

1. **Introduction:** Christendom is collapsing and secularism (or paganism) is defining the culture
  - a. This vision of a “secular” world looks a lot like a premodern one.
  - b. Carl Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*, “In the second century, the church was a marginal sect within a dominant, pluralist society. She was under suspicion not because she appeared subversive in claiming Jesus as King and was viewed as immoral in her talk of eating and drinking human flesh and blood and expressing incestuous sounding love between brothers and sisters. This is where we are today.”
  - c. Two competing perspectives on cultural engagement: retreat or confront
  
2. **How did the early church thrive in a pagan world?**
  - a. **Christian Identity**
    - i. Acts 2: Peter and the early Christian community
      1. Doctrine: Christological narrative
      2. Ethics: They held all things in common
      3. Liturgy: Baptism and worship
    - ii. How did these things transfer to the early church?
      1. Hippolytus: Baptism and confession
      2. Justin Martyr: Early Christian worship service
  - b. **Citizenship Reconsidered**
    - i. Rom 13:1-7, Matt 22:21: Relationship of church/state and Christ/culture
    - ii. In a hostile culture, navigate the tension between earthly and heavenly citizenship
    - iii. Examples:
      1. Pliny, *Letter to Trajan*: Christians are stubborn and obstinate
      2. Celsus, *True Word*: Christians are stupid and foolish
      3. *Martyrdom of Polycarp*
  - c. **Cultivated intellectual and social engagement**
    - i. Acts 17: Paul on Mars Hill and Matt 5-7: Sermon on the Mount
    - ii. Intellectual engagement: Defends the uniqueness of Christianity and the Christian way of life
    - iii. Social engagement: holiness and activism through a cultural discernment
    - iv. Examples:
      1. *Epistle of Diognetus*, 5
      2. Hippolytus of Rome, *On The Apostolic Tradition*
  - d. **Confidence in Christ’s return**
    - i. Acts 1:8, 28:30-31: The kingdom of God is coming
    - ii. Christ will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and establish a kingdom that will have no end
    - iii. Example: Justin Martyr, *1 Apology*: Look for kingdom that is not of this world
  
3. **What are the implications?**
  - a. Take heart, we have been here before
  - b. Think long-term about cultural transformation
  - c. Cultivate a seriousness about Christian identity
  - d. Think holistically about engaging the world
  - e. Develop a cultural discernment
  - f. Live in hope of Christ’s return

**Hippolytus, *On the Apostolic Tradition*, 20 (c.235 A.D.):** A deacon, likewise, will go down with them [the persons being baptized] into the water. When each of them to be baptized has gone down into the water, the one baptizing shall lay hands on each of them, asking, "Do you believe in God the Father Almighty?" And the one being baptized shall answer, 'I believe.' He shall then baptize each of them once, laying his hand upon each of their heads. Then he shall ask, "Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and died, and rose on the third day living from the dead, and ascended into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of the Father, the one coming to judge the living and the dead?" When each has answered, 'I believe,' he shall baptize a second time. Then he shall ask, 'Do you believe in the Holy Spirit and the Holy Church and the resurrection of the flesh?' Then each being baptized shall answer, "I believe." And thus let him baptize the third time.

**Justin Martyr, *1 Apology*, 67 (c.155 A.D.):** And the wealthy among us help the needy; and we always keep together; and for all things wherewith we are supplied, we bless the Maker of all through His Son Jesus Christ, and through the Holy Ghost. And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. Then we all rise together and pray, and, as we before said, when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability, and the people assent, saying Amen; and there is a distribution to each, and a participation of that over which thanks have been given, and to those who are absent a portion is sent by the deacons. And they who are well to do, and willing, give what each thinks fit; and what is collected is deposited with the president, who succours the orphans and widows and those who, through sickness or any other cause, are in want, and those who are in bonds and the strangers sojourning among us, and in a word takes care of all who are in need.

**Pliny, *Letter to Trajan* (c.111 A.D.):** In the case of those who were denounced to me as Christians, I have followed the following procedure: I interrogated them as to whether they were Christians; those who confessed I interrogated a second and a third time, threatening them with punishment; those who persisted I ordered executed. For I had no doubt that, whatever the nature of their creed, stubbornness and inflexible obstinacy surely deserve to be punished. There were others possessed of the same folly; but because they were Roman citizens, I signed an order for them to be transferred to Rome.... Soon accusations spread because of these proceedings, as usually happens, and several incidents occurred. An anonymous document was published containing the names of many persons. Those who denied that they were or had been Christians, when they invoked the gods in words dictated by me, offered prayer with incense and wine to your image, which I had ordered to be brought for this purpose together with statues of the gods, and also cursed Christ – none of which those who are really Christians can, it is said, be forced to do — these I thought should be discharged. Others named by the informer declared that they were Christians, but then denied it, asserting that they had been but had ceased to be, some three years before, others many years, some as much as twenty-five years. They all worshipped your image and the statues of the gods, and cursed Christ. They asserted, however, that the sum and substance of their fault or error had been that they were accustomed to meet on a fixed day before dawn and sing responsively a hymn to Christ as to a god, and to bind themselves by oath, not to do some crime, but not to commit fraud, theft, or adultery, not falsify their trust, nor to refuse to return a trust when called upon to do so.

When this was over, it was their custom to depart and to assemble again to partake of food — but ordinary and innocent food.

**Celsus, *True Word* (c.175 A.D.):** These Christians display their trickery in the market place and go around begging. They would not dare to enter into conversation with intelligent men, or to voice their sophisticated beliefs in the presence of the wise. On the other hand, wherever one finds a crowd of adolescent boys, or a bunch of slaves, or a company of fools, there will the Christian teachers be also—showing off their fine new philosophy. In private houses one can see the wool workers, cobblers, laundry workers, and the most illiterate country bumpkins, who would not venture to voice their opinions in front of their intellectual betters. . . . These Christians claim that they alone know the right way to live, and that if only the children will believe them, they will be happy and their homes will be happy as well.

***Martyrdom of Polycarp, 9-11* (c.155 A.D.):** Then, the proconsul urging him [Polycarp] and saying, ‘Swear [worship the emperor], and I will set you at liberty, reproach Christ;’

Polycarp declared, ‘Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He never did me any injury: how then can I blaspheme my King and my Saviour?’ And when the proconsul yet again pressed him, and said, Swear by the fortune of Cæsar, he answered, ‘Since you are vainly urgent that, as you say, I should swear by the fortune of Cæsar, and pretend not to know who and what I am, hear me declare with boldness, I am a Christian. And if you wish to learn what the doctrines of Christianity are, appoint me a day, and you shall hear them.’

The proconsul replied, ‘Persuade the people.

But Polycarp said, ‘To you I have thought it right to offer an account [of my faith]; for we are taught to give all due honour (which entails no injury upon ourselves) to the powers and authorities which are ordained of God [Rom 13:1-7; Titus 3:1]. But as for these, I do not deem them worthy of receiving any account from me.

The proconsul then said to him, ‘I have wild beasts at hand; to these will I cast you, unless you repent.’

But he answered, ‘Call them then, for we are not accustomed to repent of what is good in order to adopt that which is evil; and it is well for me to be changed from what is evil to what is righteous.’

But again the proconsul said to him, ‘I will cause you to be consumed by fire, seeing you despise the wild beasts, if you will not repent.’

But Polycarp said, ‘You threaten me with fire which burns for an hour, and after a little is extinguished, but are ignorant of the fire of the coming judgment and of eternal punishment, reserved for the ungodly. But why do you tarry? Bring forth what you will.’

***Epistle of Diognetus, 5* (late 2<sup>nd</sup> century):** For Christians are not distinguished from the rest of humanity by country, language, or custom. For nowhere do they live in cities of their own, nor do they speak some unusual dialect, nor do they practice an eccentric life-style. This teaching of theirs has not been discovered by the thought and reflection of ingenious men, nor do they promote any human doctrine, as some do. But while they live in both Greek and barbarian cities, as each one’s lot was cast, and follow the local customs in dress and food and other aspects of life, at the same times they demonstrate the remarkable and admittedly unusual character of their own citizenship. They live in their own countries, but only as aliens; they participate in everything as citizens, and endure everything as foreigners. Every foreign country is their fatherland, and every fatherland is foreign. They marry like everyone else, and have children, but they do not expose their offspring. They share their food but not their wives. They are ‘in the flesh,’ but they do not live ‘according to the flesh.’

They live on earth, but their citizenship is in heaven. They obey the established laws; indeed in their private lives they transcend the laws. They love everyone, and by everyone they are persecuted. They are unknown, yet they are condemned; they are put to death, yet they are brought to life. They are poor, yet they make many rich; they are in need of everything, yet they abound in everything. They are dishonored, yet they are glorified in their dishonor; they are slandered, yet they are vindicated. They are cursed, yet they bless; they are insulted, yet they offer respect. When they do good, they are punished as evildoers; when they are punished, they rejoice as though brought to life. By the Jews they are assaulted as foreigners, and by the Greeks they are persecuted, yet those who hate them are unable to give a reason for their hostility.

**Hippolytus of Rome, *On the Apostolic Tradition*, 15 (c.235 A.D.):** [On newcomers] Those who are newly brought forward to hear the Word shall first be brought before the teachers at the house, before all the people enter. Then they will be questioned concerning the reason that they have come forward to the faith. Those who bring them will bear witness concerning them as to whether they are able to hear. They shall be questioned concerning their life and occupation, marriage status, and whether they are slave or free... 16 They will inquire concerning the works and occupations of those who are brought forward for instruction. If someone is a pimp who supports prostitutes, he shall cease or shall be rejected. If someone is a sculptor or a painter, let them be taught not to make idols. Either let them cease or let them be rejected. If someone is an actor or does shows in the theater, either he shall cease or he shall be rejected. If someone teaches children (worldly knowledge), it is good that he cease. But if he has no (other) trade, let him be permitted. A charioteer, likewise, or one who takes part in the games, or one who goes to the games, he shall cease or he shall be rejected. If someone is a gladiator, or one who teaches those among the gladiators how to fight, or a hunter who is in the wild beast shows in the arena, or a public official who is concerned with gladiator shows, either he shall cease, or he shall be rejected. If someone is a priest of idols, or an attendant of idols, he shall cease or he shall be rejected. A military man in authority must not execute men. If he is ordered, he must not carry it out. Nor must he take military oath. If he refuses, he shall be rejected. If someone is a military governor, or the ruler of a city who wears the purple, he shall cease or he shall be rejected. The catechumen or faithful who wants to become a soldier is to be rejected, for he has despised God. The prostitute, the wanton man, the one who castrates himself, or one who does that which may not be mentioned, are to be rejected, for they are impure. A magus shall not even be brought forward for consideration. An enchanter, or astrologer, or diviner, or interpreter of dreams, or a charlatan, or one who makes amulets, either they shall cease or they shall be rejected. If someone's concubine is a slave, as long as she has raised her children and has clung only to him, let her hear. Otherwise, she shall be rejected. The man who has a concubine must cease and take a wife according to the law. If he will not, he shall be rejected. 17 Catechumens will hear the word for three years. Yet if someone is earnest and perseveres well in the matter, it is not the time that is judged, but the conduct.

**Justin Martyr, *1 Apology*, 11 (c. 155 A.D.):** And when you hear that we look for a kingdom, you suppose, without making any inquiry, that we speak of a human kingdom; whereas we speak of that which is with God, as appears also from the confession of their faith made by those who are charged with being Christians, though they know that death is the punishment awarded to him who so confesses. For if we looked for a human kingdom, we should also deny our Christ, that we might not be slain; and we should strive to escape detection, that we might obtain what we expect. But since our thoughts are not fixed on the present, we are not concerned when men cut us off; since also death is a debt which must at all events be paid.