

Church History



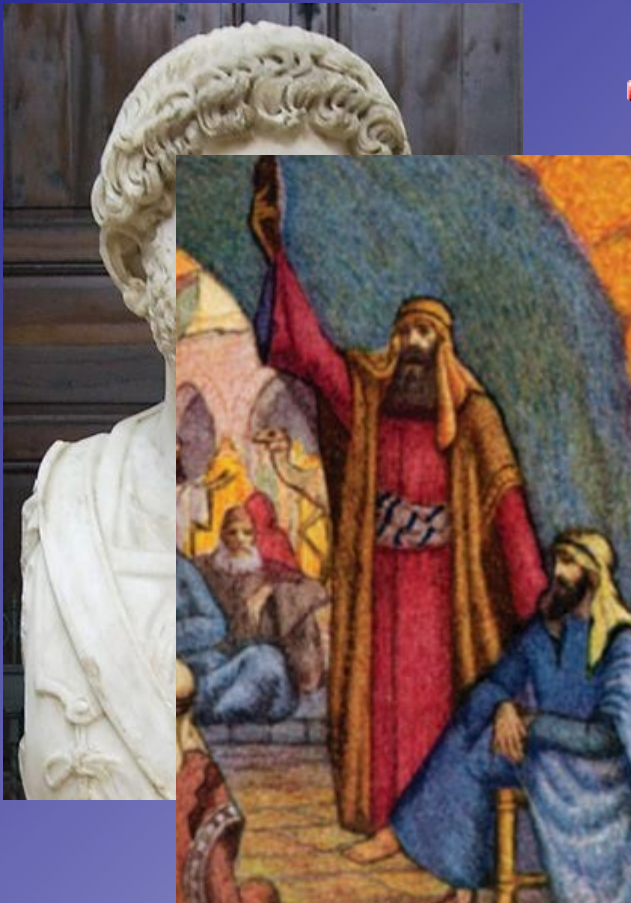
Church History

- *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

- The Second Century saw the beginnings of power struggles with Rome, and the endings of power struggles with Judaism
- 117 Hadrian becomes emperor after Trajan
 - He builds a wall to separate Scotland from the rest of the Roman Empire
 - He puts down the Bar Kokhba Revolt in Judea (led by Simon bar Kokhba)
 - Hadrian takes steps to actively destroy Judaism—he forces the final diaspora of the Jews from their homeland, makes it illegal to study the Torah or for a Jew to enter Jerusalem, and renames the country “Syria Palæstina”



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Hadrian becomes emperor after Trajan
Antoninus Pius becomes emperor

- He forces the senate to deify Hadrian (thus, the epithet, "Pius")
 - But *unlike* Hadrian, Antoninus takes a more open-minded approach toward other faiths, sometimes actually extending *protection* to Christians throughout the Empire
 - He also emptied his private, imperial treasury to aid poor provinces and cities
- It is thus to Antoninus Pius that Justin Martyr writes his *Apology*, explaining Christianity



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Marcus Aurelius becomes emperor

- He was not only a military commander, but also a Stoic philosopher
 - The Stoics believed in the innate goodness of the soul, and the crucial importance of purity of will
 - Strong, destructive emotions make people make bad decisions, and are therefore to be avoided
 - Thus, people can live stable and happy lives, *regardless* of their circumstances, by focusing on what their souls *know* to be true and good



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 - The Stoics believed in the innate goodness of the soul, and the crucial importance of purity of will
 - But *Christians* taught that souls themselves can be *corrupted* by sin
 - Thus, Marcus Aurelius—because he was a good philosopher—began a new and intense persecution of Christians, since he saw Christianity as philosophically incompatible with Stoicism



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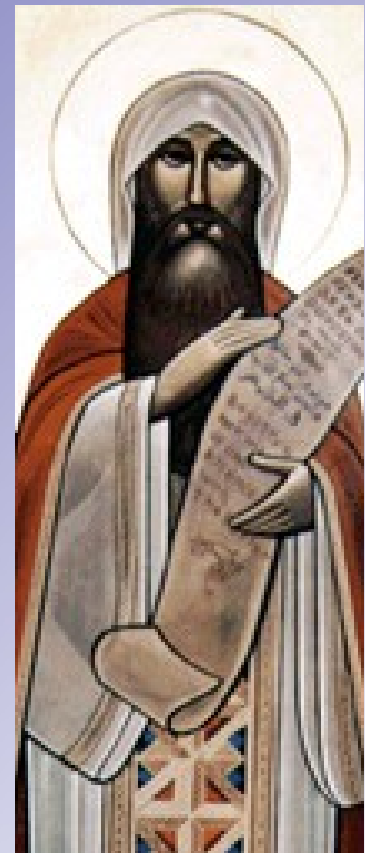
Marcus Aurelius becomes emperor

- He was not only a military commander, but also a Stoic philosopher
- **It was under Marcus Aurelius that Polycarp—the disciple of John—was martyred around 165**



The Ancient Church

- Funky little teaching moment—
 - Polycarp was the bishop of Smyrna (in Turkey) and was one of the early teachers of Irenaeus (who wrote *Adversus Haereses* against the gnostic *almost*-bishop of Rome named Valentinus)



The Ancient Church

- Funky little teaching moment—
 - Polycarp was the bishop of Smyrna (in Turkey) and was one of the early teachers of Irenaeus
 - Polycarp had made a name for himself when he travelled to Rome in the 150s to debate a crucial doctrinal point—when to celebrate Easter (called “*Pascha*” after “*pasàch*” or “*פסח*”)
 - Most of the Near Eastern churches celebrated the Pascha on the fourteenth day of Nisan (regardless of the day of the week), just like the Jews did—why?
 - This practice was officially called “Quartodecimanism” (Latin for “fourteenism”)



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 - Most of the European churches celebrated the Pascha on the first Sunday to *follow* Nisan 14—why?
 - A generation later, Bishop Victor of Rome tried to excommunicate Bishop Polycrates of Ephesus because Polycrates wouldn't give up teaching Quartodecimanism—but he was stopped by Irenaeus who argued, “Can't we all just get along?” (in Latin)



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 - A generation later, Bishop Victor of Rome tried to excommunicate Bishop Polycrates
 - Victor changed the language of Roman church services from Greek to Latin
 - He also excommunicated Theodotus for teaching “adoptionism”—i.e.; Jesus was a mortal man who was adopted by God



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 - Unfortunately, making a name for himself made Polycarp a target for Marcus Aurelius, and troops came to his home to arrest him
 - He had just made himself dinner, so he invited them to sit and eat it for him, since he wouldn't be needing it any more



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 - The soldiers, noting that he seemed more stoic than the Stoics, begged him to renounce his faith (under Trajan’s old rules, that would’ve kept him from burning at the stake)



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 - Polycarp's response was either “Eighty-six years have I served Him, and He has done me no wrong, so how can I now blaspheme my King and Saviour?” or “Why would I abandon eighty-six years of faith to avoid a moment of pain?”



The Ancient Church

- Funky little teaching moment—
 - Polycarp was the bishop of Smyrna (in Turkey) and was one of the early teachers of Irenaeus
 - According to tradition, he was stabbed when the flames refused to touch his body
 - More likely, the soldiers didn't want him to *suffer*—which is almost *more* miraculous...



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- Polycarp is martyred around 165

165-180 The Antonine Plague devastates the Roman Empire, killing five million people

- At one point, the plague (probably smallpox) was killing 2,000 people a day within the city of Rome itself
- Interestingly, while everyone else *distanced* themselves from the plague victims, the Christians became famous for *seeking plague victims out* so that they could minister to their needs
- Widespread, grass-roots support for Christians begins to spread, even while official persecution continues



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▪ The plague decimates the Roman military, leaving them in need of hiring more mercenaries from neighboring tribes

- At the same time, neighboring tribes begin to press in against Roman defenses on the edges of the empire
- Marcus Aurelius dies on the battle lines, holding the borders against the Germanic tribes one last time

