

Religion

Pagan Attacks

e. Simple Anti-Christian Thrusts

(1) Celsus was one of the earlier and vigorous foes of Christianity on the simple anti-Christian motif. His work is the True Word, a straightforward attack on Christianity along the lines of literary assault. His work and its method, etc., are discussed in Orr: The Progress of Dogma, p. 41 ff. The father, Origen, wrote a heavy philosophic-theologic tome against him.

(2) A few pagan philosophers (Libanus, Plotinus, etc) addressed works against the new group from both philosophic and social grounds. A more serious form of attack existed in those who brought forth "rival" messiahs (Alexander of Tyana, for one). The overall thrust was that the church had plenty of foes with which to be occupied... including the normal ones of spiritual deadness, etc.

Christian Leaders and Literary Productions of the Ante- Nicene Period

B. Brief Survey of Some of the Chief Christian spokesmen of this period.

There is a lot more material presented on these items in the course in church history--well, some more material. But these men and their writings represent the earlier grip on doctrinal expression and they are important for that reason. In these notes we are not stressing biography but simply seeking to put some important things and men into the right perspective.

The Apostolic Fathers

1. The Apostolic Fathers...a group of men and writings that overlapped the Apostolic age proper. Some of the literary materials are dubious in the matter of date but are certainly early. The apostolic age proper ended with the death of the Apostle John. But we count the apostolic fathers as those who wrote or lived, at least, under apostolic influence.

Barnabas

a. The Letter of Barnabas--early or middle second century AD. This manuscript offers some insight into the interpretation of the Old Testament and shows the growth of the allegorical method. It also contains (in some mss) more of the "do and don't" categories that are so popular in the earlier literature of the church. The stress in Barnabas is on the more positive side however. The letter went through canonical disputation and is found in some of the older New Testament mss. There are many citations from Scripture and evidence of the continuing company philosophy with which the early church viewed itself.