

C. The Response of the Fathers (church leaders)

Please remember that the fathers were men of their time.. did not have the sophistication of much of our learning and did not possess many of our tools. They were committed to the Scripture and to the saving message. They often do not word things with the precision we think needed today and sometimes discuss issues and offer answers that now seem meaningless to us. But they were devising the form of thinking that would become known as Christian thought and their ideas show us how the doctrines were gripped originally and how they have progressively been "better expressed" or so we hope.

1. The General Answer: Irenaeus. The following citation from Irenaeus is taken from Kelly, p. 89. I have checked it..in the "original."

This, then, is the order of the rule of our faith... God the Father, not made, not material, invisible; one God, the Creator of all things, this is the first point of our faith. The second point is this: The Word of God, Son of God, Christ Jesus our Lord, who was manifested to the prophets according to the form of their prophesying and according to the method of the Father's dispensations, through whom (i.e..The Word) all things were made; who also, at the end of the age, to complete and gather up all things, was made man among men, visible and tangible, in order to abolish death and show forth life and produce perfect reconciliatrion between God and man. And the third point is: the Holy Spirit, through whom the prophets prophesied, and the fathers learned the things of God, and the righteous were led into the way of righteousness; who at the end of the age was poured out in a new way upon mankind in all the earth, renewing man to God.

2. Patristic citations

Originally I had thought to quote some of the fathers at length in the syllabus...but the syllabus is running on and I am running out. Therefore I am giving the citations and they should serve as reference to you if you care to do any further work in this field in time to come. The citations are minimal in terms of what might be offered and these are from early fathers as they are regarded as being more formative of the items we study.

a. Tertullian

Against Praxeas, particularly chapters II and VII

b. Hippolytus

Refutation of All Heresies, IX:5

c. Gregory Thaumaturgus

On the Trinity