world. They must be good citizens; for they believe that God sees all (1).

The next section contains a description and justification of the Christian religion. The teachings of Jesus are summarized on the basis of the Gospel according to St. Matthew; and the bodily nature of the resurrection is explained (2).

Christianity is compared with paganism. The beliefs of the pagans are much more fantastic than those of the Christians; yet pagans are not punished. The pagans are truly immoral, more so than the Christians are accused of being (3).

The long section which follows this contains a detailed proof of Christianity. Justin argues from the prophecies of Christ's birth, suffering, death, and resurrection (4).

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- (1) FIRST APOLOGY
 - (2) *ibid.* 16-26
 - (3) *ibid.* 27-37
 - (4) *ibid.* 38-78

The final chapters speak of the Church and Christian life, giving a more detailed account of this than do the other apologists. Baptism is trinitarian, a confession is used; the sacrament regenerates and forgives sin. The Eucharist is celebrated with bread, wine, and water. Following a long prayer the sacrament is distributed, and the deacons take it to those who are absent. "This food is turned into the nourishment and substance of our flesh and blood, and is in some sense the flesh and blood of the incarnate Jesus " (1).

The DIALOGUE WITH TRYPHO was written after the FIRST APOLOGY, but just when we do not know; probably ca. 146 A.D. It is not certain whether the dialogue really took place, or whether this is just the style of presentation (2). We are inclined to think that it was not an actual occurrence, since it is hard to conceive of a Jew as humble as Trypho, and who would accept some of the false Hebrew exegesis which Justin offers. The work is presented as a dialogue of two days; therefore the arguments of the first day are summed up at the beginning of the second day. The last part of the first day's discussion and the first part of the second day's are lost. Following is a summary of the contents of this dialogue:

Justin tells how he was converted to Christianity, and urges Trypho to embrace it. Trypho replies that Christianity is a false religion, that the only true religion is the Jewish. Justin answers that the ceremonies of the Jews were

(1) FIRST APOLOGY, 78-end

(2) For analogies of the latter compare the dialogues of Plato, Cicero, Bishop Berkley, et al.

given for only a short time; otherwise it was inconsistent for God not to give them before Sinai. To an argument of Trypho that the prophecies indicate a glorious Savior, Justin answers that the Old Testament speaks of two advents of Christ, one in humiliation and the other in glory; he quotes passages to prove this point. Then he explains that the ceremonies of the Old Testament were allusions to various phases of New Testament history. He goes on to show that the Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled in Christ, whom Trypho considers a mere man. Trypho objects that Elias was first to come; Justin says that John the Baptist was he. Further, no prophet has arisen since John the Baptist; and the Jews have lost their independence; hence the prophecies must have been fulfilled by now. Trypho says that Jesus might be all right for the Gentiles, but the Jews were to have only the Creator as God. Justin quotes psalms to show that those Jews who were saved believed on Christ. Trypho questions the statement that Jesus is God, because of the passages which speak of God as one; Justin explains that this is a doctrine above reason. Justin now returns to prophecy, to show that the Messiah should be born of a virgin. Trypho compares this to heathen fables on the origin of certain gods. Justin quotes from the Old Testament to show that the Messiah should be virgin-born, and charges the Jews with omitting some prophecies in the LXX. He also mentions the miracles of Jesus as proof of His deity. Trypho inquires whether Justin holds to the restoration of Jerusalem because he believes it, or merely to conciliate the Jews. Justin replies that not all the Christians hold this

teaching, but he does so on the basis of Isaiah and the Apocalypse. Trypho admits that Jesus fits the prophecies, but he cannot harmonize the Messiah with the accursed death of crucifixion. Justin answers that in this case it was not accursed, because Christ was innocent; he quotes passages referring to the Messiah's death by crucifixion. Then he speaks of the conversion of the Gentiles, that they fulfill the spiritual meaning of the Law and are the true children of Abraham. He concludes by denouncing the Jews for their refusal to accept the Messiah after God has so richly blessed their race; the destruction of Jerusalem had been sent as a punishment for this, since they were not at the time guilty of the idolatry for which God in past times had delivered them into the hands of enemies. Therefore the Jews should repent and embrace Christianity.

The SECOND APOLOGY is shorter, less formal, but more vigorous than the first. It was written shortly before Justin's death, and is usually dated about 164. The contents are as follows (1):

Urbicus the praetor had condemned several Christians to death simply because they were Christians; Justin was writing as a protest to this action. Further, the Cynic philosopher Crescens had slandered the Christians; Justin wished to refute his charges (2).

The punishment of Christians is the work of demons, who

(1) Division follows Carrington
 (2) SECOND APOLOGY, 1-3

were born of illegitimate intercourse between angels and the daughters of men. Since God has power over these demons, they incite the world to persecute God's people, just as they caused Heraclitus and other philosophers to be persecuted (1).

The Christians, like Socrates, are innocent. This is proved by the fact that they face death calmly, when it brings them before a God Who punishes vice (2).

In the last two chapters Justin addresses himself to the Romans, and asks them to make his book public, thus spreading the truth about Christianity (3).

ATHENAGORAS

For some unknown reason both Eusebius and Jerome fail to mention Athenagoras; therefore we know very little concerning his life. He tells us that he was an Athenian philosopher; his writings show that he was more cultured and philosophical than Justin. He ascribes his conversion to the reading of the Old Testament. Philip Sidetes (4) says that Athenagoras was converted while studying the Bible in order to refute it; but this source is known to be unreliable in telling us that the apologist became a catechete in Alexandria, and that Clement was his pupil. The time at which his APOLOGY was written is uncertain. It is addressed to

Ἀυτοκράτορσιν Μάρκῳ Ἀυρηλίῳ Ἀντωνίνῳ καὶ Λουκίῳ

(1) SECOND APOLOGY, 4-8

(2) *ibid.* 9-13

(3) *ibid.* 14-15

(4) Cited in Stolle: *LEBEN, SCHRIFTEN, UND LEHREN DER KIRCHENVÄTTER*, p. 75

Αὐρηλίω Κομμόδω, Ἀρμενιτικοῖς Σάγματικοῖς τὸ δὲ μέγιστον φιλοσόφοις. The critic Otto (1) brings evi-

dence to show that these emperors are Marcus Aurelius Antoninus and his son Lucius Aelius Aurelius Commodus, thus putting the date of the writing at about 177 A.D. This seems to be the preferred date.

Besides the APOLOGY, a treatise which Athenagoras wrote on the resurrection is extant.

The APOLOGY, treating the emperors as philosophers, complains that the Christians are unjustly persecuted on the charges of atheism, Thyestean feasts, and Oedipodean intercourse (2). Then Athenagoras proceeds to refute the charge of atheism by showing that Christians, like Euripides, Plato, and Aristotle, believe in one God. Here he explains that the Christians do not offer sacrifices because their whole life is their sacrifice; that they do not worship idols because idols and the emperor are only creatures of God. (4). He continues by showing that the heathen gods are created by the mind of man, and have human vices; it is not atheism to refuse to worship such (5). He concludes by showing that the charges of immorality against the Christians must be untrue

(1) J. Otto: "De Inscriptione et Aetate Apologiae Athenagoricae", in ZEITSCHRIFT FÜR DIE HISTORISCHE THEOLOGIE, v.26 pp. 637ff.

(2) APOLOGY, 1-3; division follows Carrington

(3) *ibid.* 4-12

(4) *ibid.* 13-16

(5) *ibid.* 17-30

because of the teachings of the Christians that they will be judged, that even evil thoughts are sin, and that their bodies are to be resurrected (1).

THEOPHILUS

We now come to Theophilus, distinguished as the father of the science of Biblical chronology. He tells us that he was born a pagan, and was converted by reading Holy Scriptures. Eusebius tells that he was bishop of Antioch after 168 A.D. Concerning his works Eusebius says (2):

"But of Theophilus, who, as we have shown, was bishop of the church of the Antiochenes, the three elementary treatises to Autoclyous are extant: as is also another, with the title against the heresy of Hermogenes, in which he has made use of testimonies drawn from the Apocalypse of John. And certain catechetical books of his are extant as well.

"But since the heretics, in no less degree at that time also, were spoiling like tares the pure seed of the apostolic teaching, the pastors of the churches everywhere, as if they were scaring wild beasts away from the sheep of Christ, endeavoured to ward them off: at one time by warning and counsel to the brethren; by another, delivering a more open attack upon them in oral discussions and refutations in person; or yet again, by means of written memoirs completely refuting their opinions with the most rigorous proofs.

"In fact, that Theophilus along with the others entered the field against them is evident from a certain book of uncommon merit which he composed against Marcion; which book has itself been preserved even to this day along with the others of which we have spoken".

(1) APOLOGY, 31-36

(2) HIST. ECCL. 4, 24

Besides these works Jerome ascribes to him commentaries on the Gospels and Proverbs: "Legi sub nomine ejus in Evangelium et in Proverbia Salomonis Commentarios, qui mihi cum superiorum voluminum elegantia et phrasi non videntur congruere" (1); thus Jerome doubts whether he really wrote these books. Today, however, only the three books TO AUTO- LYCUS are extant. These seem to have originated out of an oral discussion on Christianity with this heathen friend when he made disparaging remarks concerning the Christian religion. The style of Theophilus is the most elegant of the early apologists. The work is also distinguished in being the first to use the word *τριάς* of God -- the trinity being composed of God, the Logos, and Wisdom.

The first book of TO AUTOLYCUS deals with First Principles. God is perfect, eternal, invisible, beyond the power of words to describe. Man has a limited knowledge of Him from nature, but will have full knowledge when he puts on immortality. Christianity is no more unreasonable than idol-worship. Belief in the resurrection is in accordance with what we observe in the course of nature.

The second book deals with the Origin of the World. First Theophilus satirizes the ideas of heathen philosophers, especially the belief that matter is eternal. Then he summarizes the Christian view of creation, recounting the first ten chapters of Genesis in detail. This, he says, we know from the inspired Word.

(1) Cited in Stolle: *LEBEN, SCHRIFTEN, UND LEHREN DER KIRCHEN-VAETER*, p. 75

The third book contains a Contrast of Greek and Hebrew Literature. Greek writers are unreliable because they are late, and are often self-contradictory. Hebrew literature is reliable because it is ancient and inspired. Hebrew literature inculcates virtues; Greek literature extols vices.

TATIAN

Tatian was born in the "land of the Assyrians", as he tells us (1). Being a "barbarian" by birth, he did not have the reverence for Greek thought which characterized his predecessors; hence he does not hesitate to satirize the culture of the Greeks. Epiphanius says he was a native of Mesopotamia (2). At first he was a student of heathen literature, and devoted himself to philosophy. He found no satisfaction in this, and was especially disgusted with the heathen religion. At this time he read the Old Testament, and was attracted by its code of morality. He traveled about much, and in Rome came into contact with Justin. As long as he remained under the influence of this great apologist he was orthodox; but after Justin's martyrdom he embraced Gnostic heresy, and founded an ascetic sect called "Encratites" (3). He wrote numerous other books, among them a DIATHESSARON; this and his apology TO THE GREEKS, written about 160, are

(1) Where not otherwise indicated, biographical data is taken from TO THE GREEKS

(2) HAER. xlvi; cited in ANTE-NICENE FATHERS

(3) Eusebius: HIST. ECCL. 4, 29

his only extant works.

The contents of TO THE GREEKS may be summarized as follows (1):

You Greeks have no reason to be so proud. All of your culture you learned from the barbarians. Your philosophers are examples of vice and monuments of ridicule. Your gods sin like men. Then why do you persecute us who worship the invisible Creator? (2).

The spirit in us is immortal and is responsible for sin; it will be punished for sin. It is superior to matter; but while dwelling in matter it must be united with God. If it is, we will not be harmed by the demons (3).

The heathen gods are ridiculous, and the Greek religious rites are foolish. Gladiatorial games are demoralizing. The philosophers are ridiculous, their learning is pride. Adherents to such foibles have no right to condemn the opinions of Christians (4).

I know what I am speaking of; for I was before a heathen, and was converted to Christianity by reading the prophets. Christianity is more ancient than Greek paganism, and it is fit for the poor and uneducated as well as for the philosopher (5).

The last section is devoted to a comparative chronology of Greek and Hebrew history (6).

(1) Division follows Carrington

(2) TO THE GREEKS, 1-10

(3) *ibid.* 11-20

(4) *ibid.* 21-28

(5) *ibid.* 29-46

(6) *ibid.* 47-50

EPISTLE TO DIOGNETUS

This is another apologetic work concerning the writing of which we know very little. None of the ancient or mediæval writers refer to it; and only one manuscript has come down to recent times. This manuscript was burned in the library of Strassburg during the Franco-Prussian War, after two copies of it had been made (1). All that we know concerning the author must come from internal evidence.

Until recently the work was ascribed to Justin, and placed among his works. However, modern critics are agreed that it is not the product of this martyr because of its difference in style and because Eusebius does not mention it in his list of Justin's works. The epistle is probably early, from about 150; this is deduced from the fact that it was placed among early writings, and that it contains no references to the heresies so abundant after the second century. Modern critics believe that the last two chapters do not belong to the epistle, since they are of an altogether different style. The writer of the last section speaks of himself as *ἀποστόλων γενόμενος μαθητής*; which, however, could be applied to Christians today also. There may be some truth to the opinion that Diognetus was the tutor of Marcus Aurelius (2).

This work is a gem among the early apologies. It is simple in doctrine, noble in style and argumentation. The

(1) Lightfoot: APOSTOLIC FATHERS, p. 467
 (2) *ibid.*

contents may be summarized as follows (1):

The letter is addressed to an official of high standing who desires information on Christianity (2). The author satirizes the idol-worship of paganism. He commends the Jewish belief in God, but condemns their ceremonialism (3). The next section contains a description of Christianity. Christians live in the world, but are not of the world. They face death without fear through the power of God, Who out of love sent His Son into the world to take away the world's sin (4). The last two chapters, generally regarded as a later addition, contain a summary of apostolic teaching and practice. They conclude with a homily showing that salvation is found in the Church.

MINUCIUS FELIX

There is much doubt concerning the date of the apology written by Minucius Felix. It has been placed almost everywhere between 160 and 300 A. D. The difficulty is caused by the similarity between parts of this work and the APOLOGY of Tertullian. Modern critics as well as the early ecclesiastical writers disagree as to which of these apologists was first, and which copied. The theory has been advanced, but is now generally discarded, that both quoted from a common lost source. For the sake of completeness we include this work here, regardless of its date. We may assume that it was written

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- (1) Division follows Carrington
 - (2) Chapter 1
 - (3) Ch. 2-4
 - (4) Ch. 5-10

toward the end of the second century.

Little is known about the personal life of Minucius. It is assumed that he was born in North Africa; for this section was the earliest leader in Latin Christianity, and Minucius makes allusions to African customs and beliefs (1). He tells us that he was originally a heathen, later was converted to Christianity (2). Lactantius (3) mentions that he was a famous juriconsult; Jerome says he practiced at Rome (4).

The name of his apology is OCTAVIUS. It is a dialogue similar to the DIALOGUE of Justin; the setting is at Ostia. As with Justin's work, we do not know whether this dialogue actually took place. However, the characters mentioned in it are real; their names have been found on inscriptions. The name of Minucius Felix was found at Tebessa and Carthage; that of Octavius Januarius at Saldae; that of M. Caecilius Natalis at Circa (5). The book received its title in memory of Octavius. It is written in the pure Latin prose of the Golden Age. Only one manuscript has come down to the present day; it was formerly listed as the eighth book of Arnobius. The critic Hadrianus Junius first discovered the true author of this work; in 1560 Franciscus Balduinus made this discovery public (6).

(1) OCTAVIUS, 9

(2) *ibid.*, 1 and 5

(3) 5,1; cited in Stolle: *LEBEN, SCHRIFTEN, UND LEHREN DER KIRCHENVAETER*, p. 125

(4) *DE VIR. ILL.* 58; cited in *ANTE-NICENE FATHERS*, IV, p. 169

(5) *CATHOLIC ENCYCLOPEDIA* s. v. "Minucius"

(6) Stolle, *op. cit.* p. 125

The following division of OCTAVIUS follows Carrington:

The three friends Octavius, Caecilius, and Minucius are walking by the seashore. Caecilius kisses his hand to an image of Serapis. This affords the occasion for a religious debate between him and Octavius; Minucius acts as arbiter (1).

Caecilius upholds paganism against Christianity. The world is governed by fate, as paganism recognizes. The Romans have met with success by following their religion. Christianity, on the other hand, is ridiculous. An omnipresent God is a spy; the destruction of the world and bodily resurrection are impossible. God does not care for the Christians, as is evident from their poverty (2).

Octavius replies that the poverty of a man does not disprove the truth of that man's argument. He proceeds with proof from design that there is a Creator; philosophers have recognized this. We should worship the Creator rather than human gods. The success of the Roman Empire was due to its violence and crime, not to the favor of its gods. Octavius then refutes the slanderous charges against the Christians. (3).

The next section contains a vindication of Christianity. God has no temples because He is too great; He dwells in our hearts. He is able to protect His people, as He did the Jews so long as they were faithful to Him. The destruction of the world and bodily resurrection are possible from a philosophic viewpoint. Christian morals are superior to those

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- (1) Chapters 1-4
 (2) 5-13
 (3) 14-21

of pagans. Fate is God. Christian children have the courage of men in the face of death. Christians stay away from sacrifices lest any one should think that they worship devils (idols) (1).

Caecilius declares himself conquered, and asks that Octavius instruct him in the Christian religion (2).

TERTULLIAN

Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullianus has been called the "father of Latin Christianity". He was born in Carthage, the son of a centurion (3), probably about 160 A.D. His heathen parents seem to have possessed sufficient wealth to give their son a liberal education. He shows great familiarity with heathen poetry and mythology; he also was acquainted with philosophy, although he heartily despised it. He was able to write in Greek (4), although his Greek works were soon lost. Eusebius tells us that he was well versed in Roman law. (5).

Carthage was a corrupt city; and in his younger days Tertullian was a delighted spectator at the indecent theatres. (6). Later he called them "bloody and lascivious fomenters of crime and lust" (7), and deeply regretted his for-

(1) OCTAVIUS, 32-38

(2) *ibid.* 39-42

(3) Jerome: *DEVIR. ILL.*, 53; cited in Jamson: *THE CHURCH OF THE FIRST THREE CENTURIES*, p.128

(4) *ON BAPTISM*, 15

(5) *HIST. ECCL.* 2,2

(6) *TO THE NATIONS*, 1,10

(7) *ON THE SHOWS*, 17

mer interest in them (1). The date of his conversion is uncertain; perhaps it occurred ca. 192. He has not told us what led to his conversion. Farrar (2) thinks a deeply wounded conscience plus the impression made by the constancy of Christian martyrs led him to embrace Christianity.

Tertullian is a most prolific writer; the ANTE-NICENE FATHERS lists over thirty of his works. Most of these are controversial; his legal training made him a great controversialist, merciless in attack. He does not so much seem concerned to win others over to his side as to win the debate. He often contradicts himself to gain immediate victory in argument. Farrar pays him this tribute: "He wields his impetuous rhetoric like a club of Hercules, and at the same time uses his logic and sarcasm like an envenomed rapier (3). Because of his profligate youth, Tertullian's writings have a "fire and brimstone" tenor, dwelling little on the love of God.

Little else is known of Tertullian's life; He traveled through Greece, and spent some time also in Rome (4). He was married, for two of his treatises are addressed to his wife; the tone of these indicates that his turbulent spirit found rest in a happy married life. Later on he adopted an ascetic and anti-Scriptural attitude toward matrimony. It is a disputed question whether he ever was a priest; although

(1) ON REPENTANCE, 1

(2) LIVES OF THE FATHERS, p. 165

(3) *ibid.* p. 160

(4) ON THE APPAREL OF WOMEN, 2, 7, 8

Jerome calls him an elder, he speaks of himself as a layman (1). In his later years Tertullian became a staunch supporter of the Montanistic heresy, and many of his later works are affected with this error. The date of his death is unknown.

Tertullian's works are divided into three classes: apologetical, polemical, and ethical. We shall here concern ourselves with only the most important writing in the first classification, his APOLOGY. This was written in 198, and was prompted by a severe wave of persecution in Carthage which made many martyrs and filled the prisons with Christians. Tertullian argues that the persecution of the Christians is the persecution of truth by ignorance. The judges condemn Christians because they are afraid of the mob. The Christians are guilty of no crimes, but are persecuted because of their name. If the law permits this, the law should be amended (2).

In the next chapter Tertullian makes the doubtful statement that the best emperors have protected Christianity. Tiberius wished to make Christ a Roman deity; Marcus Aurelius, Trajan, Hadrian, Vespasian, and Antoninus Pius were favorable to Christianity. (This certainly was not true about Marcus Aurelius).

The apology goes on to show that paganism has degenerate practices connected with it; yet the Christians are accused

(1) ON EXHORTATION TO CHASTITY, 7; ON MONOGAMY, 12
 (2) APOLOGY, 1-4; division follows Carrington

of impossible crimes (1).

The next section contains a condemnation of heathenism. You heathen are guilty of the practices of which you accuse Christians. You sacrifice children to Saturn, or expose them, you hold murderous gladiatorial games, you have immoral tragedies. Your gods are not even as moral as are the philosophers. You insult them by sacrificing the worthless parts of animals to them (2).

Christians believe in one God, the Creator. He is revealed to us by the prophets, whose witness is substantiated by the fulfillment of their prophecies. The Word of God became incarnate in Jesus Christ, Who wrought miracles to attest His deity (3).

Paganism, on the other hand, is inspired by the devil. Devils are fallen angels. They are responsible for the miracles of paganism; they are the gods of the pagans; they are the cause of the persecution of Christians (4).

The Christians are not enemies of the state. They are loyal to the emperor; yet they will worship only the true God. They pray for the empire (5).

We Christians are a corporation of men bound together to pray; we meet to read Scriptures and to improve our lives. Evils are a warning to us, punishment to you. You condemn us without cause; you do not treat the philosophers thus. Yet we rejoice in martyrdom; the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church (6).

(1) APOLOGY, 6-9
 (2) *ibid.* 9-16
 (3) *ibid.* 17-21

(4) *ibid.* 22-27
 (5) *ibid.* 28-38
 (6) *ibid.* 39-50

Did the labor of the early apologists serve its purpose? Of what value was it to the Church of that age? What is its value for us today?

One of the purposes of these writings was to inform the emperor concerning Christianity, and thus to cause a cessation of persecution. In this respect the apologists were not very successful. It is true, the persecution under Hadrian seems to have become less severe after he had received the apologies of Quadratus and Aristides; but this leniency consisted only in an order that the case must be investigated before a Christian should be put to death. Outside of this we find no traces of emperors being influenced by the apologists. In fact, their work sometimes had the opposite effect and incensed the emperor. Justin could have escaped martyrdom if he had kept silent; but when he protested against the execution of other Christians, he too was tried and condemned.

Nevertheless there were immediate beneficial results of the early apologies. The chief purpose which they served was to give the heathen a true picture of Christianity. The Christian religion was so misrepresented to the world at large that an outsider could learn little about it. The meetings were necessarily secret; therefore strangers could not attend services to become informed concerning Christianity. Here the apologies were of great value. They were public documents; the people who read them learned that Christianity was not a system imposing cannibalism and immoral love feasts upon its adherents. Rather, it was a re-

ligion that prepared one for the other world, teaching a pure code of morality during the sojourn upon earth. The rapid spread of Christianity during the first few centuries after Christ was of course due to the power of God. But God works through means; and one of the chief means of leading pagans to the truth was the testimony of these early champions of Christianity. Their writings and the chaste lives of the early Christians were two factors which drew many to a study of the truth.

Another benefit of the apologies was that they confirmed in their faith the early Christians, who at that time had to suffer many hardships for Christ's sake. Eusebius tells us that Theophilus and other apologists wrote against heretics, "completely refuting their opinions with the most rigorous proofs." He remarks that this was done for the purpose of keeping the Christians from falling victim to these errors. The apologies which we have reviewed took this same attitude toward the paganism of the day. It is easy to understand that, if a weak Christian would read such an apology, he would become strengthened in the opinion that Christianity was the true religion, rather than Roman paganism. This fortitude was especially necessary in a day in which death faced the confessors of Christianity, while a mere denial of their faith would result in freedom. The fact that the apologists themselves were willing to face death for what they had written added to the effectiveness of their testimony.

These were the results which the apologists accomplished in

their day. Now let us look at their works from the viewpoint of their value to us today.

The writings of the apologists, as well as those of the other Church fathers, are useful in many branches of theology. In the field of Biblical Introduction they are studied for the testimony which they offer in regard to the acceptance of the books of the New Testament. In the History of Interpretation they afford examples of how the Christians of that time understood the Scriptures. Especially are the apologists important in the fields of Church History and History of Dogma. The explanations which they offered concerning the worship and life of the time are source material for a study of the early Church; for the secrecy of the meetings of the Christians prevented other records from being kept on this subject. The exposition of the doctrines which they wished to explain to the heathen showed just what they believed. But what we wish to consider here is the present-day value of the second-century apologists as apologists.

The early Christian Church, as we have seen, was opposed by those who adhered only to the Old Testament, by the followers of superstitious paganism, by the philosophers, and also by the state; therefore the apologists took a definite stand in regard to these agencies. When we survey the world outside the Christian Church today, we find tendencies that are remarkably similar to those which existed in the second century.

We still have with us those who claim only the Old Testament as their source of revelation. However, though at the

present time the Jews present a critical problem in government, they affect the Christian Church very little. The dealings which we have with them in missionwork run along the same lines as they did at the time of Justin; our task is to show them that the Old Testament is fulfilled in Christ. But we have today another problem dealing with the Old Testament; that is the problem of meeting the arguments of those who wish to make of the Old Testament a human record of the development of religion among the Jews. By thus undermining the foundation of the Christian religion they seek to make of it a human document rather than a divine revelation. Strictly speaking, their attacks belong in the field of Biblical Introduction; but inasmuch as these attacks affect the whole of Christianity, they also come within the sphere of apologetics. In our defense of the Old Testament we must have the same attitude toward its revelation that the early apologists had: that it is the Word of God which focuses upon the Savior Jesus Christ.

Does superstitious paganism exist today? We find traces of it in the worship of the Roman Catholic Church. We find remnants of it in the numerous groundless beliefs so prevalent in the world today--not, however, connected with religion in the common mind. But in the mission fields of Africa and India we find religious superstitions quite similar to those prevalent in Rome in the second century. To the Christian missionaries at work among people of such a background the early apologists afford a noble example. Like them the

defenders of Christianity today must unceasingly attack such superstition, regardless of consequences. They must show the superior morality and doctrine of the Christian religion. And from the results of the efforts of the second-century apologists, they may learn that their labors will not be in vain.

The early Christians had some points in common with the thinkers of their day; but where they disagreed with the philosophers, they did not hesitate to attack. This is the attitude of the Christian toward the thought of today also. I think we can trace two lines of thought to which this applies that are similar to the attitude of the philosophers toward Christianity in the second century. One of these is that morality is sought from man's power, developed by education. The Greek philosophers were very proud of their learning and of their morality. They placed these in a causal relationship, and held that men should better themselves by joining schools of philosophy. Today we find the same attitude in America. Much stress is placed upon education in our country, in the hope of thereby producing better citizens. We agree as Christians that both education and morality are desirable; but we do not agree that education alone can produce good character. We are happy to note that in recent years a few of our educators have begun to realize that education in itself does not improve morality; hence the quite recent tendency of some psychologists to favor religion, and the desire to use Bibles in public schools and to furnish state aid to parochial schools. Although we do

not approve of all of these policies, we do approve of the principle that Christianity is the soundest foundation for a pure code of morality; and, like the early apologists, we can aid the cause of Christianity by opposing the false conception that man can better his morals solely through education.

The other line of thought in which we partially agree with the intellectuals of today, is physical science. Where this is true science, demonstrable by experiment, we agree totally; for the God of the Bible is also the God of nature. But the disagreement arises when these men, like the philosophers of old, go too far and consider Christianity foolishness. They do not often, like Lucian, openly ridicule the Bible; Christianity has in the last eighteen centuries proved its value too strongly to be opposed thus. But nevertheless many of the learned people of our country regard themselves as too intelligent for Christianity. This is shown by the polls which indicate that many young Christians lose their faith while attending college. Instead of accepting the God of the Bible, these people make matter their god. The scientific studies of biology, physiology, psychology, and others too often are permeated with the false teachings of evolutionism. Followed through consistently, these teachings undermine Christian faith. The apologist of today has the duty of defending Christianity from this false teaching of the educated, just as the apologists of the second century opposed the false teachings of the learned men of their day.

Finally, we come to the attitude which the early Chris-

tians took toward the state. They addressed the emperor as "Dominus", extending this token of respect even to such a beast as Domitian. They were the best subjects in the empire, because they considered the emperor's position as God-given. Yet they did certain things which were contrary to Roman law. They held secret meetings, forbidden in the empire. They refused to sacrifice to idols when ordered to do so. They would not consider the emperor a deity, nor would they take the oath of absolute obedience to him; they recognized a Higher Authority to Whom they owed supreme obedience. When their fellow-Christians were misunderstood and mistreated, they voiced their objections to the government even at the risk of their lives. In the last few decades several countries have adopted an attitude toward the Christian religion which is similar to that which prevailed in Rome during the period which we are considering; this is the attitude that the state is supreme, that everything else -- including religion -- must be subordinated to the state. We find this in the totalitarian state of Germany. Christianity is there discouraged except when it furthers the cause of the state; pastors who oppose official policies of the government are sent to concentration camps. We find it in Russia, where Christianity is practically outlawed because it is held to be harmful to the state; where many Christian pastors have mysteriously disappeared because they remained faithful to the Word. We even find a tendency in this direction in our own country, with the enactment of legislation that helps the state but may harm the Church.

Should the Christian apologist remain silent when such conditions arise? Every Christian is to be a witness of the faith which he holds, and as such every Christian is an apologist. Especially does this apply to the Christian pastor, who is to be a guardian of the flock over which God has made him overseer. Therefore, when conditions in the state become antagonistic to the spreading of the Way of Life, we must, like the early apologists, raise our voices in protest. If this entails persecution or even death, we may find comfort in the realization that the extension of Christ's Kingdom is the most noble cause for which anyone could suffer.

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