



## 5 Marks of the Early Church



### 1. *The spread of Christianity.*

- *By the time of Constantine, the flame of evangelism had reached the entire Roman Empire. It is reported that by the 4th century (300s), there were 30,000 Christians in Rome.*
- *Why did Christianity spread?*
  - *The passion of the Church.*
  - *The transforming effect of the gospel.*
  - *The universal offer of salvation.*
  - *Christianity offered answers to a crumbling empire.*
  - *The martyrdom of the faithful.*

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### 2. *The church was marked by persecution.*

- Christians were distinctive. *They would not worship Rome's gods or Rome's culture.*
- Christians believed in equal dignity. *Christians did not consider a man unworthy because he was a slave or a woman.*
- Christians were slandered. *Communion was considered a love feast orgy with cannibalism. Peter speaks of this in 1 Peter 2:12.*
- Christians were charged with atheism *because they did not offer sacrifices to Roman gods.*
- Christians were required to worship Caesar. *Christians were charged with violating the Pax Romana, the Roman peace and not worshiping the goddess of Rome, Roma, embodied by the emperor.*

*Christians were not persecuted because they worshiped Christ, but because they worshiped only Christ.*

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### 3. *The formulation of orthodoxy, basic Bible truth.*

- *Concerning Jesus | Was He God, Man, some combination, or both?*
- *Concerning Scripture | What was Bible?*

### 4. *Concerning Church Leadership | The rise of the bishop.*

- *The need to answer heresy.*
- *The need to answer apostates.*

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### 5. *The rise of the apologist*

- *An apologist is someone who takes the truths of Christianity and defends them as reasonable. He takes the fallacies of a culture and shows that Christianity alone meets those deepest needs. Paul was an apologist (Acts 17).*
- *Modern examples = CS Lewis, Francis Schaeffer, Oz Guinness, Norm Geisler, RC Sproul, John Piper, John MacArthur, Albert Mohler.*
- *If you were someone who wanted to present Christ to your world, there was no scholarship foundation; there was “fideism” faith only . . .*

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### 5. *Examples of early apologists – Clement of Alexandria in North Africa*

- *He believed just as the Jew had the law of God to bring him to Christ, the gentile world had philosophy. Not that he felt it was inspired.*
- *But philosophy began with the failure of the gods. And philosophers like Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, saw that the gods weren't big enough to give the dignity of man, a reason for existence, and a system of morality. So they began to create a rationalistic system by which they could give a unity to all of existence.*
- *But philosophy does not work and Clement saw that. It didn't work then and it doesn't work today which is why in the 1960s, we ended up with existentialism where you became your own god and created your own reality.*

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### 5. *Examples of early apologists – Clement of Alexandria in North Africa, cont.*

- *So Clement wrote a trilogy.*
  1. *Protrepticus (Exhortation to the Heathen) lays a foundation in the knowledge of divine truth, the religious basis of Christian morality.*
  2. *Paedagogus, The Instructor, was the second in the trilogy and goes on to develop a Christian ethic.*
  3. *Stromata, gives the individual cases of conduct.*
- *So Clement saw the Jew and Greek reaching out on their own terms. The Jew was reaching out on the basis of the given law (Jews seek a sign). And the Greek on the basis of philosophy (and the Greeks seek for wisdom). And he would go to the Greek world and say you are looking for an absolute. And that Absolute is God.*

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### 5. *Examples of early apologists – Clement's student, Origen*

- *Origen put together the first systematic theology – God, Christ, Holy Spirit, Man, Sin, Salvation, Prophecy, Bible.*
- *Preserved the “humanness of Christianity”. We no longer just had to say “I believe it because I believe it” we could show the teachings of Christ in the Scriptures answered the deepest needs of man. The rationality of our faith was preserved, it was internally logically consistent and externally could be lived out in a real world.*
- *Origen was such a force that the Roman empire felt they had to make this man deny his faith. So they tortured Origen for three solid years every day. He never recanted but died three months after his release at the age of 69.*