

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
 - 138 Antoninus Pius becomes emperor
 - 161 Marcus Aurelius becomes emperor
 - Polycarp is martyred around 165
 - 165-180 The Antonine Plague devastates the Roman Empire, killing five million people
 - 180 Commodus becomes emperor
 - Or, as he liked to call himself, “Lucius Aelius Aurelius Commodus Augustus Herculeus Romanus Exsuperatorius Amazonius Invictus Felix Pius”



The Ancient Church

- Funky little teaching moment—
 - Commodus marked a massive turning point in Roman culture and politics
 - At least two famous movies show Commodus as the precipitant of the fall of the Roman Empire (including *The Fall of the Roman Empire*)
 - Commodus was the son of Marcus Aurelius, and common thinking of the day was that he only *got* the job *because* of his dad



The Ancient Church

- Funky little teaching moment—
 - Commodus marked a massive turning point in Roman culture and politics
 - But unlike Marcus Aurelius, Commodus rejected Stoicism completely, embracing a vibrant and chaotic lifestyle
 - He was physically strong and attractive, so he saw himself as a reincarnation of the lusty demigod, Hercules
 - He bled the economy dry with more taxes to satisfy his sensualism, so when a grain blight brought about rioting for bread, he reinstituted the gladiatorial games and gave out free bread out to the people
 - He himself fought in several (fixed) gladiatorial combats (usually naked), including fighting cripples, slaves, and injured Roman soldiers
 - He also frequently had citizens killed simply because he didn't like them... or *thought* that he *might* not like them



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 - But he also was ironically friendly toward Christians—in part because his father *wasn't*
 - But also because his lover, Marcia—the widow of his sister *Lucilla's* lover, Quadratus (whom Commodus had executed in 182), and a closeted Christian herself—asked for leniency toward Christians
 - So, for instance, Christians were no longer executed for their faith or forced to work in the mines in Sardinia



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 - But he also was ironically friendly toward Christians—in part because his father *wasn't*
 - Later, he renamed the city of Rome “*Colonia Lucia Annia Commodiana*” (after himself) and demanded that instead of “*Roman*,” each citizen should now call themselves, “*Commodianus*”
 - He also changed the names of the months of the Roman calendar to reflect each of his twelve *personal* names



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 - But he also was ironically friendly toward Christians—in part because his father *wasn't*
 - Later, he renamed the city of Rome “*Colonia Lucia Annia Commodiana*” (after himself)
 - Once he began threatening the lives of the senators themselves, they'd had too much
 - They hired his personal trainer, Narcissus, to assassinate him in 192
 - Marcia drugged Commodus, then secretly let Narcissus into the emperor's chambers, where he strangled Commodus in the bathtub



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 - **Commodus was immediately named an enemy of the people, his statues were all torn down, and all of the changes he'd instituted were reversed**



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 - Once he began threatening the lives of the senators themselves, they’d had too much
 - Commodus was immediately named an enemy of the people
 - Contemporary Roman historian Cassius Dio wrote that, because of Commodus, Rome had descended “from a kingdom of gold to one of iron and rust”



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138 Antoninus Pius becomes emperor

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- Polycarp is martyred around 165

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

180

- 192 Pertinax becomes emperor for 3 months

- He was a good man who tried to institute reforms to fix what Commodus had done to Rome...

- ... and was thus murdered by his own corrupt Praetorian guards, who were upset to no longer be getting bribes



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192 Pertinax becomes emperor for 3 months

193 Julianus becomes emperor for 3 months

- Didius Julianus is a rich idiot who bought the throne from those same corrupt Praetorian guards

- He's regularly booed by crowds and hated by soldiers—the Eastern legions proclaim Pescennius Niger emperor, and the Western legions proclaim Clodius Albinus emperor instead



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193 **Julianus becomes emperor for 3 months**

- Didius Julianus is a rich idiot who bought the throne from those same corrupt Praetorian guards

- **He's finally killed by General Septimius Severus (commanding the legions of Eastern Europe)**

- **Severus gets to Rome before the other two legion-backed generals and defeats the Praetorians, so...**



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Septimus Severus becomes emperor
(the *fifth* in the “Year of Five Emperors”)

- As part of his imperial house-cleaning attempting to build a peaceful, stable empire, he begins the most intense persecution of Christians yet—making conversions punishable by torture and public execution...

