

Church History



Church History

- *Introduction to Church History*
- *The Ancient Church* AD 1st-3rd centuries
- *The Rise of Christendom* AD 4th-5th centuries
- *The Early Middle Ages* AD 6th-10th centuries
- *The Age of Crusades* AD 11th-13th centuries
- *The Renaissance* AD 14th-15th centuries
- *Conquest and Reformation* AD 16th century
- *The Age of Enlightenment* AD 17th-18th centuries
- *The Age of Revolution* AD 19th century
- *The Modern Age* AD 20th century
- *The Postmodern Age* AD 21st century



The Ancient Church

- How does the Church grow and change after the death of the final Apostle?
 - 95-100 The Church continues to be (re)defined
 - Both from within and from without—Rome is in the process of trying to figure out what the difference is between Judaism and Christianity (and so is the Church)



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- Everyone's trying to figure out where to go from here and what to believe, so they write their own “authoritative” writings to help explain doctrine and ecclesiology
 - Divisions begin as gnosticism attempts to re-invent Christianity, primarily by tying it to Platonic ideals
 - More divisions begin as people try to decide if authority to decide doctrine and practice lies in the Apostolic writings, or in the Apostolic succession



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The Church installs *bishops*

- Essentially, the bishops are to *regions* what pastors are to *local* churches
 - They help administer an area's local churches (thus the name *ἐπίσκοπος* or "*episkopos*"—"overseer"—which had been used in Scripture more or less synonymously with *πρεσβύτερος* or "*presbuteros*"—"elder")
 - (see Paul's instructions to Pastor Titus in Titus 1:5-9 to appoint *presbuteroi* who would act as responsible *episkopoi* for the churches in Crete)



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 - (i.e.; a pastor for pastors)
- Some of the most famous early Christians were bishops—Polycarp, Ireneaus, Augustine, Ignatius, Patrick, Nicholas, Thomas à Becket, etc.—including *Marcion* (albeit in title only)
 - Both Polycarp and Ignatius were disciples of John, and Peter himself had installed Ignatius as bishop of Antioch



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- Originally, they were seen as holding no special divine authority, other than that held by pastors in general
 - The bishops were affectionately called Fathers (πάππας or “Pappas” or “Popes”)—AKA the “Apostolic Fathers”
 - But as time went on, bishops in Rome, Jerusalem, Byzantium, Antioch, etc., all began claiming more and more church-wide authority for themselves
 - Eventually, Roman Popes claimed to be the vicars of the Father, and to speak His unquestionable will when they speak *ex cathedra*



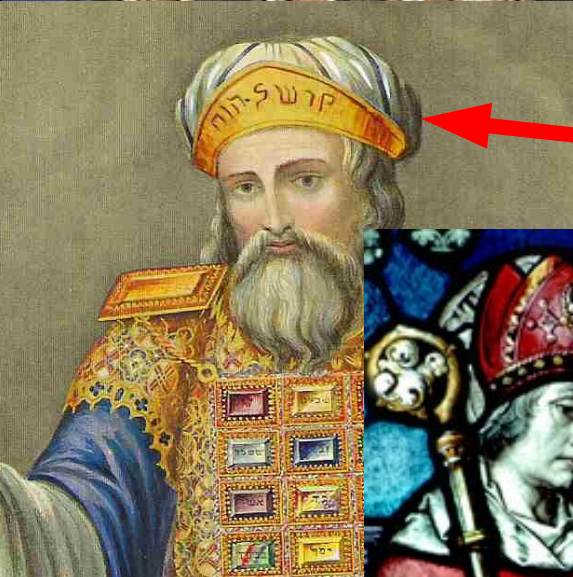
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- Note: the bishop's mitre (fancy hat) is actually a stylized version of the classic תְּצִנְפֶּת (“*mitznefet*” or turban) worn by the Jewish high priests
- But it wasn't used by bishops (or the Pope) until roughly 1000 AD
- Which means that Ireneaus never looked like this



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- As the new governor in Anatolia (Turkey), he keeps running across Christians—who may or may not be Jews—but he doesn't know what to do with them

- Under torture, they've affirmed that every day, they take an oath "never to commit any fraud, theft, adultery, never to falsify their word, not to deny a trust when they should be called upon to deliver it up," etc.

- Upon torturing two deaconesses to death, he concluded that it was not a political movement, so it didn't fall under the standing rule to suppress Jewish dissidents



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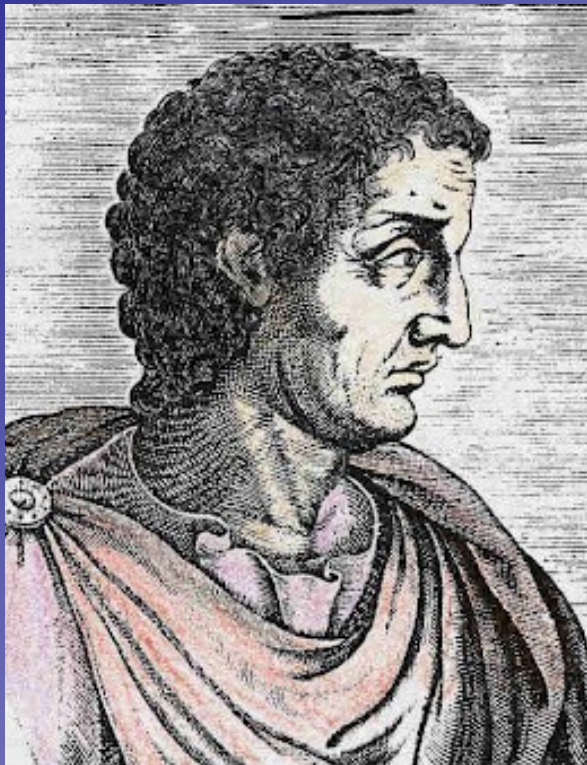
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- Nonetheless, he accused Christians of holding unsettling practices:

- Atheism*—since they did not believe in the Roman gods
- Incest*—since they “loved” their brothers and sisters
- Carousing*—since they held orgies called “love feasts”
- Cannibalism*—since at the “love feasts,” they ate flesh and drank blood



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- Nonetheless, he accused Christians of holding unsettling practices:

- Thus, he said, “I held no question that whatever it was they admitted [about their oaths to do good, etc.], in any case, obstinacy and unbending perversity deserve to be punished”

- Trajan agreed, but told him to allow them to recant before deciding to execute them



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- All of this precipitated the next round of official persecution for the Church, over the next several years



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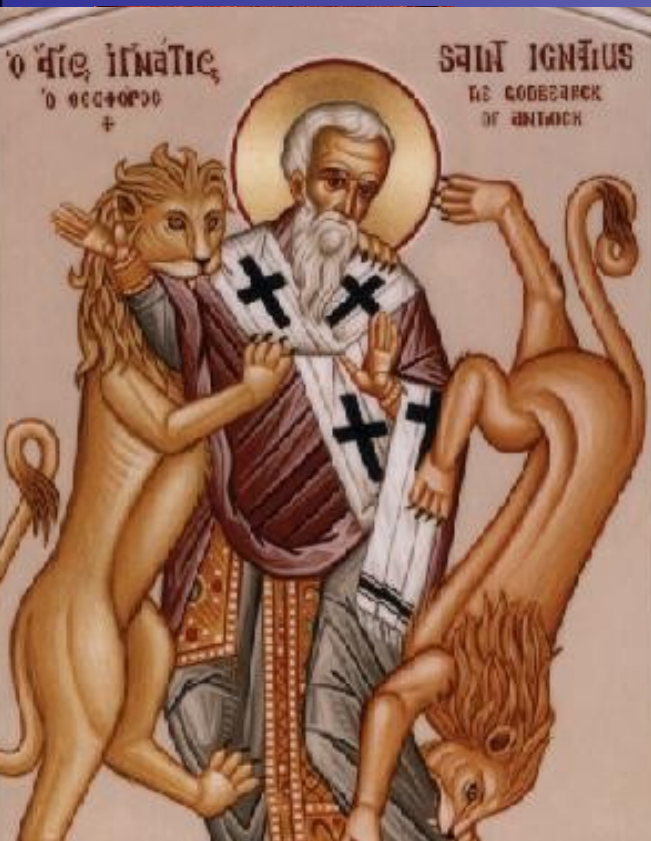
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- Intended to “circle the wagons” in response to the Gnostic heresies and to the growing persecution, Church leaders begin writing their own commentaries on the Gospels and Epistles for the churches
 - Polycarp writes a letter to Philippi
 - Demonstrates dependence on the New Testament as source material
 - Ignatius writes seven letters on his way to Rome to be thrown to the lions in the Colosseum
 - Defended the humanity of Jesus and the (growing) authority of the bishops



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- How would you summarize what's going on in the Church at this point?

