

2—Apologists Defend the Faith

“The Story of the Church”

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Apologist—a person who offers an argument in defense of something controversial

1. Justin Martyr (100-162)

- A. Born in Greek speaking Flavia Neapolis (Nablus) in Judaea
 - 1) Studied Stoicism and Platonism before coming to faith in Christ
 - 2) Wore his teaching tunic after conversion
 - 3) Used philosophical reasoning to defend Christian beliefs and practices, considered it the “true philosophy”
 - 4) Went to Rome in 150 to fight for just treatment of Christians
- B. *First Apology* (155-160) in response to *Martyrdom of Polycarp*
 - 1) Addressed to Emperor Antoninus in defense of Christianity
 - 2) Argues that Christians are not atheists nor disloyal
 - 3) Explores early Trinitarian concepts from Plato:
“For he (Plato) gives the second place to the “Logos” (word, reason) which is with God, who he said was placed crosswise in the universe; and the third place to the “Spirit” who was said to be borne upon the water.”
(60:124)
 - 4) And from Scripture:
“From the Scriptures, that God begat before all creatures a Beginning, [who was] a certain rational power [proceeding] from Himself, who is called by the Holy Spirit, now the Glory of the Lord, now the Son, again Wisdom, again an Angel, then God, and then Lord and Logos.” (61:219-220)
 - 5) And from nature:
“And just as we see also happening in the case of a fire, which is not lessened when it has kindled [another], but remains the same; and that which has been kindled by it likewise appears to exist by itself, not diminishing that from which it was kindled.”
- C. *Second Apology* (155-160)
 - 1) A plea to the Senate against persecution of Christians
 - 2) Believed that demons were in control of the world (1 Enoch)
- D. *Dialogue with Trypho* (155-160) a fictional Jew
 - 1) That Christianity has replaced the Jewish Law
 - 2) How the prophets predicted Christ as the Messiah
 - 3) Exhortation for Jews to be converted

2. Theophilus of Antioch (120-183)

- A. Wrote *To Autolycus* (180) defending Christianity to a Pagan friend
- B. Theorized “Creatio ex nihilo” (creation out of nothing) against Plato
- C. First to use the word “Trinity” with different words
“In like manner also the three days which were before the luminaries, are types of the Trinity, of God, and His Word (Logos), and His wisdom (Sophia).”
(2:15)

4. Athenagoras of Athens (133-190)

- A. *A Plea for the Christians*, uses Neoplatonic ideas to explain Christianity to Greeks and Romans
- B. First attempt at the “Trinity” to explain how God can have a son
“The Gods Themselves Have Been Created, as the Poets Confess to the one God and the Logos proceeding from Him, the Son, apprehended by us as inseparable from Him, all things are in like manner subjected.” (18:58)

5. Irenaeus of Lyons (130-202)

- A. Wrote *Adversus Haereses* (Against Heresies, 200)
 - 1) Valentinus of Rome—Unlike material people, only spiritual people can achieve secret spiritual knowledge (*gnosis*)
 - 2) Marcion of Synope—The OT God that created the evil, material world is not the same as the Father God of Jesus Christ
- B. Irenaeus was discipled by Polycarp in the ways of John
 - 1) 2 John 7-8
*I say this because many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming **in the flesh**, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist.*
 - 2) 1 Timothy 6:20-21
*Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called **knowledge**, which some have professed and in so doing have departed from the faith.*
- C. Irenaeus used apostolic succession and scripture to refute them:
 - 1) Defended the Incarnation of the Logos, and the virgin birth
 - 2) Christ and Mary reverse the disobedience of Adam and Eve
 - 3) Defended the unity of the God of the OT and the NT
 - 4) Defended physical resurrection and eternal judgment
 - 5) The “Recapitulation” of all of God’s creation (Rom 8:21)
“That the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.
- D. “Some Eastern Orthodox theologians aver that all of theology is but a series of footnotes on Irenaeus.”—Roger Olson