

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
100- “Creative” writings flourish
The Church installs *bishops*

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Pliny the Younger writes Trajan a letter
Apostolic Fathers write their own letters

- 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
 - Ignatius writes seven letters on his way to Rome to be thrown to the lions in the Colosseum
 - Irenaeus, a disciple of Polycarp, writes a seminal book—*Adversus Haereses*—that argues against Gnosticism
 - In it, he cites every NT book other than Philemon, 3 John, and Jude



The Ancient Church

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 - *Adversus Haereses* was specifically written to be defending orthodoxy against the teachings of the gnostic leader named Valentinus



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 - Valentinus expanded on the teachings of the Montanists, whereas Irenaeus built off of the teachings of Justin Martyr



The Ancient Church

- Funky little teaching moment²—
 - Montanus was a Christian in Asia Minor (Turkey) who founded what he called the “New Prophecy” movement in 135 AD
 - He believed that the Holy Spirit had come, just as Christ promised, and that He gave us new truth—new *gnosis*—to hear and obey
 - As a precursor to the Charismatic movement today, his followers spoke in a strange, babbling language, and saw ecstatic visions
 - Montanus taught that people fell into two categories—the spiritual and the natural
 - The spiritual people are consumed with wanting to know God more, while the material people make this world and its pleasures their priority
 - They thus claimed that, with enough fasting and praying, you could slough off the material and have these spiritual visions as well



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 - Montanus taught that, when people were in this state of ecstasy, they were not God's *messengers*, but God's *instruments*—
 - They were not speaking God's message, but were literally *possessed* by God and used by Him
 - How is this “we're possessed by God, but we bring it about by *our* preparations” idea reflected *today* in, say, the Charismatics?
 - How would Paul have answered all of this from 1 Corinthians 14?



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 - So Valentinus taught that the universe is a series of *threes*—
 - There are three kinds of people—the *spiritual* (who received his special *gnosis*), the *psychic* (who have received Christ, but it's never gone past their brains), and the *material* (who are still lost in their fleshly sins)
 - The *spiritual* will experience Heavenly perfection, the *psychic* will experience a lesser eternal life, and the *material* will burn in Hell (or cease to exist altogether)
 - Note the similarity to Mormonism



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 - There are three kinds of people—
 - God has three Platonic *hypostases* (from “ὑπόστασις”—“under-places” or “spiritual realities”)—
 - God the *Father*, God the *Son*, God the *Holy Spirit*—all are totally *God*, but each is a *distinct persona*
 - The Son's body was *spiritual*, not *physical* (specifically, Valentinus said that Jesus neither perspired nor defecated)



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 - God the *Father*, God the *Son*, God the *Holy Spirit*—all are totally God, but each is a *distinct persona*
 - Sabellius and Marcellus called him a heretic, since God has only one persona—the distinctions only *seem* like distinctions in *our eyes* (but *they* were later excommunicated)



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 - There are three kinds of people—
 - God has three Platonic *hypostases*
 - From God emanated three *Aeons*, or sets of five sexualized pairs of beings (called “syzygies”—from “*σύζυγοι*” or “*syzygoi*”—“yoking together”)
 - This theory of “emanations” linked Greek Platonism with the Jewish *kabbalah*



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 - There are three kinds of people—
 - God has three Platonic *hypostases*
 - From God emanated three *Aeons*, or sets of five sexualized pairs of beings
 - These beings include Thought, Grace, Silence, Wisdom, etc.
 - All of these are actual *beings*, created from but separate from God, and constitute *minor gods* to be worshipped in their own right
 - All this must be understood to receive Heaven



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 - Valentinus narrowly missed being elected to become bishop of Rome
 - How would it have changed church history, if one of the early popes had been a gnostic?



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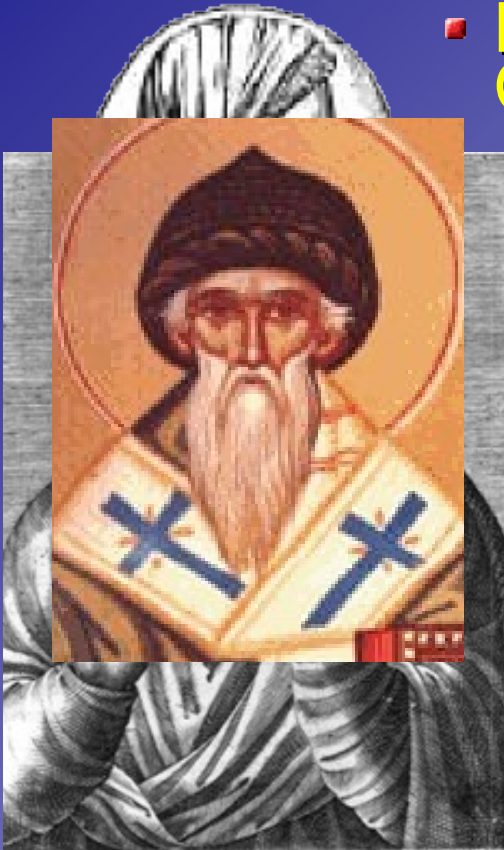
The Ancient Church

- Funky little teaching moment³—
 - Justin was a Christian in Palestine who wrote a book called the *Apology* in 150 AD to Roman emperor Antoninus Pious, explaining Christianity to him
 - He emphasized the humanity *and* deity of Christ, to counteract various heresies
 - Marcion had taught that Jesus *wasn't human* since that would make Him part of the Creation, and the physical Creation was a *bad* thing, created by *naughty* god YAHWEH back in what Marcion called the “Old” (i.e.; *outdated*) testament
 - Jesus only *seemed* human to our eyes, when He was actually Spirit (spawning a movement called “*Docetism*”—from the word, “*δοκέω*” or “*dokeō*”—“to seem”)



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 - In the third century, *Arias* would teach that Jesus wasn't *divine*—or at least not as divine as the *Father* was
 - So the Father was the all-powerful *Theos* (from the Greek “θεός”), and Jesus was the human *Kyrios* (from “κύριος”) who came *from* the Father during human history to teach us how to be *holy* humans
 - Ironically, Arianism did help encourage a healthy humanism within the Church (to treat all humans as brothers, regardless of race, social status, etc.)



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 - Justin argued that Jesus was the Platonic *Logos*—the “*Word*,” the “*Truth*,” the “*Thought*” of God, expressed throughout Marcion’s “Old” testament—made flesh
 - Jesus was the *exact representation* of all that God had been trying to say to the Jews throughout their history as a people
 - Thus, Christians are even *more* the *true* people of God than the Jews, since we have a clear and perfect representation of God’s *Logos*



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 - Justin also emphasized that this means that it’s *crucial* that we see the *Eucharist* (the “good gift”) as God’s gift of Christ’s *actual flesh and blood*, to lend His perfect flesh to feed and nurture our otherwise *damningly* corrupted lives



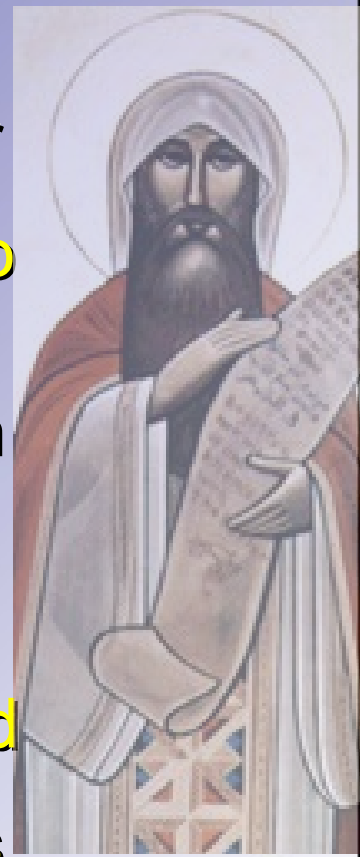
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 - FYI—Justin ran afoul of the popular Cynic philosopher, Crescens (accurately calling him a libertine and child molester), who then convinced Quintus Junius Rusticus (then the prefect of the city of Rome) to have him publicly beheaded along with six other Christian leaders in 165 AD—thus, “Martyr”



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 - Irenaeus argued for one God—one Person with three distinct *facets*—but no “minor Aeons” that we should worship
 - He also argued that Jesus, was a “new Adam” who regained perfection for us as a species, and thus...
 - 1) Adam and Eve were innocent and immature, so humanity needed to *mature* into being what God had always intended us to be (opposed to what he saw as a *gnostic* idea that it was created perfect but was later corrupted by our sin)



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 - 2) Jesus needed to be as genuinely, *physically human* as Adam had been, so He was born, matured, lived to an old age (say, in His 50s) and then died, just like Adam did, but without ever sinning



The Ancient Church

- Funky little teaching moment⁴—
 - Irenaeus was writing at a time when we were still trying to figure out *how* Christ's death saved us
 - How would *you* explain it to people?
 - He argued that, by living a complete and perfect human life, Jesus allowed every step of a human life to be saved and perfected
 - Thus, by Jesus being a baby, all babies can be saved; by Jesus being a teenager, all teenagers can be saved; etc., all the way up to gray-haired adults
 - *His* human life—lived perfectly—infuses *ours* with salvation
 - This is not that much different from the modern take on salvation by the Covenant



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 - This had led some to say that the practice of infant baptism began under Irenaeus, but there's nothing in history to suggest that
 - The first time we see mention of infant baptism is a century *later*, in the writings of Origen and Tertullian
 - In fact, Tertullian only mentions it as an aside—as a practice *not* to be followed—suggesting that it's actually better to be baptised after marriage, since baptism saves you, and you'd hate to lose your Christianity over the lusts of your pre-married years



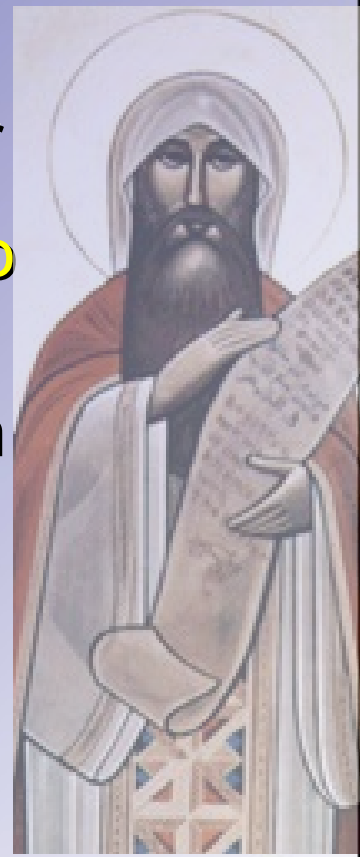
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 - One of the earliest Christian “catechisms” is called the *Didache* (from the Greek “*Διδαχή*” or “teaching”), written in the early second century
 - The *Didache* gives specific rules for how to do baptisms, including the full teaching and understanding of the Gospel message, the use of cold, running (i.e.; “living”) water whenever possible, and the strong recommendation of two days' fasting beforehand by everyone involved



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 - He also argued that Jesus, was a “new Adam” who regained perfection for us as a species, and thus...
 - 3) To be without sin, Jesus needed to be conceived without sin (i.e.; without sex), so Mary was a virgin when she gave birth—and she *remained* a virgin forever, since she was the new *Eve* to Christ's new Adam
 - *Eve* brought *death*, *Mary* brought *salvation*



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- How does the Church grow and change after the death of the final Apostle?

95-100 The Church continues to be (re)defined
100- “Creative” writings flourish

The Church installs *bishops*

110 Pliny the Younger writes Trajan a letter
Apostolic Fathers write their *own* letters

- Do you see how what we *now* consider “orthodoxy” was in flux back then?
- Solid theology emerged out of arguments and debates—
 - The Montanists were right and wrong (and we’re still interacting with their theology with Charismatics today)



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 - The Montanists were right and wrong
 - The Valentinians were right and wrong** (helping us understand the *trinitarian* personas of the *one* divine *Person*, and that our sin *did* corrupt an originally *perfect* Creation—but then teaching heresies about divine Aeons and a “spiritual” Christ who models a gnostic anti-materialism)



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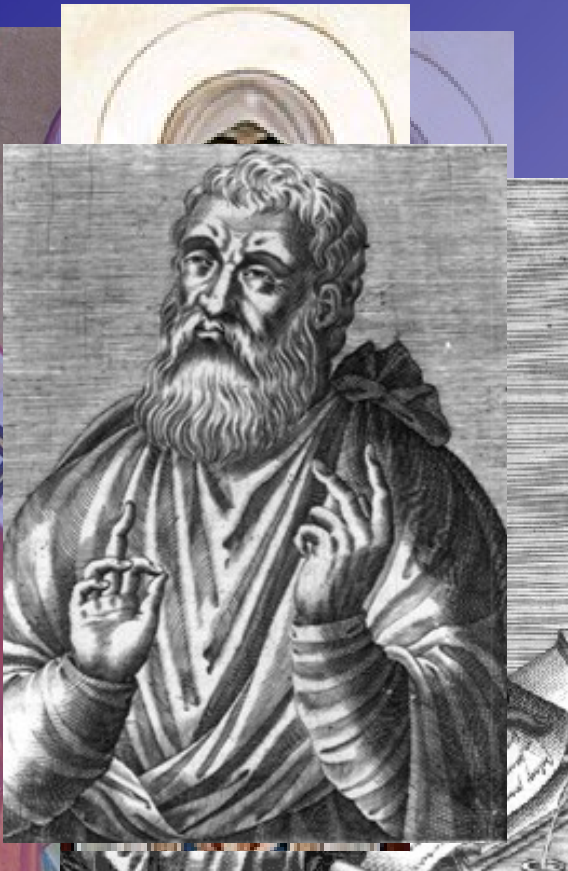
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- **Solid theology emerged out of arguments and debates—**
 - The Montanists were right and wrong
 - The Valentinians were right and wrong
 - **Justin Martyr was right and wrong** (leaning on Plato almost more than Paul, but helping us understand how Jesus was the Divine Word made *actual human flesh*... but then mangling the understanding of the Lord’s Supper in the process)



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(teaching a genuinely divine and yet genuinely human “new Adam” who saves us from sin—and yet creating weird notions of how that *works*, and non-Biblical, anti-sexual doctrines about Mary’s *perpetual* virginity)



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 - Irenaeus was right and wrong
 - Even Marcion and Arius contributed to our modern understandings, with the concept of the “Old” testament, and the essential human brotherhood of all mankind**



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 - Even Marcion and Arius contributed to our modern understandings
- They all brought Truth to the table, and yet they all were still tempted to run ahead of whatever leading that the Holy Spirit was giving to them**



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- What does all of this suggest about how we should go about “doing theology” today in the Church at large?**

