

<p>Course Information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Course: Bible 08 2020 Unit: 4. EARLY CHURCH LEADERS Assignment: 2. The Age of the Church Fathers
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THE AGE OF THE CHURCH FATHERS

The age of the church fathers represents the initial period of the church following the death of the Apostles. This age is a formative period when the *bishops* of many of the early Christian communities served as a hinge between the Apostles and the *apologists*. To understand the scope of this period, this portion of our study will deal with the church fathers themselves, their theological contributions, and the state of the New Testament *canon* during this age.

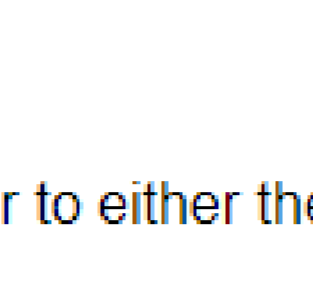
Here are your goals for this lesson:

- List important church fathers and describe their work
- Describe how the church fathers contributed to the canon of Scripture

VO·CAB·U·LAR·Y

VOCABULARY

apologists	Men who wrote to defend Christianity.
bishop	Title of the early pastors or ministers who had jurisdiction over churches within a diocese.
canon	The Bible, either Old Testament or New Testament.
degeneration	The process of growing worse or deteriorating.
dogmatism	The positive assertion of one's opinion.
heresy	Beliefs contrary to Biblical or church teaching.
martyrdom	Death for one's faith.



Vocab Arcade

The church fathers. The title "church fathers" can refer to either the men who wrote the first Christian literature or to their writings. Little is known of these believers in Christ apart from their writings. For this reason, the men are linked closely to their works.

Clement was the bishop of Rome from A.D. 92 to 101. Tertullian later stated that Clement knew the apostle Peter. Clement may have been the chief of a number of bishops in Rome at that time. These leaders were a group of overseers over that specific church.

Little is known of this man whom the Roman Catholics claim as the fourth pope. Clement's writings dealt with a situation in Corinth in which the people had dismissed several of the church leaders on uncertain grounds. Clement wrote to show his disapproval of such action.

Ignatius was the bishop of the church at Antioch. Ignatius is well remembered for his zealous fight against *heresy*. He changed his surname to Theophoros, which means "God-bearer."

On his way to Rome, Ignatius wrote letters to the churches of Ephesus, Magesia, Tralles, Smyrna, Philadelphia, and Rome. He also penned a personal letter to Polycarp, the bishop of Smyrna. In these letters, Ignatius placed strong emphasis on the need to recognize the authority of the officers of the church. He was martyred about A.D. 110), during the reign of Trajan. His execution is mentioned by the historian Eusebius, and some believed that he died in the arena before wild beasts.



Polycarp (A.D. 70-156) was the bishop of the church of Smyrna. He is believed to be the last survivor of those who spoke with the eyewitnesses of the Lord Jesus Christ. Ireneaus claimed that he knew Polycarp and that the latter had been taught by the apostle John. Polycarp's *martyrdom* occurred in Smyrna when he refused to curse the Lord Jesus Christ, saying, "For eighty-six years, I have been his servant, and he has never done me wrong: how can I blaspheme my king who saved me?" As a result of this refusal, he was burned to death by order of the emperor of Rome.

Papias was the bishop of Hierapolis in Phrygia. Very little is known of him and only fragments of his writings remain. He may have been a student of the apostle John while John was either at Ephesus or on Patmos. Papias was a Christian Jew, a zealous opponent of heresy, and the first post-apostolic writer to believe that he was in the last days.

Hermas is identified by tradition as the brother of Pius, the bishop of Rome from A.D. 141 to 146. He was a Christian Jew, and his writings shed considerable light on the activities of the Christians in Rome.

Another tradition concerning Hermas states that he had been a slave and was sold to a Christian woman named Rhoda. After becoming a Christian, he coveted wealth in business and fell away from the faith, only to repent and rejoin the church at Rome.

The theology. Although valuable to the student of the Bible and church history, the writings of the church fathers represent a *degeneration* from New Testament doctrine. Compared to the inspired letters of the New Testament Apostles and prophets, there is a lack of *dogmatism* and an overemphasis of practical matters.

Only Clement is clear on the issue of salvation. Other church fathers connect salvation with works and high ethics. Ignatius uses the term "Catholic" in referring to the church and is the first writer to do so. Most of these men held firmly to the ordinances of the church to the extent that they agreed baptism was a necessary part of salvation because it had the power to wash away sins.

[WWW Church History \(The Church Fathers\)](#)

The canon. From A.D. 70 to 170, the New Testament books were separately circulated throughout the churches. The major contribution made by the church fathers to the canon was their use and referral to the Gospels and to the letters of the Apostles as Scripture, inspired by God. Clement of Rome quoted from many of the Epistles. *The Didache* contains twenty-three quotations from Matthew and Luke alone and declares them to be divinely inspired.

To these men the inspiration of the New Testament canon was not a foregone conclusion. After some debate, the Scriptures, both the Old Testament and the New Testament, were accepted and used as a part of the worship service of that period. This discussion of the canon laid the groundwork for the formal recognition, which would come at the Council of Laodicea in A.D. 363, of what God had given to man in inspiring the New Testament.

Question #1 Matching

Show Answer

Match the vocabulary terms with their definitions.

1. men who wrote to defend Christianity	<input type="checkbox"/> bishop
2. beliefs contrary to Biblical or church teaching	<input type="checkbox"/> heresy
3. death for one's faith	<input type="checkbox"/> dogmatism
4. the Bible, either Old Testament or New Testament	<input type="checkbox"/> martyrdom
5. the positive assertion of one's opinion	<input type="checkbox"/> apologists
6. title of the early pastors or ministers who had jurisdiction over churches within a diocese	<input type="checkbox"/> canon

Question #2 MultipleChoice

Show Answer

Who was the only church father whose writings were clear on the issue of salvation?

Ignatius

Polycarp

Clement

Hermas

Question #3 MultipleChoice

Show Answer

Which man was martyred for his faith during the reign of the Emperor Trajan?

Ignatius

Polycarp

Clement

Hermas

Question #4 MultipleChoice

Show Answer

Which person was martyred for refusing to curse the name of Jesus Christ?

Ignatius

Polycarp

Clement

Hermas

Question #5 MultipleChoice

Show Answer

Who was a Christian Jew and the brother of the bishop of Rome?

Ignatius

Polycarp

Clement

Hermas

Question #6 Matching

Show Answer

Match the church father with the place where he lived.

1. Hierapolis	<input type="checkbox"/> Ignatius
2. Smyrna	<input type="checkbox"/> Papias
3. Antioch	<input type="checkbox"/> Clement
4. Rome	<input type="checkbox"/> Polycarp

Question #7 TrueFalse

Show Answer

The writings of the church fathers were an addition to the New Testament.

True

False

Question #8 TrueFalse

Show Answer

The Didache contained numerous quotations from Matthew and Luke and declares them to be divinely inspired.

True

False

Question #9 TrueFalse

Show Answer

Clement quoted from many of the Epistles.

True

False

Question #10 TrueFalse

Show Answer

The church fathers believed the New Testament to be inspired by God.

True

False

Question #11 TrueFalse

Show Answer

The church fathers wrote what is commonly referred to as the first Christian literature.

True

False

Question #12 TrueFalse

Show Answer

The Old Testament was used in the worship service in this period.

True

False

Question #13 Paragraph

Answer Key Show

What was the major contribution of the church fathers to the canon? *Answer using complete sentences.*