

Foundations

Mount Shasta Evangelical Free Church

And you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth...

Acts 1:8b

- Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyon (ca. 140-202):
 1. Irenaeus was born in Asia Province.
 2. In his youth he was a disciple of Polycarp, the disciple of St. John.
 3. He was a priest in Lyon during the persecutions of Marcus Aurelius.
 4. Following the martyrdom of the previous Bishop of Lyon, Irenaeus was elevated to the episcopal seat.

- While bishop, Irenaeus wrote copiously. Other than a few fragments of his many works, only two of his writings exist in their entirety:
 1. Although generally referred to as *Adversus Haereses*, Irenaeus' greatest works' true title is the "Detection and Overthrow of the False Knowledge". It is difficult to overestimate the importance of this work.
 - A. *Adversus Haereses* was written to repudiate and refute Gnosticism.
 - B. This work is the primary basis for our understanding of Gnosticism and other major heresies confronting the church at this time.
 - C. In achieving this end, Irenaeus provides a clear exposition of church doctrine in the latter half of the second century.
 - D. *Adversus Haereses* remains an incredibly useful resource for understanding how best to deal and defeat challenges to the church and its doctrine.
 2. The second extant work by Irenaeus is "Proof of the Apostolic Preaching". This is work of affirmation intended for consumption by the church, not a polemical work against outside forces. It usefully demonstrates the truth of the Gospel by revealing it in the Old Testament.

- Other important contributions of Irenaeus include:
 1. He emphasized Scripture, tradition and the bishops as the source of Church teaching.
 2. Stressing the importance of all four Gospels.
 3. Irenaeus directly quotes 21 of the 27 books of the New Testament and alludes to Hebrews, James, and 2nd Peter. Only Philemon, 3rd John and Jude are entirely omitted from his writings.
 4. Interestingly, Irenaeus believed in a literal millennial kingdom.

- Origen (ca. 185-253):
 1. Studied under Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150-211/216), another important apologist and contemporary of Irenaeus.
 2. Led a catechal school in Alexandria.
 3. After being forced to leave Alexandria, he established a second school Caesarea.
 4. Origen was eventually tortured and martyred in A.D. 254.

- Origen is without doubt the most prolific author of the early church. His writings are known to have numbered over two thousand works. While only a fraction of this number survive, it still far exceeds the number of works by any other ancient author.
 1. His writings include treatises on numerous philosophical works, doctrinal studies and commentaries on the books of the Old and New Testaments.
 2. Perhaps his greatest achievement is the Hexapala, which is a six-columned manuscript which included parallel columns, containing the Old Testament in Hebrew, the Old Testament transliterated into Greek, the Septuagint, the translations of Aquila of Sinope, Symmachus the Ebionite and Theodotion.

- Throughout much of his writing, Origen is concerned with exegesis, which is the practice of interpreting the scriptures. His views on the matter do not always seem consistent and at times he veers into allegorical interpretations, for which he was chastised.
 1. Origen affirms the importance of both Scripture and tradition in upholding truth against heretical challenges.
 2. He states the relationship between the letter and spirit of the Word, believing that it is often the letter (literal) that has primacy in interpreting scripture. Against his own admonition, Origen at times tends to interpret allegorically. At times, his error could be characterized by a quest for understanding that makes stops at the wrong places.
 3. In spite of his errors, he is nearly universally praised, respected, used and defended by church leaders who were unwaveringly orthodox. This maintains his own assertions of his essential orthodoxy.

- Cyprian of Carthage (ca. 205-258):
 1. Powerful bishop of Carthage in North Africa.
 2. He was a strong defender of the church in the face of fierce persecution.
 3. Affirmed the primacy of apostolic succession in maintaining the accuracy of teaching.
 4. The final bishop to be martyred in the first empire-wide persecution of the church.