

CHAPTER 3

THE CHURCH IN THE SECOND CENTURY

The Emperors

For most of the second century the **Antonines** ruled Rome; this dynasty has been named after Antoninus Pius, the fourth emperor of this line. Under their competent administration Rome reached the height of its power. In AD 193 the last of the Antonines, Commodus, was killed. He was followed by Septimius Severus of the Severi dynasty.

1. Nerva (AD 96-98)

When Domitian was assassinated, the Senate asserted itself, and elected an elderly member (66 years old). Reluctant, but did good job. Chose successor, to be able to please the Senate and keep Praetorian Guard under control. This tradition continued, because none of the next three emperors had a son.

- * Nerva relaxed Domitian's persecution. John came home to Ephesus. Christians' property was restored.

2. Trajan (AD 98-117)

A provincial, an Italian from Spain. General; continued in field two years after appointed emperor. Excellent ruler; lowered taxes. Dedicated imperialist; expanded empire too fast and far (Hadrian had to retrench). Great builder of Roman Forum.

At end of life, final great conquests in East; defeated Parthia, but died on way home in Cilicia; was to receive "the greatest triumph since Augustus."

- * Was engaged in correspondence with Pliny the Younger, governor of Bythnia, concerning the treatment of Christians (see below). Trajan had banned secret societies because of troubles from military fraternities. Christians were being interrogated on the charge of refusing to pledge allegiance to the emperor. Christians were suspect since they worshiped a rival King who had been condemned by Rome as a malefactor.

According to Irenaeus, John died during his reign.

3. Hadrian (117-138)

Commander of Trajan's main army in Syria. Probably the most competent Antonine. Withdrew armies from the new eastern provinces in order to consolidate.

Student of literature, established philosophical university. Simplified and corrected laws.

- * Followed leniency for Christians.

Great interest in provinces; took trips all over empire for most of his reign. Builder: Pantheon in Rome.

Harshly quelled Bar Kochba revolt in Palestine (AD 132).

Died painfully, seeking suicide.

4. Antoninus Pius (138-161)

Most “ideal”; most popular emperor of the empire; mild attitude toward Jews and Christians, though random persecution prompted Justin Martyr’s “Apology.” Raised legal status of women and slaves and children.

Poured his own fortune into the state; built up public treasury to fantastic level (nearly 3 billion sesterces).

5. Marcus Aurelius (161-180)

Trained by Hadrian and Antoninus Pius to be next emperor. Had 17 tutors. Age of 12, converted to Stoicism; neglected body; sickly all his life (59 years).

Clung to superstitious pagan rituals (was a priest), but skeptical in philosophy. Throughout life, wrote *Meditations*.

Revised laws, more lenient and just; gave away too much for the times. Held back German invasions from the north; defeated Parthian invasion in East, but plague brought back from there.

*Renewed persecution of Christians; accusers get property.

Appointed unworthy son as successor—Commodus. Thought education and training would help him—it didn’t.

6. Commodus (180-193)

Wicked, dissipated (cf. Durant, p. 447); harem of 300 women and 300 boys; tortured, maimed, murdered people for fun; participated in gladiator fights.

Mistress Marcia poisoned him; poison worked too slowly for her liking; so a wrestler strangled him in his bath; killed when 31 years old.

—end of Antonine line— —Interregnum of two minor emperors— —beginning of Severi dynasty—

7. Septimius Sevarus (193-211)

When Commodus assassinated, Senate elected member Pertinax, who ruled 3 months. He encouraged economy, eliminated luxury, restored military discipline; thus murdered by Praetorian Guard. Senate hid. Guard announced bidding open; Julianus won (ca. #500 paid to each soldier). Romans upset, call for generals in provinces to come; generals started coming.

Septimius Sevarus, commander in Pannonia, offered each #10,000. Defeated opposition;

marched into Rome; Julianus killed.

Senate supported Albinus. Sevarus killed most senators, confiscated nearly half of Italy for himself; plundered nation to give gifts to soldiers.

Married Julia, daughter of priest of Elgabal in Syria; she introduced eastern ideas into monarchy.

Two sons Caracalla and Geta; he gave empire to both.

- * Sponsored a severe persecution of Christians, especially in Egypt and northern Africa.

Persecution during the second century

1. The period in general

Continual persecutions, based on official, illegal status of Christianity; but most emperors did not seek out Christians.

Many suffered in provinces. Occasional flare-ups, especially under Marcus Aurelius and Septimius Sevarus.



2. Pliny's correspondence with Trajan

- * Pliny the Younger, governor in Bithynia (northern Turkey)

points of interest in Pliny's letter (Bettenson, pp. 3-5), ca. AD 112:

great influence of Christianity

torture (on the rack) and death applied to Christians

many apostatize; proof of loyalty to emperor = curse Christ; temples open again after decrease in sales of sacrificial animals

early Christian worship:

assemble early in day

sing "hymn to Christ, as to a god"

take oath (Lat. *sacramentum*) to godliness and morality; compare Roman soldiers "oath" of loyalty

later in the day, have a meal together (perhaps an "agape feast")

Trajan's reply:

examine those accused, but do not seek them out

if they brought before court, are proved to be Christians, then kill them

allow recantation

receive no anonymous accusations

3. Some martyrs of the period

Trajan: Simeon, brother of Jesus, crucified in Jerusalem; Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, thrown to beasts in Rome in 107 AD

Hadrian: persecuted “moderately;” Christianity progressed; still many martyrs, including Telephorus, minister of church in Rome

Antoninus Pius: liked Christians, but upheld law; Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, martyred and burned

Marcus Aurelius: encouraged persecution; worst since Nero; thousands beheaded or thrown to beasts; Justin Martyr and six others scourged and beheaded in Rome; persecution throughout provinces; records from Lyons and Vienne in southern Gaul; used horrible tortures to make Christians deny faith (didn’t work); citizens beheaded, others thrown to beasts; in the amphitheater, Christian slave girl Blandina encouraged others, was last to die, tied in net and killed by wild bull; bodies burned and thrown in Rhone: “Now we shall see whether there will be a resurrection of their bodies”
See Eusebius’ *Ecclesiastical History* for these accounts.

Commodus: let up, perhaps influence of Christian concubine

Septimius Sevarus: period of rest until AD 200, then renewed bitter persecution for eleven years; most known from north Africa and Egypt; in Alexandria “many martyrs were daily burned, crucified, or beheaded;” Origen’s father Leonidas killed in Alexandria; noble lady Perpetua and her slave Felicitas torn by beasts in Carthage

The apostolic fathers

By the fifth century, early writers were called fathers. The apostolic fathers were those fathers who lived in the times when at least some apostles were still living. They wrote before ca. AD 160. None of these writings is on the same level as the NT.

1. Clement of Rome

(see above)

His first Epistle addressed church government, among other things. As a bishop in Rome, he viewed himself as one elder among several Roman elders.

2. Papias (ca. AD 60-140)

bishop of Hieropolis in Asia Minor; disciple of John who affirmed John's hand in the gospel and apocalypse; mentioned in Irenaeus and Eusebius

none of his writings remain, except what is quoted in Irenaeus and Eusebius; they refer to his *Exposition of the Oracles of the Lord* in 5 books

his research (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3:39; *Apostolic Fathers*, pp. 263-264)

his view of the millennium (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 5:33:3-4; *Apostolic Fathers*, pp. 269-270)

cf. Eusebius' criticism of Papias (*Ecclesiastical History* 3:39)

3. Ignatius (d. ca. AD 110)

bishop of Antioch

not much known except through his seven letters; there are 13 letters purporting to be by Ignatius; J.B. Lightfoot proved that seven of these in their shorter form are authentic

[Since these letters quote the gospel of John, they provide proof that John was written and well-known by AD 110; this demonstration by Lightfoot destroyed the earlier critical view of the Tübingen school that John was written later in the second century. Since then the discovery of a fragment of John's gospel dating from early in the second century has given further proof.]

Ignatius wrote these letters to various churches while on his way from Syria to Rome, to be thrown to beasts as a martyr (as many had been before him) during the reign of Trajan.

visited Polycarp in Smyrna on way, wrote to four churches: to three he would not be able to visit (their delegates were there in Smyrna—Tralles, Magnesia, Ephesus) and to the church in Rome; later, at Troas, wrote to two churches he had visited on his journey: Philadelphia and Smyrna, and a personal letter to Polycarp

ideas in Ignatius' letters:

strong opposition to various heresies:

Docetism—Christ not have true body (*Trallians* 9)

Judaizers—abandon Jewish customs (cf. *Magnesians* 8, 10)

great desire to be a martyr; don't try to stop it (*Romans* 4-5)

difference between himself and apostles (*Trallians* 3; *Romans* 4)

order of church government (at least in East; no mention of monarchical bishop in Romans; *Trallians* 3; *Magnesians* 6-7)

bishop —> God the Father

elders, presbytery —> college of apostles

deacons —> Jesus Christ

[Note on church government. 1) In the NT, bishop = elder (Acts 20:17, 28; Tit. 1:5, 7); likewise in 1 Clement. 2) Each church had a plurality of bishops or elders (Acts 14:23; Php. 1:1). In Ignatius one bishop per city; six of his epistles name a single bishop; these are over many elders; the bishop leads the elders or presbytery. This was not yet the Roman Catholic view of a bishop being over many cities.]

4. Polycarp (ca. AD 70-156; “86 years”)

bishop of Smyrna, a host to Ignatius

Irenaeus reports that he was a disciple of the apostle John, as was Papias. After Ignatius passed through (ca. 110), Ignatius went to Troas, where he wrote back to Polycarp; then went to Philippi, where he and two others were taken off to Rome. The Philippians wrote to Polycarp and asked to have Ignatius’ letters; Polycarp wrote his answer to them, *Epistle to the Philippians*.

mentions only presbyters and deacons, no single bishop in Philippi (cf. *Php.* 5)

mentions Paul’s preaching and writing to Philippi

opposes Docetism and skepticism about the resurrection; “first-born of Satan” (*Php.* 7)

opposes covetousness of presbyter Valens and his wife (*Php.* 11)

asks for news of Ignatius and others (*Php.* 13)

often quotes Scripture—high view of Scripture

claims no apostolic succession

Polycarp continued 45 years as bishop of Smyrna. AD 155, traveled to Rome to confer with Anicetus bishop of Rome about Easter date; worked out a temporary truce

Christians in Asia celebrated Nisan 14 (Passover date), in Latin *die quarta decima*, thus called “Quartodecimans;” other Christians celebrated on Sunday after full moon after vernal equinox (March 21)

While in Rome, Polycarp clashed with Gnostic leader Marcion, “first-born of Satan.”

Martyred in AD 156; burned at stake in Smyrna; stabbed, “blood extinguished fire.” Testimony written by church of Smyrna, sent to church of Philomelium, called *Martyrdom of Polycarp*. Some miraculous parts (dove coming out) apparently a later interpolation.

his testimony (*Martyrdom* 9)

cf. persecution in Smyrna mentioned in Rev. 2:8-11

—— (the following are doubtfully apostolic) ——

5. *Epistle of Barnabas* (ca. AD 70-132; between two Jewish rebellions)

apparently not by the Barnabas of the NT

quoted by later fathers, especially the Alexandrian fathers (*Barnabas* allegorizes the OT); found in Codex Aleph (Sinaiticus) along with *Shepherd of Hermas*

opposes Jews, especially reliance on physical temple, etc.; defends eighth day for worship (*Barnabas* 15); claims 6000 year history for the world

6. *Didache* (*Teaching of the Twelve*; ca. AD 70-160)

recently discovered in MS scribed in 1065 in Constantinople; no author stated; gives rules for worship and other matters affecting early church

anti-abortion (*Didache* 2:2)

instruction for catechumens

baptism instructions, capable of two interpretations (*Didache* 7)

two offices: bishops and deacons (*Didache* 15)

premillennial, post-tribulational (*Didache* 16)

7. *Shepherd of Hermas* (ca. AD 100-150)

found in Codex Sinaiticus; claims to be by contemporary of Clement of Rome, but Muratorian fragment says it was written by the brother of Pius, bishop of Rome, while Pius was bishop (ca. AD 140-154); scholars think perhaps written in parts, by different authors; highly regarded by many fathers, especially in East

Hermas a freed Christian slave, poor, became rich, became poor again; children apostatized

reports a series of visions—5 visions, 12 mandates, 10 similitudes: old woman (the church), shepherd (repentance); various exhortations to morality and penance; uses allegory in presentation, often baffling

8. *Epistle to Diognetus* (ca. AD 150)

found in only one MS (13th-14th century), destroyed in 1870

falsely attributed to Justin Martyr; perhaps the earliest Christian apology

shows heathenism and Judaism inadequate for thinking person who likes morality; Christianity provides both logic and morality; Christians' conduct defended

ends abruptly; perhaps ending lost; *Diognetus* 11-12 added later

Apologists of the second century

These writers especially addressed the non-Christian people and leaders, asking for understanding and toleration, and seeking to convince them that Christianity was the true faith.

The Apologists

1. asked for reasonable and fair treatment under Roman justice
2. explained Christian beliefs and practices as opposed to popular caricatures
3. Attacked pagan practice
4. gave some theological arguments: e.g., Christianity is as old as Abraham and the creation—it was not a new religion

1. Quadratus (ca. AD 130)

quoted in Eusebius (*Ecclesiastical History* 4:3); apology written to emperor Hadrian (AD 117-138); mentions that people that were healed by Christ were still living and could give testimony

2. Aristides (ca. AD 150)

also mentioned by Eusebius (4:3), who states that many have copies and that it also was addressed to Hadrian; his Greek *Apology* is quoted in early Christian romance of the 8th century *Barlaam and Josaphat* (discovered ca. 1900), was published in an Armenian translation in 1878; that document agrees with the quote found in Eusebius; in 1889 Rendel Harris discovered a Syriac version in a monastery in Mt. Sinai; this treatise itself is addressed to Antoninus Pius (138-161)

uses argument of God's existence from motion; considers four groups of men: barbarians, Greeks, Jews, Christians; intellectually and morally, Christians the best

3. Justin Martyr (ca. AD 100-165)

born in Samaria of pagan parents; philosopher; studied Stoicism, Aristotelianism, Pythagoreanism, and Platonism

converted to Christianity by talking to old man on the beach; discovered "Christianity is the one sure worthy Philosophy"; went around teaching; was often in Rome; pupil in Rome—Tatian; never a church officer

unique *logos* idea: true reason is from *logos*, thus old Greek philosophers were Christians

wrote *First Apology* to Antoninus Pius (AD 152); defended Christian morality; offered a Christian philosophy; showed Christ was fulfillment of prophecy

wrote *Second Apology* quickly (AD 153); protest unjust execution of three Christians

wrote *Dialogue with Trypho* later; debate format with fictitious Trypho, a Jew; strong

evangelistic thrust at Jews; specially noteworthy—interpretation of OT prophecies as fulfilled in Christ; concludes with appeal for Trypho to accept Christ, to “enter upon the greatest of all the contests for your own salvation, and to endeavor to prefer to your own teaching the Christ of Almighty God” (NIDCC, p. 558)

AD 166, early in reign of Marcus Aurelius (AD 161-180), imprisoned in Rome, scourged and beheaded; thus Justin “Martyr”

4. Tatian (ca. AD 110-172)

Assyrian from Nisibitis on the Euphrates; ca. AD 150, came to Rome, converted by reading the Bible

soon prepared the *Diatessaron* (Greek, “Through the Four,” “A Harmony in Four Parts”); first attempted gospel harmony; based on John’s chronology; known only in Syriac; only portions remain, in translation or quotations; used widely by Syrians until fifth century, when church leaders suppressed it; lost until recent times

later became pupil of Justin Martyr; learned about philosophy, but openly despised Greek philosophers (as opposed to Justin)

ca. AD 160, wrote *Address to the Greeks*; mocks Greek philosophy (cf. ch. 25)

after martyrdom of Justin, returned to Syria; founded ascetic, gnostic sect “Encratites” (enkratei/a = “self-control”); thus never made a “saint”

5. Theophilus (d. ca. AD 180)

bishop of Antioch; Eusebius mentions him (*Ecclesiastical History* 24) as writing three books to Autolytus (these only survive), a book against the heretic Hermogenis, and a book against Marcion

- * in three books to Autolytus Theophilus
- mentions Christ as “second Adam”;
- first father to use the term *trias* (“Triad”) of the Godhead;
- shows Christian theism to be superior to pagan mythology

6. Melito of Sardis (late second century)

according to Eusebius, bishop of Sardis during reign of Marcus Aurelius (AD 161-180); first known Christian pilgrim, traveling to important places of Christian origins

after Marcus named Commodus as successor (in AD 175), Melito wrote apology, *Petition to the Emperor*, quoted in Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 26; lists OT books; uses same canon as Protestants except omits Esther (Esdras = Ezra and Nehemiah); no apocryphal books listed

was involved in Passover controversy; papyrus fragments of his work have been found (NIDCC, p. 648); in twentieth century, discovery of many papyrus fragments of his works (Chester Beatty, vol. 8), including discussion of Passover lamb as a type of Christ, and *On Baptism*, applying *logos* theology to significance of rite

7. Athenagoras (late second century)

Christian philosopher in Athens

wrote *Apology* to Marcus Aurelius and his son Commodus; denies charges of atheism, cannibalism, incest; notes good, peaceful lives of Christians; good discussion on the Trinity

wrote *On the Resurrection of the Body* for philosophers in Athens; argues from philosophical “common ground” (justice of God, purpose of creation, man’s need of body and soul); does not mention the resurrection of Christ

Gnosticism

1. Its extent

by AD 175, almost overshadowed Christianity; continued to fifth century

Most of what we know of it comes from orthodox opponents, especially Irenaeus and Hippolytus. Irenaeus says there were at least twelve groups. Recently Coptic translations of Gnostic papyri have been found in Egypt, including fragments of the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, and a *Gospel of Thomas* found in the library at Nag Hammadi (cf. Hennecke, *New Testament Apocrypha*, vol. 1).

2. Common beliefs of Gnosticism

a. Claim to higher knowledge

gnosis = “knowledge”; most Gnostic systems built on a system of Greek philosophy: Plato, Aristotle, Pythagoras, Stoicism, etc.

however, rationality not stressed; intuition and speculation desired; many “hidden” books; rejected much or most of Bible as revelation; usually reject OT and most of NT

b. Belief that matter essentially is evil

cf. Buddhism

Attitude toward the body: body evil; thus two extremes:

asceticism; punish the body

indulgence; cast away the body

c. “Demiurges,” and angelic intermediaries between pure spirit and the lower material world

a whole system of created beings between god and the world; graded worship due to all of them

d. Conflicting gods, especially in Christian gnosticism

good god of NT vs. bad god of OT (creator of matter); Ophites (*ophitai* from *ophis*, “snake”): OT god is bad with bad angels, while people good (e.g., the serpent, Cain, etc.); even Judas Iscariot good for some Gnostics

e. Denial of incarnation

Docetism (Greek *dokeo*, “think, seem”) = denial of humanity of Christ; no incarnation, birth, death, bodily resurrection; Christ not really physical, only “seemed” to be so

3. Roots of Gnosticism in Apostolic times

Gnosticism did not appear full-blown at the first, but rather there are indications of it developing in the NT.

a. Simon Magus

Acts 8:18-24; sale of church offices = “Simony,” in his honor; according to various opponents of Gnosticism, Simon started the Gnostic sect

b. “Colossian heresy”

Paul wrote Colossians to, among other reasons, warn the church against an incipient form of Gnosticism. Colossians 2 warns against these three different errors:

1) Jewish element (circumcision, new moons, etc.; 2:11-17)

2) ascetic element (denial of body; 2:20-23)

3) speculative element (speculation about angels, etc.; 2:8-10, 18)

These three errors together comprise what is commonly called the “Colossian heresy.” Some of these elements are found in various strains of Gnosticism. Cf. J. B. Lightfoot’s essay, “The Colossian Heresy,” in *Colossians and Philemon*, pp. 73-113.

c. Warning to Timothy

1 Tim. 6:20-21, “knowledge (*gnosis*) falsely so-called”

d. Early Docetism

1 Jn. 4:1-3; 2 Jn. 7; orthodox teaching requires belief that “Jesus came in the flesh”

“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God.” 1 John 4:1,2

e. Sensual indulgence

Some Gnostics taught that such indulgence was a matter of indifference; but against such an idea are many NT passages, e.g. Jude 4.

f. Nicolaitans of Asia Minor

Jesus' and John's warnings in Rev. 2:6, 15; Irenaeus says this refers to Nicolas the deacon (Acts 6:5; we would hope not); this false teaching linked to immorality (Rev. 2:14; cf. Jezebel in 2:20)

g. Cerinthus

not mentioned in NT; contemporary of John the apostle; taught that Christ came to Jesus (as a dove) at his baptism and left before his crucifixion; thus Jesus only a good man

later sect of the Alogi (Gk. *alogoi*, "non-word") opposed John and Revelation, claimed those books written by Cerinthus

story about John: fled from bath when he heard Cerinthus in same building; feared God would judge Cerinthus and roof would fall in

4. Marcion

major Gnostic teacher after apostolic period

son of orthodox bishop of Sinope in Asia Minor; founded sect in Rome (his father excommunicated him); rejected OT, many parts of NT (including Pastorals and Hebrews); kept only parts of Luke and ten epistles of Paul; a Docetist; denied Christ's birth and childhood (descended from heaven); Polycarp apparently fought with him when he went to Rome

5. **Effects of Gnosticism on the church

a. Church polity

lead to development of the reactionary idea of the "Catholic" (i.e., orthodox) church; emphasis on unity of doctrine and loyalty

b. Canon

forced Christians to clarify their views on the canon of Scripture: care in quoting accurately, care in selecting books to quote

Irenaeus

(wrote ca. AD 180)

bishop of Lyons in Gaul after Bishop Pothinus martyred under Marcus Aurelius in AD 177

disciple of Polycarp in Smyrna (Irenaeus a native there); thus chain: Jesus —> John —> Polycarp —> Irenaeus

fought for church unity; opposed Pope Victor's excommunicating Asian Quartodecimans; missionary throughout Gaul (learned Gallic [Celtic]); studied Greek NT

wrote five books against Gnosticism: *Against Heresies: Detection and Overthrow of Falsely-named Knowledge [Gnosis]*; this work is our main source of knowledge of Gnosticism

wrote *Epistle to Florinus*; friend who apostatized to Gnosticism

wrote *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*; apologetic purpose, and for teaching catechumens; rediscovered in an Armenian translation in 1904

decidedly premillennial; names John as the author of Revelation in time of Domitian

Montanism

named for Montanus, who lived ca. AD 150 in Asia Minor

a former pagan priest of Phrygia; these priests were known for their ecstatic religious experiences

preached strict life; opposed worldliness of many leading Christians and churches

he taught the "age of the Paraclete" that had been revealed only to him; the New Jerusalem would descend upon Perpuza, Phrygia

"prophetesses" Priscilla and Maxilla claimed divine revelations; end coming soon, etc., so they left their husbands to devote selves to the church; other women Montanists held church office and could leave families if they devoted selves to ministry

Montanus produced no literature, but movement spread through Asia Minor and northern Africa

opposed councils of bishops; he called Catholic Christians carnal; the Roman church rejected the movement

most well-known proponent of Montanism, Tertullian of north Africa; "Tertullianists" sect lasted three centuries, finally rejoined Catholic church

Tertullian

(ca. AD 160-220; flourished ca. 200)

son of a Roman centurion, he lived in Carthage; lawyer and scholar; converted ca. AD 180

wrote many works, mostly in Latin (his Greek works have not survived); some of them:

Apology (to Septimius Sevarus, shows absurdity of persecution of Christians)

Against Marcion (opposes Gnosticism)

Against Praxeas (most advanced work on the Trinity from this period)

various works of ethics and morals, as *Women's Dress and Shows*, etc.

ca. AD 207, converted to Montanism for its emphasis on anti-worldliness; thus never made a "saint" by the Catholic church

developed Latin theological vocabulary; vivid writer; most famous sentence: "The blood of the martyrs is seed." (commonly paraphrased, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.")

Beginning of Monarchianism (versus Docetism)

"Single Principle"

heretical teaching growing out of gnosticism concerning the Trinity (God only one person; thus Jesus not God and man); this early Unitarianism was opposed to the carnality of the OT and of Jesus' humanity
began in second century; became important movement in third and fourth centuries

1. Dynamic Monarchianism

Jesus only a man; holy spirit used him
Holy Spirit was the impersonal force of God

Paul of Samosata (third century) is representative

he said the spirit entered Jesus at his baptism to empower him for his ministry of miracles before the spirit left him at the cross = "Adoptionism"

This Bishop of Antioch (Syria) adapted Christian hymns with equivocal terms to allow a monarchial understanding.

2. Patripassianism ("Father suffers")

Father and Jesus one person (liked John 10:30)

a. Praxeas (flourished ca. 200)

strong anti-Montanist; friend of Pope Victor; Tertullian opposed him: "He has executed in Rome two works of the devil: he has driven out prophecy (Montanism) and brought in heresy; he has put to flight the Paraclete and crucified the Father."

b. Noetus (flourished ca. 200)

not much known about him, except through Hippolytus; from Smyrna, moved to Rome; he was a pantheist who taught Praxeas his Patripassianism; church called him a "heresiarch"

3. Sabellianism = Modalism

Promoted by Sabellius of Egypt

God is one person who takes different forms (“modes”) through different dispensations:
Jehovah in OT, Jesus in Gospels, HS in Acts

The papacy in the second century

1. The word *pope*

papa = “father,” term of respect and endearment for church leader

in NT, various references:

Mt. 23:9, “call no man father”; implies absolute authority

Paul a “father”; 1 Cor. 4:15; cf. 1 Th. 2:11; 1 Tim. 1:2

1 Tim. 5:1, elders to be treated as “fathers”

by second century, revered leaders called “popes”; by third and fourth centuries, outstanding leaders called “popes,” e.g., “Pope Athanasius” of Alexandria, Egypt

- * after AD 600, restricted to bishop of Rome (Gregory I in 604 refused title; Boniface III in 607 accepted it; held by bishop of Rome since then)

2. Bishops of Rome in the first century

probable that Peter in Rome, but no evidence that he was bishop there (bishops over elders in western church only after ca. AD 150)

early lists of bishops of Rome contradictory and have sparse information, e.g., Anacletus and Cletus may be the same man (some lists have one or the other; others list both)

only definite name for first century is Clement of Rome; but note that his epistle is addressed as from the church; no evidence that he was considered as a monarchical bishop

3. Insignificance of bishops of Rome in the second century

list still is incomplete; some bishops mentioned

a. Xystus (ca. AD 115-125)

named in lists; probably the most prominent presbyter in Rome

[all others listed come after AD 150]

b. Anicetus (ca. 160's)

Polycarp argued with him over Quartodecimanism; truce called; Irenaeus happy

c. Eleutherus (ca. 180's)

visited by Irenaeus after Marcus Aurelius' persecutions in Gaul; according to Bede, sent a missionary to Lucius of Britain at his request

d. Victor (ca. 190's)

strongly opposed Quartodecimans; excommunicated all eastern bishops who opposed him; Irenaeus said he was "truly pontifical"; later moderated; Easter conflict officially settled at Council of Nicea in 325

according to Tertullian, Victor favored Patripassians, especially Praxeas

Note: During the second century the Roman church was important because of its position in the empire and its history; there was no special recognition for the Roman bishop.

Situation at the end of the second century

1. Growth

no records of extensive, organized missionary activity, but evidence of great extension

2. Principle centers of Christianity

a. Asia Minor

includes Bithynia (cf. Pliny's letter), Phrygia, Galatia, Lydia

b. Antioch

(now small town in Turkey, north of Syria); at that time second largest city in the empire; Ignatius from there

c. Jerusalem

no Jews allowed there; some Gentile Christians

d. Alexandria

port city of Egypt; rival of Antioch; over 100,000 Jews; center of learning for Christians

e. Carthage and North Africa

first Latin Christian writers; large Christian group

f. Gaul (France)

Irenaeus and his missionaries; large center for Christianity

g. Rome

educated people speak Greek; no great leaders; visited by many; strong church; also many heretics there