

The
Apostate
Fathers

The Apostate Fathers
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The Apostate Fathers

Volume 1

Clement
Mathetes
Polycarp
Ignatius
Barnabas
Papias
Justin Martyr
Irenaeus

The above named writers, whom Christians refer to as “Apostolic Fathers”, are among the earliest founders of Christianity. According to Church historians, their writings, for the most part, were composed within two hundred years or so after the days of the apostles (hence, “*Apostolic Fathers*”). So, theirs are the most ancient of extant Christian writings. These “fathers” of the Christian faith are also called “ante-Nicene” because they lived before Christianity’s First Ecumenical Council, convened at Nicea in AD 325, at the command of the Roman Emperor, Constantine. This council set the course for the theological evolution of Christianity.

Some of these writings have survived as mere fragments. Others, if not all of them, have been tampered with, even forged, by Christians writing long after these men died. We will not try to sort all that out; we will simply examine these works as they have been preserved.

The text used for this study is from the reprinted edition of *The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume 1, The Apostolic Fathers*, originally published in the United States by the Christian Literature Publishing Company, in 1885, and reprinted by Hendrickson Publishers in 1994.

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INTRODUCTION

Irenaeus perceptively observed, “*Error, indeed, is never set forth in its naked deformity, lest, being thus exposed, it should at once be detected. But it is craftily decked out in an attractive dress, so as, by its outward form, to make it appear to the inexperienced [to be] more true than the truth itself.*” This is true. If Satan does have ministers plying their trade among the saints, as Paul claimed he does (2Cor. 11:13-15), then we should expect them to mix in their poison with the pure water of the Word rather than to tell nothing but lies. Otherwise, they would deceive no one. Just as Israel was warned of prophets whose prophecies came true but who afterward attempted to lead God’s sheep astray (Dt. 13:1-3), so we were warned by the apostles to beware of teachers who speak well of Jesus, but who then would lead us away from the righteousness of God. Jesus also sounded that warning. He said, “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves” (Mt. 7:15). This book examines the teachings of some of the most successful of the wolves that came in among the sheep of God after the apostles’ time.

Evil in the guise of good is what we find in the teachings of the men called Apostolic Fathers, and that is the reason I have re-christened them “the Apostate Fathers”. The men whose works are examined here, I contend, are the very ones concerning whom Jesus and the apostles gave God’s people warning but, alas, to no avail. They won the hearts of the saints anyway, and thus began the development of the religion of Christianity.

No one can deny that some truth is found in the writings of Church “fathers”. As I have pointed out, false prophets could not succeed without employing some truth. Along with truth, however, we find in these writings the tell-tale proofs of “wolves in sheep’s clothing”; namely, doctrines that contradict the truth and lead men away from it.

Typically, false teachers cannot discern the difference between what is holy and what is not. They hold both the truth and their own thoughts in equal esteem. The distinguishing mark of a true man of God is not merely that he speaks truth but that he speaks *only* the truth (Jn. 3:34), and it is the measure by which many of the teachings of these “fathers” stand condemned – not for minor errors in phraseology or matters of opinion, but for their distortion of fundamental elements of the saving gospel of Jesus Christ.

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The first indication that something is amiss with these men, and with Christianity itself, is the fact that Christians designated these men as *fathers*, when Jesus plainly said not to do that (Mt. 23:9). But that being said, we should move on to weightier matters. And so, I have examined the teachings of these men that carry weight. The eight categories below are the ones used to organize the teachings of these ancient writers into manageable groups:

ANTI-SEMITISM
CEREMONY
POLITICS
HERESY / PERVERSION OF THE SCRIPTURES
SALVATION
SPIRITUAL GIFTS AND POWER
SUPERSTITION
TRINITARIAN ISSUES

The following elaboration on these topics will reveal the standards by which the teachings of these men are judged:

ANTI-SEMITISM

The Standard: Jesus loved the Jews and wept bitterly when they rejected him, but false teachers often exhibit an unjust, contemptuous attitude toward them.

Note:

Although the prophets and apostles lamented the hardness of the Jews' hearts toward their God and His Messiah, there is never found in them an attitude of cruel contempt for the Jews. Israel's prophets were grieved when their fellow Israelites sinned. At times, those grieving prophets were abused by them; still, they prayed earnestly for God's chosen people. The apostle Paul even said that he could be willing to be "accursed from Christ" if that would help his beloved Jewish kinsmen to recognize their Messiah (Rom. 9:1-3). That is the attitude of a true man of God.

CEREMONY

The Standard: Jesus died to bring us real life through the Spirit, not to ordain ceremonies. The promoting of any ceremony as being part of the New Testament is a hallmark of a false teacher.

Note:

The gospel Paul preached excluded all ceremonial rites. Jewish believers in the book of Acts continued performing the ceremonial works of the Law after the Spirit came, but when God raised up Paul to be an apostle, He sent him to the Gentiles with what Paul called

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“the gospel of the uncircumcision” (Gal. 2:7). This gospel for the Gentiles excluded religious ritual, even the ones God had given Israel, and at this critical point, Paul’s gospel differed from Peter’s.

Paul’s gospel included no ceremony, and it still holds true, while Peter’s gospel for the Jews incorporated the ceremonial works of the Law, and it is no longer in effect. Fortunately, for those looking for truth, this critical difference between Peter’s gospel and Paul’s gospel has escaped the attention of many false teachers. Their promotion of ceremony makes it easy to recognize them.

POLITICS

The Standard: Paul said that the weapons of our warfare are not carnal (2Cor. 10:4), but false teachers teach men to use carnal methods, usually political in nature, to accomplish God’s will on earth.

Note:

No civil authority is given to believers in this covenant. Therefore, followers of Jesus are not to become “entangled in the affairs of this life”, such as voting, earthly warfare, or the punishing of criminals.

HERESY / PERVERSION OF THE SCRIPTURES

The Standard: Paul said he did not “handle the word of God deceitfully,” but false teachers twist what God has said to justify their teachings.

SALVATION

The Standard: Jesus, and every other genuine servant of God, taught that “salvation” is the final reward of the righteous, and that a believer must do the will of God in order to be counted worthy of salvation in the end. Many false teachers teach that God’s people will be saved because of who they are instead of how they live. This was true even in ancient Israel (e.g. Jer. 7:3-10; Mal. 2:17).

Note:

To their credit, these Apostate Fathers, in the main, agree that obedience to the will of God is required of believers in order for them to be saved in the end.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS AND POWER

The Standard: Paul scorned those whose gospel was “in word only.” False teachers proclaim a gospel, Paul told Timothy, but they “deny the power thereof.”

Note:

These Apostate Fathers did not deny the miraculous power of the gospel, and that is another trait which commends them to us.

The Apostate Fathers

SUPERSTITION

The Standard: Peter said that in the proclamation of the gospel, “we have not followed cunningly devised fables” (2Pet. 1:16), but false teachers rely upon what is false as well as upon revealed truth to promote and justify their doctrines.

TRINITARIAN ISSUES

The Standard: The apostle John stated plainly that deceivers “deny the Father and the Son” (1Jn. 2:22). By combining the Father and the Son, along with the Spirit, into one transcendent Being, Trinitarians have done this. They have denied the Father *and* the Son by teaching they are one Being.

Note:

The religion of Christianity stands or falls principally on the doctrine of the Trinity, a fact which the Catholic Church itself repeatedly admits in its official Catechism. That doctrine, therefore, receives special attention in this book.

There is no doctrine of the Trinity taught in the Bible, a fact that many Trinitarians themselves admit. And since the doctrine of the Trinity had not been invented in their day, the earliest fathers of Christianity gave no thought to it. Consequently, in most of the writings of the earliest Christian fathers, the doctrine of a Trinity is not merely missing; it is plainly contradicted! In fact, they often described the relationship of the Father and the Son in language which in later centuries might have cost them their lives if their spiritual offspring, Christian ecclesiastics, had gotten their hands on them.

Their ignorance of the doctrine of the Trinity notwithstanding, some of these “fathers” set in place a few small stones of philosophy usable to later Christian theologians as foundation material in the construction of their Trinitarian faith.

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Two Additional Notes

“Christian”

In the extant works of Christianity’s earliest “fathers”, the term *Christian* is often used in reference to believers in Jesus. There is no indication as to when or how the word *Christian* became a term by which followers of Christ identified themselves, as opposed to what it was originally – a sarcastic term invented by unbelievers in Antioch (Acts 11:26). For more on the origin and original meaning of the term *Christian*, please see the Appendix.

“Church”

The Greek word for “church” (*kuriakon*) is not found anywhere in the New Testament. That word had been in use among the Greeks for many centuries before Christ, and it referred only to a building dedicated to a divinity, never to the people of God themselves. That is why it finds no place in the New Testament books. None of the New Testament writers wrote about religious buildings, and no perfect translation of the New Testament has the word “church” in it.

Exactly when it happened that early Christians replaced the word for God’s people used by Jesus and the apostles (“assembly”; Greek: *ekklesia*) with “church (Greek: *kuriakon*), and who first did so, would be an interesting topic of research.

CLEMENT

(A.D. 30 - 100)

THE EPISTLE OF CLEMENT TO THE CORINTHIANS

INTRODUCTION

Irenaeus, whose work we will study later, tells us in his work, *Against Heresies*, that Clement was the third Bishop of the church in Rome (AH3, III.3); that is to say, the third Pope of the Roman Catholic Church. The Epistle to the Corinthians has been historically attributed to Clement, but in the letter itself, the author's name is not given. The date of its writing is also uncertain, but two suggestions are: about A.D. 68, after the persecution of Christians by Nero, or about A.D. 97, following the persecution of Christians by the Roman emperor Domitian.

Chapters are referred to in Roman numerals (XL, etc.)

ANTI-SEMITISM*No Information***CEREMONY****Clement's Statement:**

Clement states that the Lord commanded the saints to bring offerings “at their appointed times and hours” and that only those offerings offered at those appointed times are acceptable to God (XL).

The Truth:

This is false.

There is no such commandment from Jesus. In fact, such commandments are contrary to the spirit of the New Testament. Paul was dismayed when his Gentile converts began to “observe days, and months, and times, and years,” as God’s people did in the Old Testament (Gal. 4:10). He knew that the observance of holy days is contrary to the faith of Christ.

Note:

It could have been that, in Clement’s time, the elders of the body of Christ in Rome felt a need to require the saints there to bring their tithes and offerings at an appointed time. There would have been no sin in the elders making that decision. Men anointed by God have authority to give such commandments when they deem it necessary. But for Clement to teach that Jesus commanded this for all his people is false.

Clement later exhorts that every believer “who has love in Christ, keep the commandments of Christ” (XLIX). One of the Lord’s commandments, which Clement did not keep, was that men should not add to them.

POLITICS**Clement's Statement:**

Clement lists a strange hierarchy of leadership among believers: a high priest and lower priests are mentioned as functioning according to the commandment of Christ Jesus, along with Levites, and then, laymen (XL).

The Truth:

This is false.

There is no such teaching in any of Jesus’ words, nor yet in the writings of the apostles. According to the apostles, even though there are various functions and gifts belonging to individual believers, all the saints are priests and kings with Christ (Rev. 1:6). The term *laymen* is not biblical, and there are certainly no Levites ordained by God in this New Covenant.

Clement's Statement:

Clement states that a congregation of believers has authority from God both to grant to a man a position of leadership and also to expel a man from the ministry (XLIV). Moreover,

a worldly method of government, rule by the will of the majority, is recognized by Clement as a valid method of settling disputes within the family of God (LIV).

The Truth:

This suggests that the congregation which Clement considers to be the body of Christ had no leader anointed by God to rule among them, and no one wise enough to make judgments and, with authority, to enforce those judgments. Can you imagine a congregation hiring or firing Paul? Voting, that is, rule by the majority, is a “carnal weapon” which both comes from and promotes disunion, and which can never accomplish the will of God for the saints. The kingdom of God is not a democracy.

HERESY / PERVERSION OF THE SCRIPTURES

No Information

SALVATION

Clement’s Statement:

Clement looks forward to the elect of God receiving salvation in the future (II). Also, Clement states that the saints will be justified by their works, not merely their words (XXX).

He also says that “the greater the knowledge that has been vouchsafed to us, the greater also is the danger to which we are exposed.” Why? Because we are dealing with holy things, and “those who do anything beyond what is agreeable to His will are punished with death” (XLI).

The Truth:

While it is true that “to whom much is given, of him shall much be required” (Lk. 12:48), the apostle John’s statement that there is “a sin not unto death” (1Jn. 5:16), shows that Clement went too far with this last comment. However, Clement does use the word “saved” as Jesus and the apostles did (e.g. Mt. 24:13; Rom. 13:11), not with the incorrect modern evangelical meaning of *converted* but as *rescued* from sin and its ultimate consequences (VI; IX).

Also, Clement’s teaching that the saints will be justified by their works agrees with the teachings of James (2:24), Paul (Rom. 2:5-10), and Jesus (Mt. 7:21), as well as the rest of the New Testament.

So, in the main, what Clement teaches on this subject is true.

Note:

Clement seems to contradict his own teaching on the subject of salvation when he writes, “All we, too [as with the Old Testament faithful], . . . are not justified by ourselves, nor by our own wisdom, or understanding, or godliness, or works which we have wrought in holiness of heart; but by that faith through which, from the beginning, God has justified all men” (XXXII). He never explains to the readers why, in this place, he denies that “works wrought in holiness of heart” are required of those who hope to be saved, when in every

other place he teaches the opposite. It may have been simply that he wanted to emphasize here man's complete dependence upon God to inspire and enable us to do good, which is true.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS AND POWER

No Information

SUPERSTITION

Clement's Statement:

The mythological story of Judith (details below) is given historical credence by Clement, and Judith herself is lauded by Clement as a blessed servant of God, alongside Esther (LV).

The Truth:

The apocryphal book of Judith (included in the Catholic Bible) is worse than a pagan myth, for not only is the story itself invented but it also routinely contradicts historical facts found in Scripture and in secular histories. Here are some examples:

(1) The author of Judith calls Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian king, the king of the Assyrians (Judith 1:1). Later, Judith seems to think that Nebuchadnezzar's army was composed of Medes and Persians (16:10).

(2) Events in the book of Judith are said to have begun in the twelfth through the eighteenth years of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, when the Israelites "had lately returned from exile" (Judith 4:3). This is an historical impossibility. The Israelites did not even go into captivity until the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign (2Kgs. 25:8), and they remained in Babylonian captivity at least seventy years, long after Nebuchadnezzar died (Jer. 25:11-12; Dan. 9:2). When they returned from captivity, the Babylonian Empire had been replaced by the Medo-Persian Empire.

(3) In Judith, the Moabites are referred to as Canaanites (Judith 5:2-3). The truth is that they descended from Lot, Abraham's nephew (Gen. 19), not from Canaan.

(4) In one of Judith's prayers, she praises God for "putting the sword" into the hand of her ancestor, the patriarch Simeon, when he and his brother Levi murdered an entire city of helpless men who were about to enter into covenant with God (Judith 9:2-4; cp. Gen. 34). For their treacherous, wicked deed, both Simeon and Levi were cursed by their righteous father Jacob (Gen. 49:5-7). According to Judith, however, their deed was a glorious, exemplary accomplishment. Jacob called Simeon and Levi "instruments of cruelty" (Gen. 49:5), but Judith called them "favored sons, who burned with zeal for [God]" (Judith 9:4).

Clement's Statement:

Clement brings disgrace upon the holy name of Jesus and his resurrection by offering as proof of the reality of resurrection the example of the phoenix. Think about it. Clement, a father of the Christian faith and third Pope, presents as concrete evidence of the reality of

Christ's resurrection, the bi-millennial resurrection of this mythological bird (XXV), believing it to be fact! Here is the story as he tells it:

“Let us consider that wonderful sign [of the resurrection] which takes place in the Eastern lands, that is, in Arabia and the countries round about. There is a certain bird which is called a phoenix. This is the only one of its kind, and it lives five hundred years. And when the time of its dissolution draws near that it must die, it builds itself a nest of frankincense, and myrrh, and other spices, into which, when the time is fulfilled, it enters and dies. But as the flesh decays a certain kind of worm is produced, which, being nourished by the juices of the dead bird, brings forth feathers. Then, when it has acquired strength, it takes up that nest in which are the bones of its parent, and bearing these it passes from the land of Arabia into Egypt, to the city called Heliopolis. And, in open day, flying in the sight of all men, it places them on the altar of the sun, and having done this, hastens back to its former abode. The priests then inspect the registers of the dates, and find that it has returned exactly as the five hundredth year was completed.”

The Truth:

No myth proves anything about the resurrection of Christ, and to use a myth as confirmation of the gospel of Christ profanes holy history. Peter said that in preaching of “the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ”, he had “not followed cunningly devised fables” (2Pet. 1:16). Can Pope Clement, and the other Christian fathers who believed the phoenix myth, make that claim?

Clement's Statement:

Clement places confidence in the apocryphal Book of Wisdom, quoting it no less than three times. The book is a forgery which claims to have been written by Solomon. Along with the expected magnifying of God for His power and wisdom, with which praise even an infidel could possibly agree, the Book of Wisdom contains several blatant doctrinal errors.

First, The Book of Wisdom makes the incredible statement that God did not create death (1:13). Of course, this provokes the obvious question, “Who did?”

Second, the author declares that death entered into the world through Satan's envy (2:24). Paul taught that death entered the world through man's transgression (Rom. 5). Had man not sinned, Satan's envy would have had no effect on mankind.

Third, the Book of Wisdom contradicts the truth concerning the marital relationship. Hebrews 13 states that “the marriage bed is undefiled.” The Book of Wisdom calls the marriage bed a “transgression” (3:13).

The Truth:

Clement's confidence in such false statements in apocryphal books belongs under the heading of Superstition because faith in anything other than what is truly of God is not holy

faith; it is superstition. Clement reveals his lack of sound spiritual judgment by referring to writings that lack God's stamp of approval and that contradict His plainly revealed truth. Of course, there are many examples of pious statements to be found in The Book of Wisdom, as well as in other apocryphal books, but as I mentioned earlier, false teachers *must* tell *some* truth, or no one will listen to them. The apocryphal books, clearly, are an ungodly mixture of truths and lies.

Clement's Statement:

As did Josephus, Clement makes reference to the remains of Lot's wife, saying that they were still standing as a pillar of salt in his day (XI).

The Truth:

This may be true, but it is doubtful.

It is highly unlikely that any pillar of salt could have endured the ravages of nature for two thousand years, as this pillar would have had to do in order to be standing in Clement's day. However, without physical proof, we cannot completely dismiss Clement's claim.

TRINITARIAN ISSUES

Clement's Statement:

Clement sees the Son as submissive to and dependent upon the Father. The Father raised the Son from the dead (XXIV), the Son preached the gospel as he received it from the Father (XLII), and just as the apostles were ordained and sent by Christ, so Jesus was ordained and sent by God (XLII).

The Truth:

This is true.

These statements are in accord with the doctrine of Jesus and the apostles. The Father did raise Jesus from the dead (Eph. 1:19-20), the Son did preach only what the Father told him to preach (Jn. 8:28), and just as the apostles were sanctified and sent by Jesus, so Jesus was sanctified and sent by God (Jn. 10:36; 6:57). Jesus has absolute authority over the people of God, being their head (Eph. 1:22-23), and the Father has absolute authority over Jesus, being his head (1Cor. 11:3). There is no Trinitarian sense anywhere in the apostles' teaching, nor in that of Clement's.

MATHETES

(A.D. 130?)

THE EPISTLE OF MATHETES TO DIOGNETUS

INTRODUCTION

The date ascribed to this short letter is A.D. 130. The author is unknown, but he calls himself a disciple (Greek: *mathetes*); that is, a disciple of the apostles, not of Jesus himself (XI). There is not a single scriptural quote found in this letter, though the author does use phrases similar to certain Scriptures.

ANTI-SEMITISM**Mathetes' Statement:**

This writer mocks the Jews' continued observance of the ceremonies of the Law of Moses, even after their Messiah had come. In fact, he ridicules the whole concept of animal sacrifice, saying that the performance of animal sacrifice is an indication of insanity on the part of the Gentiles, adding that the Jews sacrificed animals because they believed, as many Gentiles did, that God is in need of the flesh and blood of the dead beasts (III). He further states that the Jews observed the sacred Old Testament months and days because they were "waiting on the stars and the moon" to do something (IV). He calls such observance "a manifestation of folly" (IV).

The Truth:

This is heresy. Mathetes denies Paul's doctrine that "the Law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good" (Rom. 7:12).

Mathetes forcefully shows the foolishness of both the Gentiles' worship of idols as well as the Jews' persistence in methods of worship which Christ's sacrifice changed (III). However, he misunderstands and misrepresents important elements of the Old Testament and the motivation of the Jews in worshiping God as they were doing. Another Christian father, Irenaeus, would point to Jesus' quoting from the Law during his Temptation with Satan in the wilderness, and would ask, "If the Law is due to ignorance and defect, how could the statements contained therein bring to nought the ignorance of the devil, and conquer the 'strong man'?" (AH5, XXII.1).

The Law of Moses and the ceremonies contained in it were of God. The Jews did not observe the holy days and months because they were waiting for the stars to do something, as Mathetes slanderously asserts; they were obeying God's plain commandments, and they knew it. That is the very reason that the Jews in his time still worshiped the way Moses prescribed. So, the Law was not of man, as Mathetes suggests.

The Jews were locked into a continued adherence to the works of the Law because, in addition to their knowledge of its divine origin, (1) no one but God could set them free from their obligation to the Law, and (2) in rejecting Jesus, they had rejected the very one ordained by God to set them free. No one but Jesus was anointed to free the human conscience from the Law's ceremonies (Heb. 9:14), and since they had rejected him, they were imprisoned by their respect for the Law. This imprisonment was just as the Messiah prayed concerning the Jews in the Psalms: "*that which should have been for their welfare, let it become a trap*" (Ps. 69:22). The Law, intended as a blessing for the Jews, became their prison.

In his exaltation of the Christian's place in the world, Mathetes states that it is an illustrious position to which "God has assigned them" and "which it were unlawful for them to forsake" (VI). He fails to grant, however, that it was the same self-understanding which prevented the Jews from forsaking the ceremonies of the Law.

Mathetes rightly challenges Diognetus, his Gentile reader (a non-believer), to abandon the Gentiles' perception of God and not to be attracted to the Jews' error. He is correct in pointing out the enormous pride to which the Jews had fallen victim concerning their covenant of circumcision and their other God-given (and therefore unique) observances. However, he falls victim to that same spirit of self-exaltation and foolishly boasts himself against God's fallen people. The apostle Paul sternly warned the saints not to do that (Rom. 11:18-22).

CEREMONY

No Information

POLITICS

Mathetes' Statement:

The subject of politics encompasses the arena of violent or military action. In this connection, the writer makes many good and sober comments upon the nature and works of God which modern Christians would do well to hear. Some of these observations are deeply touching. Among them, he discusses how that Jesus came to persuade men, not to compel them to obey God, "for violence has no place in the character of God" (VII).

The Truth:

This last statement is true, but only until Jesus returns to rule the earth "with a rod of iron" for a thousand years. God in the Old Testament certainly showed Himself quite capable of war, and at the end of this age, He will show Himself to be an entirely violent God toward those who rebel against the gospel of His Son, Jesus. For all that, the author is correct in emphasizing the gentleness of God as revealed in Christ.

Most important, however, is his statement that, "If you love Him, you will be an imitator of His kindness" (X). If the man really believes that violence is not a part of God's nature and that those who love Him imitate that divine nature, what would have been this man's opinion of the Christian crusades? This author's work is listed among the writings of the Christian Church fathers, but would he have called the crusaders of the Middle Ages his sons?

To certain Christian tribunals of the Middle Ages, which routinely sentenced innocent souls to torture and death, the following words from this father of their faith stand as a monument to their ignorance and rebellion against Christ:

"It is not by ruling over his neighbors, or by seeking to hold the supremacy over those who are weaker, or by being rich, and showing violence towards those that are inferior, that happiness is found; nor can anyone by these things become an imitator of God. . . . On the contrary, he who takes upon himself the burden of his neighbor; he who, in whatsoever respect he may be superior, is ready to benefit another who is deficient; he who, whatsoever things he has

received from God, by distributing those to the needy, becomes a god to those who receive [his benefits]: he is an imitator of God” (X).

To that, we can only give a hearty Amen.

HERESY / PERVERSION OF THE SCRIPTURES

SALVATION

SPIRITUAL GIFTS AND POWER

SUPERSTITION

No Information

TRINITARIAN ISSUES

Mathetes’ Statement:

The writer knows nothing of an equality of Father and Son. He sees the Son as the emissary of God (VII; X).

The Truth:

This is true.

As with most of the earliest fathers of Christianity, the doctrine of the Trinity was completely unknown to this man, as his statements concerning the relationship of the Father and the Son clearly show.

Note:

It is interesting that the word “Christian” seems to be of such sanctity to this man. In his attempt to persuade Diognetus to become a Christian, or at least to acknowledge that the Christian concept of God is superior to that of the Jews and Gentiles, he writes, “As the soul is to the body, that are Christians to the world” (VI).

POLYCARP

(A.D. 150?)

THE EPISTLE OF POLYCARP TO THE PHILIPPIANS

INTRODUCTION

Polycarp is said to have been the Bishop of Smyrna and to have been conversant with John, the apostle of the Lord. He is also said to have been martyred by being burned alive at the age of eighty-seven. This epistle is believed by some to be from near the middle of the second century, A.D.

ANTI-SEMITISM
CEREMONY
POLITICS
No Information

HERESY / PERVERSION OF THE SCRIPTURES

Polycarp's Statement:

Polycarp misunderstands 1John 4:3 and, consequently, misquotes it. He writes, "For *whosoever* does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is antichrist" (VII).

The Truth:

Polycarp made the mistake of assuming that John was speaking of *people* who deny that Jesus actually lived in a natural, fleshly body while on earth, and he altered John's words to fit the message which he thought John meant to convey. Polycarp was wrong, and the difference between what John wrote and what Polycarp said is critical.

What John actually wrote was this: "By this you know the Spirit of God: every *spirit* that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God."

John was not saying that every *person* who confesses that Jesus lived in a body of flesh is of God. If that were true, then false teachers could hardly exist among the saints, for almost all false teachers say that Jesus lived in the flesh.

The apostle John knew better than to think that anyone is of God who said Jesus lived in a fleshly, human body. John was referring instead to the vocal testimony of the Spirit that is always heard when Christ enters into an earthly temple (cp. Jn. 3:8). The first example of this is what John himself experienced on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2:1-4.

So, in 1John 4:3, the verse misquoted by Polycarp, John was warning the saints not to think the Spirit comes any other way than the way it first came. He was warning them to avoid any *spirit* which does not testify ("confess Christ") when it enters a person, and it is clear that he was referring to speaking in tongues at the moment of Spirit baptism, as at Pentecost.

Ironically, Polycarp immediately proceeds from his misquote of John's words to condemn anyone who would "pervert the oracles of the Lord", adding an exhortation for believers to "return to the word which has been handed down to us from the beginning" (VII). Polycarp could have provided a good example for believers by following his own advice and correctly quoting John, thus preserving the original meaning of the apostle's words.

SALVATION

Polycarp's Statement:

Polycarp teaches that salvation will be received only at the end of a life of faithful service to God. We will be raised from the dead into eternal glory only "if we do [God's]

will, and walk in His commandments, and love what He loved, keeping ourselves from all unrighteousness. . .” (II). “If we please Him in this present world, we shall receive also the future world, according as He has promised to us that He will raise us again from the dead, and that if we live worthily of Him, we shall also reign together with Him” (V). In reference to a man whom Polycarp considers to be apostate, he states that such a believer who departs from the faith and is again defiled by covetousness and idolatry “shall be judged as one of the heathen” (XI).

The Truth:

This is true.

Polycarp here is teaching the same thing that the prophets of Israel, Jesus, and the apostles all taught; that is, only those who do the will of God will be saved in the end. There is no hint in Polycarp’s writings of the doctrine of many modern evangelical Christians – that is, that they are already saved and that their future salvation is assured even if they live contrary to the will of God.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS AND POWER

No Information

SUPERSTITION

Polycarp’s Statement:

Polycarp quotes from the apocryphal book of Tobit, using it as an authoritative source of divine truth (X).

The Truth:

In the book of Tobit, the righteous man Tobit is blinded by bird droppings which fell on his eyes while he slept by a wall, causing him to develop cataracts. Later, Raphael, an angel from heaven, tells Tobit’s son, Tobiah, what will heal Tobit’s eyes. He says, “As for the gall [of the fish Tobiah had caught], if you rub it on the eyes of a man who has cataracts, blowing into his eyes right on the cataracts, his sight will be restored” (Tobit 6:9).

Sarah, the young woman whom Tobiah will marry, had already been married seven times, according to this tale, but a “wicked demon” named Asmodeus killed each of her husbands on the hapless bride’s wedding night, before the marriages could be consummated (Tobit 3:7-9). Raphael instructs Tobiah how to use other parts of the dead fish to exorcise the demon from the young woman’s bedroom. “As regards the fish’s heart and liver, if you burn them so that the smoke surrounds a man or a woman who is afflicted by a demon or evil spirit, the affliction will leave him completely, and no demons will return to him again” (Tobit 6:8). After the wedding, Tobiah remembered the angel’s instructions when he entered the bridal chamber. He “took the fish’s liver and heart from the bag which he had with him, and placed them on the embers [to make] incense. The demon, repelled by the odor of the fish, fled into Upper Egypt. Raphael pursued him there and bound him hand and foot” (Tobit 8:2-3).

The fish used in these magical spells was one which Tobiah caught while on his journey from Nineveh to Media. He had stopped to wash his feet in a river when “a large fish suddenly leaped out of the water and tried to swallow his foot.” The surprised young man, at the angel’s command, “seized the fish and hauled it up on the shore” (Tobit 6:3-4).

The superstitious nature of these passages is obvious. No true man of God would ever have trusted such a document.

TRINITARIAN ISSUES

Polycarp’s Statement:

Polycarp mentions “God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ Himself” (XII). According to Polycarp, the Father raised up the Son from the dead (II), and the reader is exhorted to “believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, and in His Father who ‘raised Him from the dead’” (XII).

The Truth:

There is nothing false here. Polycarp says nothing in his epistle that could be used in support of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity.

Note:

The word “Christian” is not found in Polycarp’s epistle.

THE ENCYCLICAL EPISTLE OF THE CHURCH AT SMYRNA

(Date Unknown)

CONCERNING THE MARTYRDOM
OF THE HOLY POLYCARP

INTRODUCTION

The author of this letter is unknown. It claims to have originated in the city of Smyrna, where Polycarp was Bishop. It is addressed to “the Holy and Catholic Church in every place,” but it was supposedly sent first to the church in a city called Philomenium, located in the territory of Phrygia. The high number of wildly superstitious and heretical statements found in this letter is disproportionate to its size. If this letter was in its present form when it was first written, it should have been trashed by believers before the end of its first reading.

ANTI-SEMITISM**Epistle Statement:**

Anti-Semitism burns throughout this letter. Several times, the Jews are depicted as inciting the Roman rulers against Christians. They are, in fact, said to be the ones who advised the Roman governor to burn Polycarp so completely that there would be no flesh left for the Christians to claim (XVII).

The Truth:

The Jews may in fact have incited the Romans against Christians. We cannot know, at this distance, the truth of that accusation. If, however, they advised the Romans to finish burning Polycarp's dead body so that nothing remained for Christians to salvage and venerate, then they were doing Christians a great favor.

CEREMONY**POLITICS**

No Information

HERESY / PERVERSION OF THE SCRIPTURES**Epistle Statement:**

The author(s) of this epistle expresses the opinion that believers become angels when they die (II).

The Truth:

This is false.

Angels are a different species of creature altogether. No angel will ever become human, and no human will ever become an angel. In the world to come, said Paul, the saints will rule over angels, not become angels (1Cor. 6:3).

SALVATION**SPIRITUAL GIFTS AND POWER**

No Information

SUPERSTITION**Epistle Statement:**

According to this letter, Christians watching Polycarp's execution zealously desired to become "possessors of his holy flesh" but were disappointed by the Romans' decision to burn his body completely (XVII). Not to be outdone, however, the Christians did sift through the ashes to gather Polycarp's charred bones, "as being more precious than the most exquisite jewels, and more purified than gold" (XVIII).

The Truth:

This is sick.

Relics (as possessing miracle working abilities) were a powerful tool of evangelism for early Christians. Without the cult of relics to impress the deeply superstitious barbarians, the spread of Christianity into northern and western Europe would have taken much longer. But to what were the barbarians converted by receiving the cult of relics?

Epistle Statement:

The last editor of this epistle calls himself Pionius, and he claims that “the blessed Polycarp” visited him and, through a revelation, aided him in the writing of this account of his martyrdom (XXII).

The Truth:

Either Pionius was deceived by a demon claiming to be Polycarp, or he outright lied.

Concerning the events in life on earth after their death, “the dead know nothing,” wrote Solomon (Eccl. 9:5). Polycarp, therefore, did not return from the dead in a vision to aid the author of this epistle.

TRINITARIAN ISSUES

Epistle Statement:

An attitude of worship of God’s holy Spirit is seen in several statements in which the author offers praise to not only the Father and the Son but also to the Spirit (e.g., XIV, XXII).

The Truth:

It is heresy to teach men to worship the holy Spirit or to speak to it as if it is a person. That the holy Spirit is a person is an essential element of the Trinitarian doctrine, a doctrine that was invented later than the time in which this letter was supposed to have been written. So, that this epistle has been tampered with, or forged altogether, is obvious.

IGNATIUS

(A.D. 30 - 107?)

WORKS CITED:

EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS,
Shorter and Longer Versions (EPHS.)
EPISTLE TO THE MAGNESIANS (MAG.)
EPISTLE TO THE TRALLIANS (TRALL.)
EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS (ROMS.)
EPISTLE TO THE PHILADELPHIANS (PHILA.)
EPISTLE TO THE SMYRNAEANS (SMYR.)
EPISTLE TO POLYCARP (POLY.)

(For three of the above Epistles, “sv” designates the Syriac Versions:
POLY. sv.; EPHS. sv.; THE 3RD EPISTLE, sv.)

SPURIOUS EPISTLES:

EPISTLE TO THE ANTIOCHIANS (ANTIO.)
EPISTLE TO THE HERO (HERO)
EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS (PHIP.)
EPISTLE OF MARIA TO IGNATIUS (NOT USED)
EPISTLE TO MARY AT NEAPOLIS (MARY AT N.)
EPISTLE TO ST. JOHN THE APOSTLE (NOT USED)
SECOND EPISTLE TO ST. JOHN THE APOSTLE (NOT USED)
EPISTLE TO THE VIRGIN MARY (NOT USED)
MARTYRDOM OF IGNATIUS (MART. IG.)

INTRODUCTION

The Martyrdom of Ignatius was written by one who purports to have been an eyewitness of the event.

Ignatius is thought by some scholars to have been born during Jesus’ earthly lifetime. He appears to be the earliest Christian writer from whom more than one work has survived,

but at least eight of the letters attributed to him are generally regarded as Christian forgeries. Possibly all have been tampered with, but then, the same might be said of many other writings of the fathers of Christianity. I have chosen to treat all the letters of Ignatius together, not only because it is more convenient but also because it is all but inconsequential as to whether or not a man named Ignatius penned them all. These are works that have been regarded as sacred by many in Christianity throughout its history.

ANTI-SEMITISM

Ignatius' Statement:

Ignatius refers to the Jews as “Christ-killing Jews” (Mag. XI) and states that “if any one says that the Lord is a mere man, he is a Jew, a murderer of Christ” (Hero II; cp. Phip. VI).

The Truth:

It is true that because they were God’s chosen people, the Jews *were* more guilty of the slaying of Jesus than were the Roman soldiers (Jn. 19:10-11). Nevertheless, a Gentile gave the order for Jesus’ execution, and Gentile soldiers drove the nails into his hands and feet. In reality, everyone who has ever sinned (that is, all of us) bears some responsibility for Jesus’ suffering and death. Ignatius is wrong to condemn the Jews as he does, when the truth is that “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23).

CEREMONY

HOLY DAYS

Ignatius' Statement:

The first day of the week is to be observed as the “Lord’s Day” because Jesus rose from the dead that day (Trall. IX). He states that the first day of the week is now God’s replacement for the Jewish Sabbath (Mag. IX).

The Truth:

This is false.

Ignatius never explains (1) how Jesus’ resurrection made a holy day out of an ordinary one and (2) why no New Testament writer taught that God replaced the seventh day Sabbath with a first day Sabbath.

Ignatius' Statement:

Ignatius encourages Christians to partake of special activities on the first day of the week, including rigorous Scripture reading and study, rather than in “relaxation of the body” (Mag. IX). He also sees the first day of the week as a “festival”, which “every friend of Christ” will keep (Mag. IX).

The Truth:

Ignatius rightly rejects the idea that we are any longer to “live according to the Jewish law” (Mag. VII), but he fails to realize that Christ has made us free from *all* ceremonialism, not just the Old Testament form of it. For Christians to invent a new weekly Sabbath to replace the one God commanded Old Testament Israel to keep is twice as evil as merely continuing in the old one. At least that old one really was of God.

Ignatius grasps the philosophical concept of keeping the Sabbath “after a spiritual manner,” but he seems to have no understanding of what it means to keep the Sabbath spiritually. The setting apart of the day of the sun (Sunday) as being “queen and chief of all days [of the week]” (Mag. IX) is not a spiritual keeping of God’s Sabbath.

Finally, Ignatius participates in the perversion of the original Sabbath by forbidding people to rest on that day. But to make it possible for people, especially the poor, to have a day of physical rest was the very purpose of God's weekly Sabbath. The Sabbath was transformed from a day of rest into a day of worship by oppressive religious rulers, not by God.

CHRISTIAN COMMUNION

Ignatius' Statement:

The term *eucharist* is used in connection with a ceremonial meal (Smyr. VII), saying that it is improperly performed by anyone other than the Bishop (Smyr. VIII).

The Truth:

A ceremonial meal is improperly performed by anyone under this covenant. There are no ceremonies ordained by God in this New Testament. The words concerning communion in the New Testament are to be taken spiritually (Jn. 6:63), but there are just a few who have been wise enough to do so (1Cor. 10:15-17).

Note:

The issue of spiritual communion with God confused many during Jesus' earthly ministry, as well as afterwards. The largest group of disciples to forsake Jesus at one time was the one that stormed off after he told them that if they ate his flesh and drank his blood they would live forever. Jesus tried to explain to those shocked disciples that "it is the Spirit that gives life; the flesh is worthless. The words that I am speaking to you, they are spirit, and they are life." But they walked off anyway.

CHRISTIAN BAPTISM

Ignatius' Statement:

Ignatius maintains that baptism is improperly performed by anyone who is not a Bishop (Smyr. VIII), as is the ceremony of laying on of hands and the ordination of clergy (Hero III).

The Truth:

Water baptism is improperly performed by anyone under this New Covenant. It has no part in the kingdom of God. For the people of God, there is but one baptism (Eph. 4:5), and it is not a watery one that washes dirt from one's body, but it is that baptism of one's spirit which Jesus administers from heaven, the baptism which his resurrection from the dead made possible (1Pet. 3:21).

POLITICS

Ignatius' Statement:

Ignatius exhorts Christians to "be humble in response to their [sinners'] wrath; oppose to their blasphemies your earnest prayers; while they go astray, stand ye fast in the faith. Conquer ye their harsh temper by gentleness; their passion by meekness" (Ephs. X).

This attitude is consistently found throughout his works.

“Against their error be ye armed with faith”, he writes (Ephs. sv. X), “but rather subdue those who are evil by gentleness” (Poly. sv. II). Further, he says, “Let us make them [unbelievers] brethren by kindness,” and even exhorts believers to call unbelievers brethren in order to win them (Ephs. X). He rightly uses the apostles’ words when he exhorts his readers to “imitate the Lord, ‘who when he was reviled, reviled not again . . . when he suffered, he threatened not’ but prayed for his enemies” (Ephs. X).

As for Ignatius himself, he states that “I do not give orders like an apostle” (Trall. III).

The Truth:

The absence of desire to physically harm those who oppose his faith commends Ignatius. In his writings, there is no encouragement to the saints to rely on political muscle, or intrigue, or military power in order to promote the gospel; indeed, there is just the opposite.

But he goes too far in exhorting the saints to call unbelievers brothers. There is no such exhortation to the saints found in the Scriptures.

Ignatius’ Statement:

Ignatius exhorts the local church to hold elections for its officials, at least for those of deacon and Bishop (Phila. X), as well as for delegates to other churches (Smyr. XI).

The Truth:

Ignatius’ previously mentioned disdain toward the use of earthly methods for governing believers is contradicted by this exhortation. The idea of democratic government can be attractive, and it seems harmless enough, but it is just another form of earthly warfare. The bitter fruit of violence and quests for power always eventually follow.

The kingdom of God is a *kingdom*. Elected officials do not exist in the kingdom of God. Our king appoints (anoints) all to their offices, as He alone wills, and He alone supplies His servants with the ability and power required to fulfill their duties. If a body of believers possessed the spiritual wisdom to know whom to elect as their rulers, they wouldn’t even need them.

Ignatius gave Polycarp instructions to assemble a “very solemn” council for the purpose of electing Church officials. Regardless of how solemn a council is convened, however, majority rule is not the way of Christ. We can be “very solemn” and be very wrong. Ignatius exhorts the Church “to elect one whom you greatly love” (Poly. VII). Indeed, it may be precisely because carnal men will almost always elect *only* the one whom they greatly love that God did not institute democracy as a form of government among His people. God appoints as rulers over His people those whom *He* loves, and everyone who knows God loves God’s choices.

Ignatius’ Statement:

Ignatius goes on to say in this same section of his letter to Polycarp that “a Christian has not power over himself.”

The Truth:

If Christians elect their own pastors, popes, bishops, deacons, delegates, and other officials who rule over and among them, then they certainly do have power over themselves.

Ignatius' Statement:

The Church is to “depend on [the Bishop] as the Church does the Lord Jesus, and [as] the Lord [depends] on God and His Father” (Ephs. V; Mag. XIII).

The Truth:

This is excessive. Ignatius takes submission to the elders of the Church to new heights, or depths, depending on one's point of view.

Jesus was completely dependent upon his Father, and the saints are completely dependent on Christ. Jesus said that he received his life from the Father (Jn. 5:26) and that we live by him (Jn. 6:57). By insisting that believers depend on the Bishop as they do Christ, Ignatius is making the ridiculous assertion that the saints have no life unless the Bishop is present to impart it to them.

Ignatius' Statement:

The Church is to avoid all accusations against Church leaders, just as they would avoid being burned by fire (Trall. II), for the elders of the Christian Church are the “sanhedrine of God” (Trall. III), even if the Bishops are young men (Poly. VI).

The Truth:

According to Paul, believers are forbidden to hear accusations against an elder *only if those accusations are made in secret* (1Tim. 5:19). Contrary to what Ignatius teaches, it is perfectly acceptable to hear accusations against an elder, including a Bishop, if those accusations are made before witnesses.

Ignatius' Statement:

There is no elect Church, no congregation of holy people, and no assembly of saints, without Bishops (Trall. III). Ignatius insists that there is no “lawful” baptism, offering, or “love-feast” without the Bishop presiding over them (Smyr. VIII).

The Truth:

Jesus said that where two or three were gathered together in his name, he was in the midst of them (Mt. 18:20). It is the presence of Jesus, not the presence of a Christian Bishop, that validates a gathering of the saints.

Ignatius' Statement:

Anyone in the Church who does anything “apart from the Bishop, and the presbytery, and deacons” is defiled (Trall. VII); therefore, one should “do nothing without the Bishop” (Phila. VII). Ignatius claims that in his hearing, “the holy Spirit proclaimed these words: ‘Do nothing without the Bishop’” (Phila. VII). Ignatius went so far as to say that whoever “does anything without the knowledge of the Bishop serves the devil” (Smyr. IX) and that whoever becomes well-known “apart from the Bishop has destroyed himself” (Poly. sv. V).

The Truth:

Ignatius is contriving a new standard by which to judge men's actions, a standard which contradicts such simple statements as this from Paul: "As many as are led by the Spirit are the sons of God" (Rom. 8:14).

Ignatius' Statement:

While acknowledging that God's power is still greater, Ignatius stresses that the Bishop "beyond all others possesses all power and authority" (Trall. VII). Apparently, Ignatius understands the office of Bishop as the highest rank attainable by man on earth, whether secular or ecclesiastic (Phila. IV).

The Truth:

No earthly Bishop possesses all power and authority. Jesus pointedly warned his disciples not even to think in that way. He said, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them. . . But it shall not be so among you. But he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that serves" (Lk. 22:25-26). Peter, likewise, exhorted the elders to "feed the flock of God that is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind. Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock" (1Pet. 5:2-3).

Ignatius' Statement:

Disobedience to the Bishop is tantamount to disobedience to God (Ephs. V), and it is a mockery of Him (Mag. III).

The Truth:

This is true only if the Bishop is truly a Bishop after God's own heart. If a man possesses the title only because a religious body has elected him to that ecclesiastical office or granted it to him, then the Bishop himself is a mockery of God, not the saints who refuse to follow him.

Ignatius' Statement:

God will give heed only to those who give heed to the Bishop (Poly. VI), and forgiveness of sins is granted only to those who in repentance come both to God *and* "to communion with the Bishop" (Phila. VIII).

The Truth:

It is not true that God will hear the prayers only of those who submit to Christian Bishops. Neither is it true that only if a Christian Bishop forgives, will God forgive. History has abundantly demonstrated that Christian Bishops can be as perverse as anyone, that their forgiveness can be bought, and that to submit to them can be to submit to wickedness.

Ignatius' Statement:

Using Old Testament rebels as examples, he warns that all who rebel against leaders of the Christian Church are in danger of losing their souls (Mag. III).

The Truth:

This assumes, of course, that leaders of Christianity are anointed by God to lead His people and that they are faithful to the truth, which is not borne out in history.

Ignatius' Statement:

A peculiar view of the relationship between Christian Bishops and the ordinary Christian is that "they are priests, and you [the ordinary Christian] a servant of the priests" (Hero III).

The Truth:

Paul thought of those who helped him as his fellow-servants, not his servants.

Ignatius' theology at this point is reminiscent of Pope Clement's description of Church hierarchy: the high priest, other priests, Levites, and laymen (Epistle to the Corinthians, XL). For over a thousand years, until the Reformation, this reflected the mentality of virtually all Christian leaders. They saw themselves as the most privileged social class, and at times dictated to the peoples of Europe, and their kings, with impunity.

Ignatius' Statement:

The Bishop in Rome is referred to as "father" in the silly "Epistle to Mary at Neapolis" (Mary at N. IV), one of the letters written by an unknown Christian who lived long after Ignatius and who forged this epistle in his name.

The Truth:

Jesus said not to call any man on earth father, in a religious sense (Mt. 23:9).

Note:

If "Bishop" is defined as one who is an overseer anointed by the holy Ghost to function in that capacity for the saints, then *some* of Ignatius' statements concerning a Bishop's importance hold true. But if by "Bishop" one refers to the mere holder of that ecclesiastical office, then none of Ignatius' statements concerning Bishops are relevant to the life of believers.

HERESY / PERVERSION OF THE SCRIPTURES**Ignatius' Statement:**

Ignatius teaches that Jesus, now seated in heaven at the Father's right hand, still has a fleshly body (Smyr. III).

The Truth:

This is false.

Immediately after his resurrection, Jesus was still in his fleshly body (Lk. 24:39), but now, he has been glorified with the glory he had "before the foundation of the world", just as he prayed that his Father would do for him (Jn. 17:5).

A description of Jesus' present, glorified body can be found in Revelation 1:12-18. There are no nail prints in Jesus' glorified hands, no scar from the Roman spear is in his

glorified torso, and his glorified brow shows no marks from the crown of thorns woven for him by the cruel Roman soldiers.

Additionally, the saints are promised glorified bodies like the body Jesus has *now* (Phip. 3:21), not like the body he used to have while on earth. We already have that kind of body. The bodies promised us are not earthly but heavenly (1Cor. 15:40-49). Further, the apostle Paul states explicitly that “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God” (1Cor. 15:50); that is, in order to receive our eternal inheritance, our bodies must be changed from a fleshly body to a glorified one, just as Jesus’ body was glorified after he ascended into heaven. As for our natural bodies, they will be “destroyed” (Rom. 6:6) along with this physical universe (Mt. 24:35; 2Pet. 3:10).

Ignatius’ Statement:

Ignatius teaches that Satan backed out of his plan to crucify Jesus at the last minute because “he perceived his own destruction was at hand.” He says that it was Satan who inspired Judas to take the money back to the priest, and that it was Satan who gave Pilate’s wife a tormenting dream about killing an innocent man (Phip. IV).

The Truth:

This is pure fiction that glorifies Satan, not God.

Satan could not possibly have attempted to back out of his plan to crucify Jesus because to crucify Jesus was not Satan’s plan at all! It was God’s plan to “give His only begotten Son” for the sins of the world (Jn. 3:16), and to God alone belongs all the glory for it. The saints glorified God by confessing that everything Herod, Pontius Pilate, and the rulers of Israel did to Jesus was only what God had pre-ordained to be done to him (Acts 4:27-28). Isaiah (53:10) prophesied that the Father, not Satan, would “make [Jesus’] soul an offering for sin.” And it is noteworthy that in that same verse, it is also written, “It pleased the LORD to bruise him; He [not the devil] has put him to grief.”

It was Judas’ own knowledge that filled his heart with terror at what he had done; it was not Satan changing his mind. By glorifying Satan as the master planner of the crucifixion of Christ Jesus, Ignatius exposes himself as a minister of Satan, giving him glory for what was the wondrous and awful salvation plan of God. God’s ministers glorify God.

Ignatius’ Statement:

Along with Elijah, Melchizedek, Joshua, and John the Baptist, Ignatius lists Saint Clement as an example of holiness and chastity (Phila. IV).

The Truth:

Ignatius approved of Clement because he was of the same spirit. His faith in that false teacher, whose lone surviving work we have already examined, and who has already been proved to be an apostate father of Christianity, is as revealing of Ignatius’ character as it is misguided.

Ignatius' Statement:

Ignatius says that Satan is “from the ranks of angels” (Phip. XI).

The Truth:

This is false information about the devil.

Satan is not an angel; he is a cherub (Ezek. 28:14). Cherubs have wings; angels do not. It is a common Christian error to teach that Satan is a fallen angel, as is evidenced in such materials as the Roman Catholic Catechism: “The Church teaches that Satan was at first a good angel” (p. 391; see also, p. 414). And on the other end of the theological spectrum, fundamentalist evangelist Billy Graham’s book on angels teaches the same error.

Ignatius' Statement:

Ignatius says that the “new name” for God’s people, which Isaiah prophesied would be given to them (Isa. 62:2), is “Christian”, citing Acts 11:26 as proof of his assertion. He adds that “Whosoever is called by any other name besides this, he is not of God” (Mag. X).

The Truth:

This is false.

Isaiah 62:2 reads, “. . . and you [Zion] shall be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD shall name.” But “the mouth of the LORD” never used the name “Christian”; in fact, Christ warned us not to trust everyone who came, using his name (Mt. 24:3-5). The Lord gave the new name for his people in Matthew 16:18, when he said “upon this rock I will build my *ekklesia*.” So, *ekklesia*, which came directly from the mouth of the Lord, is the new name for the people of God, not “Christian”. That word was coined by sinners as a derogatory term for God’s people in Antioch (Acts 11:26).

Note:

For more on the word “Christian”, see the Appendix.

SALVATION

Ignatius' Statement:

The believer who has become dull of hearing the word of God and “sets at nought His doctrine, shall go to hell” (Ephs. XVI), writes Ignatius. He is equally firm about those who follow a heretic, saying, “If any man follows him that separates from the truth, he shall not inherit the kingdom of God; and if any man does not stand aloof from the preacher of falsehood, he shall be condemned to hell” (Phila. III). According to him, great danger exists for those believers who desire to “live according to the Jewish law, and the circumcision of the flesh” (Mag. VIII).

Everything Ignatius writes on the subject of salvation is fairly well summed up by these words of his: “There is set before us life, upon our observance [of God’s precepts], but death as the result of disobedience, and every one, according to the choice he makes shall go to his own place” (Mag. IV).

The Truth:

All these statements are true.

Ignatius' words could have been written by Peter or Paul, or spoken by one of the prophets. Paul, too, used Old Testament examples as a warning to the saints that good works are required in order to inherit salvation (e.g., 1Cor. 10:1-12). And he warned Gentile believers, as Ignatius does here, that to resort to the Law of Moses was to put one's hope of salvation at risk (Gal. 3:1-4; 5:1-5).

Ignatius writes in one place that no man would be able to stand before God if God "should reward us according to our works" (Mag. X). But the works to which Ignatius refers here are works that people perform *before coming to Christ*; so, he is not, in this case, contradicting himself.

His insistence that obedience is necessary to attain to salvation is both correct and consistent.

Note:

Ignatius' insistence on absolute submission to *Christian* leaders is to be rejected. It begs the question as to whether those men are of God. It may be that they are those Jesus warned us about, the false teachers he said would come in his name. Moses was of God, and rebellion against him *was* sin, but refusal to obey the commandments of religious leaders who are not sent by God is a virtue.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS AND POWER

Ignatius' Statement:

Ignatius mentions the Spirit speaking to him (Phila. VII). Also, he is reported to have imparted spiritual gifts to those who came from Smyrna to see him on his way to Rome, including to Polycarp himself (Mart. Ig, III). No specifics are given concerning that.

The Truth:

It is the consistent testimony of most of these earliest Christian writers that miraculous experiences were still occurring among believers. That is consistent with the gospel that Jesus delivered to the apostles and the earliest saints.

SUPERSTITION

Ignatius' Statement:

Ignatius reveres the mythological Judith as a true heroine of God, as an example for Christian women to follow.

The Truth:

For details on the Book of Judith, see the section on Superstition under Saint Clement (pp. 4-5). It is a tale unworthy of the name of Jesus.

Ignatius' Statement:

With respect to Satan, Ignatius teaches that Jesus tormented him by his power when he was ministering on earth (Phip. VIII).

The Truth:

This is false.

The time for Satan's torment has not yet come, as even the demons themselves know (Mt. 8:29).

Ignatius' Statement:

Ignatius addresses a large portion of his letter to the church at Philippi directly to the devil himself (V-XII).

The Truth:

Ignatius does not explain why he thinks the devil was at Philippi or why he thinks the devil would even read his letter if he wrote him. Actually, it seems unlikely that Satan would be at Philippi, since Jesus said that Satan's seat was at Pergamos (Rev. 2:13). It could be that the Philippian church was expected to forward this portion of Ignatius' letter to Satan; but in reality, and quite seriously, it is much more likely that the devil was inspiring Ignatius' letter than waiting at Philippi to read it.

Ignatius' Statement:

Ignatius wrote, "I hope, through your prayers, that I may be devoured by beasts at Rome" (Ephs. sv. I). In another place, he prays, "Suffer me to become food for the wild beasts. . . . Let me be ground by the teeth of the wild beasts, that I may be found the pure bread of Christ" (Roms. IV). And later, "I am eager to die for the sake of Christ" (Roms. VII).

To spare the saints the burden of a burial, he exhorted them to "provoke greatly the wild beasts, that they may be for me a grave, and may leave nothing of my body. . . . Then shall I in truth be a disciple of Jesus Christ, when the world sees not even my body" (3rd Epistle, sv. IV). According to the anonymous account of his "martyrdom", it was with "great alacrity and joy, through his desire to suffer" that Ignatius departed from Antioch on his journey toward Rome (Mart. Ig. III).

The Truth:

The apostle Paul proved many times over that he was willing to suffer for the Lord Jesus if it need be. And the apostle Peter, after he was beaten by servants of the council of Jewish elders, thanked God that he was counted worthy by God to suffer for Christ's sake (Acts 5:41). But neither of these men, nor any other man of God, nor yet any sensible sinner, actually *desired* to suffer, as Ignatius desired it.

Nor did they believe that suffering was necessarily proof positive that a man was righteous. Paul wrote that one could surrender all his earthly possessions and surrender his body to be burned and yet it be a worthless exercise of the flesh (1Cor. 13:3). Ignatius

suggests that he will at last be a true disciple of Christ when the world “sees not even my body.” This is certainly not a reliable way to determine who is a true disciple of Christ and who is not. There have been many wicked men who died in such a way as to leave no trace of their bodies.

Ironically, Ignatius, who wanted to be eaten by the wild beasts at Rome, exhorts believers to avoid false teachers “as ye would wild beasts” (Ephs. VII). As it turned out, it was because they *did* avoid false teachers as Ignatius avoided wild beasts that believers made shipwreck of their faith.

Ignatius’ Statement:

Having joyfully and excitedly reached Rome, Ignatius was brought to the amphitheater, where “he was cast to the wild beasts,” writes the author, “so that by them the desire of the holy martyr Ignatius should be fulfilled, according to that which is written, ‘The desire of the righteous is acceptable [to God]’” (Mart. Ig. VI).

The Truth:

The author’s words show that he felt Ignatius had a godly attitude toward torture death, and he assures us that God approved of Ignatius’ morbid longing for torture. But this is just an instance of what we find in Psalm 50:21, where God quietly watches the wicked for a while, then tells them, “You thought that I was altogether such an one as yourself”.

Jesus certainly did not long to be tortured and crucified. In the Garden of Gethsemene, he begged his Father, with tears, to redeem man some other way, if at all possible.

Ignatius’ Statement:

For the enjoyment of Ignatius’ followers, the wild beasts left a few of “the harder portions of his holy remains . . . which were conveyed to Antioch and wrapped in linen, as an inestimable treasure left to the holy Church by the grace which was in the Martyr” (Mart. Ig. VI).

The Truth:

This is sick.

Ignatius’ Statement:

The writer of the account of Ignatius’ execution asks the readers to believe that within twenty-four hours after Ignatius’ suffering, the departed Bishop appeared to him and a few other discouraged souls who were gathered in earnest prayer. The author states that Ignatius embraced him, while others saw Ignatius praying for them, and still others saw Ignatius standing beside Jesus, “dropping with sweat, as if he had just come from his great labor” (Mart. Ig. VII).

The Truth:

It is doubtful that people in heaven sweat, even if they were working hard before they died.

Ignatius' Statement:

In his epistle to the Magnesians (III), Ignatius repeats as an historical fact the Apocrypha's fictional account of Daniel, as a twelve-year-old sage, opposing the wicked old judges and rescuing innocent Susannah from execution (Dan. 13, Apocrypha).

The Truth:

At twelve, Daniel was not a highly esteemed wise man in Babylon.

In the Apocrypha, two chapters are added to the twelve original chapters of the book of Daniel. The story of Susannah is in the first additional chapter, and the second contains the mythological story of Bel and the Dragon. In that chapter, Daniel exposes the vanity of worshiping Bel, is given permission by the king to destroy Bel's priests and temple in Babylon, and slays a dragon by feeding him cakes made of pitch, hair, and fat. In that same fourteenth chapter of the apocryphal book of Daniel, wise Daniel survives seven days in the den of lions because the prophet Habakkuk miraculously is transported from Judah to Babylon with a bowl of stew for Daniel's "lunch". Habakkuk had prepared the food for some field workers, says this unknown writer, but an angel hijacked him by the hair of the head as he took it to them and carried him to Babylon for Daniel's sake.

Both chapters of the apocryphal version of the book of Daniel are uninspired forgeries, and only an uninspired man could fail to see that.

TRINITARIAN ISSUES

Ignatius' Statement:

Ignatius teaches that as the Church is dependent upon Jesus, so Jesus is dependent upon the Father (Ephs. V).

The Truth:

The last part of that statement is in accord with the words of Jesus in John 6:57. The relationship of Jesus to the Father is consistently described by Ignatius in terms which agree with the teachings of Jesus and the apostles.

The first part of Ignatius' statement is false because the Church is not dependent on Jesus. The body of Christ is dependent on Jesus, but the Church, that is, the religion of Christianity is dependent upon its own creeds and traditions.

Ignatius' Statement:

In his farewell to the church in Antioch, Ignatius writes, "May He who alone is unbegotten, keep you steadfast both in the Spirit and in the flesh, through Him who was begotten before time began!" (Mart. Ig. XIV)

The Truth:

Among the early Christian fathers, the Father is sometimes distinguished from the Son in this manner. The Father is the "unbegotten God", while Jesus is "the begotten of God". It is Ignatius' consistent position that Jesus was "begotten by the Father before the beginning of time" (Mag. VI).

With Ignatius, as with other of these Church founders, there was never an issue concerning whether the Son was begotten, or by whom. Without exception, the fathers of Christianity who referred to the Son of God as “begotten of the Father” used the phrase to refer to his generation in pre-creation eternity. In their eyes, the Son could not possibly be “co-equal” and “co-eternal” with the Father, as the doctrine of the Trinity later would hold.

The Greek word *monogenes* (*only-begotten*) appears in the New Testament nine times. Four times it refers to a human being’s only child, either a girl (Lk. 8:42) or a boy (Lk. 7:12; 9:38), including Isaac (Heb. 11:17). The other five times, it refers to the Son of God as the only begotten Son of God (Jn. 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1Jn. 4:9). It seems clear in the last reference that God’s Son was begotten in heaven before the birth of Jesus on earth, and I did not find any of the Apostate Fathers who taught differently.

Ignatius’ Statement:

Of special importance is Ignatius’ clear affirmation that the Son of God *was created* (Tars. VI), which is an unmistakable contradiction of the Trinity confession.

The Truth:

Ignatius correctly reads the words of David in Proverbs 8:22, 23, and 25 as referring to Christ: “The LORD created Me, the beginning of His ways. . . . Before the world did He found Me, and before the hills did He beget Me” (Tars. VI).

Note:

Ignatius’ confession of Christ’s being created must have presented a challenge to later Christian fathers as they labored at the First Ecumenical Council at Nicene to formulate a Trinitarian confession and yet maintain the appearance of unity with these earlier fathers who knew nothing of a Trinity.

Ignatius, long before the Nicene Creed was adopted by the elders of early Christianity, rejects its view of Christ as being equal with the Father. He condemns those who “suppose Christ to be unbegotten. . . . Some of them say that . . . the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are but the same person” (Trall. VI). He warns the Church against those who “introduce a multiplicity of gods” or who “deny Christ under the pretense of [maintaining] the unity of God” (Antio. I), which is exactly what the Christian fathers did who gathered at the Nicene Council.

Ignatius affirms that it is Satan who holds that “the unbegotten was begotten”; that is, that the Son and the Father are one God, and that this one God became man (Phip. VII). “Whosoever declares that there is one God, only so as to deny the divinity of Christ is a devil, and an enemy of all righteousness” (Antio. V). Ignatius vehemently condemns as Satanic the notion that Christ is “God over all, the Almighty” (Phip. VII). Writes Ignatius: “[In order to show] that [Jesus] Himself is not God over all, and the Father, but His Son, He says, ‘I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.’ And again, ‘When all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall He also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all’ ” (Jn. 20:17; 1Cor. 15:28. Quotes from Tars. V).

Ignatius' Statement:

Ignatius teaches that Jesus, the begotten Son of God, is the “High Priest of the unbegotten God” (Mag. VII). Jesus is seated at the right hand of “the one and only true God, his Father,” who sent him into the world (Mag. XI). “There is one unbegotten Being,” writes Ignatius, “God, even the Father; and one only-begotten Son, God, the Word and man; and one Comforter, the Spirit of Truth; and also one preaching, and one faith, and one baptism, and one [body].” (Phila. IV; cp. Hero VII, IX).

The Truth:

This is the right view of the relationship of the Father and the Son.

Ignatius' Statement:

Ignatius states that the believer has “obtained the inseparable Spirit, who is Jesus Christ” (Mag. XV).

The Truth:

This is reminiscent of Paul’s comment in 1Corinthians 15:45: “the last Adam [Christ Jesus] was made a life-giving Spirit.” However, neither Ignatius’ statement nor the verse from Paul suggests a Trinity of persons, except to the one who is instructed to see it there.

Note:

In statements referring to the Father and the Son, the spurious Epistle to the Philipians is of a somewhat different tenor from other epistles of Ignatius. For example, consider this confused statement: “There is then one God and Father, not two or three, one who is; and there is none other besides Him, the only true God. . . . And there is only one Son, God the Word. For ‘the only-begotten Son’, saith the Scripture, ‘who is in the bosom of the Father.’ . . . And in another place, ‘What is His name, or what is His Son’s name, that we may know?’ And there is only one Paraclete. There are not then either three Fathers, or three Sons, or three Paracletes, but one Father, and one Son, and one Paraclete . . . not one having three names, nor three who became incarnate, but into three possessed of equal honor” (II).

At times in the writings of the early Christian fathers, there appears to be a corruption made by later editors reshaping the text to make it appear that the earliest Church fathers were in harmony with later doctrines. This may be one such example, in which Ignatius is made to appear as confused about the Father and the Son as the later, orthodox Christians were.

Ignatius' Statement:

In opposition to those of his time who taught that spiritual beings have no shape (Roms. III), Ignatius teaches that Jesus still has a body.

The Truth:

This is true.

It is important to know that Jesus has a body of his own, apart from the Father’s body, because by that simple truth alone the Christian doctrine of the Trinity is exposed as false. Two bodies means two persons, whether those bodies are spiritual or fleshly.

BARNABAS

(A.D. 100?)

THE EPISTLE OF BARNABAS

INTRODUCTION

The author of this epistle is unknown, though from early times, he was given the name Barnabas. Some early Christians believed that the letter was written by the Barnabas who was Paul's fellow-worker. It is, of course, possible that Barnabas wrote this letter in its original form, but he certainly did not write the letter as it now stands. The Barnabas who traveled with Paul knew the Scriptures better than the author of this letter knew them, and he understood the gospel Paul preached better than the author of sections of this letter understood it.

The exact date of the letter, as with all these earliest Christian writings, can only be guessed at. The most common guess is about A.D. 100.

ANTI-SEMITISM

Barnabas' Statement:

Barnabas tells his readers that “the wretched Jews, wandering in error, trusted not in God Himself, but in the temple, as being the house of God” (XVI).

The Truth:

It is true that very many of the Israelites made the tragic mistake of trusting in the *things* God had given them rather than in God Himself. They trusted the snake which Moses had lifted up in the wilderness, making an idol of it after God finished using it (2Kgs. 18:4). They trusted the ark of the covenant instead of God to save them from the Philistines (1Sam. 4:3). And, as Barnabas rightly points out, they trusted in the temple to save them when God was determined to destroy the holy city (Jer. 7:1-7). But at least we can say that the things the Israelites trusted *had really been ordained by God!*

On the other hand, Barnabas trusts Christianity's water baptism to wash sins away (XI), though God never ordained any of the forms of baptism practiced by Christians! The closest thing to Christian baptism that one will find in the Scriptures is the baptism taught by Apollos before he learned the truth (Acts 18:24-28). Apparently, Apollos thought the water baptism he performed was that practiced by John the Baptist, but Paul wisely disagreed (Acts 19:1-7).

Further, Barnabas believes that honoring the eighth day of the week as a holy day will contribute to one's salvation (XV), but he cannot point to any biblical verse to show that God ever sanctified an eighth day as He sanctified the seventh. Indeed, Barnabas cannot even prove that there *is* an eighth day of the week. After the seventh day, God started counting over again. The very definition of a “week” is seven days!

Who, then, is more “wretched”? The Jews who clung to things God actually ordained, or Christians who invented ceremonies, claimed that God ordained them, and clung to them instead?

CEREMONY

SACRIFICES, FASTING, AND SHOWY HUMILITY

Barnabas' Statement:

Barnabas points out that the New Testament form of sacrifice is no longer a sacrifice of animals but “a human oblation” (II). He proceeds in the same rich vein to show from the Scriptures that the kind of fast which is acceptable to the Lord is not a spartan show of harshness to one's body, but the keeping of such moral directives as are listed in Isaiah 58:6-14.

The Truth:

This agrees with what the writers of the New Testament books taught on these subjects, as well as with God's own detailed description of the true way of fasting from Isaiah 58.

Barnabas' Statement:

Barnabas also warns the saints of a kind of life which became extremely popular among Christians in the second and third centuries AD: the hermitic life. Says Barnabas, "Let us flee from vanity, let us utterly hate the works of the way of wickedness. Do not, by retiring apart, live a solitary life. . . For the Scripture says, 'Woe to them who are wise to themselves, and prudent in their own sight!'" (IV).

The Truth:

This is sound advice.

*BAPTISM***Barnabas' Statement:**

Concerning the verse from the first Psalm, which mentions a tree planted by the water, Barnabas writes, "Mark how [the Psalmist] has described at once both the water and the cross. For these words [the tree by the water] imply, 'Blessed are they who, placing their trust in the cross, have gone down into the water'" (XI). He also writes, ". . .we indeed descend into the water full of sins and defilement, but come up, bearing fruit in our heart" (XI).

The Truth:

This is false.

Water baptism has never washed away anyone's sins because it cannot touch the spirit of man, where the sin is. The correct understanding of the spiritual nature of the New Testament, which the author seemed to possess in some portions of his letter, is altogether contradicted here in his doctrine on baptism.

One must wonder, if Barnabas knew that true fasting is a matter of moral virtue, not self-starvation, and if he knew that New Testament sacrifices are spiritual, not carnal, and if he knew that the New Testament form of separation from the world is not physical seclusion, but sinlessness, then why would he not have understood that true baptism is in spirit and not in water? How could the man who explained those other spiritual truths so well be so blind concerning the true baptism?

*HOLY DAYS***Barnabas' Statement:**

God spoke through Isaiah, telling Israel that because of their immorality, "Your new moons and your Sabbaths I cannot endure" (Isa. 1:13). Barnabas claims that there is a hidden meaning in those words from Isaiah. According to him, God was actually saying that He despised the seventh-day Sabbath that Israel observed because He had decided to set apart the eighth day, Sunday, as the New Testament Sabbath day (XV). "Wherefore, also, we keep the eighth day with joyfulness, the day on which Jesus rose again from the dead" (XV).

The Truth:

In this New Testament, there is no difference between Saturday, Sunday, Friday, or any other day, just as there is no difference between water from a carwash and the water of Christian baptism. Water is water. A day is a day.

Believers who in Paul's day continued to observe holy days that God gave to Israel were called "weak" (Rom. 14:1-2), but simple spiritual weakness is not the spiritual condition of men such as Ignatius and Barnabas. They went beyond merely keeping God's Old Covenant Sabbath; they went the extra mile and *invented* a new holy day for believers to keep. That is not weakness; it is wickedness.

Note:

Paul said that Jewish brothers who could not in good conscience depart from Moses' Law were to be excused for their weakness, and shown love (Rom. 14:3-6, 13, 15). These Apostate Fathers, on the other hand, burdened God's people with ceremonies that never were from God. They taught that God made a change from one holy day to another, but He did not. Instead, He had done away with holy days completely, changing the Sabbath from a weekly ritual to a spiritual resting from sin. In this New Covenant, holiness is entirely a matter of the heart, not of proper form or correct time and place.

God's rest is now in the Spirit. When we cease from our own ways and thoughts, and walk in the Spirit instead, we keep the Sabbath of God.

POLITICS

No Information

HERESY / PERVERSION OF THE SCRIPTURES*THE DAY OF ATONEMENT***Biblical Background:**

On the Day of Atonement, the most fearful of Israel's holy days, two goats were to be brought by the Israelites to the high priest. The high priest then was commanded to do this:

"Take the two goats, and present them before the LORD at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And [the high priest] shall cast lots upon the two goats, one lot for the LORD, and the other lot for the scapegoat. And [the high priest] shall bring the goat upon which the LORD's lot fell, and offer him for a sin offering. But the goat on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat, shall be presented alive before the LORD, to make an atonement with him, and to let him go for a scapegoat into the wilderness. . . . And [the high priest] shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins,

putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness. . . . And he that let go the goat for the scapegoat shall wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in water, and afterward come into the camp.”

(excerpts from Leviticus 16)

Barnabas' Statement:

According to Barnabas, Christ spoke through Moses and commanded the priests to eat the inner parts of the goat that was sacrificed “unwashed with vinegar.” Why? He says that Christ explained, “Because to Me, who am to offer my flesh for the sins of My new people, ye are to give gall with vinegar to drink” (VII). (Fortunately for Christians, this attempt by Barnabas to make the drink used in Christian communion to be “gall with vinegar” failed.)

Barnabas also says that in the Old Testament, God commanded the Jews participating in the Day of Atonement ceremony described above: “All of you spit upon it [the scapegoat], and pierce it, and encircle its head with scarlet wool, and thus let it be driven into the wilderness” (VII).

Afterwards, Barnabas claims that the man who drove the scapegoat into the wilderness was required by God to find a certain kind of desert shrub, probably a thorny one, and then place the wool from the goat’s head onto it (VII). Of course, a somewhat complicated explanation follows, telling how this deed foreshadowed Jesus’ crown of thorns.

The Truth:

This is false.

The Law’s uncomplicated Day of Atonement ceremony is so distorted by Barnabas that it is hardly recognizable. Not only would his distortions have warped the reader’s perception of the God of the Israelites but also the reader’s perception of the Jews themselves.

Justin Martyr’s assertion (noted later), that the only reason God gave the Law to the Jews was because they were especially wicked, would be more believable if the ceremonies were made to seem weird, as Barnabas makes them to appear. Barnabas’ version of the rites of Moses’ Law must have lent credence to the many anti-Semitic statements found in the writings of Christianity’s fathers.

Barnabas misquoted and misrepresented many Old Testament Scriptures which we will not take the time to mention. But the above portion of the Law, and the one following, demonstrate how ignorant this author was of the holy rites commanded by God in the Law.

THE RED HEIFER

Biblical Background:

Here are the relevant portions of Scripture concerning the famous Red Heifer ceremony, as they appear in the Bible (excerpts from Numbers 19):

“And the LORD spoke saying, ‘Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring thee [the high priest] a red heifer without spot. . . . And ye shall give her

unto Eleazar the priest [who was next in line to be high priest], that he might bring her forth outside the camp. And one shall slay her before his face. And Eleazar the priest shall take of her blood with his finger, and shall sprinkle of her blood directly before the tabernacle of the congregation seven times. And one shall burn the heifer in his sight: her skin, and her flesh, and her blood, with her dung, shall he burn, And the priest shall take cedar wood, and hyssop, and scarlet, and cast it into the midst of the burning of the heifer.” [Then the priest and the man who burned the heifer were required to bathe, wash their clothes, and remain outside the camp until evening.] “And a man that is clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer, and lay them up outside the camp in a clean place, and it shall be kept for the congregation of the children of Israel for a water of separation. It is for purification of sin.”

Barnabas’ Statement:

According to Barnabas’ version of this ceremony, God commanded “men of the greatest wickedness” to make the offering of the heifer (VIII), and after these men had slain and burned the heifer, “[three] boys should take the ashes, and put these into vessels, and bind round a stick purple wool along with hyssop; then, the boys should sprinkle the people, one by one, in order that they might be purified from their sins” (VIII). “And why are there three boys that sprinkle?” asks Barnabas. “To correspond to Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob” (VIII).

Carrying out the ceremony, according to Barnabas, made the wicked men innocent of all evil and they were “no longer regarded as sinners” (VIII).

The Truth:

This is false.

First, wicked men were absolutely forbidden to perform the rites of the Law, and God was incensed whenever wicked men did so (Isa. 1:10-17).

Secondly, boys were *never* allowed by God to perform the holy ceremonies of Israel. Even the helpers of the priests, the Levites, were required to be at least thirty years old before they could carry out the holy works of the Law (1Chron. 23:3. And this was, apparently, after a five-year apprenticeship – Num. 8:24).

Lastly, the ashes of a red heifer were not sprinkled on all the people, as Barnabas says. The biblical text shows that those ashes were preserved “outside the camp” for use at specific times, when certain unclean persons would need to be sprinkled with them.

Barnabas’ Statement:

Barnabas states flatly that Jesus “is not the Son of man, but the Son of God” (XII).

The Truth:

Jesus called himself the Son of man thirty-two times in the book of Matthew alone.

SALVATION

Barnabas' Statement:

That Barnabas does not consider himself to have already obtained salvation is made obvious in many places by such comments as this: "We take earnest heed in these last days; for the whole past time of your faith will profit you nothing, unless now in this wicked time we also withstand coming sources of danger, as becometh sons of God" (IV). Barnabas also teaches that the man who, after having a knowledge of "the way of righteousness, rushes off into the way of darkness" will perish (V).

The Truth:

This is true.

The last statement is very similar to Peter's language in 2Peter 2:20-21, "If after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them."

SPIRITUAL GIFTS AND POWER

SUPERSTITION

TRINITARIAN ISSUES

No Information

FRAGMENTS OF PAPIAS

(A.D. 70 - 155?)

INTRODUCTION

Almost nothing is known about this Bishop of the Church at Hieropolis, a city of Phrygia. He is said to have heard John the apostle and to have known many who had personally been acquainted with the Lord and his apostles. Nothing remains of his writings except a few small fragments attributed to him in the writings of other Christian Church fathers and writers.

ANTI-SEMITISM
CEREMONY
POLITICS
No Information

HERESY / PERVERSION OF THE SCRIPTURES

Papias' Statement:

According to Theophylact, Papias taught that "Judas walked about in this world a sad example of piety; for his body having swollen to such an extent that he could not pass where a chariot could pass easily, he was crushed by the chariot, so that his bowels gushed out." He also suggests that Judas' eyes were so swollen that he could not see, and they were so sunk into his head that his eyes could not be seen, even with the aid of a physician's optical instruments, and that the rest of his body was covered with runnings and worms, and that the place in Palestine where he died still stank badly (Frag. II).

The Truth:

This is pure fiction.

The biblical account of Judas' death differs significantly from this fanciful account. According to the Bible, Judas hanged himself (Mt. 27:5). This act of suicide was apparently committed from the side of a steep hill, for when the rope which Judas used broke (or perhaps when the tree limb from which he hanged snapped), Judas fell headlong, and his body burst open upon the rocks below (Acts 1:18).

Papias' Statement:

Papias teaches that those who are saved in the end will be divided into three groups, depending on their rewards: the first group will live in heaven, the second will live in paradise, and the third in "the city", that is, New Jerusalem.

The Truth:

The writer uses the word *saved* correctly; that is, as a reference to "the end of your faith", just as Peter said (1Pet. 1:9).

There will be, of course, degrees of rewards for the saved in eternity. Jesus made that clear many times. But that the saved will be separated in the manner described by Papias is false.

First, the eternal dwelling place of the saved will not be heaven, as Papias teaches, along with many modern Christians; rather, it will be the New Earth, as Jesus said: "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth" (Mt. 5:5). And the Psalmist wrote, "The heaven, even the heavens, are the LORD's, but the earth has He given to the children of men" (Ps. 115:16).

Papias' Statement:

According to Eusebius, in his famous History of the Church (iii. 39), Papias said that "Mark [author of the Gospel that bears his name] having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately whatsoever he remembered. It was not, however, in exact order that he related the sayings or deeds of Christ. For he neither heard the Lord nor accompanied him" (Frag. VI). As for the Gospel of Matthew, Papias says that Matthew recorded "the oracles [of the Lord] in the Hebrew language, and each one interpreted them as best he could" (Frag. VI).

The Truth:

This may or may not be the case. There is no biblical information about this.

SALVATION

No Information

SPIRITUAL GIFTS AND POWER**Papias' Statement:**

Papias states that the "living and abiding voice" of the holy Spirit is more accurate and dependable than the books which had been written about Jesus and his disciples (Frag. I).

The Truth:

This is true.

Jesus did not promise he would have a book written that would guide us into all truth; he said he would send the holy Spirit to do that. And Paul taught, "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God", not, "As many as read the Bible are the sons of God." To those who look to the Bible to guide them instead of to the holy Spirit that Jesus sent, the rebuke Jesus gave to some in his day still applies: "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life, yet they are they which testify of me, and you won't come to me that you might have life" (Jn. 5:39-40).

SUPERSTITION**Papias' Statement:**

According to a genealogy supposedly invented by Papias (Frag. X), several of Jesus' disciples were his cousins, including James, John, and James the Less. Other men listed as Jesus' cousins were named Joseph and Judas, but it is unclear whether or not the inventor of this genealogy meant that this Judas was the Judas who betrayed Christ.

The Truth:

None of this is biblical.

TRINITARIAN ISSUES

Papias' Statement:

Papias teaches that, in the end, the Son will submit his kingdom to the Father, who gave to the Son all the authority that he now possesses (Frag. V).

The Truth:

This is true. Paul says the same thing in 1Corinthians 15:27-28.

Papias offers no help to those who seek from these fragments some support for their Trinitarian faith.

JUSTIN MARTYR

(A.D. 110 - 165)

THE FIRST APOLOGY (1AP.)
THE SECOND APOLOGY (2AP.)
DIALOGUE WITH TRYPHO, A JEW (DIAL.)
THE DISCOURSE TO THE GREEKS (DISC.)
HORTATORY ADDRESS TO THE GREEKS (HORT.)
ON THE SOLE GOVERNMENT OF GOD (GOV.)
ON THE RESURRECTION, FRAGMENTS (ON THE RES.)
OTHER FRAGMENTS (FRAG. JUST.)
MARTYRDOM (MART. JUST.)

INTRODUCTION

According to his own words, Justin's first Apology was written one hundred fifty years after Jesus' birth (1Ap. XLVI). For those unfamiliar with the term, an "apology" is a defense. Justin was not *apologizing* for his faith to the Roman emperor; he was offering a *defense* of it.

Justin is called "Justin Martyr" because (if we are to trust the story related in *The Martyrdom of Justin*) he was beheaded for his faith. He possessed a great intellect and was well acquainted with the literature of ancient Greece and Rome, as well as with the Bible. He was a philosopher, and he repeatedly asserted that some of the poets, writers, and philosophers of ancient classical cultures possessed a knowledge of the true God and, therefore, deserved to be called Christians (Hort. XXVIII).

Interestingly, Justin accuses the imminent ancient philosopher Plato of rank cowardice, maintaining that on a visit to Egypt, Plato learned of Moses and of the Mosaic Law's revelation of the true God but that, fearing a fate such as befell his teacher, Socrates, Plato disguised his confession of the truth in ambiguous, contradictory language (Hort. XXV).

ANTI-SEMITISM

Justin's Statement:

Justin calls the Jews “senseless”, because they were inspired by demons to persecute Jesus (1Ap. LXIII).

The Truth:

The Jews were no more senseless than the Gentiles who, together with the Jews, participated in the unjust execution of Jesus.

Justin's Statement:

Justin states that the works of the Law (Sabbaths, sacrifices, etc.) were given to Israel because of their great wickedness (Dial. XX; XXI).

The Truth:

This is false.

For one example, circumcision, which became an essential ceremonial work of the Law, was first given to God's friend, Abraham, “a seal of the righteousness of the faith he possessed, being yet uncircumcised” (Rom. 4:11). God did not give circumcision to Abraham, nor did He accept Abraham's sacrifices, because Abraham was wicked, as Justin would have us to think. There was a loving, holy purpose in all the ceremonial works God gave to His chosen people. “The Law was our schoolmaster”, wrote Paul, “to lead us to Christ” (Gal. 3:24).

It is true, as Paul said, that “[the Law] was added because of transgressions” (Gal. 3:19), but there is no indication that the Law was added because *Jewish* transgressions were particularly bad. “The whole world”, wrote the apostle John, “lies in wickedness” (1Jn. 5:19), and so, even though the Jews were guilty before God, the Gentiles had no reason to boast themselves against them (Rom. 11:17-24).

Justin's Statement:

Justin insists that the sacrifices required of Israel by the Law of Moses had not even been necessary for them to perform (Dial. XXII).

The Truth:

This is false.

It is the steadfast position of the Bible, both in the Old and New Testament books, that every word of the Law was of God; therefore, it was absolutely necessary that its every precept be obeyed by the circumcised nation (the Jews). As Paul wrote, “I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole Law” (Gal. 5:3). And God Himself told Israel that whoever kept those commandments would live (Lev. 18:5; Rom. 10:5).

Justin's Statement:

Justin suggests that Jews in general, not just those to whom he was speaking, have “a love of contention” (Dial. CXVII).

The Truth:

God's prophets, without hypocrisy, could call Israel such things as foolish, hard-hearted, or "wise only to do evil", but not Justin. In several fundamental matters of faith, as will be shortly demonstrated, he shows himself to be, as he condemns the Jews for being, "utterly incompetent to know the hidden counsel of God" (Dial. CXXIII).

CEREMONY*THE LAW***Justin's Statement:**

Justin holds that Jews who believed in Christ would probably be saved in the end if they did not attempt to persuade Gentiles to "be circumcised like themselves, or to keep the Sabbath, or to observe any other such ceremony" (Dial. XLVII).

The Truth:

This is true.

Paul exhorted each Jewish and Gentile believer to "abide in the same calling wherein he was called" (1Cor. 7:20). He wrote, "Is any man called being circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Is any man called in uncircumcision? Let him not be circumcised" (1Cor. 7:18).

The larger issue for us now is, if the Jews were not to pressure Gentile believers to submit to the God-given ceremonial works of the Law or "any other such ceremony", as Justin rightly insists, then by what authority do Justin and the other Christian fathers demand that believers observe *their* ceremonies, which were never given by God to anyone?

Justin's Statement:

Justin suggests that the Israelites performed the Law's ceremonies through ignorance, adding that he and the Christian community have learned that "the Maker of this universe . . . has no need of streams of blood and libations and incense" and that men ought not to "consume by fire what He has brought into being for our sustenance" (1Ap. XIII). He ascribes to Jesus such a perspective of contempt toward ceremonial works of the Law.

The Truth:

This is false.

Jesus neither felt nor taught such contempt for the Law of God. Jesus himself observed every precept of the Law. He gladly did so because the Law came from his Father, and he exhorted everyone around him to do the same. "Think not", he said, "that I am come to destroy the Law or the prophets. I am not come to destroy but to fulfill" (Mt. 5:17).

The Law was not the offspring of the superstition of ignorant men, as Justin insinuates. Out of pure love for mankind, God gave the Law, that men might prepare to receive His Son. Without the Law, man would have had nothing by which to grasp the meaning and the majesty of Christ Jesus' saving work. Paul, though teaching Gentiles that they were not to perform the ceremonial works of the Law, insisted that "the Law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good" (Rom. 7:12).

*CHRISTIAN BAPTISM***Justin's Statement:**

When Justin first mentions baptism, his reference is clearly to a baptism in water (1Ap. LXI). “[Those who have fasted and sought God for forgiveness of sin] are brought by us where there is water, and are regenerated in the same manner in which we ourselves were regenerated.” He also describes what probably was the baptismal formula used by the baptizer: “In the name of God, the Father and Lord of the universe, and of our Savior Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, they then receive the washing with water.” He calls this baptism “the water of remission of sins already committed” (1Ap. LXI).

So, Justin holds that by Christianity's water baptism, sins already committed are washed away, and by the same baptism a repentant person is “born again”. “This washing is also called illumination”, wrote Justin, “because these things are illuminated in their understanding.”

The Truth:

This is false.

We are born of God when we are baptized with God's holy Spirit, not with water (1Cor. 12:13; Tit. 3:5).

Justin later contradicts himself on this key doctrinal point by teaching some truth about baptism; therefore, we will let him condemn his own teaching, as described above:

Justin's Statement:

In speaking to a group of the Jews concerning Jesus' baptism with the holy Spirit, Justin rightly confesses, “We have believed, and testify that that very baptism which he announced is alone able to purify those who have repented; and this is the water of life. . . . For what is the use of that baptism which cleanses the flesh and body alone?” (Dial. XIV). He goes on to scold the Jews because “you have understood [the works of the law] in a carnal sense, and you suppose it to be piety if you do such things” (Dial. XIV). “We do not receive that useless baptism of cisterns,” he tells the Jews, “for it has nothing to do with this baptism of life” (Dial. XIX). Again, he testifies, “What need have I of that other baptism, who have been baptized with the holy Spirit?” (Dial. XXIX).

The Truth:

Amen! That is excellent, and it is the doctrine of baptism that Paul taught the Gentiles. But this truth does not agree in any respect with Justin's previous teaching on the necessity and sin-cleansing power of water baptism.

Justin also agrees with Paul in explaining the spiritual significance of the baptism of the holy Spirit in relation to circumcision (Dial. XLIII): “We, who have approached God through [Christ], have received not carnal but spiritual circumcision. . . . And we have received it through baptism.” Of course, the baptism which administers this circumcision of the heart cannot be a fleshly, watery baptism. Whether or not Justin would agree with this comment, though, depends upon which Justin responded to it: the Justin who taught that water baptism

regenerates and illumines a man, or the one who didn't need the "useless" baptism of water because Jesus had baptized him with the holy Ghost.

So great is the difference between Justin's two teachings on baptism that one must wonder if the same man wrote both parts of his First Apology.

CHRISTIAN COMMUNION

Justin's Statement:

The Justin who believes in water baptism states that after baptizing in water one "who has been convinced and has assented to our teaching", Christians then led him to the place where they assembled. There they prayed, saluted the brothers with "a holy kiss", and, lastly, partook of a ceremonial meal, "bread and a cup of wine mixed with water" (1Ap. LXV). This bread and diluted wine was typically served to the congregation by the deacons after another prayer was offered to God "at considerable length" by the "president" of the meeting (1Ap. LXV). A portion of the meal was also sent to the homes of those believers who were unable to attend the meeting.

The title given to this meal by the Christians was the *eucharist* (literally, *thanksgiving*), "of which no one is allowed to partake but the man who believes that the things which we teach are true, and who has been washed with the washing that is for the remission of sins, and unto regeneration, and who is so living as Christ has enjoined" (1Ap. LXVI).

The Truth:

This is precisely the "such ceremony" as Justin condemned the Jews for teaching the Gentiles to observe (see "The Law" under Ceremony, above).

Justin's Statement:

Justin says further that the Christian communion meal is not received by the faithful as common bread and wine, but as the flesh and blood of Jesus (1Ap. LXVI).

The Truth:

This is nonsense.

The real communion of Christ is indeed his true blood and his true flesh. Jesus himself said that (Jn. 6:53-55). But he was speaking spiritually, not naturally (Jn. 6:63). The bread and wine consumed during the Christian ceremonial meal called "Christian Communion" is nothing but common bread and wine. A certain Medieval man, an Italian shoemaker disgusted with Christianity's bizarre communion doctrine, is quoted as having said that the sacramental wafer is just "a bit of food which one puts in one's mouth and comes out his arse." Needless to say, his comment was reported to the clergy, and he was summoned before the Papal inquisitors for that forbidden display of common sense.

Justin's Statement:

Justin teaches emphatically, even indignantly, that "wicked demons" produced among men an imitation of the Christian eucharist, naming specifically the initiation meals of Mithras, a popular religion at that time, especially among Roman soldiers. The priests of

Mithras served their ceremonial meal with an incantation, as Christians served theirs with prayers (1Ap. LXVI).

The Truth:

Since heathen ceremonial meals existed before Christianity existed, it is more likely that Christianity copied them than vice-versa. But even more importantly, the Christian communion ritual can itself be seen as a mockery of the true communion which Jesus suffered and died for us to share with God, in spirit. The only communion acceptable with God is the communion which Jesus ministers to believers from heaven: fellowship in spirit with the Father and the Son, and with one another.

Justin's Statement:

Justin states that Jesus enjoined the Church to offer the "sacrifice" of "the Eucharist of the bread and the cup . . . which are presented by Christians in all places throughout the world" (Dial. CXVII).

The Truth:

Jesus taught no such thing.

Justin's Statement:

Justin adds that this "solid and liquid food" brings to mind the suffering of Jesus.

The Truth:

Here, Justin says that the ceremonial consumption of food and drink brings to mind the sufferings of Christ. That is not what Jesus meant when he said, "This do in remembrance of me." Jesus' word, *this*, referred to what *he* was doing, acting as a servant, not to what the disciples were doing, eating and drinking.

Only a few paragraphs after this Christian sacrifice of "solid and liquid food" is mentioned, however, Justin contradicts himself again, this time by stating that the "true and spiritual praises" of believers are God's replacement for the carnal "blood and libations" of the Old Testament (Dial. CXVIII).

HOLY DAYS

Justin's Statement:

"The eighth day [that is, Sunday]", wrote Justin, "possessed a certain mysterious import, which the seventh day did not possess, and which was promulgated by God through [certain rites of the Law]" (Dial. XXIV). One of those rites which accentuated the eighth day was circumcision, he says, which had to be performed on males eight days after birth (Dial. XXVII; Gen. 17). Another of Justin's justifications for honoring the "eighth day of the week" was that "it is the first on which God, having wrought a change in the darkness and matter, made the world; and [on that day] Jesus Christ our Savior rose from the dead" (1Ap. LXVII). Another justification offered by Justin for revering the eighth day is the fact that there were eight souls saved in Noah's ark (Dial. CXXXVIII).

The Truth:

This is shallow, school-yard philosophy.

First, it is remarkable that in his zeal to formulate a justification for making a new Sabbath day, this astute man failed to acknowledge that there is no eighth day of the week.

Justin confesses that Christians substituted the “day of the Sun” for the biblical Sabbath day, that they instituted a form of water baptism instead of washing at the laver of the temple, and that they partake of ceremonial meals instead of Israel’s feasts, such as Passover. In all these things, however, it is clearly demonstrated that Christian worship was as carnal as the Jews’ worship. At the same time, there was a singular, fundamental difference; namely, God ordained the ceremonies of the Law for the Israelites, but Christians simply invented their ceremonies and then claimed that God did it.

But again, there appears to be two Justins at work here. For at another point, Justin contradicts himself when he tells Trypho that the “new law” in Christ requires men to keep a “perpetual Sabbath” and that this new Sabbath is observed by walking in the Spirit of holiness (Dial. XII; XVIII). This is absolutely true. Whence, then, the Christian tradition of keeping holy a non-existent eighth day of the week?

But the larger issue remains; to wit, there are no ceremonies or holy days ordained by God in the New Testament. The Old Testament Scriptures contain the only ceremonies and holy days God has ever ordained, and they only served for a time, as shadows of the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ (Col. 2:16-17).

*CIRCUMCISION***Justin’s Statement:**

Justin teaches that physical circumcision was required only of the Jews and that the Gentiles, having received the circumcision of the Spirit in their hearts, did not need the physical circumcision God required of the Jews under the Law (Dial. XVIII; XIX; XCII; et. al.).

The Truth:

This is true.

This from Justin reveals that he possessed an insight into the differing natures of the two testaments that few people share; namely, the first covenant was in the flesh, and the second covenant is in spirit. The apostle Paul could have written this perfect explanation of circumcision and the covenants of God.

Justin’s Statement:

Justin condemns Trypho the Jew for trusting in fleshly circumcision, resting on the Sabbath day, and eating unleavened bread at the times appointed by the Law. He tells him, “The Lord our God does not take pleasure in such observances” (Dial. XII; XVIII).

The Truth:

Justin is correct to say that “the Lord our God does not take pleasure in such observances”; however, it should not be forgotten that during the time of the Old Testament Law, God *did* take pleasure in those observances if performed by righteous men. It is only from the time of Jesus’ sacrifice for the sins of the world that God has “taken no pleasure” in those holy works of the Law.

Secondly, to condemn Trypho the Jew, or anyone else, for resting on the Sabbath day, when that was the very purpose God gave it, is an ungodly thing to do.

SUMMARY OF CEREMONIAL SECTION

In the earliest Christian centuries, there was a transformation of Jesus of Nazareth – not in reality, but in the minds of Christians. There was, as it were, a redefinition of the Messiah. The apostle Paul warned the saints not to receive “another Jesus”, nor “another Spirit”, nor yet “another gospel” (2Cor. 11:4). Unfortunately, in the main, Paul’s warning went unheeded, and the result was the religion of Christianity.

In the early Christian centuries, there was in the minds of many Christians a combining of Jesus with the persona of Helios, the Greek sun god (sometimes identified with the god Apollo). Helios was thought to drive a chariot (and the sun) from east to west daily across the sky, thus providing light to the world and chasing night away. Helios was also distinguished by a halo, with radiant beams springing from it. This latter feature probably provided the inspiration for the glowing halo which Christian artists for centuries have drawn around the head of Christianity’s Jesus/Helios. On a Christian’s sarcophagus in Rome, from about Justin’s time, has been discovered a picture of Christianity’s Jesus/Helios riding a chariot with a glowing halo surrounding his head.

So closely did some Christians associate Jesus with Helios that they would actually bow toward the east in honor of the sun before entering the Church for their weekly Day of the Sun meeting. In light of all this, it should not surprise us to find that Christians esteem “the day which is called ‘the sun’” above other days of the week.

If forced by God to make a choice, a reasonable man would choose to observe the Jewish Sabbath rather than the Christian Sunday. He would prefer Jewish feast days to Christian communion meals, and the baptism of John to Christian baptism, for at least it could be said that God *did* ordain the Jewish rites. God did ordain the Jewish Sabbath as a holy day, whereas observance of the Day of the Sun (Sunday) was never ordained by God. He ordained John’s baptism for the Jews, but He never ordained Christianity’s water baptisms. And Jesus broke the bread and served the wine at what he called his *last* supper, not as a first, revised version of the ancient Passover meal.

Justin rightly states that if Christians had not understood the Law of Moses, then they would observe the ceremonial works of the Law (Dial. XVIII). Ironically, it is precisely because Justin and Christians did not understand the Law of Moses that they observed their own special days, wore special clothes for worship, baptized in water, offered the Eucharistic sacrifice, burned incense, and performed a host of other carnal ceremonies.

Note:

What God abandons, the devil uses. When God abandoned the high places where Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob worshiped, Satan used the fact that God had once accepted Abraham's worship in high places to confuse and deceive Israel. When the holy ceremonial forms of the Old Testament were fulfilled by Christ and abandoned by God, Satan successfully embraced ceremonial forms as a snare for the earliest saints, despite all that Paul could do to prevent it. "Are you so foolish," Paul pleaded with one congregation who had begun to participate in carnal ceremonies, "Having begun in the Spirit, are you now made perfect by the flesh?" (Gal. 3:3).

Justin said that he and other Christians "do continually beseech God by Jesus Christ to preserve us from the demons which are hostile to the worship of God"; however, in joining with Christians who partook of dead works, he had fallen right into their hands.

POLITICS**Justin's Statement:**

Justin states unequivocally that he and other Christians do not look for a "human kingdom"; rather, they look for a kingdom which is with God. And for that reason, he and other Christians are not afraid to face death (1Ap. XI). Justin also states that Jesus taught us to pay our due taxes and to submit to earthly authorities, but to worship none but God (1Ap. XVII).

The Truth:

This is all true.

Justin's Statement:

Justin demands that the Emperor of Rome punish all who claim to be Christians but who live ungodly lives (1Ap. XVI), and he tells the Emperor that he should "exterminate from your realm" all prostitutes and other sexually perverse people (1Ap. XXVII).

The Truth:

This is heresy.

By demanding that the government act according to his directives, Justin intrudes into the realm of politics, which is a responsibility not given to believers in this New Testament. Jesus told Pontius Pilate that his followers would engage in earthly combat if his kingdom was an earthly one (Jn. 18:36). Justin had no commission from God to demand that the Emperor of Rome do anything, much less to demand that he put people to death for being sinners.

Note:

While it is none of the saints' business to advise governors of earth, it *is* Christianity's business to do so because Christianity is a religion of this world. Indeed, at heart, Christianity itself is the earthly Roman Empire, in an altered form. In time, false teachers

such as Justin brought about a blending of the community of faith and the Roman Empire, which resulted in the development of the religion of Christianity.

The perceptive reader will ask the obvious question: If it is wrong for saints now to be involved with political action, then why were many of the righteous characters in the Bible deeply involved in earthly politics? The answer is that all of the biblical characters who were entangled with the political, social, or military affairs of this life were Old Testament figures. Before Christ came, God anointed many of His servants to go to war against evil men and nations, including Abraham, the father of all the faithful (Gen. 14).

Under the Law, Israel was an earthly kingdom and had earthly responsibilities. To protect the nation from being corrupted by lust, God commanded the judges of Israel to kill witches (Ex. 22:18) and to execute grossly immoral people (e.g., Ex. 22:16, 19). He even commanded the rulers to stone to death any young man who would not obey his parents but had given himself to rebelliousness and self-indulgence (Dt. 21:18-21). But the body of Christ has received no such commandment from God.

If Jesus' kingdom were of this world, then his servants would fight not only with guns and knives, they would fight with any other earthly weapons to bring about peace and the righteousness: military and political power, civil authority, and social activism. Believers would, if Christ's kingdom was of this world, be required to "mind earthly things", but according to Paul, doing that would make them the enemies of God instead (Phip. 3:19).

HERESY / PERVERSION OF THE SCRIPTURES

DELETED SCRIPTURE?

Justin's Statement:

The Christian father Irenaeus (whose writings follow) quotes a non-existent Scripture, which he on one occasion says is from Isaiah (AH3, XX.4) and on another occasion says is from Jeremiah (AH4, XXII.1): "The holy Lord remembered His dead Israel, who slept in the land of sepulture; and He descended to them to make known to them His salvation, that they might be saved." Justin also quotes this verse.

We have to allow for errors in Scripture quotations from the "fathers" because reliable texts may have been wanting to them. However, Justin not only quotes this Scripture, along with other equally unknown verses, but he also condemns the Jews for having removed them from the Bible (Dial. LXXII).

The Truth:

There is no evidence at all that this or any other Scripture was purposefully deleted by the Jews.

THE RESURRECTED BODY

Justin's Statement:

Justin is adamant that in the resurrection, both the righteous and the wicked will possess the same fleshly bodies in which they walked on earth (1Ap. VIII; On the Res. II). "The flesh will rise perfect and entire," he taught (On the Res. IV).

The Truth:

This is false.

It is true that Jesus was raised with the same physical body with which he lived on earth, but after he ascended into heaven to offer himself to the Father for the sins of the world, and was accepted, he was glorified by the Father with the glory that was his before the foundation of the world (Jn. 17:5). It is a glorified body such as Jesus *now has* that the saints are waiting to receive (Phip. 3:20-21).

Justin's Statement:

Justin holds that the physical body of a sinner, "with its head, hands, feet, and skin," are taken into hell so as to make torment possible (Hort. XXVII).

The Truth:

This is false.

A fleshly human body has never been in hell, nor will one ever be. The Bible is very clear about the fact that, after death, the human corpse returns to dust.

Justin's Statement:

Concerning the promise of the resurrection given to believers, Justin writes, "[God] gives the promise to the flesh" (On the Res. VIII).

The Truth:

This is false.

Justin misunderstands Jesus' resurrection in a fleshly body to be an example of how the saints will rise (On the Res. IX), apparently ignorant of Paul's words from 1 Corinthians 15:42-44 concerning the resurrection from the dead: "It [the body] is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body."

GOD'S NAME

Justin's Statement:

Justin states that God "is called by no proper name" (1Ap. X; 2Ap. VI; Hort. XXI). He refers to the Father as "the nameless God" (1Ap. LXIII; Hort. XXI).

The Truth:

This is false.

God specifically revealed His name to Moses in Exodus 6:2-3. Later, because the Jews superstitiously feared to pronounce this name wherever it appeared in Scripture, the pronunciation of it was forgotten and lost to history. But that does not negate the fact that God has a name, that He revealed it to Moses, and that generations of Jews and non-Jews knew what it was and referred to it often.

Justin's Statement:

Justin holds that the God of the Old Testament is the Son, not the Father (Dial. LX).

The Truth:

This is false. His position on this matter is impossible to defend, in the light of such Scriptures as Psalm 110:1, in which the Father (the name revealed to Moses) speaks to His Son. Jesus referred to this Scripture as well (Mt. 22:41-45), as an example of God speaking to him.

*CREATION***Justin's Statement:**

Justin states that God created all things out of “unformed matter” (1Ap. X).

The Truth:

This is false.

The question, then, is naturally raised, by whom did the “unformed matter” originate? The Bible's stance on this is that God created all things from nothing. David sang, “By the word of the LORD were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth” (Ps. 33:6). No mention of God merely rearranging pre-existent matter is there. In the act of creation, the commandment from the mouth of the LORD was typically, “Let it *be*”, not “Let it be rearranged” (Gen. 1:3, 6, 14).

It is interesting to note that Irenaeus, another Christian father, condemned the heretics of his time for teaching that “the Creator formed the world out of previously existing matter” (AH2, XIV.4). What would he have said of Justin?

*MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE***Justin's Statement:**

Justin teaches that “all who, by human law, are twice married, are in the eye of our Master sinners” (1Ap. XV).

The Truth:

This is false.

Justin errs, as many Christian ministers still do, in his understanding of Jesus' teaching on marriage and divorce because he applies to everyone the strict standard that applies only to God's people.

Jesus was sent from the Father to minister to no one but Jews, God's covenant people (Mt. 15:24; Rom. 15:8). When a man and a woman marry who are both in covenant with God, remarriage during the lifetime of the first spouse is forbidden (with an exception made for infidelity). Jesus did not speak to any other group of people concerning marriage and divorce, including the unconverted.

When Paul taught on the subject of marriage, he, too, allowed married believers to separate; at the same time, and again like Jesus, he forbade separated believers to remarry so long as the first spouse lived (1Cor. 7:10-11). However, contrary to what Justin and many of his theological descendants hold, Paul *did allow for remarriage* if the departed spouse was an unbeliever (1Cor. 7:15).

*BIBLICAL CHRONOLOGY***Justin's Statement:**

Justin states that 5000 years before Jesus' birth, it was prophesied that he would come (1Ap. XXXI).

The Truth:

According to the biblical timetable, this world had not yet been created, much less prophets sent, 5000 years before Christ.

THE APOSTLES' MISSION

Justin's Statement:

Justin believes, as many of his Christian descendants do, that the twelve apostles of Jesus "went out into the world" and "proclaimed to every race of men that they were sent by Christ to teach to all the word of God" (1Ap. XXXIX; XLIX).

The Truth:

There is no indication in the Scriptures that the apostles of Christ ever did such a thing. Peter's mission was to the Jews, while Paul's gospel was for the Gentiles (Gal. 2:7-9). Paul and his fellow workers, such as Titus, were they who carried the gospel to the Gentiles, not Jesus' twelve disciples.

*THE ORIGIN OF DEMONS***Justin's Statement:**

Demons came into existence, according to Justin, when fallen angels "were captivated by love of women, and begat children" by them (2Ap. V). These half-human, half-angelic beings then subdued mankind, he says, "partly by magical writings, and partly by fears and the punishments they occasioned, and partly by teaching them to offer sacrifices, and incense, and libations, of which things they stood in need after they were enslaved by lustful passions" (2Ap. V). Justin lays the blame for the troubles and sins among men and nations on these same demons.

The Truth:

This is false.

Jesus said that sin proceeds from the heart of man (Mt. 15:19); in other words, to blame demons for our sin is a lame excuse. Man does not need the devil in order to sin; sin is in human nature, and if the devil were to be destroyed tomorrow, mankind would still be sinful.

Justin's tale of intercourse between fallen angels and earthly women is a myth, probably based upon a misunderstanding of Genesis 6:2, which refers to intermarriage between godly and ungodly people. Jesus said plainly that angels in heaven do not marry (Mt. 22:30). Jesus' meaning was not that angels cannot marry in heaven because no women are there but that they could marry if they come to earth. His obvious meaning is that the bodies with which angels are created are neither male nor female and that the glorified bodies given to faithful saints in the resurrection will be like the angels' bodies. Those who will be saved

will not marry, not because there will be no saved women for saved men to marry, but because the spiritual bodies given to those who are saved in the end will not be designed by God for the purpose of reproduction.

SATAN WAS HOPING FOR A BREAK FROM THE JUDGE

Justin's Statement:

According to Irenaeus, Justin taught that Satan never blasphemed God before Jesus came because he didn't yet know what his sentence for apostatizing from God would be. Justin explains that Satan became so angry when he learned from listening to Jesus and the apostles "that eternal fire had been prepared for him" that he blasphemed God, much the same way that a condemned criminal may become enraged when his sentence is announced and curses the court and the judge (AH5, XXVI.2).

The Truth:

There may be an element of truth in this, but it is more likely that Satan did not blaspheme until after Jesus ascended into heaven in Acts 1, for that is when he was cast out of the kingdom of God (Jn. 12:31; Rev. 12:5-9). Demons who possessed people in Jesus' day appeared to already know, the first time they met Jesus, that eternal torment awaited them (Mt. 8:28-29), but their confession may only have been truth forced from them by the power of the Spirit of truth, present in Christ Jesus.

JESUS WAS ACCURSED

Justin's Statement:

Justin makes the incredible statement that "Christ was not cursed by the law" (Dial. CXI).

The Truth:

In the attempt to justify this unorthodox statement, Justin travels a twisted theological path. Paul, on the other hand, keeps it simple: "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us; for it is written [in the Law], 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree'" (Gal. 3:13).

SALVATION

Justin's Statement:

Justin uses the word *saved*, not as a synonym for conversion but in reference to being received into Paradise at the Final Judgment. Justin understands, as most of Christianity's fathers did, that "each man goes to everlasting punishment or salvation according to the value of his actions" (1Ap. XII). "Not those who make profession," says Justin, "but those who do the works, shall be saved, according to his word" (1Ap. XVI; also LXV).

The Truth:

This is true.

Salvation will be given only to those in Christ who do good works. Jesus said so (Mt. 7:21), as did all the prophets and apostles.

Justin's Statement:

Justin says that “by [the blood of Christ], those persons who were at one time harlots and unrighteous persons out of all nations are saved” (Dial. CXI), but he is not using the word *saved* as modern Christians do, as a synonym for *conversion*. Rather, he is saying that by the blood of Christ, sinners are delivered from the power of sin so that they sin no more and, so, are prepared to receive salvation when Christ returns. He teaches that those once-vile sinners are saved by “receiving remission of sins, and continuing no longer in sin.”

The Truth:

Justin is correct. This is in harmony with the consistent biblical stance that only those who are converted and cleansed from sin, and afterward are obedient and faithful to Christ, will be saved from the coming wrath of God (Mt. 7:21-27; Rom. 2:13; Jas. 2:24).

Justin's Statement:

Justin points out that Jesus was saved by his Father (Dial. CI).

Justin warns Trypho and his fellow Jews: “When [Jesus] said, ‘Thou art my God; be not far from me,’ he taught that all men ought to hope in God Who created all things, and to seek salvation and help from Him alone; and not suppose, as the rest of men do, that salvation can be obtained by birth, or wealth, or strength, or wisdom. . . . For if the Son of God evidently states that he cannot be saved, because he is a son, nor because he is strong or wise, but that without God he cannot be saved, even though he be sinless, . . . how do you or others who expect to be saved without this hope suppose that you are not deceiving yourselves?” (Dial. CII).

The Truth:

Justin is exactly right.

This statement touches not only on the issue of salvation but also on the issue of the Trinity and the power of the Father over the Son. Jesus feared God (Heb. 5:5-9), knowing that the Father heard his prayers and would receive him into glory because he kept God’s commandments and did those things that were pleasing in His sight (cp. 1Jn. 3:22).

SPIRITUAL GIFTS AND POWER

Justin's Statement:

Justin acknowledges the reality of prophecy, stating that God “beforehand foretold [the events which] should come to pass” (1Ap. XII). He confesses that the coming of Jesus was predicted many times over many generations, “for in the succession of generations prophets after prophets arose” (1Ap. XXXI). The number of references in Justin’s writings to prophecy are too many to list, but of special importance is his statement that “the prophetic gifts remain with us, even to the present time” (Dial. LXXXII). Significantly, Justin calls upon the Jew, Trypho, to bear witness to the fact that since the time of Christ, prophecy had completely ceased to exist among the Jews (Dial. LXXXVII).

Justin records the deeds of Christian exorcists, who were driving out demons by the name of Jesus when other, non-Christian exorcists could not (2Ap. VI). Further, he lists various other gifts given to believers in his time by the Spirit (Dial. XXXIX; LXXXVII; LXXXVIII).

Concerning exorcism, however, Justin acknowledges that exorcism was practiced by the heathen and by Jews as well as by Christians, but he condemns the methods which non-Christians used (see esp. Dial. LXXXV).

The Truth:

People who adhere to the notion that spiritual gifts and power were given only to the very earliest believers, or were never really given at all, would do well to hear Justin's testimony of the presence of spiritual gifts and miracles in his time, as well as the testimony of other "apostate fathers". These men were apostate not because of the truths they still confessed, or the spiritual power they may have still demonstrated, but because of the errors they mixed in with those blessings from God.

SUPERSTITION

Justin's Statement:

Justin believes the myth concerning the origin of the Septuagint (1Ap. XXXI; Dial. LXXI; Hort. XIII).

The Truth:

The true manner in which the Septuagint came about is lost to history, but the fanciful tale that Justin repeats simply did not happen (details of this myth are given later).

Justin's Statement:

There was a story repeated among some early Christians that when Jesus stepped into the Jordan river to be baptized by John, a fire was ignited *in the Jordan River*. Justin gives credence to this myth (Dial. LXXXVIII).

The Truth:

No fire was ignited in the Jordan River when Jesus was baptized.

THE AFTERLIFE

Justin's Statement:

In his classic three-part poem, *The Divine Comedy*, the Italian poet Dante (AD 1265-1321), considered by many to be the greatest Christian poet, modeled his depiction of hell and torment on the pattern provided by the ancient Roman poet Virgil in his epic poem, *The Aeneid*. As a matter of fact, in Dante's poem, Virgil himself, as a "shade" from the underworld, served as Dante's highly honored "master", protector, and guide on his frightful expedition through hell. In both of these false representations of the afterlife, one from Ancient Rome and one from Medieval Rome (Christianity), the wicked dead are described as being tormented in hell by evil creatures, or by being forced to perform unending, cruel

tasks. Justin follows in this spirit, teaching a myth about hell and torment similar to Virgil's and Dante's, saying that when we die, God is able to prevent "every shameless evil angel from taking our souls," and that when Jesus prayed for deliverance from "the sword, and the lion's mouth, and from the power of the dog," he was praying that no one but God would take his soul when he died (Dial. CV, with reference to Psalm 22:20-21).

The Truth:

This is false.

There is no indication in Scripture that the wicked in hell are being tormented by demons or that they are being tormented by being forced to perform strange and cruel tasks.

In that prayer of Christ from Psalm 22, the Son of God was not praying that demons wouldn't get him, but to be delivered from cruel and wicked men. Jesus did not, and does not, fear demons. The Scriptures state plainly that just the opposite is the case; demons fear him (Jas. 2:19).

Justin's Statement:

To Trypho, Justin says that because Jesus prayed to his Father that his soul would not be taken away by demons when he died, "God by His Son teaches us . . . to pray that our souls may not fall into the hands of any such [evil] power" (Dial. CV).

The Truth:

Jesus feared God, not the devil (Heb. 5:7). As stated above, Jesus did not fear falling into the hands of demons or the devil; on the contrary, *they* fear falling into *his* hands.

By teaching the doctrine Justin teaches, not only has he followed after Virgil's lie but also after the Greek philosopher Plato's doctrine of the fate of the wicked (Hort. XXVII). And by doing so, Justin betrays an idolatrous spirit within himself. Jesus, not Satan, "has the keys of death and of hell" (Rev. 1:18), and the beginning of wisdom is the fear of God, not fear of demons or the devil – of which fear Jesus himself was in no short supply.

By portraying Satan as the dreaded god of the underworld (like the Roman god Pluto), in charge of tormenting the souls of the damned, and especially by teaching that even Jesus feared being turned over to demons, Justin promotes the fear of the devil rather than the fear of God. But it is more dreadful to fall into the hands of God than to fall into the hands of Satan, who himself trembles at the thought of God's wrath.

Justin's teaching on this subject is an evil and ancient heresy, and his promotion of Satan's power and fear is an indication of whose spirit has the strongest influence over Justin's heart.

TRINITARIAN ISSUES

Justin's Statement:

According to Justin, Christians hold Jesus "in the second place" after "God Himself", and hold the "prophetic Spirit" in the third place (1Ap. XIII). Quoting Plato as well as

Moses to support his doctrine, Justin continues along this philosophic line to teach that there is a “power next to the first God,” and a third power besides (1Ap. LIX).

The Truth:

Here, Justin speaks some truth, concerning the existence of a “power next to the first God.” The Father is the Creator of the Son and is superior to the Son in every way. Justin plainly states that [God the Father] “conversed with some one who was numerically distinct from Himself, and also a rational being” (Dial. LXII). This other person is the Son of God, whom we now call Jesus.

However, the Spirit cannot be in a “third place”, for the Spirit is not a person; it is God’s life, just as your spirit is your life. God’s holy Spirit is within His body, just as your human spirit is within your body. The Father gave of His life-giving Spirit to the Son; thus, the Son was created, the “firstborn of every creature”, servant to God the Father, and himself God over all things which he, by the will and power of his Father, created.

Justin’s Statement:

Justin condemns some for teaching that the Son is in fact the Father Himself (1Ap. LXIII). To Trypho he said, “I will attempt to persuade you of what I say, that there is, and that there is said [by the Old Testament Scriptures] to be, another God and Lord subject to the Maker of all things” (Dial. LVI). This second person, says Justin, “is distinct from Him who made all things, – numerically, I mean, not [distinct] in will. For I affirm that he has never at any time done anything which He who made the world – above whom there is no other God – has not wished him both to do and to engage himself with” (Dial. LVI).

This second person is called at various times “the Glory of the Lord, now the Son, again Wisdom, again an Angel, then God, and then Lord and Logos” (Dial. LXI). However, as lofty as all these titles are, Justin maintains that it must be kept in mind that whatever titles the Son bears, he received them from one greater than he: the Father (Dial. LXXXVI).

The Truth:

This is all true.

Justin does not at all see Jesus as “co-equal” and “co-eternal” with the Father, as Trinitarians would later teach. He understands that the Son is “numerically distinct” from the Father, and that “there were two in number: One [Jesus] upon earth. . . . Another [the Father] in heaven, who also is Lord of the Lord on earth” (Dial. CXXIX). Justin disparages the philosophical notion of Plato that there are “three first principles”, preferring Aristotle’s view that there were only two (Hort. VI).

In consideration of this last statement, Justin’s previous declaration of a “third place” in heaven gives rise to questions. In his writings, we find that Justin teaches that there are, and then again that there are not, three “places” in heaven. The inner contradictions found in his writings make it difficult to avoid the conclusion that Justin’s works have been tampered with.

Justin's Statement:

Without explanation, Justin mentions worshipping the holy Spirit (1Ap. VI).

The Truth:

Worship of the Spirit of God is foreign to the Scriptures. This is either an addition by a later Christian Trinitarian editor, promoting the idea that the Spirit of God is a person, or Justin wrote something here which he neither explains nor elaborates upon, and which contradicts many statements he made in other places.

Justin's Statement:

Justin states very plainly that there is a power, and only one, who is greater than the Word of God; namely, God Himself who brought forth the Word (1Ap. XII).

The Truth:

This is perfectly true. Jesus said that the Father is greater than he (Jn. 14:28).

Justin's Statement:

Justin calls Jesus the "Apostle of God" (1Ap. XII), the "first-born of God" (1Ap. XXI), and the "only proper Son who has been begotten by God" (1Ap. XXI; Dial. LXI). Like Ignatius and others, Justin distinguishes the Father from the Son by calling the Father the "unbegotten God" (1Ap. XXV; XLIX).

The Truth:

This is true.

Justin's Statement:

It is the Son, says Justin, who appeared to Moses in the burning bush, not the Father (Dial. LX).

Justin teaches Trypho, ". . . wherever [the Scriptures say], 'God went up from Abraham', or, 'The Lord spoke to Moses', and 'The Lord came down to behold the tower which the sons of men had built', or when 'God shut Noah in the ark', you must not imagine that the unbegotten God Himself came down or went up from any place. For the ineffable Father and Lord of all neither has come to any place, nor walks, nor sleeps, nor rises up, but remains in His own place, wherever that is, quick to behold and quick to hear, *having neither eyes nor ears* [emphasis mine], but being of indescribable might; and He sees all things, and knows all things, and none of us escapes His observation; and He is not moved or confined to one spot in the whole world, for He existed before the world was made. How, then, could He talk with anyone [!], or be seen by anyone, or appear on the smallest portion of the world, when the people at Sinai were not able to look even on the glory of [Moses] who was sent from Him?" (Dial. CXXVII).

The Truth:

The reason for Justin's mistaken insistence that the Father is not the one who descended upon Mount Sinai, nor the one who communicated with Abraham, nor yet that He did many other deeds which Jehovah is said to have done in the Old Testament, remains a mystery

until near the end of his Dialogue with Trypho. In that dialogue, Justin betrays his excessively philosophical idea of *what* God is, as opposed to the truth revealed in the Scriptures concerning *who* God is. Justin's supreme God is so much *other than man* that He never so much as moves or speaks! This is ruinous philosophy.

Clearly, in Justin's philosophical mind, God is a thing, something to be speculated upon. Justin's concept of God can never be the kind, humble, and loving Being revealed in the Bible who condescends to communicate with and to care for man. Justin's *thinging* of God is a precursor of Christianity's Trinity doctrine, which later would bring the *thinging* of God to its perfection.

Remarkably, Justin commits this crime, though he himself condemns Plato for doing the same. Justin points out that while "Moses said, 'He who is'; Plato [said], 'That which is'" (Hort. XXII). But Justin's own philosophical description of the heavenly Father certainly would not lead his readers to think of Him as "He".

Note:

The fact that God the Father has a body separate from Jesus' body is incontrovertible, if the integrity of the Scriptures is to be maintained. The biblical information on this is plenteous (see "God's Body", in the Appendix). Our bodies were created in the image of His body (Gen. 1, 2), and His Son, being made a man, was a reflection not only of His will and holiness but also of His form.

Those who believe in Christ and are faithful to him are promised a body like Jesus' glorified body (Phip. 3:21). If Jesus, now glorified, is merely a third part of a nebulous, divine Blob, does that mean that our hope in Christ is to be glorified as blobs in heaven with him? What kind of hope is that? When Justin denies the bodily form of the Father, he opens a philosophical door through which later Christians entered to formulate more philosophical tripe about the Father and the Son, which they most vigorously did.

It is in this context of re-inventing the Father as a philosophical idea that Justin feels the need to begin to discuss how it is that the Son differs from the Father; consequently, we see this bright scholar resort to inscrutable language, speaking of "the essence of God". What in heaven's name does that phrase mean? And who cares to pretend to know? But this is the ostentatious language of men who have come to "consider themselves wise". Justin's inexplicable concept of God's "essence" was eagerly built upon by others of later generations.

THE CHILD, JESUS

Justin's Statement:

During his conversation with the Jew Trypho, Justin makes the comment that at the time of Jesus' birth, "he was in possession of his power" (Dial. LXXXVIII).

The Truth:

It is a long-standing Christian myth that from Jesus' birth, he possessed miraculous power. According to one such myth, the child Jesus made clay pigeons and then miraculously gave them life, so that they could fly away. Such myths are utter nonsense, of

course, but the notion that Jesus possessed miracle-working power at birth serves as a basis for such myths. It is true, as Jesus said, “All power in heaven and in earth is given to me” (Mt. 28:18), but it was not given to him as a baby.

Justin’s Statement:

In reaction to this, the knowledgeable Trypho perceptively raises a question concerning one of Isaiah’s prophecies of the Christ, “And the Spirit of the LORD will rest upon him” (11:2). How can it be that the Spirit of God will “rest upon” Jesus, as though he was without it, he asks, if Jesus already had it?

Justin’s reply is that Trypho misunderstands the meaning of “rest upon”. According to Justin’s definition of “rest upon”, the Spirit would not *come upon* Jesus, inasmuch as Jesus already was in possession of the Spirit and power of the Almighty from birth. By “rest upon him”, Justin maintains, Isaiah meant that the Spirit and its gifts would henceforth spring from Jesus alone. In other words, spiritual power and various spiritual gifts *rest* in Jesus now, and only through him does any man partake of them.

The Truth:

This is nonsense.

Though it appears to honor Jesus greatly, Justin’s definition of “rest upon” is only an attempt to avoid admitting to error. Trypho the Jew had asked a penetrating question that Justin simply could not answer.

The old proverb goes, “Oh, what a tangled web we weave when first we practice to deceive.” Justin here provides a perfect example of this practice. Teaching that Jesus possessed all power from the womb, Justin is forced to invent a second false teaching to cover his first one. But as the Christian father Irenaeus would later write, “One ignorance cannot be done away with by means of another ignorance” (AH5, XXII.1). Justin should have confessed his mistake when Trypho pointed out the Scripture which exposed his teaching to be wrong instead of continuing to make the following statement.

Note:

After his baptism in the Jordan River and his forty days of temptation that followed, Jesus was anointed by God with power to do good and to heal all that were oppressed by the devil (Acts 10:38). Jesus did not have that power before that time. Only after Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River did the Spirit come upon him (which, despite Justin’s denial, is the clear meaning of “rest upon” in Isaiah 11:2, and in John 1:32). Only after his Temptation in the wilderness was Jesus able to minister “in the power of the Spirit” (Lk. 4:14).

Justin’s doctrine is, however, a mixture of truth and error. It is true that no man comes to the Father but by Jesus Christ (Jn. 14:6). And it is true that the Spirit of God, with all its gifts, are available now only in the name of Jesus (Jn. 14:26). But those truths do not preclude the fact that Jesus himself received the Spirit and its gifts from his heavenly Father. Jesus repeatedly confessed his utter dependence upon his Father for his doctrine (Jn. 7:16-17; 12:50), his power (Jn. 5:30; Acts 10:38), and even his life (Jn. 5:26; 6:57).

Justin's Statement:

If Jesus possessed all power from his infancy, then there was no time in his life when he could have *received* it. That is exactly the position Justin takes next. He states that Jesus had no need to receive the holy Spirit (Dial. LXXXVIII).

The Truth:

This is false.

Jesus certainly needed eternal life from God, and that is what he received when the Spirit came, for "the Spirit is life" (Rom. 8:10). Jesus was born of the Spirit just as we must be. He was, as Paul said, "the firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. 8:29). And Jesus confessed more than once that the Father gave him life (e.g., Jn. 5:26).

*JESUS' OCCUPATION***Justin's Statement:**

Justin holds that Jesus' occupation before his baptism was that of a carpenter (Dial. LXXXVIII).

The Truth:

The Bible is not perfectly clear on this point. Some in Jesus' home country called Jesus a carpenter (Mk. 6:3), but this may have only been because he had been a carpenter's son, which is what they sometimes called him (Mt. 13:55).

The only direct biblical statement concerning the Messiah's occupation prior to his being anointed by God is the prophecy that came through the prophet Zechariah (13:5-6):

"But he shall say, 'I am no prophet; I am an husbandman, for man taught me to keep cattle from my youth.' And one shall say unto him, 'What are these wounds in your hands?' Then he will answer, 'Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.'"

Apparently, then, Jesus was a shepherd, or herdsman, before his calling to go to the River Jordan to be baptized by John and receive the Spirit.

*CLASSICAL GODS AND GODDESSES***Justin's Statement:**

Justin states repeatedly and emphatically that ancient Gentile poets and philosophers learned much from Moses and from Israel's prophets, who predated them, but that they were inspired by demons to twist the truth and to fashion myths which glorified those demons, giving certain characters appealing names and making them out to be gods and goddesses (1Ap. XLIV). He wrote, "[The Greek myths] have been uttered by the influence of wicked demons, to deceive and lead astray the human race. For having heard it proclaimed by the prophets that the Christ was to come . . . they put forward many to be called sons of Jupiter, under the impression that they would be able to produce in men the idea that the things

which were said with regard to Christ were mere marvelous tales” (1Ap. LIV. For more on this, see “Gods of the Gentiles” in the Appendix.)

The Truth:

This is true.

I do not know how successful those ancient myths were in persuading those of Justin’s time to reject belief in the miraculous elements of Christ’s story, but they were very successful in deceiving some of the seminary professors who taught me. In conversation, they frequently referred to ancient Near Eastern and Classical myths as proof that the miraculous stories in the Bible were also mythological. They did not seem to think that the great stories of faith which are in the Bible were later used and twisted by demon-inspired heathen poets and served as the basis for their mythological tales. Justin gives several specific examples of biblical revelation which served as springboards for certain heathen myths (1Ap. LIV), among them Noah, whom the Greeks renamed Deucalion (2Ap. VII). “It is not”, Justin writes, “that we [believers] hold the same opinion as others, but that all speak in imitation of ours” (1Ap. LIX).

Justin’s brilliant characterization of the gods of ancient Greece and Rome as demons in disguise is very bold, considering his times, and it deserves commendation. It is less likely that he spoke the truth when he suggested that those demons actually had intimate, carnal relations with both women and boys (1Ap. V).

THE LEAVEN OF PHILOSOPHY

Justin’s Statement:

Justin saw himself as a philosopher, as is evidenced by his wearing the distinctive pallium of philosophers (DIAL. I). His principal failure was the failure to realize that the gospel is not a philosophy but a living experience of God’s power. Remarkably, he acknowledges that God’s power is the difference between the gospel and ancient heathen errors, but he relies on refined philosophical arguments rather than upon the power and truth of God to make his case. His strong faith in philosophy is exemplified by his confident quote from the Greek philosopher Plato: “Unless both rulers and ruled philosophize, it is impossible to make states blessed” (1Ap. III). Later, however, Justin admits that Plato’s trust in Homer’s theology is a sure indication that Plato was perverse (Hort. V). Justin denies that the teachings of Plato are different from those of Christ, just that they are not in all ways similar (2Ap. XIII). To fully appreciate Justin’s concept of Christianity, one must hear his own words (1Ap. XLVI):

“Those [in human history] who lived reasonably are Christians . . . as among the Greeks, Socrates and Heraclitus, and men like them; and among the barbarians, Abraham, [Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego], and Elijah, and many others”(emphasis mine).

The Truth:

Then, a foundation stone of Justin's theology is that all people, from any culture at any time, who lived according to reason were righteous, or in Justin's term, Christians. Following this line of thought, we would necessarily see the Savior as the ultimate philosopher, despite Justin's disclaimer that Jesus is not "the mere instrument of human reason" (2Ap. X). What Jesus taught, Justin classifies as the "divine philosophy" (2Ap. XII), "more lofty than all human philosophy" (2Ap. XIV). According to Justin's view, then, Jesus *was* a philosopher, and that is false.

Justin's Statement:

Justin defends Socrates as being a man guided by the Word of God and as "partially knowing Christ" (2Ap. X).

The Truth:

Justin's high regard for Socrates is understandable. Anyone who carefully reads Socrates' dialogues must be impressed by the man's courage, his inquisitive genius, and his apparent humility and earnestness. Yet, at his trial before the men of Athens, Socrates adamantly insisted that he *did* believe in the Greek gods. In Socrates' vigorous cross-examination of Meletus, one of his accusers, the aged philosopher successfully proved that Meletus had falsely charged him of *not* believing in the Greek gods.

So, Socrates' admirable qualities notwithstanding, it transgresses the limits of truth to suggest that Socrates was led by the same Spirit of holiness which guided Moses, David, and Abraham. Socrates, like Justin and all other false teachers, was a mixed bag of good and evil.

Justin does admit that Jesus was not "a sophist", but that "his word was the power of God" (1Ap. XIV). However, it appears that the miracle-working power of the Spirit found in the New Testament books is not what Justin has in mind, Justin's "power" being the power of persuasion through the use of logic and reason.

Final Comments:

Throughout Justin's works, he flirts with the seductive spirit of philosophy; indeed, he surpasses flirtation and passionately embraces it and, by so doing, profanes the gospel and elevates ungodly men to a level of righteousness which was foreign to them.

It is heresy to teach, as Justin does, that "philosophy is *the greatest possession*, and most honorable before God . . . and these are truly holy men who have bestowed attention on philosophy" (Dial. II, emphasis mine). Did Socrates and other heathen thinkers really attain to holiness through their enormous mental effort? Does philosophy make men holy? What about the Spirit of God? Is philosophy really a greater possession than that? And what does the holy Spirit do for men if it is philosophy which makes them holy?

Justin's confession to Rome's emperor was that "on some points we [Christian teachers] teach the same things as the poets and philosophers whom you honor, and on other points are fuller and more divine in our teaching" (1Ap. XX). By this, Justin implies that heathen

poets and philosophers were divinely inspired and that the gospel is the fulfillment of their demonically inspired myths and writings. Further, Justin's admiration of ancient philosophers and poets, combined with his disdain for the Law, could lead one to conclude that Justin felt that some ancient heathen philosophers and poets were more perfectly inspired than Moses.

Justin's justification for stating that "every race of men" was a partaker of the Word of God (1Ap. XLVI) is that the Word is a philosophical concept, saying that "a part of the Word" was "diffused [among men]" (2Ap. VIII) and "is in every man" (2Ap. X). "Whatever things were rightly said among all men are the property of Christians," wrote Justin (2Ap. XIII). Justin's Word of God is "Reason Himself, who took shape, and became man, and was called Jesus Christ" (1Ap. V). Paul's Word of God is described in somewhat similar terms, actually. To him, the Word was "Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (1Cor. 1:24).

It is true, of course, that God has blessed, to some extent, all people everywhere (Mt. 5:45). God is the Provider for all mankind, and the Giver of "every good and perfect gift." But Justin stretches that truth too far, leaving the impression that God spoke through Homer as well as Hosea.

Paul wrote, "And I, brothers, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring to you the testimony of God And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God" (1Cor. 2:1, 3-5). In contrast, at the conclusion of Justin's work, there is nothing for his hearers to rest upon except his impressive intellect and erudition.

According to Paul, relying upon philosophy would ruin the faith of the saints (Col. 2:8), and thanks to men like Justin, it eventually did.

IRENÆUS

(A.D. 120 - 202)

AGAINST HERESIES (FIVE BOOKS: AH1., AH2., etc.)
FRAGMENTS (FRAG. IRE.)

INTRODUCTION

Irenaeus claims that as a young child, he saw the aged Polycarp. If the dates assigned to Polycarp are correct, then Irenaeus was a boy in the late first or early second century. Irenaeus resided and ministered in the territory of ancient Gaul (modern France), in the city of Lyons, where he and a number of other Christians are reported to have been martyred in 202.

Irenaeus' main work, *Against Heresies*, is intended to refute the errors of certain heretics, whose names he gives. If those heretics taught what Irenaeus says they taught, then they were certainly strangers to the truth of Christ. However, in defense of his faith, Irenaeus apparently fell into one of those traps which Satan so often and so successfully lays for men, for in his attack against the teaching concerning supposed deities in heaven other than the Father and the Son, Irenaeus sometimes stresses the unity and uniqueness of the Father and the Son too far in the opposite direction; thus, inadvertently laying some groundwork for later Christian fathers to build their doctrine of a Trinitarian god, something Irenaeus himself never imagined.

Some Christian scholars have characterized the writings of Irenaeus as "monuments of fidelity to Christ, and to the charges of St. Paul, St. Peter, and St. Jude." One scholar has written that "the work of Irenaeus *Against Heresies* is one of the most precious remains of Christian antiquity." Let's examine his work now, and see how precious it really is.

ANTI-SEMITISM*No Information***CEREMONY****Irenaeus' Statement:**

Irenaeus claims that Jesus and the apostles handed down the tradition of performing the Eucharist as a sacrifice (AH4, XVI.5; XVIII.1; Frag. Ire. XXXVII).

The Truth:

Neither Jesus nor the apostles handed down any such thing. This is the typical Christian misinterpretation of Jesus' words at his last Passover supper with his disciples.

Oddly, Irenaeus understands that the kind of incense which rises from believers to God is not physical, but it is the prayers of saints instead (AH4, XVII.6, on Rev. 5:8). If we pray, and our prayers are acceptable to God, then our prayers are described as rising as sweet incense to God. Irenaeus seems to grasp the idea that there is no ritual of incense burning ordained in this New Testament that represents prayer, as there was under the Old Testament (Ex. 30:1).

But he fails to grasp that the Father has also chosen a real, living communion with saints through the Spirit rather than for saints to act out a ritual meal that merely symbolizes true communion with God. Irenaeus, as his next statement also shows, missed this point completely.

Irenaeus' Statement:

Irenaeus says that the using of earthly material in the celebration of the Eucharist is a spiritual act (Frag. Ire. XXXVIII).

The Truth:

This is a revealing error. Using earthly materials, or "elements" as Paul called them (Gal. 4:3, 9), in symbolic, ceremonial worship is not spiritual but carnal. It is, as Paul would say, "worship in the flesh". Such worship comes from and leads to superstitious fear, as the next statement shows.

Irenaeus' Statement:

Irenaeus teaches that by partaking of the bread and wine of Christian communion, human bodies are "nourished with the body of the Lord and with his blood" and "are no longer corruptible" (AH4, XVIII.5). The flesh's participation in Christian communion, says Irenaeus, is proof that the flesh will be raised incorruptible from the grave (AH5, II.3).

The Truth:

This is nonsense.

The problem with this doctrine is clear, for it cannot be proved that the Christian Eucharist ritual does anything out of the ordinary for the participants' bodies. They certainly still die, and their bodies still decay like everybody else's body decays. And inasmuch as

Paul said the fleshly bodies of saints will no longer be fleshly in the resurrection (1Cor. 15:35-44), Irenaeus' doctrine plainly contradicts Paul.

As I pointed out in the beginning of this book, one hallmark of false teachers is that they do not know when they wander off the right path. Therefore, it is typical of false teachers that they often contradict themselves without realizing that they have done so. True to form, Irenaeus unwittingly contradicts himself when writing about communion with God. He says that the Spirit was poured out from above for the purpose of "communion of God and man, imparting indeed God to men by means of the Spirit" (AH5, I.1). Here, Irenaeus follows Paul in confessing that communion with God is in the Spirit. Paul, however, would have said *only by the Spirit* is God's life imparted to us (cp. Eph. 2:18; Rom. 8:9), whereas Irenaeus praises an imagined power inherent in Christianity's communion ritual, saying that our bodies are given immortality by consuming the Eucharistic bread and wine (AH5, II.2, 3).

MARY WAS IN A HURRY

Irenaeus' Statement:

Irenaeus claims that when Mary told Jesus there was no more wine at the wedding feast (Jn. 2:3), her real purpose for making that request was for him to change the water into wine so that she could partake of the Christian sacrament of the Eucharist. Her crime, says Irenaeus, was impatience, and "the Lord, checking her untimely haste, said 'Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour [to initiate the Eucharist ceremony] has not yet come'" (AH3, XVI.7).

The Truth:

When Mary told Jesus that the wine was gone, she was simply regretting that the store of wine at the wedding feast had run out. Her imagined secret desire for Jesus to inaugurate the Eucharistic ceremony too soon is pure fiction. Jesus never ordained the Eucharistic ceremony that Christians perform, either then or later, and Mary never wanted it, either then or later.

CHRISTIAN BAPTISM

Irenaeus' Statement:

In what was probably a reference to Christian (i.e., water) baptism, Irenaeus states that infants who are put through that ritual are born again to God (AH2, XXII. 4). Irenaeus points to Naaman's "baptism" in the Jordan River, and his healing, as a symbol of how the "sacred water" of Christian baptism cleanses the repentant person from sin (Frag. Ire. XXXIV).

The Truth:

Naaman's *baptism*? Naaman was not baptized. He merely *washed himself* in the Jordan River seven times, as Elisha told him to do.

No earthly water is sacred, and no water baptism has ever washed anyone's sins away. It is impossible for anything other than the blood of Christ to wash sins away. The belief that an external, fleshly ceremony is spiritually beneficial is fundamental to Christianity, as

it is to virtually all the world's religions; at the same time, it is contrary to the truth revealed in the New Testament.

Irenaeus' Statement:

Concerning the baptisms of the holy Ghost and of water, Irenaeus teaches that "both are necessary, since both contribute towards the life of God" (AH3, XVII.2).

The Truth:

This is plainly contrary to the truth Paul preached among the Gentiles. To them, Paul taught, "there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism." He warned Gentile congregations not to practice any ceremonial works (this would include water baptism), insisting that such ceremonial works have nothing to do with the Gentiles' hope in Christ (Eph. 2:8-9). This explains how Paul could say that "Christ sent me not to baptize [in water]" (1Cor. 1:17), for the baptism of the Spirit is the only baptism God ordained for the Gentiles, to whom Paul was sent.

NOT BOWING THE KNEE

Irenaeus' Statement:

Irenaeus declared that from the days of the apostles, the Church was forbidden to bow the knee on the day of Pentecost, as "a symbol of the resurrection" (Frag. Ire. VI).

The Truth:

No one on earth with good sense believes this.

POLITICS

Irenaeus' Statement:

Irenaeus proclaims that Paul and Peter "founded and organized" the "universally known Church at Rome" (AH3, III.2).

The Truth:

This is among the most ancient and bizarre of Christian myths.

Believers were in Rome, and were well known, long before Paul ever set foot there (Rom. 1:8-10). Secondly, Peter was a servant of *Jewish* believers and was out of his element among Gentile believers (cp. Gal. 2). Further, there is no biblical evidence at all to support the claim that Peter ever went to Rome. Considering the time of his writing the letter, Peter's cryptic term "Babylon" (1Pet. 5:13) is more likely a reference to Jerusalem than to Rome. But even if it is true that Peter did go to Rome in his old age, it certainly was not to "found and organize the Church."

The myth of Paul and Peter founding the Church in Rome remains a doctrine of supreme importance to the Roman Catholic Church, as a basis for forwarding their claim of the supremacy of the Bishop of the Church at Rome over all other Christian Bishops.

Irenaeus' Statement:

Irenaeus appears to embrace the notion that "succession of Bishops" from the apostles is the equivalent of spiritual authority (AH3, III.2; AH4, XXVI.2).

The Truth:

No one has spiritual authority among the saints unless God gives it to him, and God's method of bestowing spiritual authority is by the anointing of the Spirit. God's ordination is not biologically transferred, as it was with the priests and Levites under the Old Testament, and it is not bestowed by the appointment or election by any committee of humans, as in Christianity.

Irenaeus' Statement:

Irenaeus says that Jesus accomplished his work "not by violent means . . . but by means of persuasion, as became a God of counsel, who does not use violent means to obtain what He desires" (AH5, I.1).

The Truth:

Irenaeus is right.

Later generations of Christians, who fought, abused, tortured, and killed those who refused to submit to the Christian religion, should have listened to their father Irenaeus on this matter. God's righteousness cannot be imposed upon anyone.

HERESY / PERVERSION OF THE SCRIPTURES*JESUS' AGE***Irenaeus' Statement:**

Irenaeus firmly holds that Jesus lived to be an old man (AH2, XXII. 4-6), saying that men who had known the apostles reported that the apostles themselves taught that Jesus lived to be old (AH2, XXII.5).

The Truth:

This is simply false. It appears that Irenaeus, opposing the heretics' position that Jesus lived only one year after his baptism (AH1, III.3), went too far in the opposite direction in order to prove them wrong.

*JESUS' LINEAGE***Irenaeus' Statement:**

Irenaeus says that Jesus was a descendent of both Levi and Judah (Frag. Ire. XVII).

The Truth:

Irenaeus is wrong.

The only biblical evidence that the blood of Levi ran in Jesus' veins is the fact that Mary was a kinswoman to Elizabeth (Lk. 1:36). Neither the prophets nor the apostles say anything about the Messiah coming from Levi. The Bible states plainly that Jesus came from the tribe of Judah (Heb. 7:14). If anything could have been said by the apostles about the Messiah descending from Levi, they would most certainly have said it.

*THE BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST***Irenaeus' Statement:**

Irenaeus claims that the cry of John at his birth loosened his father's tongue so that he could speak (Frag. Ire. XLVII).

The Truth:

This is false.

Those who have read the Bible know that it was only after Zacharias wrote on a tablet, "His name is John," that the Lord loosened his tongue (Lk. 1:57-64). The baby's birth cry took place eight days before Zacharias' tongue was loosed.

JESUS' BREATH

Irenaeus' Statement:

Irenaeus taught that when Jesus "breathed on his disciples" (Jn. 20:22) they received the holy Spirit (Frag. Ire. XXI; LII).

The Truth:

This is false, but it is a doctrine still maintained by many evangelical Christians today. The disciples received the Spirit when Jesus told them they would, on the day of Pentecost (Acts 1:4-5; 2:4; 15:8).

THE RESURRECTION

Irenaeus' Statement:

Irenaeus assumes that resurrected bodies will be made of flesh, as was Jesus' body when he was resurrected (AH5, VII.1). He writes, "the new flesh which rises again is the same which also received the new cup [of the Christian Eucharist]" (AH5, XXXIII.1). Concerning the body which arises from the grave, Irenaeus states, "It is not one thing which dies and another which is quickened" (AH5, XII.3).

The Truth:

Paul taught that the resurrected bodies of the faithful would no longer be made of fleshly substance, but of spiritual substance. "It is sown a natural body," he wrote, "and it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body" (1Cor. 15:44). Again, to the saints at Philippi, he explained that Jesus "will change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body" (Phip. 3:21).

Paul compares the burying of a dead saint's body with the planting of a seed. He wrote, "That which you sow, you do not sow that body which shall be," meaning of course that the body that one receives in the resurrection will *not* be the same body of flesh that was "planted" in the ground (1Cor. 15:37). This completely contradicts Irenaeus' doctrine concerning a resurrected body.

When Jesus rose from the dead, his body was not yet glorified; therefore, he was still in his natural, fleshly body, the same one that was crucified. He even showed his disciples the crucifixion scars (Lk. 24:40). Terrified at his sudden appearance into the room, they thought they were seeing a ghost; but Jesus comforted them by saying, "handle me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have" (Lk. 24:39). It was only after his ascension into heaven that he received his glorified body.

After Jesus ascended into heaven, he received his inheritance from the Father; that is, he was given a new, unscarred, glorified body, the one John saw and described in Revelation 1:13-15. There are no crucifixion marks in his glorified hands, no gash from the spear in his side. A glorified body cannot be harmed by earthly weapons; it shines as the sun in the kingdom of our Father. It is this kind of body Jesus will give all obedient saints, not recycled fleshly bodies, as Irenaeus adamantly maintains Jesus will do (AH2, XXIX.2).

Irenaeus' Statement:

Says Irenaeus, "If God does not vivify what is mortal, and does not bring back the corruptible to incorruption, He is not a God of power" (AH5, III.2). Irenaeus so strongly feels that resurrected bodies will be made of flesh that he puts that false doctrine on a par with the doctrine of redemption by the blood of Jesus (AH5, II.2), saying that it is "the utmost blasphemy" to deny it.

The Truth:

This is foolish. Irenaeus was risking his soul by making such a statement. It is a grievous thing to see any teacher become so adamant in his assertions that he condemns God if He does not conform to the teacher's statements.

Note:

It is pride that causes a minister to overstep the bounds of prudence and challenge God Himself to disagree with him. The man who has a reputation for teaching, but who can humble himself and change when he finds he is in error, has been blessed with great favor from God.

Paul wrote (1Cor. 15:50): "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption."

As with Justin, whose example we have already seen, Irenaeus' handling of this verse provides a perfect example of how a heretic, in order to preserve his reputation as a teacher, must twist the Scriptures in order to justify himself. Irenaeus has already taught that the flesh will live forever in the kingdom of God. What, then, is he to do with Paul's unequivocal assertion that it will not? So that the reader may comprehend what Irenaeus teaches here, some background on 1Corinthians 15:50 is necessary.

Some among the saints in Corinth were beginning to have doubts about the resurrection because they could not understand how natural bodies could arise from the dead, seeing that, after death, those bodies decay and return to the earth. In 1Corinthians 15, Paul is reminding the Corinthian believers of what he had previously taught them; to wit, that, yes, there will be a resurrection of the righteous at the appearing of Jesus but that our fleshly body will *not* be the kind of body that arises from the grave. "It is sown a natural body," he writes, "and it is raised a spiritual body" (1Cor. 15:44).

Paul then goes on to explain that we *must* have new bodies and that it wouldn't do any good for the flesh to rise anyway, for "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God"

(v. 50). His unmistakable meaning is that the flesh will not be raised from the dead and granted immortality but that a new, spiritual body will be given to those who inherit the kingdom of God. He writes, “As we have born the image of him who is of the earth [Adam], we shall also bear the image of Him who is from heaven [the glorified Christ]” (1Cor. 15:49). Paul earnestly longed for his “house which is from heaven” (2Cor. 5:2), knowing that “if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (2Cor. 5:1).

The bodies we have now are not in heaven, but the bodies we shall receive at the resurrection *are* now in heaven, and we are waiting to receive them (see John 14:2, where Jesus calls them mansions, and 1Peter 1:4, where Peter refers to the new bodies as the inheritance “reserved in heaven for you”).

Irenaeus’ Statement:

With such verses, Irenaeus is confronted with a choice. Either he must admit that his doctrine concerning the resurrection of the flesh is wrong, or he must reinterpret Paul’s words to make Paul’s doctrine seem to agree with his. He chooses the latter, altering Paul’s obvious meaning to suit his purposes. “When did we bear the image of him who is earthy?” asks Irenaeus. “Doubtless it was when those actions spoken of as ‘works of the flesh’ used to be wrought in us. And then again, when do we bear the image of the heavenly? Doubtless when he says, ‘Ye have been washed,’ believing in the name of the Lord, and receiving his Spirit.”

The Truth:

This is a complete perversion of Paul’s teaching.

By his phrase, “image of the earthly”, Paul is not describing the deeds we have done but the fleshly body we possess now. And with his phrase, “image of the heavenly”, Paul is describing the bodies we will receive from God, spiritual bodies like Jesus’ glorified body.

Irenaeus’ Statement:

Most revealing, Irenaeus further says that Paul’s phrase, “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God” does not mean that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. Instead, he teaches that it means a man who is *merely* flesh and blood (does not have the holy Spirit) cannot inherit the kingdom (AH5, IX.4). Without the Spirit, says Irenaeus, a man *is* merely flesh and blood (AH5, IX.1). “The flesh, therefore, when destitute of the Spirit of God . . . cannot possess the kingdom of God.” And, “The flesh in itself, and blood, cannot possess the kingdom of God” (AH5, IX.3). His point is that man’s body of flesh *will* inherit the kingdom of God, if the Spirit of God is in that body.

The Truth:

An intelligent adolescent could easily see that this is not what Paul was teaching.

Irenaeus’ Statement:

In a bizarre twist of logic, and contrary to the apostles' many words on the subject, Irenaeus teaches that saints of God actually will never inherit anything [!], but that when the Spirit enters our bodies, it inherits the flesh of the saints. The "various parts of the man", claims Irenaeus, "are inherited by the Spirit when they are translated into the kingdom of God" (AH5, IX.4). Justin also seems to have taught something like this (Frag. Just. V).

The Truth:

What a lousy inheritance for the Spirit – worthless flesh!

The holy Spirit of God inherits our bodies? That is a useless inheritance because this entire physical creation, including all flesh, will be destroyed (2Pet. 3:10-12). From his original denial that bodies of the faithful will be changed from fleshly to spiritual bodies, Irenaeus has painted himself into the proverbial corner and makes ever more outlandish doctrinal pronouncements in order to justify his error.

Irenaeus' Statement:

Paul, in another letter, encourages his readers by teaching that if our earthly bodies "dissolve" and return to the earth, we need not be dismayed, for we "have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2Cor. 5:1-4). But Irenaeus says those who, like Paul, teach that the "eternal house" which now is "in the heavens" refers to new bodies from heaven that saints will receive "make perverse and crooked interpretations of all the [biblical] passages, so as to overturn and alter the sense of the words" (AH5, XIII.5).

The Truth:

To believe that our mortal bodies must be changed into immortal, spiritual bodies is not a "perverse and crooked interpretation" of Paul's words. It is the only reasonable interpretation.

Irenaeus' Statement:

If one wonders how the Spirit can inherit decomposed flesh, Irenaeus explains, "We therefore have formed the belief that [our] bodies also do rise again. For although they go to corruption, yet they do not perish; for the earth, receiving the remains, preserves them" (Frag. Ire. XII).

The Truth:

How the earth "preserves" the decomposing flesh of dead men is not explained.

With this statement, Irenaeus forces the reader to choose between common sense (the indisputable fact that the earth does not preserve dead bodies) and his doctrine (human flesh is made immortal by partaking of Christian communion).

What happened to Irenaeus here is a common problem among heretics. Having begun with an heretical premise, and finding himself contradicted by clear and simple statements found in the Bible, as well as by common sense, Irenaeus twists ever more tightly the

apostles' clear meanings and concocts an ever more strained theology in order to justify his error. In the end, his bands burst, and his lack of ordination from God is exposed.

There are a number of statements from Irenaeus on this issue which I could include here, but the point has been amply made. I refer the reader to the works of Irenaeus, if there is any remaining curiosity as to his efforts to explain the resurrection of the flesh.

AFTER THE RESURRECTION

Irenaeus' Statement:

Early Christian tradition and Irenaeus' teaching concerning the ministry of the apostles is that after they received the Spirit at Pentecost, "they departed to the ends of the earth, preaching the glad tidings" (AH3, I.1).

The Truth:

This betrays Irenaeus' ignorance concerning the commission of Jesus' disciples. The twelve apostles of Jesus, including Peter, were never sent to the Gentiles, even if Peter was sent by God with the key to open the door of the kingdom for them (Acts 10). Jesus' original disciples were ministers only of the circumcision (Jews), just as Jesus himself was, while here on earth. Paul was the apostle sent with the gospel for the Gentiles (see Gal. 2:7-8).

CONCERNING ADAM

Irenaeus' Statement:

Irenaeus insists that Adam repented of his sin in the garden, was forgiven by God, and, at the end, was saved by Christ. "It was necessary", says he, that it should be so (AH3, XXIII.1).

The Truth:

Being an unresolvable mystery, the matter of Adam's eternal judgment is nothing to be concerned with, and I would have omitted mention of it, as I did the many other questionable opinions Irenaeus expresses, except that Irenaeus insists that all who doubt what he says about Adam "shut themselves out from life for ever" (AH3, XXIII.8). Irenaeus thus sets a standard for obtaining eternal life that is contrary to all godliness and truth.

Irenaeus' Statement:

Irenaeus says that if Adam was not pardoned and saved, then God Himself was conquered by the devil (AH4, XXIII.1).

The Truth:

This is nonsense. "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy," said the Lord (Ex. 33:19; Rom. 9:15). If God refuses to show mercy to anyone, He is not defeated in any respect by any creature in heaven or on earth.

Whether or not Adam is in hell or paradise now is a relatively insignificant matter (except to Adam, of course). If God refused to grant repentance to Adam, then God refused to grant repentance to Adam. There is no more to that issue than that. There is absolutely nothing said in the Bible concerning Adam's salvation or damnation.

*CONCERNING ADAM AND EVE***Irenaeus' Statement:**

Irenaeus teaches that Adam and Eve were created not as adults but as children and had to grow up before they could procreate (AH3, XXII.4).

The Truth:

God called Adam a man from the moment of his creation (Gen. 1:26), and Eve was called a "woman" from the moment of hers (Gen. 2:22). If they were created as mere children, then God's commandment to Adam and Eve that they "be fruitful and multiply" (Gen. 1:28) was a bit premature.

Further, if Adam and Eve were created as children, how could Irenaeus have been telling the truth when, in another place, he taught that Adam sinned on the day that he was created (AH5, XXIII.2)? Did he sin as a little child by receiving the fruit from the little girl Eve and eating it?

And why would God create them as children instead of as babies? or as teenagers?

Irenaeus' Statement:

Irenaeus says that Satan's promise that Adam and Eve "would become as gods" (Gen. 3) "was in no way possible" for them (AH3, XXIII.1).

The Truth:

This is not true.

The Father said to the Son that by Adam and Eve's eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, "the man is become as one of us" (Gen. 3:22). But Irenaeus' doctrine holds that what God plainly said happened could not have happened.

*THE DEVIL***Irenaeus' Statement:**

As most Christians do, Irenaeus calls the devil a fallen, or "apostate", angel (AH4, XL.3; AH5, XXI.3).

The Truth:

This is false.

The devil is not an angel; he is a fallen cherub (Ezek. 28:14), which is a species of heavenly creatures completely different from angels. One major difference: cherubim have wings; angels do not.

*THE ANTICHRIST***Irenaeus' Statement:**

Irenaeus teaches that the coming of the antichrist is a future event (AH5, XXV.1; XXVIII.2; XXIX.2; etc.). Typically, Christians follow their father Irenaeus and assume that the Beast, the evil world ruler described in the book of Revelation, is the antichrist (AH5, XXV.3, 4).

The Truth:

Long before Irenaeus, there were many antichrists, a fact that John referred to as a fulfillment of the prophecy that antichrist(s) should come (1Jn. 2:18; 4:3). This is the reason the word *antichrist* is not found in Revelation. The book of Revelation was prophecy of *future* events. When John wrote that prophetic book, he was already seeing antichrists multiplying all around him. There was no need, then, for John to write of the antichrist's coming, for the antichrist had already arrived.

The antichrist's clever doctrine is that he (antichrist) is not yet here, and many there be that proclaim it. But Paul did not say that the "man of sin" (the antichrist) would *come* in the future but that he would *be revealed* in the future: "Let no man deceive you by any means, for that day [the coming of the Lord] shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped" (2Thess. 2:3-4).

This evil spirit lives in the temple of every saint who receives his doctrine, and not only Paul but John also saw many of God's people taking him in before they died. "They went out from us," John wrote, "but they were not of us" (1Jn. 2:19).

Irenaeus' Statement:

Irenaeus says that the antichrist "shall sit" in the temple of God (AH5, XXV.2).

The Truth:

Paul said that the antichrist already "sits" there. (And had Paul been alive in Irenaeus' day, he would no doubt have told Irenaeus that the antichrist was sitting in him!) That is an important distinction. The antichrist takes up residence in God's temple as he persuades believers to accept his doctrine and to reject Paul. As an "aged" man, the heavy-hearted Paul lamented that all the congregations in Asia had forsaken his gospel (2Tim. 1:15). The apostles, during their lifetimes, lived to see the "great apostasy" take place in the body of Christ.

The antichrist has been sitting in the temple of God, then, since the days of the apostles, teaching that he is not here yet. This son of Satan, using men such as Irenaeus, pervert the right ways of God. They invented the religious system known as Christianity and imprisoned God's people within it, even to this day. But the truth will shortly set them free.

Irenaeus' Statement:

Irenaeus not only teaches that the antichrist's sitting "in the temple of God" would be a future event but also that the temple in which the antichrist sits is to be a building which will in the future be built in Jerusalem (AH5, XXV.2).

The Truth:

This is false.

The only temple of God that exists on earth is the body of Christ. "Know ye not", wrote Paul, "that your body is the temple of the holy Ghost?" (1Cor. 6:19). Even if someone in the

future builds a building for the worship of God in Jerusalem and calls it the temple of God, that building will not be the temple of God. What men call a thing is irrelevant; God is not confused by our delusions. Nothing can be the temple of God if God does not dwell there.

It is foolish to look for the antichrist to come, when he is here, or to look for him to sit in something that never will exist again, an earthly building that is the temple of God. The antichrist is already here, has been here since the days of the apostles, and the temple in which he now sits is the only temple of God there is: the people of God. This great imposter has been sitting among the saints on a stolen throne for so long now that he calls it home; and why not? Over the centuries, he has shaped the doctrine and controlled the behavior of God's people to the extent that he has made a home of us.

PERFECTION (OR, "BEING SPIRITUAL")

Irenaeus' Statement:

Irenaeus quotes Paul's words in his letter to the Corinthians, "We speak wisdom among them that are perfect", and he says that Paul was referring to everyone who has received the Spirit "and who through the Spirit of God do speak with all languages, as he used himself also to speak" (AH5, VI.1).

The Truth:

This is not true.

In writing to "those who are perfect", Paul was not speaking to everyone who had received the Spirit and spoke in tongues, but to those who had matured in Christ after receiving the Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues. In Paul's doctrine, they are *spiritual* who not only have received the Spirit but who have also matured in their understanding of, and in their walk with, God (1Cor. 3:1-3).

Irenaeus' Statement:

Irenaeus later amends his definition of a perfect person in Christ as one who has "had the Spirit of God remaining in him, and has preserved his soul and body blameless, holding fast the faith of God . . . and [has maintained his] righteous dealings with respect to his neighbors" (AH5, VI.1). And again, he says that spiritual people are those "who possess the earnest of the Spirit, and who are not enslaved by the lust of the flesh, but are subject to the Spirit, and who in all things walk according to the light of reason" (AH5, VIII.2).

The Truth:

Irenaeus' philosophical bent ("the light of *reason*" instead of the light of the *Spirit*), causes his definition of spiritual people to fall somewhat short of what Paul would have said, but this is an improvement over some of his earlier definitions of spirituality.

Irenaeus' Statement:

As opposed to spiritual people, Irenaeus defines carnal people as people who "have no thought of anything else but carnal things" (AH5, VIII.2).

The Truth:

This is an inadequate definition. Carnally minded people can be religious in the extreme, and they may ponder a great deal on spiritual things, as Irenaeus himself did. They are carnally minded not because they think of *nothing* but earthly things but because what they think is not led by the holy Spirit.

JOSHUA'S FACE

Irenaeus' Statement:

Irenaeus teaches that Joshua's face glowed brightly, though not as brightly as Moses' face did, when Moses laid his hands on Joshua's head (Frag. Ire. XX).

The Truth:

This did not happen.

SALVATION

Irenaeus' Statement:

Irenaeus condemns heretics for teaching that they will be saved by virtue of their being "spiritual", rather than on the basis of their conduct (AH1, VI.2).

The Truth:

Irenaeus is telling some truth here. He apparently understands that God requires holiness of those who would be saved in the end, "without which no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14).

On the other hand, those who live a holy life are the ones Paul called "spiritual". The conduct of spiritual people proves that they are indeed spiritual. Irenaeus' dividing of "spiritual" from "righteous conduct" is unbiblical.

Irenaeus' Statement:

Irenaeus uses "to save" with the meaning of "to rescue" numerous times (AH2, VI.2; AH4, XXVIII.3).

The Truth:

Irenaeus is right in this matter. "To rescue" is one of the biblical meanings for the phrase, "to save". For example, the Bible says that Jesus saved Peter from drowning (Mt. 14:30-31).

Irenaeus' Statement:

At least twice, Irenaeus appears to use the term *saved* as modern fundamentalists use it (AH5, VI.1); to wit, as a synonym for conversion. However, a few sentences he clarifies what he thinks, which is that "salvation" refers to the eternal inheritance of the righteous (AH5, VI.1).

The Truth:

Converted is never a biblical meaning for the word *saved*, and Irenaeus only occasionally *appears* to use it so, as a careful reading of his works makes clear.

Irenaeus' Statement:

Irenaeus teaches that “without the Spirit of God we cannot be saved” (AH5, IX.3; Frag. Ire. XXVI). Also, he says that it is the communion of the Spirit by which we are saved (AH5, XI. 1). And again, he says that it is by the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Spirit of God that we are saved (AH5, XI.1).

The Truth:

All these statements are true. They indicate that Irenaeus understands that salvation is what is wrought in the lives of God's people by His Spirit and that without the Spirit of God, no one has any hope for salvation. As Paul wrote, “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his” (Rom. 8:9). And in another place, “It is God who is working within you [by the Spirit] both to will and to do His good pleasure” (Phip. 2:!3).

SPIRITUAL GIFTS AND POWER**Irenaeus' Statement:**

Irenaeus states that the gifts of the Spirit are still being exercised in his day (AH2, XXX.8), as well as miracles being wrought (AH2, XXXII.4). In particular, he mentions that the gift of prophecy comes upon “those to whom God sends His grace from above” (AH1, XIII.4), and he tells of the dead being brought back to life by the assembly of believers “directing her prayers to the Lord” (AH2, XXXI.2, 5) and that those who were brought back to life “remained among us for many years” (AH2, XXXII.4). “Others have foreknowledge of things to come; they see visions and utter prophetic expressions” (AH2, XXXII.4). Some others among the saints healed the sick “by laying their hands upon them,” while others cast out demons by the power of the Spirit (AH2, XXXII.4). In fact, he states that miraculous works were “frequently done in the brotherhood” (AH2, XXXI.2) and that the saints had grown “accustomed to work miracles” (AH2, XXXII.5). Irenaeus states with great confidence his belief that “the name of our Lord Jesus Christ even now confers benefits [upon men], and cures thoroughly and effectively all who anywhere believe on him” (AH2, XXXII.5).

The Truth:

Irenaeus' faith in the power of God is commendable, and his testimony is believable. He is like other early Church fathers, in that miraculous experiences with the power of God was an element of his faith.

Many modern Christians are not of the same faith as their fathers as regards the active working of the Spirit among them with power and gifts. This, despite the fact that none of the early Christian Church fathers in this book indicated that they expected a cessation of spiritual gifts. On the contrary, they spoke of miracles as if they were an essential part of the gospel.

Also, it is worthy of note that Irenaeus seems to employ Paul's euphemism for speaking in tongues at Spirit baptism, when he says that Paul wrote to those “who had received the Spirit of God, ‘by which we cry, Abba, Father’” (Rom. 8:15; AH5, VIII.1).

Note:

Irenaeus claims that certain Jews of his time were still exorcising demons by calling upon the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (AH2, VI.2). This is interesting, but doubtful. The only biblical example of this is found in Acts 19, and in that case, the Jewish exorcists failed miserably.

SUPERSTITION*THE MYTH OF JOHN'S FEAR***Irenaeus' Statement:**

Irenaeus describes the apostle John as cutting short his visit to a bath house in Ephesus when he discovered Cerinthus, a heretic, bathing there. Irenaeus says that the apostle fled in terror, "saying, 'Let us fly, lest even the bath house fall down, because Cerinthus, the enemy of truth, is within'" (AH3, III.4).

The Truth:

This is an idle tale. No apostle ever fled in terror from a heretic.

John would certainly have known God far better than to think that his heavenly Father would cause a building to collapse on him because a heretic was close by. This story, which Irenaeus tells with utmost seriousness, is a silly myth.

*THE WORD***Irenaeus' Statement:**

Irenaeus teaches that the Word of the Father descended to earth and "is the same also that ascended." This Word is "the Only-begotten Son of the only God . . . our Lord Jesus Christ" (AH1, IX.3). He also teaches that the Word was God's agent in creation (AH1, XXII.1).

The Truth:

These things are true.

At no time does Irenaeus embrace the later Christian contention that the Bible itself is the Word of God. Whenever Irenaeus uses the phrase, "Word of God", he uses it rightly, either as a reference to what the Father says or as a reference to the person of the Son of God.

*THE SEPTUAGINT***Irenaeus' Statement:**

Irenaeus adheres to the mythological origination of the Septuagint, as do other fathers of Christianity (AH3, XXI.2; AH4, XXI.2).

The Truth:

According to this myth, the Greek version of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, was miraculously produced by seventy Jewish elders (hence the Greek word, "septuagint"). Here is the myth, as related by Irenaeus:

“Before the Romans possessed their kingdom, while the Macedonians [Greeks] still held Asia, Ptolemy the son of Lagus, being anxious to adorn the library which he had founded in Alexandria with a collection of the writings of all men, which were works of merit, made request to the people of Jerusalem, that they should have their Scriptures translated into the Greek language. And they – for at that time they were still subject to the Macedonians – sent to Ptolemy seventy of their elders, who were thoroughly skilled in the Scriptures and in both the languages, to carry out what he had desired.

But he, wishing to test them individually, and fearing lest they might perchance, by taking counsel together, conceal the truth of the Scriptures by their interpretation, separated them from each other, and commanded them all to write the same translation. He did this with respect to all the books [of the Old Testament].

But when they came together in the same place before Ptolemy, and each of them compared his own interpretation with that of every other, God was indeed glorified, and the Scriptures were acknowledged as truly divine. For all of them read out the common translation [which they had individually prepared] in the *very same words and the very same names, from beginning to end* [emphasis mine], so that even the Gentiles present perceived that the Scriptures had been interpreted by the inspiration of God.”

Now, I believe in miracles. It is altogether possible for God to have given to each of those separated scholars a verbatim translation of the Hebrew into the Greek language. But what makes this story so completely unbelievable is that the Septuagint version of the Old Testament is undeniably riddled with translation errors. Some sections of it, according to reviews I have read, are just plain bad. I cannot believe that God inspired those seventy Jewish translators, all working independently of the others, to write the same wrong word-for-word translation.

Ptolemy may have actually commissioned this translation of the Old Testament into Greek. There may have been seventy elders from Jerusalem who worked on the translation. And the translation may have been undertaken so that a copy of the Hebrew Scriptures could be placed in the great library in Alexandria, Egypt. All that may have been true. We cannot know certainly whether those elements of the story are true or not. But no reasonable person can be expected to believe that God Himself inspired the errors in translation which exist in the Septuagint, much less that He inspired seventy different men, working in seventy different places, to make precisely the same errors.

The erudite Irenaeus should not have repeated as true this “cunningly devised fable” of the Septuagint’s origin. A man who places such faith in a myth cannot know the difference between true and false faith.

TRINITARIAN ISSUES

At times, for his own crafty purposes, Satan raises up religious leaders who are wild and transparent heretics. Examples in the late 20th century in the United States were Jim Jones and David Koresh. Satan's purpose for inspiring such men is to give Christian ministers someone at which to point an innocent-looking finger, for by doing this, those ministers appear to be the protectors of the body of Christ and defenders of the faith. However, both the wild and transparent heretics and the well-trained, disguised ones work for the same master. The first are Satan's expendables, thoroughly despised by him but necessary for his purposes. The latter are Satan's pride and joy, for whom he sacrifices the other.

Satan led Irenaeus into just such a trap. By inspiring some men to proclaim the existence of gods and other powers in heaven above the Father of Jesus, Satan offered Irenaeus a target at which to aim his condemnations, thereby turning the attention of the listener from Irenaeus' false doctrines to the false doctrines of others. Thus, just as Satan planned, Irenaeus is made to appear to be a defender of the faith. Not having been sent by God, however, and carried away with his own intellectual prowess, Irenaeus made thorough shipwreck of the holy faith he may once have possessed.

Irenaeus concentrates his efforts on refuting heretics who had developed elaborate schemes of invisible, divine powers. So bizarre were their teachings that one wonders why any leader among believers would have given them any attention at all. There certainly was no danger that those crazy schemers would "deceive, if it were possible, the very elect" of God. The danger of deception lay in the saints giving ear to Irenaeus, not in listening to those whom he condemns as heretics. In his zeal to refute them, Irenaeus so heavily stresses the closeness, unity, and uniqueness of the Father and the Son that he issues unordained and unwise statements which would contribute to the development of the doctrine of the Trinity.

For all that, Irenaeus himself does not at any time teach the Trinity doctrine, and he clearly knows nothing of it. That would be a later development. It is impossible to imagine that if Irenaeus had believed in the Trinity, as later taught by Christian theologians, he would have chosen not to use it to contradict the heresies against which his writings are directed. Irenaeus clearly does not believe that the Spirit of God is a person; otherwise, he certainly would have said so. Nor does he believe that the Father and the Son are the same person. However, in his philosophical efforts to refute the speculative philosophy of the heretics, he overstates his case, and brings confused and contradictory statements into the argument.

Irenaeus' Statement:

After commenting upon a verse in Psalms (33:9) concerning creation, Irenaeus says this: "He [the Father] commanded, and they were created", Irenaeus asks "Whom, therefore, did He command? The Word, no doubt, by whom the heavens were established" (AH3, VIII.3).

Irenaeus teaches that the Father is "God, the only Creator" and "of His own free will, He created all things" (AH2, I.1). At the same time, he acknowledges the biblical truth that

the Father created all things *through* His Son. “The rule of truth which we hold is that there is one God Almighty, who made all things by His Word” (AH1, XXII.1). “The Word”, of course, is the Son of God, and accordingly, Irenaeus states that “the Father made all things by him” (AH1, XXII.1).

“Just as regards success in war, which is ascribed to the king because the king, even though not personally in the battle, commanded the battle to take place, so the Father is credited with being the Creator of all, though the Son actually performed the creation act, because the Father willed and empowered him to do it” (AH2, II.3). “Wherefore, we do not say that it was the axe which cut the wood, or the saw which divided it; but one would very properly say that the *man* cut and divided it” (AH2, II.3).

The Truth:

This is sound doctrine.

Irenaeus’ Statement:

Irenaeus acknowledges that the Son was blessed by the Father with “dominion over all Creation” (AH3, VI.1).

Further, Irenaeus observes that because the Son (the Word) was empowered by the Father to fulfill His will in Creation, the Son and the Father both may rightly be called God and Lord (AH3, VIII.3).

The Truth:

This is true, and it poses no biblical difficulty at all. At the appropriate times, either the Son or the Father may be referred to as “God”.

Irenaeus’ Statement:

At times, Irenaeus seems to leave out the person of Christ when discussing the act of creation (AH2, II.4-5).

The Truth:

It appears that in Irenaeus’ time, there were heresies which assigned responsibility of Creation to various gods or powers, even to angels, and which imagined a higher and nobler authority than the Father of the Lord Jesus. Waxing overly vigorous in his opposition of them, Irenaeus, at times, depersonalizes the Word of God in order to make his point that ultimately there is no other responsible for Creation than God the Father.

Irenaeus’ Statement:

In an attempt to prove his theological position against the heretics, Irenaeus resorts to philosophy and condemns the notion that God the Father *needed* any other being to help in creating all things (AH2, II.4-5).

The Truth:

It is true, of course, that God needed no help in creating this creation; but, that is not the issue. The issue is whether the Father *chose* to use any other in creating all things.

The revelation of the gospel is that according to His own will, He did use another in the creation process, and the other person was His Son. In trying to shoot down false doctrines of heretics, Irenaeus wounds himself in the foot at times by virtually denying the Son's part in Creation (e.g. AH2, XXXV. 4). This is contrary both to the Scriptures and to Irenaeus' own statements in other places.

Irenaeus' Statement:

Irenaeus says that the Scriptures never refer to any other but the Father as God (AH2, XXVIII.4).

The Truth:

This is another example of Irenaeus overstating his case.

Irenaeus understands that the Father is God over all, even over Jesus (e.g., AH5, XXII.1), and that may be the truth to which Irenaeus is referring. If so, he is correct. The Father is the one God whom both Jesus and Paul proclaimed (Mk. 10:18; Eph. 4:6). But Irenaeus should have, and very easily could have, made his point in a less confusing manner.

Jesus is referred to as God in many places in the Bible, such as Hebrews 1:8-9. Remarkably, Irenaeus himself admits this in another place (AH3, VIII.3).

Moses is also called a god by God Himself in Exodus 7:1, and the judges and prophets among God's people are also called gods (Ex. 22:28; Ps. 82:6 with Jn. 10:34-35). So, the use of the term *god* with reference to someone other than the Father is biblical, and especially is this true when speaking of the Son, God's agent in Creation.

Irenaeus' Statement:

The Church father Justin maintained that God the Father has never spoken directly to any man and never will do so; moreover, he taught that the Father never even moves from His place "wherever that is" (Dial. CXXVII). Irenaeus, on the other hand, insists that even though the Son was one of the angels who visited Abraham (AH3, VI.1), it was "God the Father who spake with Abraham" (AH4, XLI.4).

The Truth:

Irenaeus is unclear regarding his position on a number of issues, including this one. He holds (again, contrary to Justin, Dial. CXXVII) that it was God the Father who gave the Law to Moses (AH5, XXI.3), but then he teaches that the Son is the one who spoke with Moses (AH3, VI.2). Did he mean that the Father willed, and the Son performed the deed, as in Creation? If so, he is wrong, as Justin is, concerning who it was that met with Moses on Mt. Sinai. That God was clearly the Father, not the Son.

Irenaeus' Statement:

Irenaeus says that "neither the prophets, nor the apostles, nor the Lord Christ in his own person, did acknowledge any other Lord or God, but the God and Lord supreme" (AH3,

IX.1). The apostles and prophets, he adds, confessed both the Father and the Son, but the Son confessed only that the Father was God (AH3, IX.1; also AH3, VIII.1).

The Truth:

This is true.

Jesus never claimed to be God. A few of his statements have been interpreted that way by Christian theologians, but they do so only in order to justify their Trinitarian faith.

Irenaeus' Statement:

“The Lord, receiving [the Spirit] as a gift from his Father, does himself also confer it upon those who are partakers of himself, sending the holy Spirit upon all the earth” (AH3, XVII.2).

The Truth:

This is true.

This truth emphasizes the Son's utter dependence upon the Father for his own life and power. Jesus said, “As the Father has life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in himself, and has given him authority to execute judgment also” (Jn. 5:26-27; see also Jn. 15:26).

Irenaeus' Statement:

Irenaeus says, “Even the Lord, the very Son of God, allowed that the Father alone knows the very day and hour of judgment, when he plainly declares, ‘But of that hour knoweth no man, neither the Son, but the Father only’” (AH2, XXVIII.6).

The Truth:

This is true.

This reference to Jesus' own words, by which Irenaeus confessed that the Father possessed greater knowledge than the Son, is obviously intended by Irenaeus to emphasize the Father's superiority to and authority over the Son.

Irenaeus' Statement:

Should someone ask how the Son was produced (that is, came into being in eternity past), Irenaeus says that “No man understands that production, or generation, or calling, or revelation, or by whatever name one may describe his generation, which is in fact altogether indescribable. Neither Valentinus, nor Marcion, nor Saturninus, nor Basilides [the heretics against whom Irenaeus argued], nor angels, nor archangels, nor principalities, nor powers [possess that knowledge], but the Father only who begat, and the Son who was begotten” (AH2, XXVIII, 6).

The Truth:

It is true that no man understands the generation of the Son, but whether any other creature understands it or not is unknown, including the Son. If anyone other than the Father does understand it, however, it is only that the Father has chosen to reveal it to him.

Notably, both Irenaeus and Christians who followed in his footsteps avoid the term *creation* to describe how the Father brought the Son into being. They seem unwilling to admit the simple biblical truth that the Son of God was created by his Father and was ordained by the Father to create everything else. Still, as other statements of Irenaeus (such as the one that follows) show, he is not averse to the *idea* that the Father brought the Son into being.

Irenaeus' Statement:

In the act of creation, says Irenaeus, “all things which proceed from Him [the Father]. . .do indeed receive their own beginning of generation, and on this account are inferior to Him who formed them, inasmuch as they are not unbegotten” (AH2, XXXIV.2).

The Truth:

This is all true, even when applied to the Son.

All that proceeds (into existence) from the Father or that is generated (into existence) by the Father is “inferior to Him”. Irenaeus often says that the Son was begotten by the Father and that the Father alone is the “Unbegotten God”. By this, and perhaps without his fully realizing the import of his own words, Irenaeus is teaching that the Son had a beginning and is, therefore, inferior to the Father, as Jesus himself confessed (Jn. 14:28), and that the Son’s continued existence is dependent upon the Father, as Jesus also taught (Jn. 6:57).

Irenaeus asks, “What are we to learn from the fact that Jesus said the Father alone knew all things,” except it be “that we may learn through him that the Father is above all things. ‘For the Father’, says [Jesus], ‘is greater than I’” (AH2, XXVIII.8). Amen.

Note:

There is not a hairbreadth of difference between saying that the Son was *created* by God and saying that he was *produced* by God. Every way the matter is viewed, the truth is exactly as Arius (who was condemned by Roman Catholic Christians) is said to have taught: “There was, when he [the Son] was not.” And if “there was, when he was not”, then the Son’s life was given to him by the Father, which is exactly what Jesus said is the case: “For as the Father has life in Himself, so has He given to the Son to have life in himself” (Jn. 5:26; also 6:57). By whatever term used, if the Son was given life by the Father, then there was a time when the Son did not have life. That is not philosophy; that is biblical revelation and simple, common sense.

Irenaeus' Statement:

Laboring to refute the heretic Marcion, who taught, among other things, that there was a second God besides the Father, Irenaeus announces that “there is only one God . . . He is Father, He is God, He the Founder, He the Maker, He the Creator, who made [all] things by Himself, that is, through His Word and Wisdom. . .” (AH2, XXX.9).

The Truth:

Here we see an excellent example of those times when, in his heated passion to contradict other theologians of his time, Irenaeus begins to drift from the simple confession of Christ as God's servant and agent in creation and to complicate the issue with rhetoric of his own. Note especially this next bizarre phrase, which follows this statement of Irenaeus by only a few sentences and which later became a fundamental tenet of the Trinitarian faith.

Irenaeus' Statement:

Refuting the heretics who imagined deities other than, and even superior to, the Father, Irenaeus says that the Son "eternally co-existed with the Father" (AH2, XXX.9).

The Truth:

If this was original with Irenaeus and not added into the text by later Christians, this can be seen as a step toward the development of Trinitarian doctrine. But how could the Son have co-existed eternally with the Father, if the Father gave life to the Son? If the Son is co-existent with the Father, then how is it that only the Father is "the Unbegotten God", as Irenaeus otherwise maintains?

If the Son co-existed with the Father, then the Son is necessarily, as Trinitarians teach, co-equal with the Father. And if that were true, then Irenaeus has not refuted Marcion at all; on the contrary, he has agreed with him, for with that doctrine, Irenaeus presents to us another deity, equal in all respects with the Father! One could even argue that to have a Trinitarian god is to have a god who is greater than the Father, for the Father's power would be broadened by the additional attributes of the Son and the Spirit.

We can discern the clever hand of Satan in the argument of Irenaeus, who argues against heretics because of their teaching that there is one equal to or greater than the Father, while laying the groundwork for a doctrine which teaches, in essence, that very thing.

Irenaeus' Statement:

"All saw the Father in the Son," writes Irenaeus, "for the Father is the invisible of the Son, but the Son is the visible of the Father" (AH4, V.6).

The Truth:

Such nebulous statements do nothing to edify the saints. This mysterious language is too philosophical to hold much spiritual truth. What do his words mean? Was everything that was invisible about Jesus, the Father? What about Jesus' will, which was invisible and which differed from the Father's in the garden of Gethsemene (Mt. 26:39)? What about his mind, which did not know all that the Father knew? Was that the Father, too? Of course not. And by saying that the Son is "the visible of the Father", is Irenaeus saying that Jesus perfectly represented the Father on earth (which is true), or is he saying that the Father does not possess a body of His own and that when He is seen, whether on earth or in heaven, He is seen as Jesus (which is false)?

It is true, as Paul taught, that the visible things of Creation teach us about the invisible realities of God (Rom. 1:20). By observing nature, we may learn of the Father, but only in part. We may learn more perfectly of God by following Jesus, the image of the Father (Heb. 1:3). But just as we do not say that the stars and other elements of Creation *are* God

(pantheism) simply because they teach us about Him, so we do not say that Jesus is Jehovah the Father simply because he perfectly reflects the Father's will and wisdom.

The strange, philosophical language of Trinitarianism was a long time in development. Such statements as the last two from Irenaeus, and the next one, clearly foreshadowed that language.

Irenaeus' Statement:

Irenaeus uses the enigmatic phrase, "God of God" in referring to the Son (Frag. Ire. LIV).

The Truth:

By this, Irenaeus may mean only that the Son, created by the Father, was made God over all Creation, as Moses, on a far lower level, was made god over Egypt and its king (Ex. 7:1). Whatever his intentions, however, this phrase was later used frequently by Christian Trinitarians to affirm their faith in the co-equality in all respects of the Father and the Son. The phrase may have in fact been added to these writings of Irenaeus by one of those later Trinitarians to make it appear that Irenaeus taught their doctrine.

THE WORD

Irenaeus' Statement:

A central focus of Irenaeus' and Justin's teachings about God is *the Word*. Irenaeus believes that the Word "always co-existed" with God (AH2, XXV.3).

The Truth:

This is true only if *Word* here is defined simply as God's ability to reason and to speak. God has always been able to do that. But the person of the Son of God, who is often called the Word of God, was created by the Father and, therefore, could not possibly have "co-existed in eternity" with Him.

THE PERSONHOOD OF THE SPIRIT

Irenaeus' Statement:

Irenaeus employs the enigmatic phrase, "character of the holy Spirit" (AH1, XXIII.1).

The Truth:

Along with the idea that the Son is co-equal with the Father, a foundation stone of Trinitarianism is that the Spirit of God is itself a person. If that is shown to be false, the whole Trinitarian faith collapses.

Even though Irenaeus uses the phrase, "the character of the holy Spirit", he does not at any time teach that the Spirit is a person; on the contrary, he condemns the heretics of his day partly because they taught, in their bizarre genealogy of universal powers, that the Spirit was a person. To be specific, according to Irenaeus, those false teachers taught that the Spirit of God is "the first woman" (AH1, XXX.1), with whom both the Father and the Son had intercourse, producing a third man, who was the Christ (AH1, XXX.1-2).

As the reader can see from the above description of one of their doctrines, the heretics against whom Irenaeus taught, were transparently wrong. Irenaeus opposed them with errors of his own which were not so easily discerned.

Irenaeus' Statement:

Irenaeus holds that the Son was always with the Father, but then adds that the Spirit was always with Him, too, as if there were a third being present (AH4, XX.3). A similar statement shortly follows: "Thus God was revealed; for God the Father is shown forth through all these [operations], the Spirit indeed working, and the Son ministering, while the Father was approving" (AH4, XX.6).

The Truth:

Naturally, the Spirit of God was always with God, just as your spirit has always been with you. God's Spirit is God's life. That does not in any way make the Spirit of God a person.

Again, this and other similar statements contradict so many other words from Irenaeus about the relationship of the Father and the Son that one wonders who really penned these words, Irenaeus or a later Catholic editor.

Irenaeus' Statement:

Irenaeus makes other statements which also seem to personalize the Spirit. For example, "For with Him [i.e., the Father] were always present the Word and Wisdom, the Son and the Spirit, by whom and in whom, freely and spontaneously, He made all things, to whom He also speaks, saying, 'Let us make man in our image'" (AH4, XX.1; AH5, I.3). He also writes, "For by the hands of the Father, that is, the Son and the Spirit, man . . . was made in the likeness of God" (AH5, VI.1).

The Truth:

It appears that Irenaeus is saying in these places that *the Father was speaking to the Spirit*. This necessarily implies that the Spirit is a person other than the Father, who can hear what the Father said.

Unlike Irenaeus, Paul referred to Christ, not to the Spirit, as "the wisdom of God" (1Cor. 1:24).

"THEY ALL HAVE FORSAKEN ME"

Irenaeus' Statement:

Irenaeus seeks to legitimize his doctrines by saying, "To these things all the Asiatic churches testify" (AH3, III.4).

The Truth:

This may very well have been true.

The broken-hearted, aged apostle Paul wrote to Timothy: "All they which are in Asia be turned away from me" (2Tim. 1:15). If Irenaeus is telling the truth, and all the

Congregations of Asia really did approve of him and his words, it is only because they had apostatized from the true faith, as Paul, with much grief, wrote. No believers who remained faithful to the truth Paul taught would have agreed with Irenaeus.

Smyrna was one of those congregations in the Roman province of Asia that forsook Paul and his gospel. If Polycarp really was the Bishop of Smyrna, as was claimed, then Irenaeus' glowing admiration of him is all the more understandable.

CONCLUSION

A Developing Tradition

Perceptive artists and writers know that the Christian tradition of Christmas is still in its formative stage and that the opportunity exists for someone to still have a hand in shaping that tradition for future generations. Consequently, on television, in movies, and in children's books, new and imaginative variations on the origin and meaning of the Christmas tradition and of the origins of old Santa Claus himself are constantly being offered to the public. The originators of these new ideas hope that theirs will be the one that will capture the public's imagination and become an integral part of the developing Christmas tradition.

One successful example of this is the nineteenth century poem, "The Night Before Christmas". There can never again be a credible myth about Christmas unless allowance is made for the "jolly old elf" who comes down the chimney. Another such success is the song, "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer". It was offered to the public in the early twentieth century, was warmly received, and subsequently became a permanent part of the Christmas tradition. Every future addition to the Christmas tradition must now accommodate Rudolph.

This is the kind of thing that was happening during the time of the early fathers of Christianity. They seemed to sense that something big was developing in the world and, so, were rushing to offer their versions of the gospel to the public, in hope of being among those whose doctrines would be incorporated into the developing tradition. Those whose offerings were successful are those whom Christians now call their fathers. The failures either are now unknown or they are the ones who were publicly condemned as heretics and persecuted by the victors and whose records remain. But the prize for those whose doctrines were incorporated into the growing tradition of Christianity was enormous. It was that for which all flesh longs: fame.

But there must have been at that same time another group, a group which was neither participating in nor seeking to help develop the burgeoning Christian tradition, a sector of the family of faith which would have been considered by leaders in Christianity to be heretical, but was not. They would have been the small groups, scattered throughout the Empire, who clung resolutely to the truth Paul taught the Gentiles. They would have

watched and grieved as the fathers of Christianity stole the show and won the hearts of the majority of the saints, just as Paul grieved in his old age as he witnessed the beginnings of that great apostasy.

In time, with all the military might of the Christian Roman Empire to enforce their rapidly developing version of the gospel, those fathers could and did quench the light of truth, and they sang diffidently, as a crafty whore upon her bed, “I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow” (Rev. 18:7).

Since those days, that pretty whore has sung her lovely siren song and has brought eternal death to millions. Those who have been given the grace to see through her painted countenance and behold the blackness of her heart, and who have given warning to others, have been ridiculed, persecuted, and condemned by her and her ministers. The masses have fallen for the Great Whore’s seductive appearance, her phony humility, and her cunningly devised doctrines. She has seemed to be right; however, wise Solomon remarked that although the man who is first to argue his case always *seems* to be right, his neighbor may come afterward and reveal the truth of the story.

Christianity, your neighbor has arrived.

Appendix

GOD'S BODY

BODY PARTS	SCRIPTURES
head & hair	Dan. 7:9
eyes	Prov. 15:3; Dt. 11:12; Ps. 34:15
eyelids	Ps. 11:4
ears	Ps. 17:6; 34:15
nose (smell)	Lev. 26:31; Amos 5:21; Phip. 4:18
nostrils	Ex. 15:8; Job 4:9; Ps. 18:8, 15
mouth	Dt. 8:3
tongue	Isa. 30:27
lips	Job 11:5; 23:12; Isa. 30:27
breath	Ps. 33:6
voice	Gen. 3:8; Dt. 4:12; Isa. 6:8; 30:30
face\ countenance	Ex. 33:20; Ps. 13:1 Num. 6:26; Ps. 4:6
arm	Dt. 33:27; Isa. 51:5
hands	Gen. 49:24; Ex. 15:17; Isa. 5:12
finger	Ex. 8:19; 31:18; Lk. 11:20; Ps. 8:3
back	Ex. 33:23
feet	Ex. 24:10; 2Sam. 22:10; Isa. 60:13; Nah. 1:3
a general bodily form; an "image"	Num. 12:8; Jas. 3:9; Rev. 4:3 Gen. 1:26-27 with 5:3
heart	Gen. 6:6; Hos. 11:8
spirit	Gen. 1:2; 1Cor. 2:11
soul	Isa. 1:14; 42:1; Jer. 5:9, 29

Note 1: The Scriptures also mention God riding, walking, sitting, standing, feeling, speaking, and thinking. Yes, we are made in His image!

Note 2: Wings of the Almighty are mentioned several times (Ruth 2:12; Ps. 17:8; 36:7; 57:1; 61:4; 63:7; 91:4). However, wings are mentioned figuratively throughout the Bible (e.g., as belonging to Assyria in Isa. 8:8; Moab in Jer. 48:9; the risen Christ in Mal. 4:2).

CONCERNING THE TERM “CHRISTIAN”

All of us who were brought up in Western society have grown up in a culture in which the term *Christian* commands great respect. It has a pleasant ring in the ears of Westerners. Until recently, it had never crossed our minds that the term *Christian* is a title unworthy of Christ. But when the evidence is carefully examined, or more correctly, when God opens our eyes to His truth, we see clearly that *Christian* is a title that was given to the saints by the world, not our heavenly Father.

There are but three places in the Bible where the word *Christian* appears. Those three places are Acts 11:26; 26:28; and 1Peter 4:16. We will examine each one.

In Acts 11:26, we are told that “the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.” Please note that the verb in that sentence is a passive verb; the followers of Jesus *were called* Christians by others. This strongly suggests that the saints did not invent the name “Christian” for themselves. This fact is acknowledged even in Gerhard Kittel’s *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, a scholarly work that is used by biblical scholars of every ilk, everywhere on earth where New Testament Greek is seriously studied and used. In Volume IX, page 537, it is affirmed that “it is likely that the term [*Christian*] was first used by non-Christians”. (How this same scholar can justify his earlier statement that *Christian* is “obviously the term which the original believers used for themselves” [p. 536] is beyond me.) The important point here is that the idea that non-believers coined the term *Christian* as a title for disciples of Jesus is not a far-fetched one. The world’s leading scholars admit the same.

That being so, we should ask ourselves, “Why would the unbelieving people in Antioch call the followers of Jesus *Christians*?”¹ The first reason must involve the type of city Antioch was. It was a cosmopolitan, sophisticated city, a crossroads of culture from Asia, Africa, and Europe. It was one of the three or four most popular and celebrated cities of that era. Many of its citizens were well educated and wealthy, especially compared to the other cities and regions of the Roman world and Eastern lands. It is not surprising that the witty citizens of Antioch would coin the title *Christian* in reference to believers.

To rephrase the question a little more completely, we ask, “Why would the unbelieving people in Antioch call the followers of Jesus *Christians* if they themselves did not believe

in Christ?” Wouldn’t they be admitting that Jesus was the Christ, by saying his disciples were Christians? The simple answer is that by using the term *Christian*, they would indeed be confessing there was a real Messiah of Israel – unless they were being sarcastic! And that must have been the case. The second, and obvious, reason that *Christian* was the term which the Antiochans invented to refer to God’s people is that believers claimed to have found the Christ, or Messiah, of Israel. To mockingly call believers “Messiah-ers”, or “Christ-ians”, is something that sarcastic unbelievers would do. This leads us to the third, and last, reason that the Antiochans would have chosen that term: it was funny to them.

The Antiochans, as I have said, were sophisticated, worldly people, proud of their city and their status in the Roman world. It suits their times and their attitude for them to have been the ones to come up with a clever, sarcastic name for those who believed that the carpenter’s son from Nazareth, whom Pontius Pilate crucified, was the Savior of the world. That notion would have been absurd to them, pathetic to the point of comedic. The term *Christian* would not in the least have been considered a complimentary title. In that title, there was no confession from the Antiochans of faith in Israel’s Messiah at all. It would have been a belittling title of mockery, scorn, and ridicule, cast upon the humble followers of Christ Jesus by a smug, unbelieving world.

In summary, these are the three reasons that the Antiochans would have called the disciples *Christians*: (1) the pride and sophistication of the Antiochans, (2) the claim of believers in Antioch that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah, or Christ, of God, and (3) the smug sarcasm of the Antiochans toward that claim.

ACTS 11:26

It seems obvious that by the time Luke wrote the book of Acts that the title *Christian* had already been popularized as a term for those who followed Jesus, and in his *Acts of the Apostles*, he apparently thought that the reader might want to know where that term originated. Hence, Luke’s story of the first use of the word. But the real issue is not *whether* it had become popular by then, but *with whom* had it become popular? It was certainly not popular with Jesus’ disciples; they would hardly have felt worthy to refer to themselves by any form of the sacred title of Christ. It seems to me that for followers of Jesus to have invented that word for themselves would have required an arrogance and pride that they simply did not possess.

ACTS 26:28

The second time we find the word *Christian* is while Paul, as a Roman prisoner, was reasoning so powerfully before King Agrippa concerning the righteousness of the gospel of Christ. So impressed was the king that he interrupted Paul and said, “You almost persuade me to be a Christian.”

What does this remark show? Most readers move on past this unexpected comment without stopping to consider all that it tells us. The king’s remark shows us that he

considered Paul to be one of those who were called Christians and that the word “Christian” was such a disreputable term that he could not bear the thought of being called one, even if it meant running the risk of rejecting the truth of God. In other words, *Christian* was known at that time as a term of reproach, a reproach which the king was unwilling to bear.

The word *Christian* being a term of scorn and reproach, several things are obvious. First, and most importantly, believers would not have made up a term of scorn for themselves. They *were called* Christians by others. Secondly, the king was paying Paul a very high compliment. He was telling Paul that his preaching and his reasoning from the Scriptures was so profound and convincing that he, the great King Agrippa, had almost been persuaded to confess it himself and, so, lose his exalted social standing and reputation and be branded as a Christian himself. Paul would not have quibbled with the king over using the derogatory term *Christian* in reference to him when the king was actually using it to show how powerfully Paul had confessed Christ.

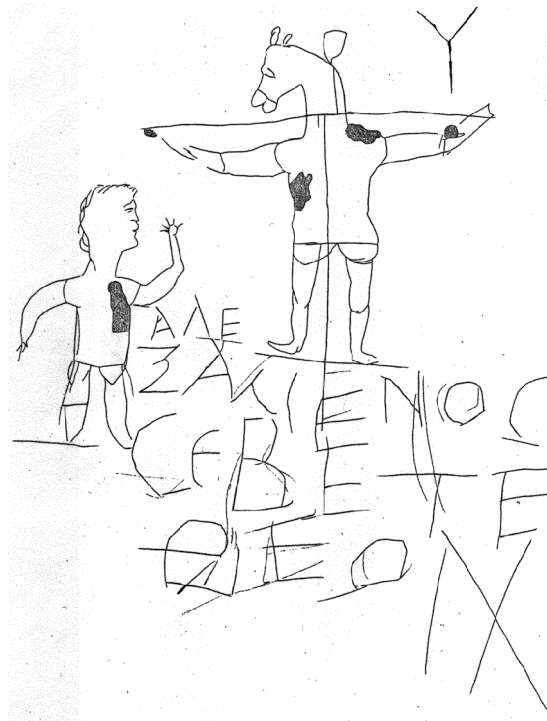
1PETER 4:16

Peter is the only apostle ever to use the word *Christian* in reference to the saints. He wrote, “If any man suffer as a Christian . . . let him glorify God on this behalf.” Peter wrote this letter to the saints in what is present day Turkey. Clearly, then, by the time Peter wrote to these saints, the term *Christian* was in widespread use among persecutors of the saints as a title for those who believed that Jesus was the Christ. There is no indication, however, that *Christian* was a title in widespread use among the saints, for as I said, this is the only case in the Bible where a believer uses the word.

It is extremely important to point out that Peter is not himself referring to believers as Christians. In order to understand Peter as his original readers understood him, we need only to substitute the word Christian with a modern equivalent. We could use “cult member”, or “jackass”, or “fool”, or any such term, because when ancient unbelievers called a saint a Christian, that is the sort of thing they meant.

Actually, of all modern equivalents, “jackass” may be the best choice. There was actually a rumor occurrent in the ancient Roman world that those who were called Christians worshiped a jackass. There is a very well known and widely published sketch (next page) found scratched on an ancient wall in Rome (on the Palatine Hill, chief of Rome’s famed seven hills) which shows a believer looking toward a man, crucified on a cross, who has the head of a jackass, with graffiti that mockingly says of the believer, “Alexamenos worships god.”

On the following page is a copy of that ancient graffiti:



“ALEXAMENOS WORSHIPS GOD”

So, if we substitute the modern, derisive term *jackass* for *Christian* in the three Scriptures in the New Testament where *Christian* is found, we will discover what was really being communicated at that time, when God’s children were being called Christians by those who invented the term.

Acts 11:26

“And the disciples were first called ‘jackasses’ at Antioch.”

Acts 26:28

“Then Agrippa said to Paul, You almost persuade me to be a jackass.”

1Pet. 4:16

“Yet if any man suffer as a ‘jackass’, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf.”

Reading these verses as they were originally meant to be read makes it clear that ungodly men, not Jesus or the Father, invented that term for His people.

¹ It is possible, as Kittel's dictionary also proposes (IX, 484), that the Antiochans misunderstood the word *Christ* to be someone's name. There were similar names used by people in those times, such as Chrestus (male), or Chraystes (female). So, unbelievers might have been simply calling the disciples after what they thought was the name of their leader (Christ).

The weakness of this explanation is that it suggests there was in Antioch a profound ignorance of the Jewish hopes for the Messiah (Greek: Christ), but there was a very large and prosperous Jewish community in Antioch, many of them believers, and those Jews were conversant with Gentiles. The highly educated, worldly-wise Antiochans would not likely have been ignorant of Jewish traditions and hopes. In fact, it was there in Antioch that Gentiles in large numbers first began to believe the gospel that Jewish believers preached. It is, then, unlikely that the Gentiles in Antioch misunderstood the term *Christ* to be a proper name. The reason they chose *Christian* for the disciples is better explained as a witty, sarcastic term.

GODS OF THE GENTILES

John David Clark, Sr.

(first published in February, 1997)

*“The things which the Gentiles sacrifice,
they sacrifice to demons, and not to God.”*

1Corinthians 10:20

Modern man is so proud of his scientific knowledge that he regards the myths of the classical world as having no more basis in reality than a cartoon, but this generation's contempt for previous ones may be based on more fiction than are the myths of ancient civilizations. This generation's superior attitude is encouraged by the theory of evolution, for that theory suggests that the longer men live, the smarter they become. The truth may be far different.

What construction crew could today build the pyramids? Who in our time could match Julius Caesar's feat of building *in ten days* a forty-foot wide bridge across the Rhine River, a quarter of a mile across at that point, strong enough for an entire army to cross? An ancient citadel stands on a mountain in South America made of rock *molten together after its construction* – a feat which modern scientists have tried and failed to duplicate. With cleverly fashioned instruments, ancient Romans and Greeks, and others, performed delicate eye surgery, brain surgery, and even what is known now as plastic surgery, building new ears and noses. The ancient people were not the monkeys that some men try to make them out to have been.

The inevitable impression left upon the person who studies the classical world with an open mind is one of great respect and deep pity, respect for the amazing accomplishments they managed to achieve in virtually every field, and pity that so much of their efforts were wasted on ignorant superstition. In terms of both wealth and human life, the cost of ignorance of the truth of God was enormous, and doubtlessly, it prevented even more advances in the sciences and arts than the ancients did achieve.

The Aztecs provided us with one example of needless suffering from ancient times in our hemisphere. It has been estimated by some scholars that the Aztecs sacrificed an average of fifty-four human beings a day to their blood-thirsty sun god (*Eerdman's Handbook to the*

World's Religions, p. 54. 1994 ed.). These people believed that their sun god required human blood in order for him to continue moving across the sky. Therefore, to keep the sun going, they thought, there had to be a constant supply of sacrificial victims. One method of human sacrifice required the victim's heart to be cut out while he was still living!

In order to maintain a supply of victims, wars had to be waged and prisoners taken, so war was a necessary tool of this religion. Imagine the centuries of constant, useless terror and agony inflicted on innocent people because of that *one* wrong idea about God and His sun! Now, multiply that horror by ten thousand times and spread the pain and loss over the face of the whole earth, and the enormous cost of ignorance of God's truth begins to be revealed.

For another example, imagine how many heartaches could have been avoided and how much suffering among the poor could have been alleviated by using the fortunes that were buried with the dead in various ancient cultures! Immense wealth was sealed in tombs of stone, to be used by the dead in the next world, while the miseries of the poor of this world were ignored.

How precious is the truth about God! There is nothing that has caused more misery in man's history than wrong ideas about God. In fact, the origin of all human suffering was a wrong idea about God that Satan planted in Eve's mind in the garden of Eden. But wrong ideas about God are not a hallmark of ancient cultures alone; modern cultures are seen to be as superstitious as those were, when God opens our eyes to see the truth.

BECAUSE IT WAS REAL

Ancient man's superstitions notwithstanding, I tend to give more credence to *some* ancient myths than most people are inclined to do. And such confidence in elements of ancient stories has proved to be well founded, on occasion.

Over a century ago, a German named Heinrich Schliemann dared to think a similar thought. He endured the ridicule of "experts" who scoffed at his belief that the ancient city of Troy was a real place. (Remember the Trojan Horse?) With tremendous determination, he ventured out on his own to search for the ruins of Troy. Using the geographic information in Homer's Iliad as his principle guide, he astonished the scholarly world by discovering the ruins of a once-great city in the northwest corner of Asia Minor – exactly where Homer had located Troy, its ruins testifying to its former greatness.

The superstition of the ancient world may have been great, yet those people are not so easily made fools of, as modern men, especially evolutionists, would have us to believe. In the Bible, there are examples of soothsayers and witches who had real spiritual power. The most stunning example is the Egyptian magicians of Moses' time, who performed miraculous deeds which for a time matched the miracles Moses and Aaron performed! There was also the famous witch of Endor in 1Samuel, who had power to contact the dead, and there was the demon-possessed young girl in Acts who made her owners wealthy with her supernatural

knowledge. In spite of what many “enlightened” people now believe, such supernatural events did take place, and ancient men were deceived by them, not because such spiritual power was phony, but because it was real!

The devil is a real creature, as are the fallen angels. They are not theological inventions of man. They once stood before God in heaven but were cast out when they rebelled against God (2Pet. 2:4). Having been in heaven, they know God far better than ordinary men know God. They have supernatural powers; they can reveal things unknowable to humans through the person whom they might possess, and they can perform feats of superhuman strength, as did the demon-possessed man whom Jesus healed at Gadara (Mk. 5:1-5).

Of course, many ancient myths are fabricated. We know, for instance, that Atlas is not holding the world on his shoulders, and we know that Poseidon does not drive his chariot across the seas. Moreover, there are no half-divine people born of intercourse between one of the gods and a mortal. But ancient man’s colorful imagination does not make untrue the fact that there were men of old, possessed by demons, who could, for example, lift and throw stones much larger than men normally can, as Homer describes Hector doing during the battle for the Greek ships at Troy. The possessed man in the region of Gadara, out of whom Jesus cast a “legion” of demons, exhibited astonishing strength. The Bible also mentions men before the flood who were of giant stature, “mighty men which were of old, men of renown” (Gen. 6:4). Because of the depths of evil to which mankind had fallen in those times (such evil that it caused God to regret that He had created man - Gen. 6:5-6), it is very easy to imagine such demon-possessed men performing superhuman feats, and then, those stories were told and retold for generations, becoming increasingly fictional until the mythological stories of ancient Greece, Rome, and other nations were formed.

Are we not able to see through the layers of myth and acknowledge the germ of truth which may have lain at the root of those stories? According to the truth revealed in the Bible, there is no reason not to do so, for there certainly were men and women possessed with demonic power which was interpreted by the ancients as a divine touch from one of the gods.

In the book of Acts, that young slave girl who followed Paul was empowered by a demon to reveal secrets and predict the future, and she brought her masters quite a bit of money with her soothsaying. When the apostle Paul cast out that demon, the poor child couldn’t predict anything, and Paul and Silas were beaten and cast into prison (Acts 16:16f). In Greece, when the ancients went to the famous oracle of Apollo at Delphi, or to the other oracles of the ancient world, it is altogether believable that when they went to the oracle, supernatural events sometimes took place. We do know that when backslidden King Saul went to a witch for help, he received more help than he bargained for (1Sam. 28). It is inconceivable that the ancients, intelligent as they were, would have continued believing in oracles if nothing supernatural ever happened; and there is ample evidence that supernatural events often occurred in the “holy” places of the gods.

So, in the ancient world (as in the modern world) we had a mixed bag. Along with their high intelligence and initiative, there was gross spiritual darkness which perverted the good life which their intelligence could have produced.

MINISTERS OF SATAN

Repeatedly, the Bible states that what the Gentiles worshiped were actually demons (Lev. 17:5-7; Dt. 32:12-18; 2Chron. 11:13-16; Ps. 106:34-38; 1Cor. 10:18-22), but neither the Gentiles nor the idolatrous Israelites thought so, and they persecuted and sometimes put to death those who, like the prophets of Israel, dared to tell them so. Men called their gods (demons) by lovely names, such as Saturn, Jove, Aphrodite, Apollo, etc., and invented elaborate ceremonies for them and mythic stories about them. Those ancient people were dedicated to the service of the gods and prayed fervently to them in expectation of supernatural help. All the evidence points to the fact that sometimes those demons fulfilled their expectations and gave a prophecy, or revealed a secret, or made a promise, or gave one of them supernatural power. To receive that “help”, one needed to do as Satan suggested that Jesus do in the Temptation: “Bow down and worship me.”

When Jesus neared a demon-possessed person, quite often the demon would scream out some element of truth about Jesus, such as, “We know who you are, O holy one of Israel!” (Mk. 1:23-24), or would beg him, “torment me not!” (Mk. 5:7). And sometimes they would prophesy of the coming judgment, asking Jesus (Mt. 8:29), “Are you come to torment us before the time?” That little demon-possessed girl whom Paul delivered had followed him and Silas through the streets of Philippi, screaming out, “These men are the servants of the most high God, who show to us the way of salvation!” (Acts 16:16-17). These demonic voices, crying out bits of truth through possessed people, were the voices of the gods of the ancient world. But consider this sobering question: If demons inspired men in those times to proclaim the holiness of God and the certainty of judgment to come, why, then, should anyone consider it strange that demons continue to do so?

Paul said that Satan has transformed himself into “an angel of light” and that his “ministers have transformed themselves into ministers of righteousness” (2Cor. 11:14-15). Ministers of Satan, Paul wrote, now masquerade as “apostles of Christ” (2Cor. 11:13). But haven’t they always done so? In the ancient world, who were Satan’s ministers? Were they not the priests and priestesses of the gods? Was not the high priest of Jove (chief god of the Greeks and Romans) Satan’s chief minister? Were not the prophets and poets who called on the Muses for inspiration, or called on the lyre-playing Apollo, or shrewd Athena, or Juno, Poseidon, or any of the other gods, demon-possessed ministers of Satan? But regardless of what the Gentiles thought they were worshiping, God’s prophets and apostles taught that they were worshiping demons, not God.

The official title of the high priest of Jove (Latin pronunciation: *Yahweh*), the chief god of the Roman Empire, was *Pontifex Maximus*. It was a coveted political prize, to which a man was elected by the senate of Rome. It was the world’s highest religious position, first

held by nobles such as Julius Caesar and, later, by the emperors of Rome. If there ever was a man who was a “minister of Satan”, then Pontifex Maximus was he, being the chief of all the idolaters on earth.

But if Satan’s ministers have transformed themselves into apostles of Christ, as Paul said, where is Pontifex Maximus now? Where has that chief minister of Satan gone? Find him, and you’ll find a man claiming to be God’s spokesman, and the anointed shepherd of the sheep. Find Pontifex Maximus now, and you’ll hear someone again moved by demons to speak well of God and His Son, and perhaps even warn people of His righteous judgment. Find him, and as in ancient times, you will find multitudes following him, ignorantly worshiping devils in beautiful, if not magnificent, settings, “having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof” (2Tim. 3:5). Find Pontifex Maximus and his followers, and you’ll hear the “doctrines of devils” of which we were forewarned by the apostle Paul. Where are they, and by what name now do they disguise themselves? You tell me.

The loveliness of false religion has always belied its danger. The simple rites which God gave to Israel could not compete with the grandeur of the Greeks’ Parthenon or with many other of the spectacular rituals and temples of the ancient world; but then, God wasn’t trying to compete. He was only providing a way for us to be forgiven – a simple way, and it worked. His simple way of faith still works, but only those who are more impressed with reality than with appearance will ever learn that.

