

THE EARLY CHURCH AND THE FATHERS

COURSE MANUAL

THE302_22A



LESSON PLANS - TESTS - STUDY GUIDES - QUARTER REPORT FORMS



Week One

INTERACTIVE DAILY REVIEWS
available at SetonOnline



IMPORTANT NOTE: This course was designed as a half-year course. It is usually paired with *Moral Theology*, another half-year course. We typically suggest that *Moral Theology* be taken the first half of the year, and *The Early Church and the Fathers* be taken the second half of the year.

Unit 1: Introduction and the Apostolic Fathers

Day 1 The Age of the Apostles and the *Didache*

You can check off work as you complete it!



Read the course introduction on pages 5-6 of this lesson plan. Then, read the following lesson introducing this week's material.



Imagine that you plan to go to a certain college so that you can study under Dr. Jones, the world's most famous history teacher. One night, a few weeks before your first year of studies, a tragic fire breaks out at the college in the electrical closet immediately under Dr. Jones's office. It destroys all his lecture notes and his academic papers. Dr. Jones, who is working late, perishes in the blaze. You will never have the chance to study under the great teacher.

When you arrive at the college, you meet many students who studied under Dr. Jones. You listen eagerly when they talk about his class. Sometimes, you notice that they can't quite agree on what he said. There aren't any written records for you to consult, but it's not too hard to decide who to trust. The students who got good grades in his class are obviously more reliable than those who did poorly. A good grade is like Dr. Jones speaking from the grave. It is his attestation that the student had a good understanding of the class.

The analogy isn't perfect, but the earliest Christians were in a similar situation. They wanted to become followers of Christ, but they could not go directly to Jesus. For them, as well, it was not difficult to decide who to trust. There were several people who had spent a great deal of time with Jesus during his life. Jesus had appointed twelve of them to be the teachers of future generations of Christians. These twelve were the Apostles. Matthew 28:18-20, a passage known as "The Great Commission," relates the words with which Jesus sent forth the apostles immediately before his ascension: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age." There

could be no clearer affirmation that Jesus wanted the first Christians to turn to the apostles as their teachers and leaders.

After Pentecost, the apostles and disciples were filled with zeal. They began to spread the news that Jesus Christ was the Son of God Who had come to this world to save sinners, that He had been crucified, had risen from the dead, and had ascended into Heaven. The New Testament, especially the Acts of the Apostles, records the spread of the Early Church. Large numbers of converts believed in the Gospel and were baptized. The Apostles spread out from Jerusalem and established churches¹ in Egypt, Syria, Asia Minor, Greece, and Rome. Some Apostles, like St. Thomas, even ventured beyond the dominion of the Roman Empire. St. Peter established the church in Rome, the most important city in the world at that time. St. Paul in particular was especially active, establishing many churches in Asia and Greece during his missionary journeys.

Today, we will read an ancient text that was probably written during the time of the Apostles. This text is called the *Didache*. The word "didache" is a Greek word that simply means "the teaching." The full name of the text is "The Lord's Teaching through the Twelve Apostles to the Nations." Outside of the New Testament, the *Didache* is one of the earliest records of Christianity. We do not know who the author was, but the text may well have been

¹ The Latin/Greek word for church is *ecclesia/ekklesia* and it originally meant simply "an assembly"; however, in the New Testament it began to take on a technical definition referring to a society of Christians, both "The Church" as in the entire membership of the Mystical Body of Christ, but also local churches, which is usually what we would refer to today as dioceses. So when someone in this early time period refers to "the church in Antioch" they don't mean one particular building, but the entire Christian population under the leadership of a bishop.

written down at the same time as the Gospels, or even earlier. It is an ancient handbook for Christians. You will notice striking similarities between the teaching of Jesus as recorded in the Gospels, and the moral teaching recorded

in the *Didache*. The text of the *Didache* can be divided into three parts. The first part consists of moral teachings. The second has practical instructions for various rituals. The third has instructions for various ministries.



Lecture on the Church Fathers: Listen to today's lecture in SetonOnline.



Read the following excerpts from the *Didache*. Notice the similarities between the teaching of the *Didache* and Catholic teaching today. Some are pointed out for you.



<p>The Lord's Teaching through the Twelve Apostles to the Nations</p> <p>Chapter 1: The Two Ways, The First Commandment</p> <p>There are two ways, one of life and one of death; but a great difference between the two ways. The way of life, then, is this: First, you shall love God who made you; second, your neighbor as yourself; and all things whatsoever you would should not occur to you, do not also do to another. And of these sayings the teaching is this: Bless those who curse you, and pray for your enemies, and fast for those who persecute you. For what reward is there, if you love those who love you? Do not also the Gentiles do the same? But love those who hate you, and you shall not have an enemy. Abstain from fleshly and worldly lusts. If someone gives you a blow upon your right cheek, turn to him the other also, and you shall be perfect. If someone impresses you for one mile, go with him two. If someone takes away your cloak, give him also your coat. If someone takes from you what is yours, ask it not back, for indeed you are not able. Give to everyone that asks you, and ask it not back; for the Father wills that to all should be given of our own blessings (free gifts). . . .</p>	<p>Notes</p> <p>(These first two chapters are from the section on the moral life.)</p> <p>Notice the similarities between this chapter and the teaching of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:38-48). As the Apostles passed on the message of Jesus, their teaching would have been circulated in several ways: orally, in the written record of the Gospels, and in other written records.</p>
<p>Chapter 2: The Second Commandment, Gross Sin Forbidden</p> <p>And the second commandment of the Teaching; You shall not commit murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not commit pederasty, you shall not commit fornication, you shall not steal, you shall not practice magic, you shall not practice witchcraft, you shall not murder a child by abortion nor kill that which is begotten. You shall not covet the things of your neighbor, not forswear yourself, you shall not bear false witness, you shall not speak evil, you shall bear no grudge. You shall not be double-minded nor double-tongued; for to be double-tongued is a snare of death. Your speech shall not be false, nor empty, but fulfilled by deed. You shall not be covetous, nor rapacious, nor a hypocrite, nor evil disposed, nor haughty. You shall not take evil counsel against your neighbor. You shall not hate any man; but some you shall reprove, and concerning some you shall pray, and some you shall love more than your own life.</p>	<p>Note the explicit condemnation of abortion here. Of course, the commandment "thou shalt not kill" makes it obvious that abortion is wrong. Nevertheless it is interesting to see that this specific sin is defined as murder and condemned in the earliest days of Christianity.</p>
<p><i>These next two chapters are from the Didache's instructions for rituals.</i></p>	
<p>Chapter 7: Concerning Baptism</p> <p>And concerning baptism, baptize this way: Having first said all these things, baptize into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, in living water. But if you have not living water, baptize into other water; and if you cannot in cold, in warm. But if you have not either, pour out water thrice upon the head in the name of Father and Son and Holy Spirit.</p>	<p>"Living water" here means running water.</p> <p>Note the similarities between the instructions in the <i>Didache</i> and the administration of Baptism today.</p>



Chapter 9: The Thanksgiving (Eucharist)

Now concerning the Thanksgiving (Eucharist), thus give thanks. First, concerning the cup: We thank you, our Father, for the holy vine of David Your servant, which You made known to us through Jesus Your Servant; to You be the glory forever. And concerning the broken bread: We thank You, our Father, for the life and knowledge which You made known to us through Jesus Your Servant; to You be the glory forever. Even as this broken bread was scattered over the hills, and was gathered together and became one, so let Your Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into Your kingdom; for Yours is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ forever. But let no one eat or drink of your Thanksgiving (Eucharist), but they who have been baptized into the name of the Lord; for concerning this also the Lord has said, Give not that which is holy to the dogs.

The word "Eucharist" is a Greek word meaning "Thanksgiving."

The words here are different from those used in the Roman Rite of Mass today. The offertory prayers are an example of a part of the Mass for which the Church has approved various different forms. Nevertheless, the "matter" of the Sacrament, bread and wine, remains the same, as does the exclusion of non-believers from Communion.

This last chapter is from the Didache's guidelines for ministry.

Chapter 14: Christian Assembly on the Lord's Day

But every Lord's day gather yourselves together, and break bread, and give thanksgiving after having confessed your transgressions, that your sacrifice may be pure. But let no one that is at variance with his fellow come together with you, until they be reconciled, that your sacrifice may not be profaned. For this is that which was spoken by the Lord: In every place and time offer to me a pure sacrifice; for I am a great King, says the Lord, and my name is wonderful among the nations.

Just as today, the earliest Christians gathered every week on the Lord's day for the Eucharist.

Notice the command to confess sins before the Eucharist. Today, Mass still begins with the recitation of the "I confess" and the penitential rite.

The word "sacrifice" appears three times in this paragraph. From the earliest times, Christians have understood that the Eucharist is a sacrifice.

The last sentence of this chapter is a paraphrasing of Malachi 1:11. You may remember covering this text in your scripture class. This Jewish prophecy describes the sacrifice of the New Covenant. It will be offered not just in the Temple in Jerusalem, but in every place. Not only Jews, but all nations will honor God with this sacrifice. The sacrifice will be pure and pleasing to God. From the very first days of Christianity, Christians have understood how the Eucharist fulfills this prophecy. The Mass takes place all over the world, and it is the sacrifice to God of the most perfect offering: Jesus Himself.



Day 2 Introduction to the Church Fathers



Daily Review: Review yesterday's lesson using the following questions to help you. You need not answer the following questions in writing.

1. Why are the apostles so important? Who gave them the authority to teach Christianity?
2. How did the apostles work to spread the Gospel?

3. When was the Didache probably written? What does the word “didache” mean?
4. Which sin does the Didache define as murder?
5. List elements of the Didache’s teaching on the Mass that are the same as Catholic teaching today.
6. List elements of the Didache’s teaching on Baptism that are the same as Catholic teaching today.
7. How can we explain the fact that some of the rituals described in the Didache different from our rituals today?



Course Reading: Read the following lesson on the Church Fathers

All of the apostles except St John eventually suffered martyrdom. St. Peter and St. Paul died in Rome during the persecution of the Emperor Nero, no later than 68 AD. The historical record of the New Testament ends with St Paul living under house arrest in Rome. The deaths of the Apostles marked the end of one story, but the beginning of another.

In this course, we will study these early Christian teachers. How did the few Christian communities founded by the Apostles survive the death of their leaders and the persecution by the Roman Empire? How did the early Christians understand the teachings that Christ and the Apostles had left them? To understand these things, we need to get to know some of these early Christians!

What is a Church Father?

The Fathers of the Church are a select group of early Christian teachers, around a hundred in number. The Catholic Church has long revered them and given them a privileged place of doctrinal authority. They meet four criteria:

- | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| 1) Sound doctrine | 2) Holiness of life |
| 3) Church approval | 4) Antiquity |

Source:
p. 17-18



Course Reading: Read pages 17-23 in the textbook.

- Pay special attention to the four criteria for being considered a church father and why these men are called “fathers.”
- As you read, note the meaning of the following words: Pope, Church Father, Patristics.

NOTE ON TODAY'S READING:

The text mentions why the early Christian bishops were called “fathers” and mentions that this early time period is sometimes called the Patristic Era. In both Greek and Latin, the word for father is *pater*, so the Patristic Era just means the era of the fathers. The study of the fathers of the church is also called patristics.

Day 3 St. Clement of Rome and the Papacy



Daily Review: Review yesterday’s lesson using the following questions to help you. You need not answer the following questions in writing.

1. List the four criteria for being a Church Father.
2. Why are the Church Fathers important?
3. Define the following terms: Pope, Church Father, Patristics.



Lecture on the Church Fathers: Listen to today's lecture in SetonOnline.



Course Reading: Read the following lesson on the historical context of St. Clement of Rome.

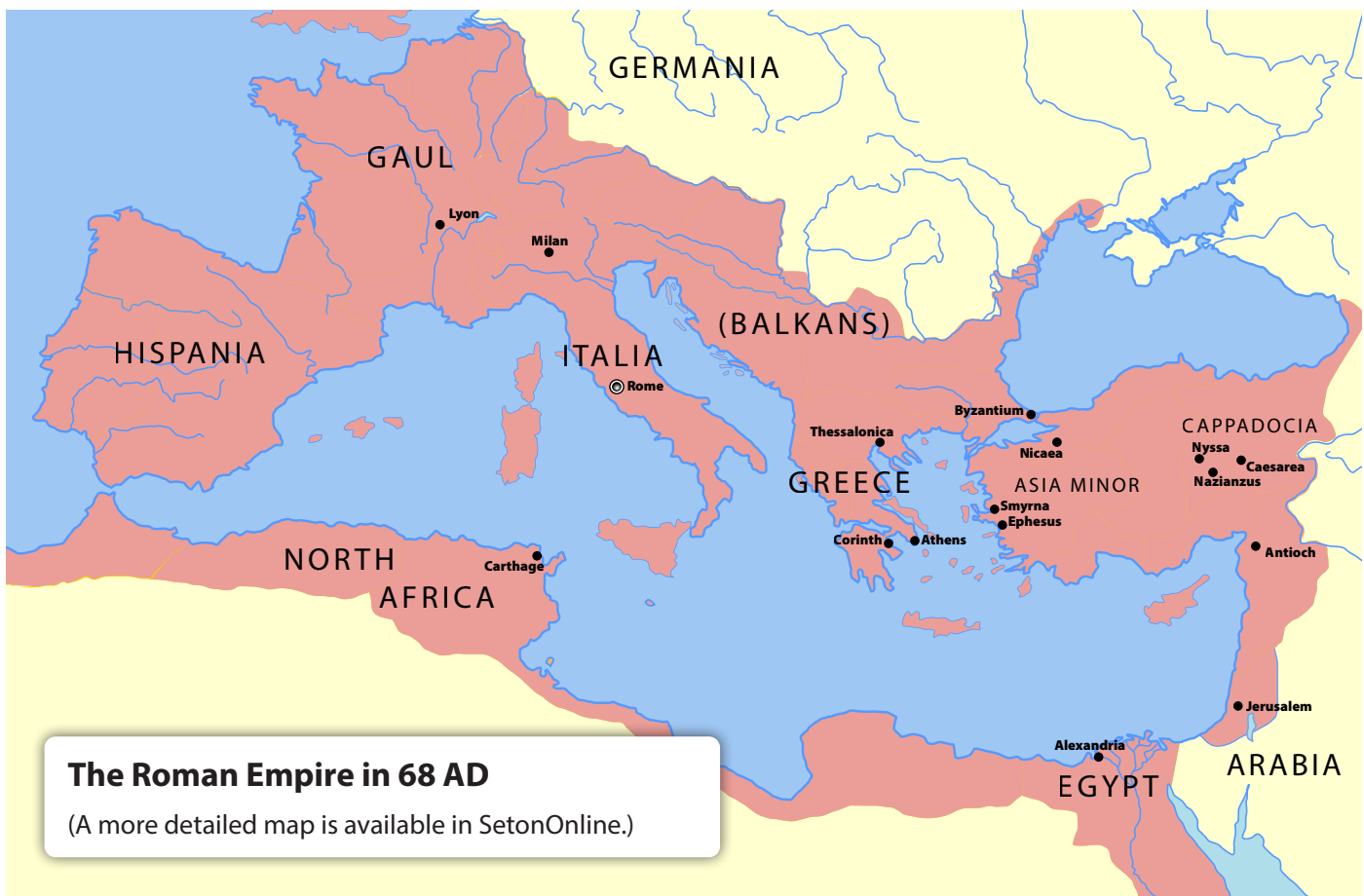


While the Romans had barbarian tribes on their borders, and there were a few nations to the east in Persia, India, and China, to the people living in the Mediterranean world, the Roman Empire ruled everything that mattered. Rome was essentially the capital of the entire world. By 68 AD, after Sts. Peter and Paul died, the Roman Empire was close to its full size (though it would not technically reach its greatest territorial size until 117 AD). Rome had been a world power for hundreds of years already. In 27 BC, Caesar Augustus had essentially abolished a real republican form of government. Since this time, Rome had been ruled by nearly all-powerful emperors.

With perhaps around 1 million inhabitants, Rome was by far the largest city in the Empire, and it was geographically centrally located (though the Eastern portion of the Empire had a far larger population than the Western portion). Rome was the center of government and administration. It was the home of the Emperor and the Senate (which still played a role in government under the Emperor). It was a

natural place for St. Peter to establish the seat of the leading bishop of the Church.

St. Linus was selected to lead the Roman Church after St. Peter was martyred, and he was succeeded by St. Anacletus, who was succeeded by St. Clement. While Sts. Linus and Anacletus, being the second and third popes, would naturally be considered “fathers” in one sense, they are not considered Fathers of the Church. They meet a couple of the four criteria mentioned by St. Vincent Lerins. They led holy lives and lived in early antiquity. We can assume they taught sound doctrine, but we don’t actually have any works written by them. It isn’t that their works have been lost, but they probably just never had occasion to write important works of theology or letters that were so important they were kept by other churches. This is probably the reason that the Church has never recognized them as Church Fathers, which is the third criteria (church approval). St. Clement, the fourth pope, is considered a Church Father, and in fact he is one of the very earliest.



St. Clement is one of the Apostolic Fathers. The Apostolic Fathers are the first Fathers of the Church. Their teaching is particularly important because they knew the apostles personally, and may have been their students. Today we will read St. Clement's only surviving writing: his Letter to the Corinthians. This document is especially important because it is the earliest piece of evidence that the Bishops of Rome, St. Peter's successors, exercised authority over the other Christian communities as well.

Some of the passages from the Church Fathers that you will be reading in this course may be difficult to understand. In the upcoming reading, don't worry about understanding everything St. Clement is referring to. St. Clement writes about a terrible situation going on in the Church at Corinth: there are multiple factions; the people are not obeying the presbyters (priests); many Corinthians are giving themselves over to sinful behaviors. These were not new problems for the Church in Corinth. St. Paul himself, in his Epistle to the Corinthians a few decades earlier, addressed many of these same issues. In St. Clement's estimation, the situation in Corinth has gotten worse since St. Paul's letter. St. Clement is very much following in the footsteps of St. Paul in his care for the community. It is worth noting that the popes in Rome are considered not only the successors of St. Peter, but the successors of St. Paul as well. For this reason, in the Roman liturgy, whenever St. Peter is commemorated, St. Paul is likewise remembered.

The most important theme to recognize in the following reading is the authority St. Clement shows by sending a letter to a church in another province with commands and instructions. In fact, this *Letter to the Corinthians* is considered one of the earliest papal encyclicals! It is also important to note the analogy St. Clement uses comparing the obedience soldiers must give their commanders with the obedience Christians must give to their bishops and how the Apostles gave instructions that their office as bishops needed to be passed down to successors.

THE APOSTOLIC FATHERS



St. Clement of Rome

Papal Reign: 88-97 A.D.

St. Clement was the fourth pope and one of the earliest Church Fathers. He is known for his only surviving writing, his *Letter to the Corinthians*.



Textbook Reading: Read the *Introduction to the Apostolic Fathers* and the section on St. Clement of Rome on pages 55-61 in the textbook. Pay special attention to the authority St. Clement seems to exercise over the Church in Corinth (which is in Greece, nowhere near Rome).

NOTE ON TODAY'S READING:

The text mentions that some scholars think St. Clement's Letter to the Corinthians might have been written as early as 70 AD because it seems to refer to the Temple in Jerusalem as still standing. In 66 AD, most of the Jewish factions joined together in a "Great Revolt" against Roman authority. Rome sent an army which laid siege to the City of Jerusalem, and in 70 AD they sacked and destroyed much of the city, including the Temple, which was never rebuilt.



Day 4 The Life of St. Ignatius and the Letter to the Smyrnaeans

Daily Review: Review yesterday's lesson using the following questions to help you. You need not answer the following questions in writing.

- 1. The popes are the successors of which two apostles?
2. Why was Rome such an important city in the ancient world?
3. Who was St. Clement and why did he write to the Corinthians?
4. What does St. Clement's letter teach us about the bishop of Rome?
5. Define the following term: Apostolic Father.

Scripture Reading: Read the following selection from The Acts of the Apostles (11:19-26).

(Antioch has sometimes been called the "Cradle of Christianity" for the importance it played in the Early Church. It was written about in the Acts of the Apostles as the place the followers of Jesus were first called "Christians.")

[19]Now they who had been dispersed by the persecution that arose on occasion of Stephen, went about as far as Phenice and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to none, but to the Jews only. [20] But some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they were entered into Antioch, spoke also to the Greeks, preaching the Lord Jesus.

[21] And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believing, were converted to the Lord. [22] And the tidings came to the ears of the church that was at Jerusalem, touching these things: and they sent Barnabas as far as Antioch. [23] Who, when he was come, and had seen the grace of God, rejoiced: and he exhorted them all with purpose of heart to continue in the Lord. [24] For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith. And a great multitude was added to the Lord. [25] And Barnabas went to Tarsus to seek Saul: whom, when he had found, he brought to Antioch.

[26] And they conversed there in the church a whole year; and they taught a great multitude, so that at Antioch the disciples were first named Christians.

Textbook Reading: Read the introduction to St. Ignatius of Antioch and the excerpt entitled "The Effects of Heresy" on pages 61-64 in the textbook.

THE APOSTOLIC FATHERS



St. Ignatius of Antioch
Died around 107
St. Ignatius was bishop of Antioch at the end of the first century. He was martyred in Rome by being cast to the lions. He left the Church several important epistles, including one which contains one of the earliest recorded uses of the term "the Catholic Church."

**NOTE ON TODAY'S READING:**

Page 62 of the text contains an error. It says that Troas was one of the churches to which St. Ignatius wrote. He did stop in the city of Troas during his journey, but the letter was written to the church in Tralles, a different city in Asia Minor near the other churches that received letters.



Lecture on the Church Fathers: Listen to today's lecture in SetonOnline.



Course Reading: Read the following lesson on St. Ignatius of Antioch.

St. Ignatius had been arrested in Antioch, where he was bishop, and was being transported by Roman soldiers to the capital at Rome to face public execution in the arena. First they traveled from Antioch to the Roman province of Asia (in what is now the country of Turkey). The troops rested there for some time, in the city of Smyrna. As word spread about the arrest of the famous bishop of Antioch, many of the bishops from the nearby churches in Asia came to visit him. (The Roman soldiers seem to have given him some freedom to meet with people and to write letters.) Ignatius was friends with Polycarp, the bishop of Smyrna. Before the journey continued through Greece and on to Rome, Ignatius had written letters to many of the churches in Asia, particularly to the bishops who had come to visit him and who would have told Ignatius about the problems their local churches were facing.

Six of St. Ignatius's letters are fairly similar and they repeat two overarching themes again and again. The Letter to the Romans is the one that is different, and we will discuss why later. The two major repeating themes are:



- Be obedient to your bishops, presbyters (priests), and deacons¹
- Avoid heretics, especially the Docetists

Let's look at the first theme more in depth.

The text gave us a selection from the Letter to the Smyrnaeans, but let's look at examples from each of the letters on the topic of the bishops, priests, and deacons. As you read through these examples, also notice how St. Ignatius talks about the Eucharist. It is clear that he understands that the Eucharist is the real body and blood of Jesus.

LETTER TO THE EPHESIANS

Chapter 5: The Praise of Unity

For if I in this brief space of time, have enjoyed such fellowship with your bishop — I mean not of a mere human, but of a spiritual nature — how much more do I reckon you happy who are so joined to him as the Church is to Jesus Christ, and as Jesus Christ is to the Father, that so all things may agree in unity! Let no man deceive himself: if anyone be not within the altar, he is deprived of the bread of God. For if the prayer of one or two possesses such power, how much more that of the bishop and the whole Church! He, therefore, that does not assemble with the Church, has even by this manifested his pride, and condemned himself. For it is written, God resists the proud. Let us be careful, then, not to set ourselves in opposition to the bishop, in order that we may be subject to God.

Chapter 6: Have Respect to the Bishop as to Christ Himself

Now the more anyone sees the bishop keeping silence, the more ought he to revere him. For we ought to receive every one whom the Master of the house sends to be over His household, as we would do Him that sent him. It is manifest, therefore, that we should look upon the bishop even as we would upon the Lord Himself. And indeed Onesimus himself greatly commends your good order in God, that you all live according to the truth, and that no sect has any dwelling-place among you. Nor, indeed, do you hearken to any one rather than to Jesus Christ speaking in truth.

LETTER TO THE MAGNESIANS Chapter 3: Honor your Youthful Bishop

Now it becomes you also not to treat your bishop too familiarly on account of his youth, but to yield him all reverence, having respect to the power of God the Father, as I have known even holy presbyters do, not judging rashly, from the manifest youthful appearance [of their bishop], but as being themselves prudent in God, submitting to him, or rather not to him, but to the Father of Jesus Christ, the bishop of us all. It is therefore fitting that you should, after no hypocritical fashion, obey [your bishop], in honor of Him who has willed us [so to do], since he that does not so deceives not [by such conduct] the bishop that is visible, but seeks to mock Him that is invisible. And all such conduct has reference not to man, but to God, who knows all secrets.

LETTER TO THE TRALLIANS Chapter 3: Honor the Deacons, etc.

In like manner, let all reverence the deacons as an appointment of Jesus Christ, and the bishop as Jesus Christ, who is the Son of the Father, and the presbyters as the Sanhedrin of God, and assembly of the apostles. Apart from these, there is no Church.

LETTER TO THE PHILADELPHIANS (Chapter 4: Have but one Eucharist, etc.)

Take heed, then, to have but one Eucharist. For there is one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one cup to [show forth] the unity of His blood; one altar; as there is one bishop, along with the presbytery and deacons, my fellow-servants: that so, whatsoever you do, you may do it according to [the will of] God.

¹ The word presbyter is a word the early church used for a Catholic priest. The Greek word presbyteros means “elder.” This term is still used in the Church today in some forms. For example, someone might refer to the presbyterate of a diocese, which means all of the diocesan priests belonging to a diocese. The Greek word used for bishop is episkopos, which means “overseer.” We hear this word used most common as an adjective referring to a bishop, like an episcopal ring (the bishop’s ring of office). The American members of the Anglican Protestant community refer to themselves as Episcopalians because they believe there should be a role for bishops when many other American Protestants do not.

LETTER TO POLYCARP Chapter 6: The Duties of the Christian Flock

Give heed to the bishop, that God also may give heed to you. My soul be for theirs that are submissive to the bishop, to the presbyters, and to the deacons, and may my portion be along with them in God! Labor together with one another; strive in company together; run together; suffer together; sleep together; and awake together, as the stewards, and associates, and servants of God. Please Him under whom you fight, and from whom you receive your wages. Let none of you be found a deserter. Let your baptism endure as your arms; your faith as your helmet; your love as your spear; your patience as a complete panoply. Let your works be the charge assigned to you, that you may receive a worthy recompense. Be long-suffering, therefore, with one another, in meekness, as God is towards you. May I have joy of you forever!

Why was the emphasis on the role of bishops, priests, and deacons so important to St. Ignatius? Clearly he felt that the Church as a whole was under a significant attack from false doctrines. While some people might have had malicious intent in perverting the teachings of Our Lord, other people were being carried along in the error through confusion. St. Ignatius could see that one of the reasons Christ established the Church with bishops was to bring unity to the Christian community. It would be so easy for disagreements to arise if there was not someone in authority who could help keep the local churches authentically connected with the Sacred Tradition of the Church. Having strong bishops was one way to minimize the spread of heresy.

Why is St. Ignatius's emphasis on the role of bishops, priests, and deacons so important in our own day? Some Protestant communities accept, at least in theory, there should be a role for bishops and priests. The Anglican community is an example. However, many Protestants, especially in the United States, do not believe in any kind of hierarchy. They have no bishops or priests, but rather have a preacher, elected by the congregation, lead their services. They do not believe that Christ and the Apostles ever intended to have bishops or priests in a formal church structure. It is difficult to hold that position when you read the writings of the early church fathers like St. Clement and St. Ignatius, who help provide such clear evidence that these teachings were handed down directly from the Apostles. St. Ignatius was an Apostolic Father. He knew St. John. He knew St. Paul. He knew St. Peter. Just as the Apostles provided a witness for the teachings of Christ, the early Church Fathers serve as a witness of the Apostolic teachings. In fact, at the end of the twentieth century, many prominent Protestant ministers like Dr. Scott Hahn converted to the Catholic Faith, largely through their study of the Church Fathers.

One very important detail from St. Ignatius's Letter to the Smyrnaeans that we don't want to miss is found near the end of the quote in the text. It reads, "Wherever the bishop shall appear, there let the multitude also be; even as wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church." This quote is important because it is the very first recorded use of the name "Catholic Church" as a proper noun. (The Greek word *katholikos* means "universal.")



Review: You will take a test over this week's material tomorrow. If you have time today, review the material briefly. You may also want to work ahead and answer the review questions for today's lesson. You can also make use of the interactive study guide in SetonOnline, or the printed study guide in the back of this course manual.

Day 5 St. Ignatius and Docetism



Daily Review: Review yesterday's lesson using the following questions to help you. You need not answer the following questions in writing.

1. Of which city was St. Ignatius the bishop? Why was this city important?
2. What was happening to St. Ignatius while he was writing his letters?
3. How many letters did St. Ignatius write, and to whom did he write them (don't forget the one that is addressed to a person)?
4. How was St. Ignatius connected to the Apostles?
5. According to St. Ignatius, what was the role of bishops in the early Church? How could bishops prevent heresy?
6. How can Ignatius's references to bishops, priests, and deacons help us today?



7. Define the following term: Presbyter
8. St. Ignatius was the first person on record to use which term as a proper noun?



Course Reading: Read the following lesson on St. Ignatius and Docetism.

The second theme from St. Ignatius’s letters is avoiding heresies, especially Docetism. You may have heard the words “heresy” and “heretic” several times, perhaps without receiving an exact definition. The word heresy comes from a Greek word meaning “choice.” A heretic is somebody who chooses only some parts of Christian revelation to believe. The heretic’s partial acceptance of Christianity, accompanied by the rejection of other parts of the faith, leads to a corrupted and incomplete version of the truth. It is important to note that heresy is not the same thing as total rejection of Christianity. Rather, it is a corruption of Christianity. You will learn about many different heresies in this course. As Christianity spread to more and more people, false teachings inevitably began to appear. As the first heresies took hold in the Church, the Fathers faced an enemy from within. (Note that “heresy” is the word for a false belief, while “heretic” is the word for a person who holds that false belief.)

Docetism was a heresy that was popular in St. Ignatius’s time, and even in the time of the Apostles. It appeared due to the influence of the Gnostics, a group that you will learn about later. The word “Docetism” comes from the Greek word *dokesis* meaning “appearance.” Docetists believed that Jesus did not have a real human body but that He was an apparition of God and only appeared to have a body.

The Docetist heresy threatened to make nonsense of the whole Christian faith. If Christ didn’t have a real body, then He couldn’t have really suffered and died for us on the cross. The Redemption and Resurrection, the central mysteries of the Christian Faith, could not really have happened.

To combat Docetism, St. Ignatius quoted from the Gospels to show some of the many instances in which Christ physically interacted with people. After the Resurrection, Christ even came to the Apostles and explicitly said that He was not just a ghost or apparition. Our Lord ate food with the Apostles to prove He had truly risen.



Textbook Reading: Re-read the first four paragraphs of Ignatius’s Letter to the Smyrnaeans on pages 63-64 of the textbook. Notice his arguments against Docetism.



Review: Review today’s lesson using the following questions to help you.

1. Define the following terms: heresy, heretic.
2. What is Docetism?
3. How did St. Ignatius argue against Docetism?

Review the material you have studied this week. Use the quizzes and review questions to help you review. There is no written element to the test. Questions may be multiple choice, true/false, multiple response, ordering, mix and match, or fill-in-the-blank.



Test: Take the test over this week’s material. To prepare, you may make use of the study guides found in the back of this course manual or on SetonOnline.

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Week Two

INTERACTIVE DAILY REVIEWS
available at SetonOnline

Introduction and the Apostolic Fathers (Unit 1, continued)

Day 1 The Death of St. Ignatius and the Letter to the Romans

Read the following lesson introducing this week's material.

Six of Ignatius's letters had been written to places he had been or to the churches who had sent their bishops to visit him in Asia, but one letter was sent ahead to his destination, to the church in Rome. This letter was very different from the others.

The focus of the selection in the text is on Ignatius's acceptance and desire for martyrdom. There were many Christians in Rome at this time, and he knew that if they wanted to, they could probably break him out of custody when he arrived in Rome, but Ignatius implores the Roman Christians not to interfere and to allow him to receive the grace of martyrdom.

St. Ignatius echoes the words of St. Paul who wrote these words in 2 Tim 4:6-8 when he was on his way to Rome to be martyred: "for I am already on the point of being sacrificed; the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing."

**Textbook Reading:** Read pages 64-68 in the textbook. **NOTE ON TODAY'S READING:**

As well as Ignatius's desire for martyrdom, there are two other important themes in this letter that we should note.

First, Ignatius writes to the Roman church in a deferential way, different from the tone of his other letters. He even refers to the Roman church as the "church that presides." When we read St. Clement's *Letter to the Corinthians*, we noted how it indicated the primacy of the Pope in Rome. That was an example of the pope claiming that authority. In the case of St. Ignatius, who was one of, if not the most, revered Christian leader at the time because of his old age and connection with the Apostles, we see the claim to primacy acknowledged by a bishop from the other side of the Empire.

The second theme that is mentioned both in Ignatius's *Letter to the Romans* and in the *Letter to the Smyrnaeans* is the strong reference to Christ's True Presence in the Eucharist. In fact, in the *Letter to the Smyrnaeans*, Ignatius mentions that some of the heretics don't believe that Eucharist is truly Christ's Body and because they spurn this gift from God they incur spiritual death. Powerful words, but no more powerful than the words of St. Paul, who warns: "Anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body, eats and drinks judgment on himself" (1 Corinthians 11:29). Time and time again we will see the Church Fathers echoing the words of the Apostles, expounding upon what the Apostles handed down to them.

This reference to the Eucharist, like St. Ignatius's reference to bishops, priests, and deacons, is very significant in our discussions with non-Catholic Christians who do not believe in Christ's True Presence in the Eucharist. Many Protestant communities believe that Christ's words ("This is my body, this is my blood") were merely symbolic. The words of St. Ignatius are compelling evidence that the early Christians believed Christ's words to be quite literal. During the celebration of the Eucharist, Christ becomes really present in His Body and Blood.



You're probably wondering whether Ignatius suffered the martyrdom that he so ardently desired. The answer is yes. Shortly after his arrival in Rome, St. Ignatius was fed to wild beasts, presumably lions, before the crowds. He may well have died in the Colosseum.

Day 2 St. Polycarp

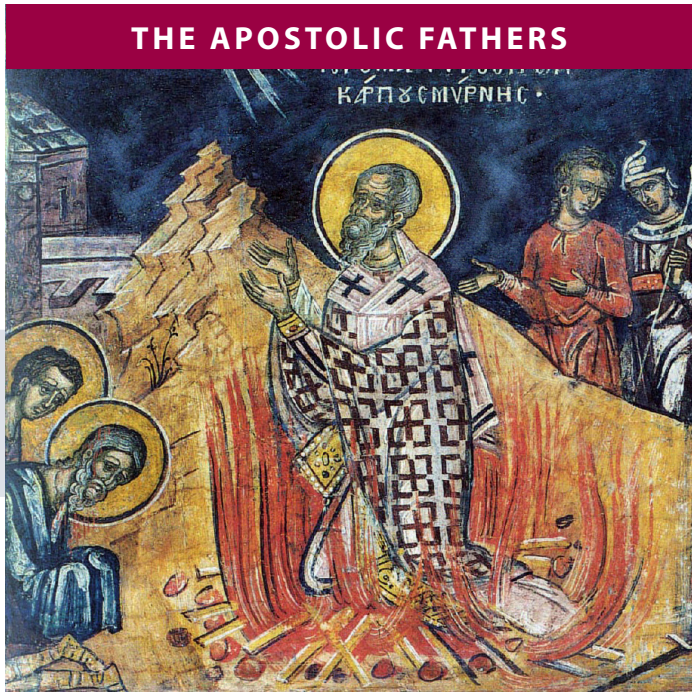
Daily Review: Review yesterday's lesson using the following questions to help you. You need not answer the following questions in writing.



1. Where did St. Ignatius die and how was he killed?
2. Why did St. Ignatius want to die?
3. How did St. Ignatius show his acceptance of the primacy of Rome?
4. What did St. Ignatius teach about the Eucharist, and how can his teaching help us in conversation with Protestants?

ST. POLYCARP

St. Polycarp is the last Apostolic Father that we will study. He reached the great age of 86, and by the end of his life, he may have been the only bishop alive who had known the Apostles personally. Polycarp also knew St. Ignatius personally. He is the bishop to whom Ignatius addressed one of his letters. Given that both men were disciples of the Apostle John, we can imagine how close their relationship must have been.



THE APOSTOLIC FATHERS

St. Polycarp 69-155

St. Polycarp was bishop of Smyrna and a disciple of St. John the Apostle, who consecrated him bishop. He was martyred by being burned at the stake. According to accounts from the time, he was finally killed by being stabbed by his persecutors, as the fires would not harm him.



Textbook Reading: Read pages 68-73 in the textbook.

Notice Polycarp's famous response when his executioner urges him to blaspheme: "Eighty-six years have I served Him, and He never did me any injury: how then can I blaspheme my King and Savior?"



Lecture on the Church Fathers: Listen to today's lecture in SetonOnline.

Meaning of the word "Orthodox"

Throughout this course, and throughout the readings, the word "orthodox" is used to describe those Christians who hold to the truth, as opposed to heretics that have strayed from the truth. The word "orthodox" in this sense comes from the Greek words which mean "right opinion." In this course, the word does not refer to the Eastern Orthodox or Russian Orthodox. These groups emerged far later in the history of the Church.

Unit 2: Ante-Nicene Fathers

Day 3 Hellenization



Daily Review: Review yesterday's lesson using the following questions to help you. You need not answer the following questions in writing.

1. How was Polycarp connected to the apostles? To St. Ignatius?
2. Why was Polycarp an important figure in the Church towards the end of his life?
3. What was Polycarp's reason for refusing to blaspheme Christ?
4. List the Apostolic Fathers that we have covered.

We have completed our study of the Apostolic Fathers. Today we begin a new unit, which will focus on the next category of Fathers: Ante-Nicene Fathers. The name Ante-Nicene means "before Nicaea." It refers to the Council of Nicaea, which took place in 325, and which you will learn about later in the course. The Ante-Nicene Fathers are those who came after the Apostolic Fathers, but before the Council of Nicaea.



Course Reading: Read the following lesson on **Hellenization**.

Before we begin studying the first Ante-Nicene Father, we need to take a couple of days to get a better understanding of the culture of the Roman Empire in the second and third centuries AD. This information is essential background to help you understand who the Fathers were, how they saw the world, and what issues they faced as Christian leaders. To understand Roman culture, we need to go back further in time to another great culture: Greece. More than 350 years before Christ rose from the dead, Alexander the Great had led the ancient Greeks to conquer most of the known world at that time.

Alexander the Great's conquests ultimately brought three main aspects of the Greek World to the world of the Church Fathers and the early Church.

1. Greek Language: Alexander brought more than his armies with him. He also brought his language. Alexander conquered the Persian Empire, and in so doing, made Greek the official language for much of the East. He also conquered Egypt, and Greek became the official language there as well.

Even after Alexander died and his successors divided his empire into smaller kingdoms, Greek remained the official language. Thus, for most of the area we call the Middle East today as well as Greece itself, Greek had become a sort of universal language among the wealthy and educated citizens.

Local languages like Egyptian (Coptic), Aramaic (often used by Jesus), Syriac, Hebrew, and many others were still the native languages of most of the people, but the use of Greek helped tie the various cultures of the East together. It is similar to the role English plays in today's world as the most important language of politics and business.

The Jewish Old Testament was translated into Greek, and many of the Apostles and early Christians spoke Greek. In fact, the entire New Testament was written in Greek, as were the writings of many of the Church Fathers.

2. Greek Religion: Greek religion also spread with the Greek armies. The Greeks believed in many gods like Zeus, the father of the gods, Athena, the goddess of wisdom, Ares, the god of war, and Aphrodite, the goddess of love. An interesting aspect of classical polytheism was its inclusivity. Greek religion had no concept of salvation and so had no missionary zeal. There was no impulse in Greek religion to contradict other religions; it just tried to absorb them.

When the Greeks came into contact with Egypt, for example, they found a way to synthesize the pantheon of the Greeks with the pantheon of the Egyptians. The Greeks had a god of war named Ares, and the Egyptians had a god of war named Horus. Never mind that the stories told of each were very different, the Greeks accepted them as the same god. In this way, even though the Greeks and the



Egyptians seemed to worship entirely different gods, they were able to live together without religious conflict. The two religions just sort of merged together.

Thus, the Greeks helped merge many of the local polytheistic religions of the Mediterranean world into a form acceptable to most. The Jewish people, however, steadfastly refused to accept the Greek gods. Under the leadership of the Maccabees, they even led a successful revolt against the rule of the Greek Seleucid Empire, and re-established their own independent kingdom.

3. Greek culture, including science and philosophy:

Along with Greek language and religion came all of the other advances of Greek culture, particularly Greek science and philosophy, but also sculpture, poetry, and history. The spread of Greek philosophy in particular is important for understanding the Church Fathers, but we will delve into that more later.

The spread of Greek culture, religion, and language is collectively known as **Hellenization**.

THE ROMANS

The Roman Empire grew up in the West. Centered in Italy, it conquered what is today France, Spain, and North Africa before it turned east. Since Italy, France, Spain, and North Africa had not been part of Alexander's empire, they never became fully Greek-speaking areas, but rather used the language of the Romans, Latin, as their language of culture, politics, and business. The Romans traded with the Greeks, and eventually sent their legions to conquer Greek-speaking territories.

By the time Jesus was born, the Roman Empire had conquered all of the Mediterranean world including Greece, Syria, Asia Minor, and Egypt. The Romans loved Greek culture, so instead of trying to replace it, they absorbed

it. Many educated Romans learned Greek in addition to Latin, and they studied the great Greek philosophers, scientists, mathematicians, and artists. Just as the Greeks and Egyptians had merged their gods, the Roman gods all found Greek counterparts. The Greek god Zeus was identified with the Roman god Jupiter, the Greek goddess Aphrodite with the Roman goddess Venus, the Greek god Ares with the Roman god Mars, and so forth.

By the time of the early church and the Church Fathers, the entire Roman Empire largely shared the same religion, or at least had found a way for their different pantheons to co-exist. Greek philosophers were studied from one end of the Empire to the other.



Day 4 Pagan Philosophy



Daily Review: Review yesterday's lesson using the following questions to help you. You need not answer the following questions in writing.

1. What does the term "Ante-Nicene Father" mean?
2. What role did Alexander the Great's empire play in the process of Hellenization?
3. List the three aspects of Hellenization as explained in yesterday's lesson.
4. Which Empire inherited the Greek world and culture?
5. How did Greek and Roman religions coexist?
6. Practice identifying the Latin and Greek-speaking parts of the Roman Empire on a map.



Course Reading: Read the following lesson on **Pagan Philosophy**.

There was much that ancient men did not understand about the world around them. It is part of our human nature, however, to be curious. You have probably talked with a young child who always asked the question *why*. Why is the sky blue? Why can't I eat this leaf? Why do things fall down?

In many ancient cultures, people gave up trying to answer their questions about the world. If they didn't understand something, rather than guess at why it might be, they would just say "because the gods made it that way." Some created elaborate myths to explain the different mysteries of nature. The ancient Greeks were really the first people to use their reason in a systematic way and try to come up with natural explanations for the world around them. In essence, the Greeks founded most of the natural sciences as we know them today.

SOCRATES

Socrates came first. He was born around 470 BC and died in 399 BC. Socrates was a stone mason and fought in the Peloponnesian War when Athens and its allies went to war with the city-state of Sparta and its allies. The accounts claim that he fought bravely, but Socrates is best known for being a teacher and great thinker. Socrates didn't teach in a formal way in a classroom, but instead had public discussions—out on the streets, in the marketplace, and in the political forum. He attracted young men who wanted to learn about his ideas about morality and wisdom.

Socrates was called the gadfly of Athens (gadfly is another name for a horsefly, which is a large stinging fly that goads animals to run away when it stings). Socrates went around challenging the citizens of Athens to question assumptions they held about basic principles. One of his

Some of the Greeks' questions had to do with more abstract questions. What are good and evil? How do humans come to have knowledge, and how is it possible for different people to have the same idea? Does man have a soul and what is a soul? The search for rational answers to these kinds of questions is the beginning of philosophy. The word philosophy is a combination of the Greek words "philos" meaning love, and "sophia" meaning wisdom. It literally means "love of wisdom."

There are three Greek philosophers in particular who are the most important: Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. All three of these men lived in the ancient city-state of Athens, the most famous city in ancient Greece.

most famous quotes is, "The unexamined life is not worth living." Socrates never claimed to have all of the answers. In fact, he claimed to know less than anyone else. He said that true wisdom comes from knowing how much you don't know. Having a wrong idea about something is worse than admitting that you don't know. He was interested in ideas about justice, virtue, knowledge, and thought many of his fellow citizens had the wrong idea about these topics, so it was his job to point out their errors.

As you can imagine, many Athenians didn't like Socrates pointing out when they were wrong, and he earned many enemies. So many, in fact, that he was eventually put on trial and executed. Socrates never wrote any books, but his philosophy was made famous by one of his students, a man called Plato.



PLATO

Plato was more aristocratic than Socrates and was highly respected. Plato wrote a series of dialogues featuring Socrates. A dialogue is similar to a written play where there are a few characters and you imagine yourself present in the scene listening to these characters have a conversation. Socrates is the main character in all of these dialogues, and the words that Socrates speaks convey his philosophy. We don't know for certain how much of the words Socrates says in the dialogues really convey things that Socrates said and how much of it Plato wrote himself and simply put in the mouth of his slain teacher for dramatic effect. Since almost everything we know about the thought of Socrates comes from Plato's dialogues, the teachings of the two men are essentially indistinguishable. So when talking about their philosophy, we almost treat them as if they were the same person.

Plato brought Socrates's method of asking questions about the world to a more respected level. He even founded an official school where young men could come and learn about philosophy. This school was called the Academy. (This school was so popular that its name literally became synonymous with education.) Socrates and Plato thought that the best way to teach was to lead others to a conclusion by asking questions. This is called the Socratic Method.

ARISTOTLE

Plato was the most famous student of Socrates, and he had a famous student of his own. The name of Plato's famous student was Aristotle. He is often regarded as the greatest of the pagan philosophers. Aristotle was a genius who recognized many of the errors in Socrates and Plato's philosophy. Aristotle wrote books on ethics, physics, the soul, metaphysics, poetry, biology, astronomy, and much more. He was truly prolific. While his writings on science were proven wrong almost two thousand years later, his teachings on philosophy became the basis for much of the Catholic Church's rational explanation for some of the mysteries of the Faith. In fact, Aristotle's philosophy is really the inspiration for St. Thomas Aquinas, the greatest Catholic philosopher.

Aristotle essentially invented what we call formal logic. He taught us how to make proper definitions for words and explained how the intellect of man acquires knowledge. Like Plato before him, Aristotle formed an official school in

As founders of Western philosophy, Socrates and Plato taught some very significant ideas. They held that the physical world was an imperfect realm that only dimly reflected the perfect immaterial realm—that immaterial things were better than material things. They taught that man had an immortal soul which was immaterial and that the soul was more important than the body, which would pass away. They even said that while the Greeks believed in many gods, there had to be one perfect immaterial and unchanging being above them all.

Christians would later use the arguments that Socrates and Plato gave to show that human beings could prove from reason alone, without divine revelation, that there is only one true God, and that this One God was the same as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of the Jewish people. This same God came to earth in the Person of Jesus Christ. Christians claimed that Socrates was really an early monotheist and they used his popular philosophy to help convince some of the skeptical people of the Roman Empire about the truth of Christianity.

Platonism is the name used to refer to the philosophy of Socrates and Plato.

Athens, which he called the Lyceum. The Lyceum had a lot of covered walkways, and students would often walk around the grounds pondering deep philosophical questions, so the people who followed Aristotle's philosophy were called peripatetics (meaning given to walking about). The general name for the philosophy of Aristotle is **Peripateticism**.

After learning from Plato, but before founding the Lyceum, Aristotle left Athens for a time to become the private tutor to the son of a king north of Greece. The king was Philip of Macedon, and his son was a young boy named Alexander. This boy was the same Alexander who would grow up to conquer the known world, Alexander the Great. In fact, it was probably Aristotle who encouraged Alexander to think about turning East and conquering Persia. We can trace the education that Alexander the Great received all the way back to Socrates. Alexander the Great was the student of Aristotle. Aristotle was the student of Plato. Plato was the student of Socrates.

OTHER SCHOOLS OF PHILOSOPHY

During the time of the Church Fathers in the Roman Empire, Platonism and Peripateticism were popular schools of philosophy. (The term school here doesn't mean a physical place but a group of people who share the same

ideas or methods.) These were just two of many schools of thought in the Empire. Three other less important schools were Epicureanism, Stoicism, and Skepticism.



The School of Athens, by Raphael. Plato and Aristotle are depicted in the center of the painting.

The Epicureans believed that the material world was all that existed, and thus that pleasure was the highest good. They did not, however, think that pursuing base physical pleasures at any cost was the wisest course of action. Rather, they argued for temperance and living modestly so that people could avoid pain, fear, and anxiety. Mental pleasure was the best. The Epicureans thought it best to avoid things like politics, fame, and power because those can lead to mental anguish. With the Platonist believing that only the immaterial world was important, and the Epicureans believing that there is no immaterial world, the two schools of thought were very much opposed to each other.

The Stoics stressed the importance of reason and logic and held that the pursuit of virtue was the greatest good for man. Ethics and justice were their chief concerns. They had many admirable qualities. They believed that men had souls, but that souls were not immortal or truly individual. Instead, they believed that the whole universe was just one great object. They believed that ourselves, and everything around us, are not complete, but are parts of that one whole. This belief is a form of pantheism (a belief that nature, God, and all living things are really all just the same thing).

The Sceptics held that true knowledge was impossible to obtain. Socrates said that true wisdom comes from knowing how much we don't know. The Sceptics went even further. They said that wisdom is knowing that we know nothing at all. Like the Epicureans, the Sceptics strived for the goal of having mental peace and not being bothered by the world.

Almost all of these major philosophies had a few important teachings in common. They all taught that human reason should be in control of our human emotions and desires and that physical pleasures should not be given pride of place. Men should pursue virtue, which is a habit of doing the right thing. The fact that these philosophies were popular in the Roman Empire doesn't mean that everyone followed them, but it does show us that the Romans and Greeks placed a high priority on using their minds to understand the world around them. These cultural values of virtue and reason led the early Christians to believe that they might bring many good people in the empire to Christ by demonstrating the reasonable basis for Christianity and how the teachings of Christ would lead to the highest virtues.



Review: You will take a test over this week's material tomorrow. If you have time today, review the material briefly. You may also want to work ahead and answer the review questions for today's lesson. You can also make use of the interactive study guide in SetonOnline, or the printed study guide in the back of this course manual.



Day 5 The Life of Justin Martyr



Daily Review: Review yesterday's lesson using the following questions to help you. You need not answer the following questions in writing.

1. What is philosophy?
2. Why did some Christian philosophers consider Socrates an early monotheist?
3. How were Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and Alexander the Great connected to each other?
4. What are some of the characteristics of the following schools of philosophy: Platonism, Peripateticism, Stoicism, Skepticism, Epicureanism.
5. How did the popularity of Greek philosophy affect the preaching of Christianity?



Course Reading: Read pages 86-87 in the textbook.

Today, we saw that Justin grew up a pagan, but had a love of philosophy. The text tells us that Justin followed different philosophies. He would become convinced of one, but eventually realized that it didn't have the whole truth and so he moved on to another. He tried Platonism, Stoicism, Peripateticism, Pythagoreanism (which we didn't cover, but which is named after the famous Greek philosopher and mathematician Pythagoras to whom is attributed the discovery of the Pythagorean theorem in Geometry).

Based on what we learned about these philosophical schools, we can assume that before his conversion, Justin was a man who valued knowledge and the pursuit of truth. He would have practiced many virtues and did not often give in to temptations of the flesh. We can see from the story of his conversation with the old man on the beach that Justin's philosophical training was instrumental in his conversion—that philosophy had prepared him for Christianity.



Review: Review today's lesson using the following questions to help you.

1. Briefly summarize the life story of St. Justin. Include where he came from, where he lived at the end of his life, and what he did there.
2. What does it mean to say that St. Justin was an apologist?



Review the material you have studied this week. Use the Study Guide in the back of the course manual to help you review, or use the interactive version in SetonOnline. There is no written element to the test. Questions may be multiple choice, true/false, multiple response, ordering, mix and match, or fill-in-the-blank.

Your test will also include a short section on material from previous weeks. For this cumulative section, you will need to know the following information: The four criteria for being a Church Father. For the map section, make sure you can find **Rome**, **Antioch**, and **Corinth** on a map.



Test: Take the test over this week's material. To prepare, you may make use of the study guides found in the back of this course manual or on SetonOnline.

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THE EARLY CHURCH AND THE FATHERS

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