

Standing on the Shoulders of Giants:

What Does Today's Church Need to Learn from the Early Church?

Studying church History is important because:

- It demonstrates how believers have dealt with similar problems in the past
- It can help us to avoid mistakes that were made in the past
- It encourages us as we see how God worked thru fragile believers in the past

'If you don't know where you have come from , you won't know who you are, or where you should be going'. John Lennox

Latourette's history of the expansion of Christianity Vol.7

Latourette's 6 weapons in the Christian's armoury:

- Prayer
- Evangelism
- Example – personal lifestyle and community
- Argument
- Action
- Suffering

Three lessons from the Reformation

The Reformers

1. Recovered the essence of the Gospel
2. Reformed the culture
3. Renewed their missionary and evangelistic vision.

- But, what can we learn from the Early (Primitive) Church?
- How do we account from its growth from about 30 AD to 350 AD?

1. Their LIFESTYLE Was Attractive in at Least Three Ways

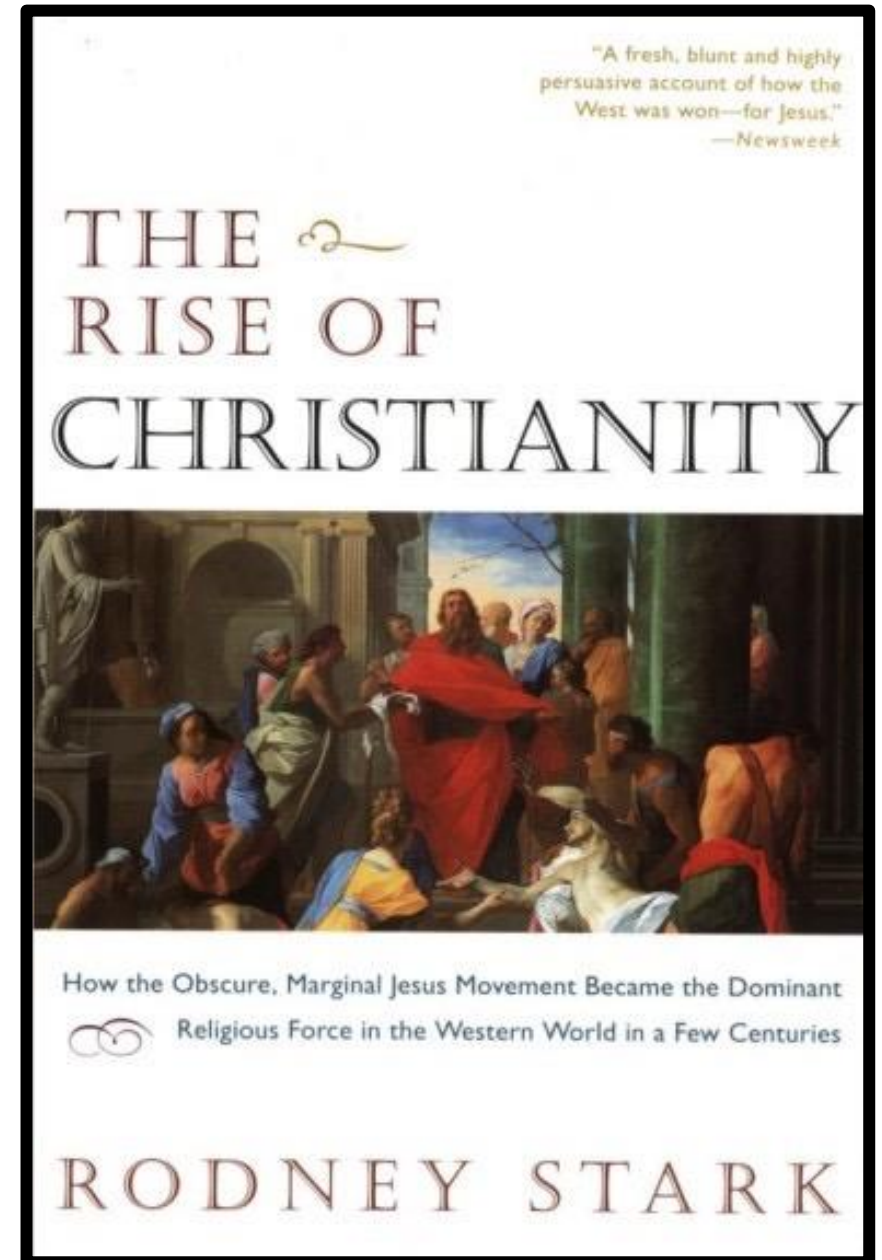
1. *Koinonia*-a NEW COMMUNITY. Transethnic, Jew and Gentile, slave and free

Implications for ministry amongst refugees, diaspora, international students.

2. *Diakonia*. self-giving service, Separation, assimilation or engagement with the world?

E.g. Engagement in a time of pandemic. 150 AD and 251-265 AD

the calling of the church is to be morally distinct without being socially segregated' -John Stott



Their **LIFESTYLE** Was Attractive in at Least Three Ways contd.

3. New ethics - treatment of unborn, newborn, women, widows, marriage E.g. ‘Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her’ Ephesians 5:25

‘Take then yourself the same provident care for her, as Christ takes for the [Church](#). Yea, even if it shall be needful for you to give your life for her, yea, and to be cut into pieces ten thousand times, yea, and to endure and undergo any suffering whatever — refuse it not.’ John Chrysostom (347-407)

In what ways do we need to live differently today-personally, and in community?

2. They Sought to **PERSUASIVELY COMMUNICATE** Gospel Truth

Apologia They both **DEFENDED** orthodox Christian teaching against heresy,
And **ARTICULATED CHRISTIAN TRUTH AND BELIEF** before unbelievers

E.g. Irenaeus of Izmir/Smyrna, Bishop of Lyon (130-202?)

Tertullian of Carthage (160-220?)

Justin Martyr of Rome (born in Nablus 100-165)

Athanasius of Alexandria (300-373?)

The need for apologetics today. What are the issues?

What are dangers of retreating?

3. They Engaged in the TEACHING and DISCIPLING of New Converts as well as DEFENDING Gospel Truth Against Heresy

The *Didache*-an early discipleship handbook

Origen

Early Councils especially Nicaea 325

They dealt with heretics e.g. Marcion, Arius.

The First Appearance of the Word 'Evangelical' –around 180 AD in debates with the heretic Marcion

The importance of doctrine(see Deuteronomy 32.1,2.)

And the role of Theologians.

4. PERSEVERANCE: Dying for the truth

Martyrio ‘They are immortal for all time, and we live forever, which explains why they despise death and voluntarily give themselves up’ –Lucien

‘Eighty-six years have I served Him .He has done me no wrong.

How can I then blaspheme my King and Savior?

You threaten me with a fire that burns for a season, but you are ignorant of the fire of everlasting punishment prepared for the wicked....I bless you Father for judging me worthy of this honour so that I may share in this honour in the company of Christ and the martyrs of the church’. Polycarp (69-155)

- Standing for Truth.1 Cor 15.58.
- A culture can be changed when 2% of the people share a common vision of a just and a gentle society'. Robert Bellah
- Die climbing.

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