

Church History

Through the Eyes of 13 Theologians

Why Church History?

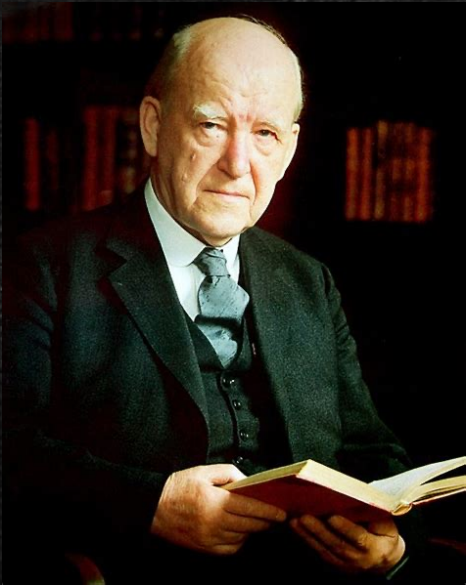
"I will be their God, and they shall be My people." (Ezekiel 37:27)

"And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overpower it." (Matthew 16:18)

"... And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:20)



Does Church History Matter?



- *The way to safeguard yourself...is to learn something about heresies—how they arose in the past generally through very good and conscientious men. History shows how subtle it all is, and how many a man lacking balance, or by failing to maintain the proportion of faith, and the interrelationship of the various parts of the whole message, has been pressed by the devil to put too much emphasis on one particular aspect, and eventually pressed so far as to be in a position in which he is really contradicting the Truth and has become a heretic. So Church history is invaluable... It is not the preserve of the academics. **I would say that Church history is one of the most essential studies for the [believer]** were it merely to show him this terrible danger of slipping into heresy, or into error, without realizing that anything has happened to him.*
 - D. Martyn. *Lloyd-Jones Preaching and Preachers* (pp. 128-129).

Does Church History Matter?

- "Nothing is more relevant for understanding the present than the history of the past experiences of those who sought to follow Jesus Christ."
Everett Ferguson, *Church History*, p.26.
- "Our participation in history is especially meaningful if we are vital members of the church of Jesus Christ. Then we are bound together by faith in Christ, the head over all things, for whom all things exist (Eph. 1:10, 22–23; Col. 1:16). Also, we are bound together in "one Spirit" with all Christians (Eph. 4:4) and are "members one of another" (Rom. 12:5) in a manner that transcends time. We are no longer strangers and aliens, but members of the ancient people of God's promise, united in the peace purchased by Christ's blood (Eph. 2:12–13, 19). When we read about believers and churches from times past, we are reading our family history—the stories of our brothers and sisters."
 - -Joel Beeke and Michael Haykin, *Why Should I Be Interested in Church History*, p. 7.

How will we approach Church History?

- Historical Context

- Discuss the major events that were taking place during this period.
- Discuss the major people of this time period.
- Discuss the big ideas being discussed.

- Theologian of the Week

- Discuss a specific theologian who helped contribute to the development, growth, and mission of the church
 - Combatting heresy
 - Missionary work
 - Apologetics
 - Reform
 - Preaching

How will we approach Church History?

Lecture

- First part of class will be providing background for the era and the theologian

Discussion

- Second part of class will be reading and discussion of a passage from the theologian.

Goals of the Class

1. To provide a better understanding of how God uses imperfect individuals throughout history to carry on the mission of His church.
2. To interact with important thinkers throughout church history.



Small, Unpromising Beginnings

Praeparatio Evangelica - preparation for the gospel. God's sovereignty working through Rome to pave the way for the gospel.



First Century Rome

“The greatest accomplishment of Rome was neither political or military; it was cultural. It was the establishment of a **culture of peace and prosperity.**”

Paul Johnson



- **Roman Roads** - high tech roads spanned the empire and paved way for easy travel
- **Great Bridges** - the most noteworthy person in a community was the Bridge Builder (pontifex), we also get our word for priest from pontifex
- **Pax Romana** - stability, safety, security, and standardized rule of law

First Century Rome

- **Lingua Franca** -better communication was possible because of the unified languages: Latin in the West, Greek in the East and these being the common tongue within the Academies and Conservatories
- **Koinosis** - Roman culture provided common gathering places for community. The natural gathering places became hubs for the early Church to identify itself — they were antiquity's version of social media.
- **Diaspora** - Because it was safe to travel, when disruption did take place, believers had somewhere else to go and begin anew

- *“Without the unifying effects of Roman imperial civilization, it is difficult to imagine how the Christian Gospel could have possibly spread throughout the whole known world as fast as it did during the first two centuries after Christ.” - Michael Green*



Missionary Journeys of the 12



Paul's Missionary Journey



The 12 Apostles

Apostles	Missions	Disciples
Peter	Antioch; Rome	Ignatius; Clement
Andrew	Scythia; Epirus	Stachys
James	Iberia	Iria Flavia
John	Ephesus	Polycarp
Philip	Hieropolis	Polycrates
Bartholomew	Tigris; Indus	Pantaenus

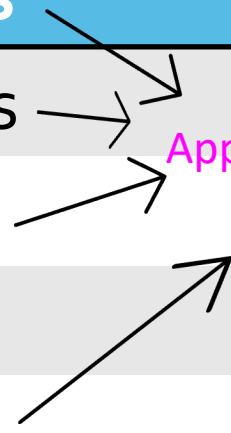
The 12 Apostles

Apostles	Missions	Disciples
Matthew	Judea; Parthia	Lipsius
Thomas	Euphrates; Indus	Addai; Aggai
James Alpheus	Black; Caspian	Hesippius
Thaddeus	Macedonia	Gerusalis
Simon	Egypt; Libya	Tertulius
Matthais	Ethiopia	Hyssius

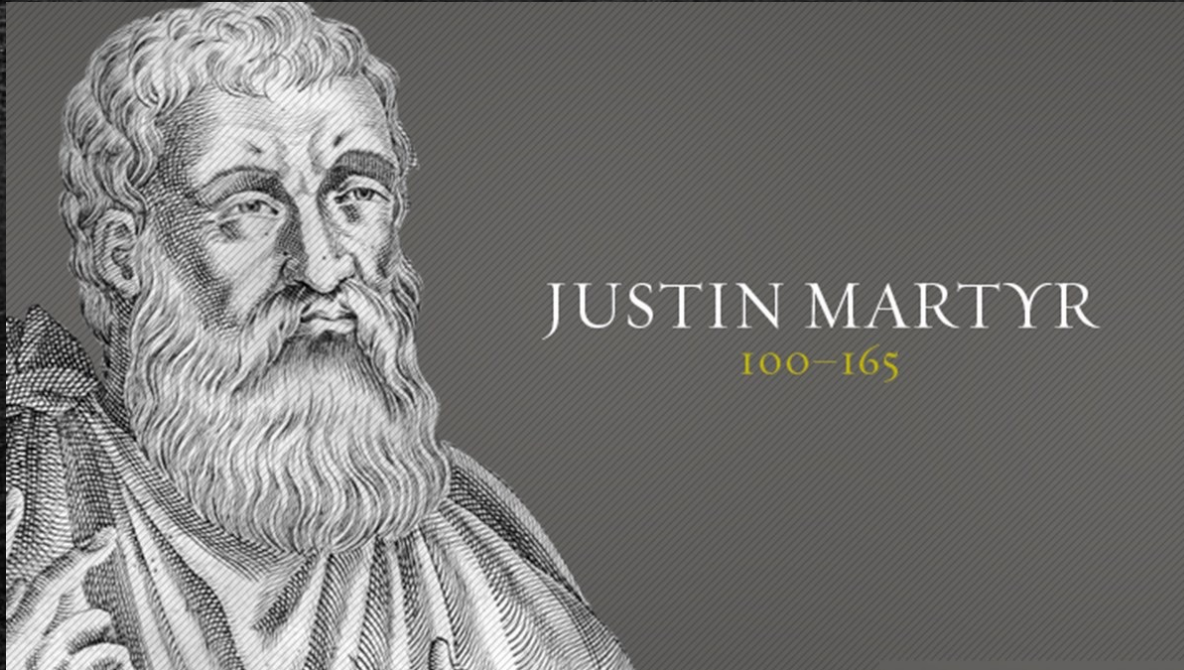
Other Patristics

Barnabas	c. 10-70	Antioch
Onesimus	c. 12-89	Colossae
Timothy	c. 10-97	Ephesus
Clement	c. 35-100	Rome
Titus	c. 12-107	Crete
Ignatius	c. 20-105	Antioch
Polycarp	c. 69-155	Smyrna
Papias	c. 100-170	Pyrgia

Appears in NT



Justin Martyr



"As a pioneering Christian apologist, philosopher, and martyr, St. Justin's unwavering faith has left an incredible mark on the church. It continues to inspire those who seek to deepen their understanding of Christianity."

- Saul Cross, St. Justin Martyr, p. 9.

Tertullian



"The blood of
the martyrs is
the seed of the
church"

The Caesars

Julius Caesar (49-44 BC)

Octavian Augustus (27 BC-14 AD)

Tiberius (14-37)

Caligula (37-41)

Claudius (41-54)

Nero (54-68)

Galba (68-69)

Otho (69)

Vitellius (69)

Julian
Dynasty

Flavian
Dynasty

Vespasian (69-79)

Titus (79-81)

Domitian (81-96)

Nerva (96-98)

Trajan (98-117)

Hadrian (117-138)

Antonius Pius (138-
161)

Marcus Aurelias (161-
180)

Commodus (180-193)

Nervan
Dynasty

Why did Rome persecute Christians?

1. Christians wouldn't worship the cult of the emperor
2. Christians criticized the Roman religions
3. Christians would not sacrifice to local deities.



Polycarp

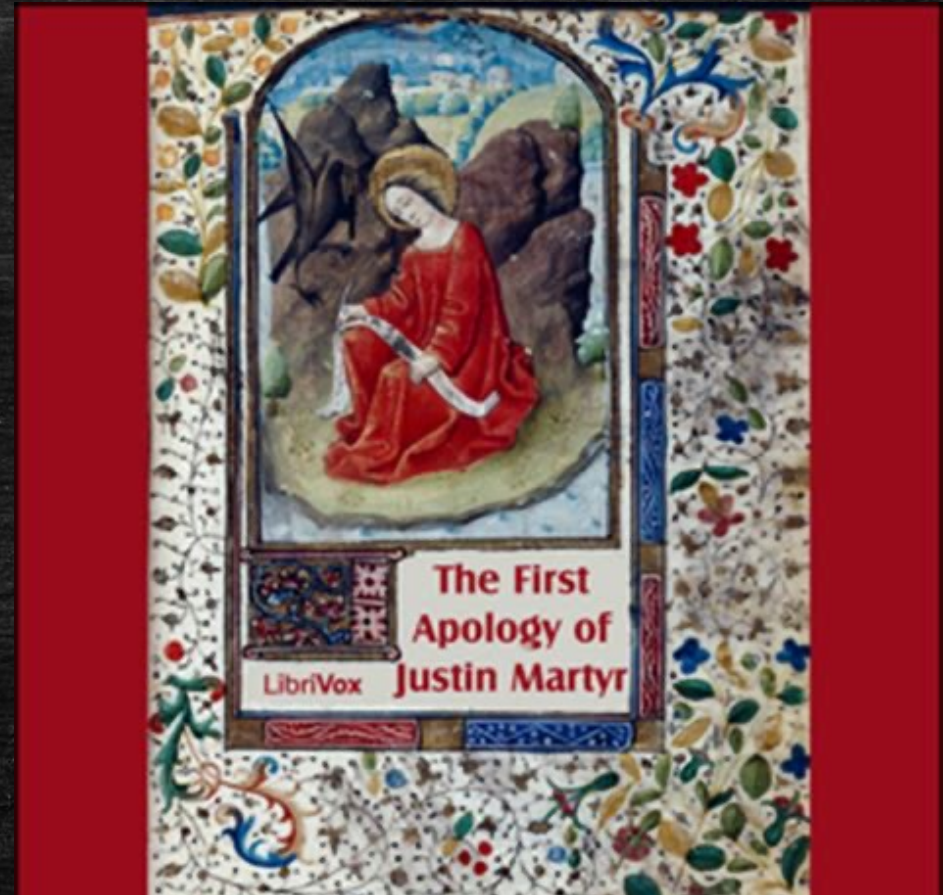
- "For eighty-six years I have served Christ and he has done me no wrong; how can I blaspheme against my King and Savior."



First Apology of Justin

Addresses 3 major misconceptions

1. Christians are atheists
2. Christians are insurrectionists
3. Christians are cannibals





What can we learn from Justin
and the other martyrs?

How ought we then to live?

Introduction to Athanasius' On The Incarnation

C. S. Lewis (1898-1963)

THERE is a strange idea abroad that in every subject the ancient books should be read only by the professionals, and that the amateur should content himself with the modern books. Thus I have found as a tutor in English Literature that if the average student wants to find out something about Platonism, the very last thing he thinks of doing is to take a translation of Plato off the library shelf and read the Symposium. He would rather read some dreary modern book ten times as long, all about "isms" and influences and only once in twelve pages telling him what Plato actually said. The error is rather an amiable one, for it springs from humility. The student is half afraid to meet one of the great philosophers face to face. He feels himself inadequate and thinks he will not understand him. But if he only knew, the great man, just because of his greatness, is much more intelligible than his modern commentator. The simplest student will be able to understand, if not all, yet a very great deal of what Plato said; but hardly anyone can understand some modern books on Platonism. It has always therefore been one of my main endeavours as a teacher to persuade the young that firsthand knowledge is not only more worth acquiring than secondhand knowledge, but is usually much easier and more delightful to acquire.

This mistaken preference for the modern books and this shyness of the old ones is nowhere more rampant than in theology. Wherever you find a little study circle of Christian laity you can be almost certain that they are studying not St. Luke or St. Paul or St. Augustine or Thomas Aquinas or Hooker or Butler, but M. Berdyaev or M. Maritain or M. Niebuhr or Miss Sayers or even myself.

Now this seems to me topsy-turvy. Naturally, since I myself am a writer, I do not wish the ordinary reader to read no modern books. But if he must read only the new or only the old, I would advise him to read the old. And I would give him this advice precisely because he is an amateur and therefore much less protected than the expert against the dangers of an exclusive contemporary diet. A new book is still on its trial and the amateur is not in a position to judge it. It has to be tested against the great body of Christian thought down the ages, and all its hidden implications (often unsuspected by the author himself) have to be brought to light. Often it cannot be fully understood without the knowledge of a good many other modern books. If you join at eleven o'clock a conversation which began at eight you will often not see the real bearing of what is said. Remarks which seem to you very ordinary will produce laughter or irritation and you will not see why - the reason, of course, being that the earlier stages of the conversation have given them a special point. In the same way sentences in a modern book which look quite ordinary may be directed at some other book; in this way you may be led to accept what you would have indignantly rejected if you knew its real significance. The only safety is to have a standard of plain, central Christianity ("mere

Christianity" as Baxter called it) which puts the controversies of the moment in their proper perspective. Such a standard can be acquired only from the old books. It is a good rule, after reading a new book, never to allow yourself another new one till you have read an old one in between. If that is too much for you, you should at least read one old one to every three new ones.

Every age has its own outlook. It is specially good at seeing certain truths and specially liable to make certain mistakes. We all, therefore, need the books that will correct the characteristic mistakes of our own period. And that means the old books. All contemporary writers share to some extent the contemporary outlook - even those, like myself, who seem most opposed to it. Nothing strikes me more when I read the controversies of past ages than the fact that both sides were usually assuming without question a good deal which we should now absolutely deny. They thought that they were as completely opposed as two sides could be, but in fact they were all the time secretly united - united with each other and against earlier and later ages - by a great mass of common assumptions. We may be sure that the characteristic blindness of the twentieth century - the blindness about which posterity will ask, "But how could they have thought that?" - lies where we have never suspected it, and concerns something about which there is untroubled agreement between Hitler and President Roosevelt or between Mr. H. G. Wells and Karl Barth. None of us can fully escape this blindness, but we shall certainly increase it, and weaken our guard against it, if we read only modern books. Where they are true they will give us truths which we half knew already. Where they are false they will aggravate the error with which we are already dangerously ill. The only palliative is to keep the clean sea breeze of the centuries blowing through our minds, and this can be done only by reading old books. Not, of course, that there is any magic about the past. People were no cleverer then than they are now; they made as many mistakes as we. But not the same mistakes. They will not flatter us in the errors we are already committing; and their own errors, being now open and palpable, will not endanger us. Two heads are better than one, not because either is infallible, but because they are unlikely to go wrong in the same direction. To be sure, the books of the future would be just as good a corrective as the books of the past, but unfortunately we cannot get at them.

I myself was first led into reading the Christian classics, almost accidentally, as a result of my English studies. Some, such as Hooker, Herbert, Traherne, Taylor and Bunyan, I read because they are themselves great English writers; others, such as Boethius, St. Augustine, Thomas Aquinas and Dante, because they were "influences." George Macdonald I had found for myself at the age of sixteen and never wavered in my allegiance, though I tried for a long time to ignore his Christianity. They are, you will note, a mixed bag, representative of many Churches, climates and ages. And that brings me to yet another reason for reading them. The divisions of Christendom are undeniable and are by some of these writers most fiercely expressed. But if any man is tempted to think - as one might be tempted who read only contemporaries - that "Christianity" is a word of so many meanings that it means nothing at all, he can learn beyond all doubt, by stepping out of his own century, that this is not so. Measured against the ages "mere Christianity" turns out to be no insipid interdenominational transparency, but something positive, self-consistent, and inexhaustible. I know it, indeed, to my cost. In the days when I still hated Christianity, I learned to recognise, like some all

too familiar smell, that almost unvarying something which met me, now in Puritan Bunyan, now in Anglican Hooker, now in Thomist Dante. It was there (honeyed and floral) in Francois de Sales; it was there (grave and homely) in Spenser and Walton; it was there (grim but manful) in Pascal and Johnson; there again, with a mild, frightening, Paradisial flavour, in Vaughan and Boehme and Traherne. In the urban sobriety of the eighteenth century one was not safe - Law and Butler were two lions in the path. The supposed "Paganism" of the Elizabethans could not keep it out; it lay in wait where a man might have supposed himself safest, in the very centre of *The Faerie Queene* and the *Arcadia*. It was, of course, varied; and yet - after all - so unmistakably the same; recognisable, not to be evaded, the odour which is death to us until we allow it to become life:

An air that kills
From yon far country blows.

We are all rightly distressed, and ashamed also, at the divisions of Christendom. But those who have always lived within the Christian fold may be too easily dispirited by them. They are bad, but such people do not know what it looks like from without. Seen from there, what is left intact despite all the divisions, still appears (as it truly is) an immensely formidable unity. I know, for I saw it; and well our enemies know it. That unity any of us can find by going out of his own age. It is not enough, but it is more than you had thought till then. Once you are well soaked in it, if you then venture to speak, you will have an amusing experience. You will be thought a Papist when you are actually reproducing Bunyan, a Pantheist when you are quoting Aquinas, and so forth. For you have now got on to the great level viaduct which crosses the ages and which looks so high from the valleys, so low from the mountains, so narrow compared with the swamps, and so broad compared with the sheep-tracks.

The present book is something of an experiment. The translation is intended for the world at large, not only for theological students. If it succeeds, other translations of other great Christian books will presumably follow. In one sense, of course, it is not the first in the field. Translations of the *Theologia Germanica*, the *Imitation*, the *Scale of Perfection*, and the *Revelations of Lady Julian of Norwich*, are already on the market, and are very valuable, though some of them are not very scholarly. But it will be noticed that these are all books of devotion rather than of doctrine. Now the layman or amateur needs to be instructed as well as to be exhorted. In this age his need for knowledge is particularly pressing. Nor would I admit any sharp division between the two kinds of book. For my own part I tend to find the doctrinal books often more helpful in devotion than the devotional books, and I rather suspect that the same experience may await many others. I believe that many who find that "nothing happens" when they sit down, or kneel down, to a book of devotion, would find that the heart sings unbidden while they are working their way through a tough bit of theology with a pipe in their teeth and a pencil in their hand.

This is a good translation of a very great book. St. Athanasius has suffered in popular estimation from a certain sentence in the "Athanasian Creed." I will not labour the point that that work is not exactly a creed and was not by St. Athanasius, for I think it is a very fine piece of writing. The words "Which Faith except

every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly" are the offence. They are commonly misunderstood. The operative word is keep; not acquire, or even believe, but keep. The author, in fact, is not talking about unbelievers, but about deserters, not about those who have never heard of Christ, nor even those who have misunderstood and refused to accept Him, but of those who having really understood and really believed, then allow themselves, under the sway of sloth or of fashion or any other invited confusion to be drawn away into sub-Christian modes of thought. They are a warning against the curious modern assumption that all changes of belief, however brought about, are necessarily exempt from blame. But this is not my immediate concern. I mention "the creed (commonly called) of St. Athanasius" only to get out of the reader's way what may have been a bogey and to put the true Athanasius in its place. His epitaph is Athanasius contra mundum, "Athanasius against the world." We are proud that our own country has more than once stood against the world. Athanasius did the same. He stood for the Trinitarian doctrine, "whole and undefiled," when it looked as if all the civilised world was slipping back from Christianity into the religion of Arius - into one of those "sensible" synthetic religions which are so strongly recommended today and which, then as now, included among their devotees many highly cultivated clergymen. It is his glory that he did not move with the times; it is his reward that he now remains when those times, as all times do, have moved away.

When I first opened his *De Incarnatione* I soon discovered by a very simple test that I was reading a masterpiece. I knew very little Christian Greek except that of the New Testament and I had expected difficulties. To my astonishment I found it almost as easy as Xenophon; and only a master mind could, in the fourth century, have written so deeply on such a subject with such classical simplicity. Every page I read confirmed this impression. His approach to the Miracles is badly needed today, for it is the final answer to those who object to them as "arbitrary and meaningless violations of the laws of Nature." They are here shown to be rather the re-telling in capital letters of the same message which Nature writes in her crabbed cursive hand; the very operations one would expect of Him who was so full of life that when He wished to die He had to "borrow death from others." The whole book, indeed, is a picture of the Tree of Life - a sappy and golden book, full of buoyancy and confidence. We cannot, I admit, appropriate all its confidence today. We cannot point to the high virtue of Christian living and the gay, almost mocking courage of Christian martyrdom, as a proof of our doctrines with quite that assurance which Athanasius takes as a matter of course. But whoever may be to blame for that it is not Athanasius.

The translator knows so much more Christian Greek than I that it would be out of place for me to praise her version. But it seems to me to be in the right tradition of English translation. I do not think the reader will find here any of that sawdusty quality which is so common in modern renderings from the ancient languages. That is as much as the English reader will notice; those who compare the version with the original will be able to estimate how much wit and talent is presupposed in such a choice, for example, as "these wiseacres" on the very first page.



