

FORERUNNERS — OF THE — FAITH



Why Contend for the Faith

Because...

- ✓ Faith is a sacred trust (2 Tim. 2:14)
- ✓ False Teachers Constantly Threaten the Church (Jude 4; Matt. 7:15; Acts 20:29)
- ✓ the Gospel is the Power of Salvation (Rom. 1:16)
- ✓ Truth Matters to God (Titus 1:9)
- ✓ Future Generations depend on it (2 Tim. 2:2)
- ✓ Christ is worthy of our Loyalty (Matt. 10:37-39; Luke 14:25-33; Phil. 3:7-11; Col. 1:15-20; Rev. 5:9-14)

Contending For the Faith:

Justin, Irenaeus, and the Pre-Nicene Church

July 8, 2026



~150
Justin
writes his
First Apology

Irenaeus
writes
*Against
Heresies*

Tertullian
writes
from
Carthage

~240
Tertullian
dies

~165
Martyrdom
of Justin

~202
Martyrdom
of Irenaeus

Origen
writes and
teaches from
Caesarea

~253
Origen
dies

Contending for the Faith

I. Introduction

- **Apologetics** refers to a defense of the faith in the face of external attack (1 Pet. 3:15)
- **Polemics** refers to theological disputation or debate (2 Cor. 10:5)

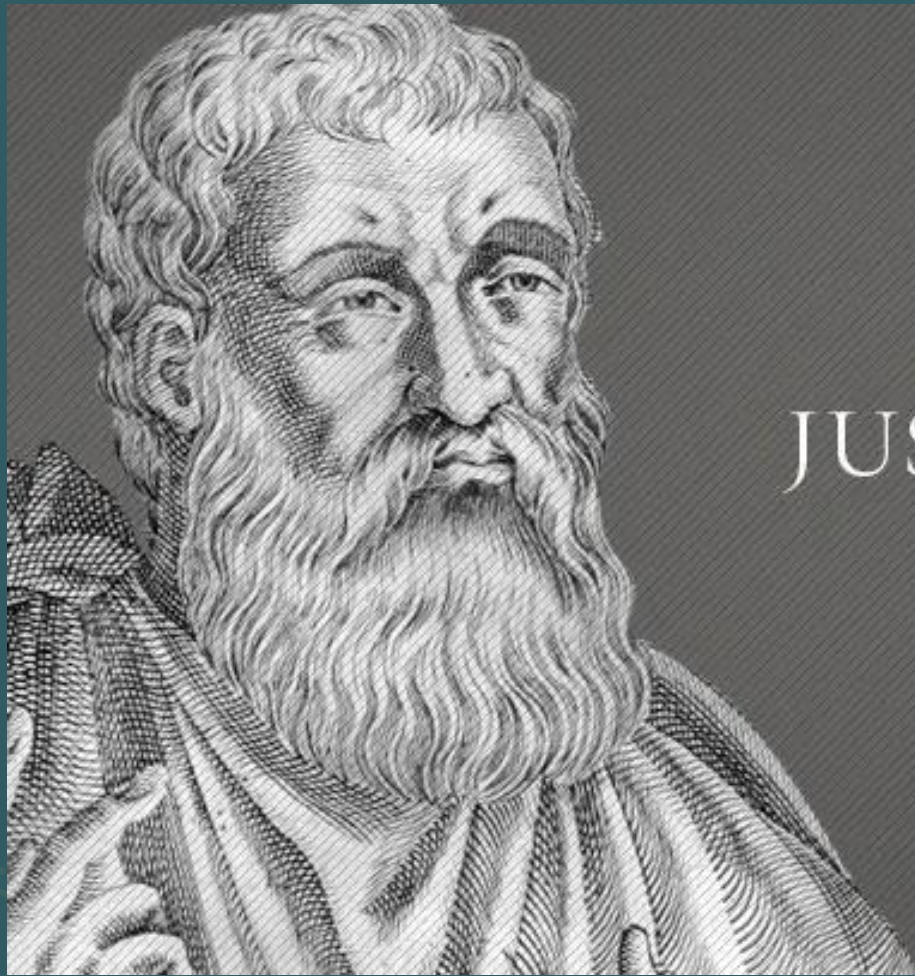
Contending for the Faith

I. Introduction

II. The Apologists

The Christian's were accused of..

- **Atheism** – Because they rejected the pantheon of Roman deities.
- **Insurrection** – Because their worldview was so radically different from the society around them
- **Immorality** – Because of a misunderstanding of what they did when they met on the Lord's Day
- **Cannibalism** – Because of a misunderstanding regarding the Lord's Supper



JUSTIN MARTYR

100–165

Contending for the Faith

I. Introduction

II. The Apologists

III. Justin Martyr (Died C. 165)

- Justin was born around **100 AD** into a non-Christian family
- Justin used the concept of the **divine Logos** (or **"Word"** from John 1) as a way to build bridges to those steeped in Greek philosophy.

Biblical Elements of Worship



1 	We sing the Scripture.	 1 Cor. 14:15; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16
2 	We pray the Scripture.	 1 Tim. 2:1-8
3 	We read the Scripture.	 1 Tim. 4:13
4 	We teach the Scripture.	 1 Tim. 4:13; 6:13-16; 2 Tim. 4:1-5; Titus 2:15
5 	We give generously for the Gospel.	 1 Cor. 16:1-4; 2 Cor. 8-9; Phil. 4:10-14
6 	We celebrate the ordinance of Baptism.	 Matt. 28:19-20; Acts 2:38, 42; 16:31-33; 18:8
7 	We celebrate the ordinance of the Lord's Supper.	 1 Cor. 11:23-32

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IV. The Polemicists

- In addition to persecution, the New Testament also warns Christians about the reality of **false teachers**.

Contending for the Faith

IV. The Polemicists

Some of the Ancient Heresies that they contended with were..

- **Gnosticism** —a diverse group of false movements that each claimed to possess the “secret knowledge” of salvation.
- **Marcionism** - Similar to Gnosticism in some ways. Marcion rejected the Old Testament entirely.
- **Modalism** – Denies the Trinity. Teaches that God operates in different modes.
- **Montanism** – Also known as New Prophecy, insists that the Holy Spirit still gives them new revelation.



Irenaeus of Lyon

Contending for the Faith

IV. The Polemicists

A. Irenaeus of Lyons (died 202)

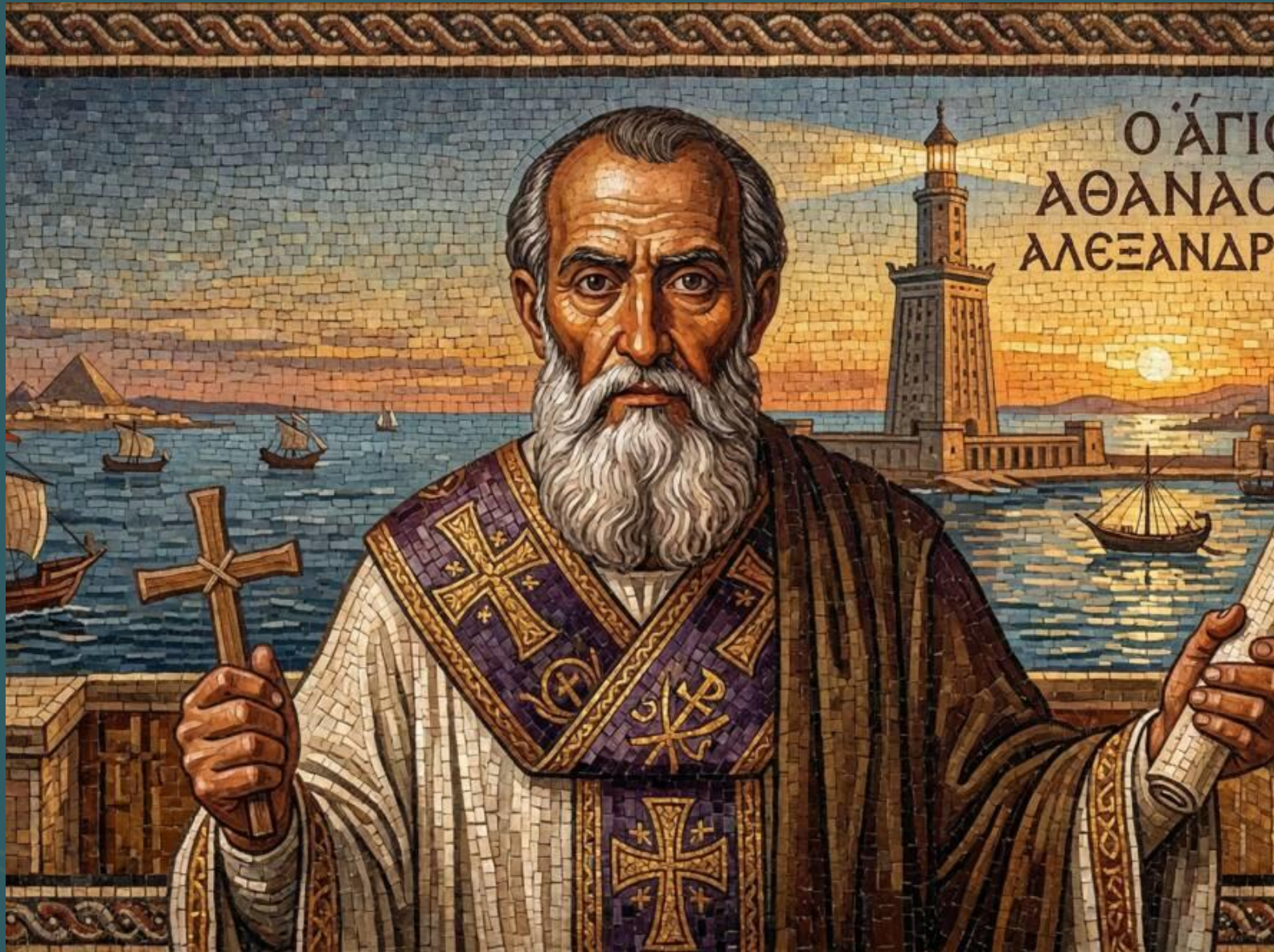
- Irenaeus (pronounced “ear-wren-nay-us”) was born around the year **130**.
- His most famous work, known as **Against Heresies**, was written to refute the false teachings of Gnosticism.

"We have learned from none others the plan of our salvation, than from those through whom the Gospel has come down to us, which they did at one time proclaim in public, and, at a later period, by the will of God, handed down to us in the Scriptures, to be the ground and pillar of our faith.

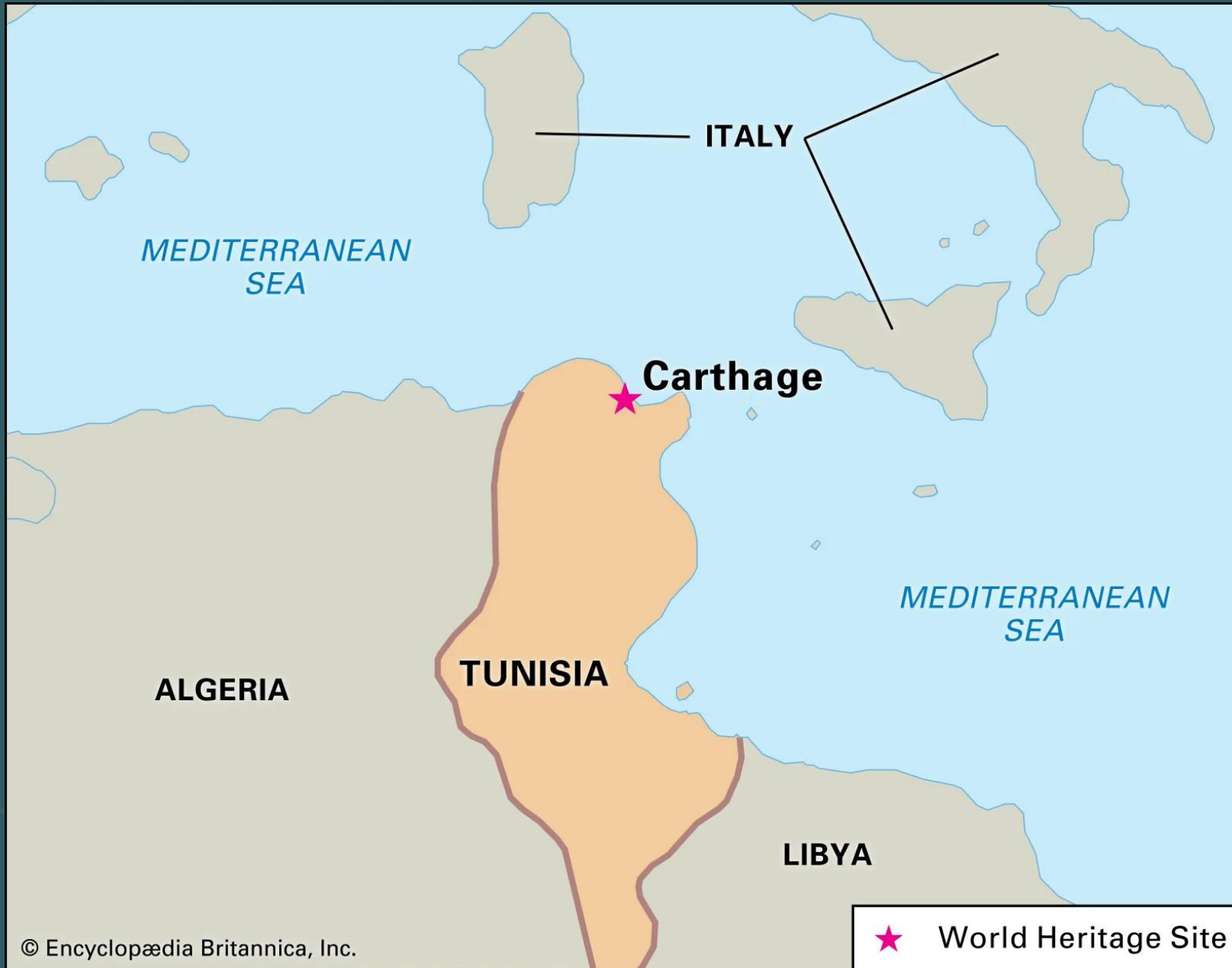


"[The] ancient tradition of the apostles [is] believing in one God, the Creator of heaven and earth, and all things therein, by means of Christ Jesus, the Son of God; who, because of His surpassing love towards His creation, condescended to be born of the virgin, He Himself uniting man through Himself to God, and having suffered under Pontius Pilate, and rising again, and having been received up in splendor, shall come in glory, the Savior of those who are saved, and the Judge of those who are judged, and sending into eternal fire those who transform the truth, and despise His Father and His advent."





Tertullian of Carthage



Contending for the Faith

IV. The Polemicists

A. Irenaeus of Lyons (died 202)

B. Tertullian of Carthage (c. 155-240)

- He is known as the "**Father of Latin (or Western) Theology.**"
- Tertullian was the first person to use the Latin term "**Trinity.**"
- Tertullian was also strongly opposed to the idea that Christianity should be influenced by **Greek philosophy.**

ORIGEN OF ALEXANDRIA



Contending for the Faith

IV. The Polemicists

- A. Irenaeus of Lyons (died 202)
- B. Tertullian of Carthage (c. 155-240)
- C. Origen of Alexandria (c. 184-253)

- Origen was one of the most influential Christian thinkers of the early church, producing roughly 2,000 treatises on various theological subjects
- According to Origen's allegorical method, each text of Scripture has three levels of meaning, corresponding to the body, soul, and spirit.
 - The body: the literal meaning focused on what the text says if taken at face value.
 - The soul: the ethical meaning involved the moral truth being taught by the text.
 - The spirit: the spiritual meaning allowed the interpreter to turn the text into a series of symbols or metaphors, which were generally interpreted in ways that pointed to Jesus.

Contending for the Faith

I. Introduction

II. The Apologists

III. Justin Martyr

IV. The Polemicists

V. Standing for the Truth

- Make it your aim to remain Faithful. Faithful to Christ and Faithful to His Word. Faithful in the face of external opposition (False Religions and Hostile Governments) and Faithful in the face of internal opposition (from False Teachers)

Principles of Sound Interpretation

1. Pray for Illumination by the Holy Spirit (John 16:13; 1 Cor. 2:12–14; Ps 119:18; Eph 1:17–18)
2. Study the Historical, Literal Context of the passage (Neh. 8:8; Lk 24:27; Acts 17:11)
3. Interpret the Words according to the Normal Grammatical Meaning (2 Tim. 2:15; Matt. 5:18; Gal. 3:16)
4. Compare Scripture with Scripture (1 Cor. 2:13; Luke 24:27, 44–45; Acts 17:11)
5. Recognize Literary Genre (Narrative, Poetry, Prophecy, Epistles etc)
6. Seek the Authors intended meaning before making applications (Neh. 8:8; Luke 24:25–27; 2 Pet. 3:15–16)
7. Allow clear passages to interpret the difficult ones (2 Pet. 3:16; Acts 20:27; Ps 119:160)
8. Submit conclusions to the Whole Counsel of God (Act. 20:27; Lk 24:27; Matt. 4:4; 2 Tim. 3:16–17)
9. If possible, buy a good Study Bible (ESV / MacArthur NASB)