

G. Important Writers 170-313

1. Melito, Bishop of Sardis (170)

Melito journeyed to Palestine to obtain accurate list of the O.T. books. His list preserved in a letter to a friend consists of our 39 books (Esther) and excludes the Apochrypha (O.T.Intro. p.8). He's the first Christian from whom we have any record of number and names of O.T. books.

2. Irenaeus: (190) (man of peace - Born in Asia Minor: Bishop of Lyons in France)

a. His general attitude - one of moderation and toleration where the Scripture is not explicit.

(1) In 190 Bishop Victor of Rome determined to follow the example of various Bishops of Asia Minor and declare that all Montanists (13) were not Christians. Irenaeus urged Victor not to take such a stand, since the Montanists held to the doctrines of the faith and only claimed a new revelation in matters of daily conduct. For a time Irenaeus prevailed.

(2) The eastern churches celebrated Easter on the 14 of Nisan, i.e. after the Jewish passover - no matter what day of the week it fell on. The western churches celebrated Easter only on the first Sunday after the passover. Bishop Victor determined to excommunicate the eastern churches over this issue (He alone considered himself to have such authority, thus he was unique among the early Bishops of Rome) Irenaeus pointed out that Polycarp who was a student of John had recognized the bond of Brotherhood with the Roman church in spite of the difference over Easter and prevailed upon Victor to do likewise.

b. Irenaeus wrote lengthy books against gnosticism and other heresies and unwittingly contributed to the power of the Roman church by advocating that younger churches should look for correct doctrine to the churches where the apostles had lived and taught. Everyone he said should follow the example of the Roman church which was founded by Peter and Paul. He, however, held no idea of apostolic succession and considered the church under Polycarp in Smyrna or the church at Ephesus as models for doctrine. Here, <sup>he</sup> argued there were leaders who were taught by men who studied under the Apostles.

c. In his writings Irenaeus stressed the pre-millennial return of Christ. (Chiliasm) which is also clearly presented in the works of Justin and Papias as the belief of the whole church.