

The Life of Polycarp

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Introduction

In the New Testament, we learn about Jesus and His earliest disciples. We read about their triumphs and tragedies as they spread the gospel message to Jerusalem, Judea, and throughout the Mediterranean world. We have excerpts of their teachings and records of their works in the New Testament.

But what about the next generation of disciples that came after them? How much, if anything, do we know about them?

The New Testament does provide some background on these individuals. However, there were others who are only known to us by history. Among these are a man named Polycarp. While we do not possess a large amount of information about him, what we do possess is weighty and extremely significant to early Church history. He was perhaps the only witness of Apostolic teaching in the mid-second century.

After the first Apostles passed away, error entered the Christian community. It was facilitated by a series of events that converged at just the right time. The original faith delivered to the saints was in danger of being compromised and tainted by false teachers. An entire generation of believers were in danger of falling away.

Polycarp was taught by the first disciples and those who had seen the Lord. He took a great stand for the faith. He confronted the false teachers of his time, led many back to the truth, and then faced persecution.

In the annals of church history, he is among the great examples of the Christian faith. He is likely the most important figure in early Church history after Jesus and the first disciples. In this work, you will learn about the events leading up to and surrounding Polycarp's work for the Lord. This will help us understand his importance and give fresh insight to our knowledge of him.

Enjoy the life of Polycarp.

Chapter 1

What Happened to the Early Disciples?

In the New Testament, we learn that the earliest disciples were greatly persecuted. They were often cast out of fellowship from synagogues and at times driven out of entire regions. Their testimony was crucial because they were eyewitnesses of Christ's life and resurrection; they had a unique faith because they walked with the Lord. Later disciples knew those who walked with Christ.

Many early leaders of Christianity were martyred. Clement I, who was the bishop of Rome from about 88 AD to possibly as late as 102 AD, wrote about Peter and Paul's martyrdom in his letter to the Corinthians. We have an excerpt from his letter below:

“But not to dwell upon ancient examples, let us come to the most recent spiritual heroes. Let us take the noble examples furnished in our own generation. Through envy and jealousy the greatest and most righteous pillars [of the church] have been persecuted and put to death. Let us set before our eyes the illustrious apostles. Peter, through unrighteous envy, endured not one or two, but numerous labours; and when he had at length suffered martyrdom, departed to the place of glory due to him. Owing to envy, Paul also obtained the reward of patient endurance, after being seven times thrown into captivity, compelled to flee, and stoned. After preaching both in the east and west, he gained the illustrious reputation due to his faith, having taught righteousness to the whole world, and come to the extreme limit of the west, and suffered martyrdom under the prefects. Thus was he removed from the world, and went into the holy place, having proved himself a striking example of patience...”

“To these men who spent their lives in the practice of holiness, there is to be added a great multitude of the elect, who, having through envy endured many indignities and tortures, furnished us with a most excellent example. Through envy, those women, the Danaids and Dircaë, being persecuted, after they had suffered terrible and unspeakable torments, finished the course of their faith with steadfastness, and though weak in body, received a noble

reward. Envy has alienated wives from their husbands, and changed that saying of our father Adam, ‘This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh’ (Genesis 2:23). Envy and strife have overthrown great cities, and rooted up mighty nations” (idem, 5-6).

Clement does not hint where Peter was martyred. We know that he was put to death for the faith based on the testimony of writers such as Clement. Jesus also referenced it in the gospels. “Jesus saith unto him, ‘Feed my sheep. Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. 19 Now this he spake, signifying by what manner of death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me” (John 21:17b-19, KJV).

On the other hand, Clement mentioned Paul’s missionary journeys to the east and west and his death under the prefects. This refers to the prefects in Rome. He goes on to mention other people who suffered in these persecutions, such as the Danaids and Dircae, who are women that we do not know much about.

James, the half-brother of Jesus, was also martyred. Jewish leaders conspired to have him accused of breaking the law – in a similar way to Jesus – and then had him stoned. His martyrdom is recorded by the first century historian Josephus (*Antiquities*, 20.9).

As these early leaders preached the gospel message, they imparted it to the next generation. The Apostle Paul commended Timothy and Titus as his sons in the gospel (I Timothy 1:2, 2 Tim. 1:2, Titus 1:4). At the end of his letters, he commended others who helped him spread the Kingdom message. The Apostle Peter called Mark his son (I Peter 5:13).

Among the leaders of early Christianity that I think deserves more attention is the Apostle John. He wrote five books of the New Testament, leaned upon the Lord’s chest at Passover, stayed with Jesus through the crucifixion, and ran to the tomb after Jesus’ resurrection. What happened to him? Did he leave behind disciples to carry on the teachings of Jesus?

John lived longer than most early disciples and faced unique challenges. As time passed, new threats to the faith arose. Instead of opposition from people outside the Christian community, threats from within the community created obstacles. Jude, who is believed to have written between the years 64 and 80 (NIV study notes), instructed believers to "...contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. For there are certain men who crept in secretly, even those who were long ago written about for this condemnation: ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into indecency, and denying our only Master, God, and Lord, Jesus Christ" (Jude 1:3b-4, WEB). Believers had to fight for the doctrine and teachings of Jesus. Forces were at work to pervert, twist, and/or destroy that work.

This subversion is briefly mentioned in John's third letter, where we learn that he and his co-workers were being harassed by people who claimed to be believers. "9 I wrote to the assembly, but Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, doesn't accept what we say. 10 Therefore if I come, I will call attention to his deeds which he does, unjustly accusing us with wicked words. Not content with this, neither does he himself receive the brothers, and those who would, he forbids and throws out of the assembly" (3 John 9-10, WEB). It is hard to fathom that one of the original disciples of Jesus would be mistreated by other believers, but it happened!

According to second and third century sources, Roman authorities tried to put John to death in a pot of boiling oil during the reign of the Roman Emperor Domitian (81-96 AD). He survived and was exiled to the isle of Patmos, where he wrote the book of Revelation. Non-Christian writers confirm that banishment to an island was a punishment employed by the Romans during that era (see Tacitus, *Annals*, 1.53, 14.63, Dio Cassius, *Roman History*, 55.10, 59.22, 67.14).

Tertullian, who wrote about 200 AD, stated: "How happy is its church, on which apostles poured forth all their doctrine along with their blood! Where Peter endures a passion like his Lord's! Where Paul wins his crown in a death like John's where the Apostle John was first plunged, unhurt, into boiling oil, and thence remitted to his island-exile!" (Tertullian, *Prescription*

Against Heretics, 36).

John testified that he was a target of persecution and put on the isle of Patmos because of his faith. He wrote, “I John, your brother and partaker with you in tribulation and kingdom and patience which are in Jesus, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus” (Rev. 1:9).

Irenaeus wrote about 175-180 AD. He said that John received the book of Revelation towards the end of Domitian’s reign and that he died during the reign of Trajan.

“We will not, however, incur the risk of pronouncing positively as to the name of Antichrist; for if it were necessary that his name should be distinctly revealed in this present time, it would have been announced by him who beheld the apocalyptic vision [Revelation]. For that was seen no very long time since, but almost in our day, towards the end of Domitian’s reign” (*Against Heresies*, 5.30.3).

“Then, again, the Church in Ephesus, founded by Paul, and having John remaining among them permanently until the times of Trajan, is a true witness of the tradition of the apostles” (ibid, 3.3.4).

Concerning these events, Eusebius, a later Christian chronicler, wrote: “But after Domitian had reigned fifteen years, and Nerva had succeeded to the empire, the Roman Senate, according to the writers that record the history of those days, voted that Domitian’s honors should be cancelled, and that those who had been unjustly banished should return to their homes and have their property restored to them. It was at this time that the apostle John returned from his banishment in the island and took up his abode at Ephesus, according to an ancient Christian tradition” (*Church History*, 3.20.10-11).

Domitian or a regional official during his reign tried to put John to death in a pot of boiling oil. After it was not successful, he was banished to the isle of Patmos. On that island, he received the Book of Revelation. We do not know how long John was there, but he was eventually released – likely just after the reign of Domitian. He then lived in Ephesus, where he died during the reign

of Trajan, who reigned from 98-117 AD. This gives us a sound estimate as to when John passed away.

It is interesting that of all the early disciples, John is among the few who died a peaceful death. His most prominent disciple was named Polycarp. He is not discussed in the New Testament, but early church history tells us of his incredible testimony.

To fully grasp Polycarp's significance in Church History, it is necessary to review the events leading up to his work for God. Great troubles started for Christianity in the second century, and Polycarp resisted this rising tide of confusion.

Chapter 2

The Next Generation

It is clear from the New Testament and Church History that the first Apostles held the faith in purity. They preached the gospel in season and out of season. They sacrificed it all to spread the message. What happened after the death of the first Apostles?

Hegesippus (writing between 150-170 AD)

“And, after profound peace had been established in every church, they remained down to the reign of Trajan Caesar... Up to that period the Church had remained like a virgin pure and uncorrupted: for, if there were any persons who were disposed to tamper with the wholesome rule of the preaching of salvation, they still lurked in some dark place of concealment or other. **But, when the sacred band of apostles had in various ways closed their lives,** and that generation of men to whom it had been vouchsafed to listen to the Godlike Wisdom with their own ears had passed away, **then did the confederacy of godless error take its rise through the treachery of false teachers,** who, seeing that none of the apostles any longer survived, at length attempted with bare and uplifted head to oppose the preaching of the truth by preaching ‘knowledge falsely so called.’” (*Fragments of Hegesippus*, emphasis mine).

Clement of Alexandria (writing around 180 AD)

“For the teaching of our Lord at His advent, beginning with Augustus and Tiberius, was completed in the middle of the times of Tiberius. And that of the apostles, embracing the ministry of Paul, ends with Nero. **It was later, in the times of Adrian [Hadrian] the king, that those who invented the heresies arose; and they extended to the age of Antoninus the elder [who is also called Antonius Pius]...**” (*Stromata*, 7.17).

Hegesippus said that up to the reign of Trajan (98-117), the church remained like a virgin. This is figurative language, meaning that the faith was not corrupted by false teaching and disobedience. Clement wrote that heretical teachers arose within Christianity during the time of Hadrian (117-138) and that they continued until the reign of Antonius (138-161).

These key details give us a frame of reference. There was a period in the early to mid-second century where certain factors were at work to pervert the original gospel message. The study of history will yield that there were at least three other factors that came together and contributed to the development of heresy. They are listed below; we will explain each one of these in depth.

1) Persecution of Christians

2) Anti-Semitism

3) The Destruction of Jerusalem in 135 AD

Factor #1 – Persecution

When you read the book of Acts, the earliest persecution against Christians came from Jewish leaders who sought to suppress the message that Jesus was the Messiah. As this message increasingly spread among the Gentiles, persecution also came from them. We have some examples in the New Testament of Gentiles reacting harshly to the message of the early disciples, such as Acts chapter 19.

The first historical example of Gentile persecution outside of the New Testament occurred in the mid-60s AD. The Roman Emperor Nero (54-68) wanted to build a new city called Neroina. One problem is that the city of Rome occupied the location for his grand design. Not long after this plan was conceived, a fire destroyed part of the city.

Nero tried to offer sacrifices to the gods to please them and pacify the people, but it did not work. The people demanded justice for the loss of property and life; they wanted the culprit to be brought to justice. Of course, Nero was suspected to have been involved. According to the Roman historian Tacitus, Nero blamed Christians for the fire. He put them to death for it; this event is recorded in Roman sources (see Tacitus, *Annals*, 15.44).

The Emperor Domitian (81-96) or magistrates under him engaged in a brief and limited persecution of Christians. It was at this time that the Apostle John was put on the isle of Patmos. After Domitian's death, John was released and died peacefully in the city of Ephesus. We discussed these details more in the last chapter.

During the reign of Trajan (98-117), a precedent was established where Christians could be put on trial for their faith. In about 110, Pliny the Younger was a magistrate in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). He wrote a letter to Trajan where he described the trials of those who were brought to him with the accusation that they were Christians. This was the only charge brought against them. He sought Trajan's approval or disapproval for the way that he handled the situation. We have an excerpt from the letter below:

“(Pliny to Trajan)...An anonymous information was laid before me containing a charge against several persons, who upon examination denied they were Christians, or had ever been so. They repeated after me an invocation to the gods, and offered religious rites with wine and incense before your statue (which for that purpose I had ordered to be brought, together with those of the gods), and even reviled the name of Christ: whereas there is no forcing, it is said, those who are really Christians into any of these compliances: I thought it proper, therefore, to discharge them. Some among those who were accused by a witness in person at first confessed themselves Christians, but immediately after denied it; the rest owned indeed that they had been of that number formerly, but had now (some above three, others more, and a few above twenty years ago) renounced that error... They affirmed the whole of their guilt, or their error, was, that they met on a stated day before it was light, and addressed a form of prayer to Christ, as to a divinity, binding themselves by a solemn oath, not for the purposes of any wicked design, but never to commit any fraud, theft, or adultery, never to falsify their word, nor deny a trust when they should be called upon to deliver it up; after which it was their custom to separate, and then reassemble, to eat in common a harmless meal... After receiving this account, I judged it so much the more necessary to endeavor to extort the real truth, by putting two female slaves to the torture, who were said to officiate' in their religious rites: but all I could discover was evidence of an absurd and extravagant superstition. I deemed it expedient, therefore, to adjourn all further proceedings, in order to consult you. **For it appears to be a matter highly deserving your consideration, more especially as great numbers must be involved in the danger of these prosecutions, which have already extended, and are still likely to extend, to persons of all ranks and ages, and even of both sexes.** In fact, this contagious superstition is not confined to the cities only, but has spread its infec-

tion among the neighbouring villages and country. Nevertheless, it still seems possible to restrain its progress. **The temples, at least, which were once almost deserted, begin now to be frequented; and the sacred rites, after a long intermission, are again revived; while there is a general demand for the victims, which till lately found very few purchasers. From all this it is easy to conjecture what numbers might be reclaimed if a general pardon were granted to those who shall repent of their error. ...**" (*Letters*, 97).

Trajan replied to this letter and expressed approval for how Pliny handled the situation. His approach became the main precedent to persecute Christians for about 130 years.

There is much to glean from Pliny's correspondence, but we will focus on two points. First, it is evidence that regional persecution against Christians occurred in Asia Minor, possibly as early as 20 years before. Secondly, we learn that two categories of believers begin to emerge. The first one was composed of loyal and faithful believers. They would suffer and even die for the faith. The second one would profess Christ in public but deny Him when threatened.

The evidence for these two points is clear from the text. Pliny stated that there were some who would confess to being a Christian when first accused, but later deny it when threatened or put on trial. As a show of allegiance, these people were asked to offer incense to the emperor and sacrifice to the gods; they complied. Pliny admitted that a true Christian could not be forced into these behaviors. There were also other forms of persecution that arose, such as mob violence (similar to Acts 19) and a revival of dedication to the gods of Rome.

During these persecutions, the strongest leaders who were sound in doctrine, faith, and their lifestyle/example were put to death. As mentioned in the last chapter, Paul died during Nero's reign. Peter was put to death, even though the exact date/location is not certain. James, the half-brother of Jesus was put to death in about 62. Hegesippus informed us that Simeon Clopas, who was Jesus' brother rather than uncle, was put to death in the early second century.

Persecution caused the strongest believers to be imprisoned, tortured, and/or put to death. The death of resolute leaders in the first and second centuries caused Christianity to be vulnerable to the influence of teachings that were not sound.

Factor #2 – Anti-Semitism

The second factor that assisted the heretical teachers of the mid-second century was anti-Semitism. This term refers to hatred and/or disdain for Jewish people or those things which are considered Jewish. Anti-Jewish sentiment was strong in the Roman world – some quotes below will illustrate this point.

Seneca, who lived from 4 BC to 65 AD, wrote about the Jewish people. The early writer and thinker Augustine quoted him in the work *The City of God*. In book 6, chapter 11, he recorded the words of Seneca about the Jewish people.

“What Seneca Thought Concerning the Jews....Seneca, among the other superstitions of civil theology, also found fault with the sacred things of the Jews, and especially the sabbaths, affirming that they act uselessly in keeping those seventh days, whereby they lose through idleness about the seventh part of their life, and also many things which demand immediate attention are damaged. The Christians, however, who were already most hostile to the Jews, he did not dare to mention...When he was speaking concerning those Jews, he said, When, meanwhile, the customs of that most accursed nation have gained such strength that they have been now received in all lands, the conquered have given laws to the conquerors....” (idem).

Quintilian (35-100 AD)

“The vices of the children bring hatred on their parents; founders of cities are detested for concentrating a race which is a curse to others, as for example the founder of the Jewish superstition...” (*Institutio Oratoria*, 3.7.21).

Tacitus (117 AD)

“To ensure his future hold over the people, Moses introduced a new cult, which was the opposite of all other religions. All that we hold sacred they held profane, and allowed practices which we abominate... Their other customs are impious and abominable, and owe their prevalence to their depravity... they feel nothing

but hatred and enmity for the rest of the world...the Jewish ritual is preposterous and morbid....” (Tacitus, *Histories*, 5.4-5). He also claimed that they worshiped the image of a donkey.

This anti-Jewish attitude infiltrated Christianity. The first evidence of this is found in the *Apology* of Aristides. He was a Christian who attempted to defend Christianity before the Roman Emperor Hadrian (as a side note, the word apology means ‘defense’). This work is usually dated to the 120s AD.

In it, Aristides divided humanity into four classes: Barbarians, Greeks, Jews, and Christians. He gave a brief history of each and then tried to explain why Christians are the only group following the fullness of truth and thus better than the rest. We have a brief excerpt below:

“...All-powerful Cæsar Titus Hadrianus Antoninus, venerable and merciful, from Marcianus Aristides, an Athenian philosopher... Nevertheless [the Jews] too erred from true knowledge. And in their imagination they conceive that it is God they serve; whereas by their mode of observance it is to the angels and not to God that their service is rendered:— as when they celebrate sabbaths and the beginning of the months, and feasts of unleavened bread, and a great fast; and fasting and circumcision and the purification of meats, which things, however, they do not observe perfectly... But the Christians, O King, while they went about and made search, have found the truth; and as we learned from their writings, they have come nearer to truth and genuine knowledge than the rest of the nations” (idem, 14-15).

First, notice that Aristides did not introduce himself as a Christian. Instead, he introduced himself as a philosopher. The second detail of significance is that he drew a sharp distinction between Jewish people and Christians. He even misrepresented Jewish people as worshipping angels, especially in their observance of certain practices (including the Sabbath).

He finished out the defense by giving many details as to why Christians are better than the other groups (including Jewish people). He asserted that they alone had the truth.

Because of anti-Semitism, Christian teachers sought to diminish

the Old Testament. They sought other sources, such as Greek philosophy, to replace it as the chief background resource to the New Testament. As the second century proceeded, the anti-Semitic tinge in Christian writings increased.

In the *Epistle of Barnabas*, written not long after Aristides' apology, there is a marked increase of anti-Semitism. The author, who is not the Barnabas of the Bible, claimed that circumcision came from an evil angel. He utilized a highly allegorical interpretation of the Old Testament as a way to explain it away (chapters 7-10). He explained that Christians have covenant with God – but not Israelites (chapters 13-14). He even called the Jewish people wretched (chapter 16).

Justin the Martyr, in the mid-second century, would continue many of these same themes. He claimed that the Israelites were given the law because their hearts were hard (*Dialogue with Trypho*, 18). This disagrees with the New Testament because the book of Hebrews is clear that they their hearts became hardened **after** the law was given because they did not combine it with faith (chapters 3 and 4).

The anti-Semitic attitude developed in this century led to the teaching of replacement theology, which contradicts many parts of the New Testament. Barnabas is the first to hint at this, but it grew significantly over time. Also, practices associated with the Jewish people, such as the Sabbath, became labeled as Jewish as a means to denigrate it (though the Bible never labels the Sabbath as Jewish).

Factor #3 – The Destruction of Jerusalem in 135

Towards the end of Hadrian's reign, a major event occurred that contributed to more anti-Jewish sentiment in the broader Roman world. From the primary sources, the emperor made one or two moves which caused a war with the Jewish people. One source says that he banned circumcision (Aelius Spartianus, *The Life of Hadrian*, 14). A second one stated that he tried to build a temple to Jupiter on top of the ruins of the Second Temple, which is the chief source we will discuss. This happened in about 131; a great war ensued. The Roman historian Cassius Dio gives us details regarding these events:

“At Jerusalem he founded a city in place of the one which had been razed to the ground, naming it Aelia Capitolina, and on the site of the temple of the god he raised a new temple to Jupiter. This brought on a war of no slight importance nor of brief duration, for the Jews deemed it intolerable that foreign races should be settled in their city and foreign religious rites planted there... At first the Romans took no account of them. Soon, however, all Judaea had been stirred up, and the Jews everywhere were showing signs of disturbance... Five hundred and eighty thousand men were slain in the various raids and battles, and the number of those that perished by famine, disease and fire was past finding out. Thus nearly the whole of Judaea was made desolate...” (*idem*, 69, 12.1-2, 13.1, 14.1-2).

As a result of this major war, Hadrian banned Jewish people from the city. This included Jewish people who also believed in Jesus. Eusebius discussed this in his work *Church History*.

“...But I have learned this much from writings, that until the siege of the Jews, which took place under Adrian [Hadrian], there were fifteen bishops in succession there [Jerusalem], all of whom are said to have been of Hebrew descent, **and to have received the knowledge of Christ in purity**, so that they were approved by those who were able to judge of such matters...” (*idem*, 4.5.2).

“...the whole nation was prohibited from this time on by a decree, and by the commands of Adrian [Hadrian], from ever going up to the country about Jerusalem. For the emperor gave orders that they should not even see from a distance the land of their fathers...And thus, when the city had been emptied of the Jewish nation and had suffered the total destruction of its ancient inhabitants, it was colonized by a different race, and the Roman city which subsequently arose changed its name and was called *Ælia*, in honor of the emperor *Ælius* Adrian. **And as the church there was now composed of Gentiles, the first one to assume the government of it after the bishops of the circumcision was Marcus**” (*ibid*, 4.6.3-4).

Eusebius attested that every Christian bishop of Jerusalem was Jewish up to this event in 135. Additionally, he stated that these bishops held the knowledge of Christ in purity. With their removal, the apostolic line of succession was interrupted. A man named

Marcus, who we know very little about, became the first Gentile Bishop of Jerusalem. The fact that he was a Gentile was not the problem – the issue is that he brought Gentile ways with him. The implication from Eusebius is that this bishop and the ones after him did not hold the message of Christ in purity.

To give you an example of this, we will look at a quote from Epiphanius. He was the bishop of Salamis in the mid to late fourth century. He wrote the following:

[speaking of a group called the Audians] “For they choose to celebrate the Passover with the Jews...And indeed, < it is true > that this used to be the church’s custom...each is found writing to the other and quarreling, and down to our own day. This has been the situation ever since was thrown into disorder after the time of the circumcised bishops...” (*Panarion*, 70.9.1-2, 9, Translated by Frank Williams)

Epiphanius wrote that the earliest Christians all kept Passover in the same manner as the Jewish people. He then attested that confusion concerning Passover started after Hadrian removed the Jewish people from Jerusalem. This was the beginning of what would be known as the **Quartodeciman Controversy** – or the controversy about when to keep Passover. Look for a free short book on this subject on www.sabbath.blog sometime in 2022.

In the New Testament book of Acts, we learn that Jerusalem was considered the de-facto capital of Christendom. Leaders met there to make important decisions. Ministers were sent out to assist the brethren in other places. Those same ministers had to report back to Jerusalem about their activity. For some examples of this, read the following verses: Acts 1:4-8, 11:1-2, 11:19-22, 11:26-27, 12:24-25, 13:13, 15:2, 16:4, and Gal. 2:1-2.

With the headquarters of Christianity stricken with confusion, other cities began to compete to take the place of Jerusalem. Leaders in Rome, Antioch, Alexandria, and other cities claimed that they were the inheritors of Apostolic succession. They tried to function in the same way that Jerusalem had functioned in the book of Acts. There were even squabbles and infighting between these cities as each contended to exert itself as supreme over the others. This fractured Christianity and differences of practice on

certain topics, such as Passover, developed in the second century.

Sulpicius Severus (about 400) wrote: "...he [Hadrian] ordered a cohort of soldiers to keep constant guard in order to prevent all Jews from approaching to Jerusalem. This, however, rather benefited the Christian faith, **because almost all then believed in Christ as God while continuing in the observance of the law...**" (*Sacred History*, 2.31).

According to the author, nearly all Christians still kept the Law of God up to the time of Hadrian's war with the Jewish people. Sulpicius viewed the Jewish ban from Jerusalem in a positive light because he did not like observances of the law.

To conclude this section of the chapter, consider that at least four total factors contributed to the rise of heresy:

- 1) The Death of the early Apostles
- 2) Persecution
- 3) Anti-Semitism
- 4) The Destruction of Jerusalem in 135

The first disciples were martyred or passed away; they were the original protectors of the faith. Many of the remaining leaders who held to the teachings of Christ in purity were persecuted. Disdain for anything that appeared Jewish was prevalent in the greater Roman culture, especially considering the events of Hadrian's reign. It gradually influenced Christianity. Apostolic succession was removed from Jerusalem, and the headquarters of the faith was now in question.

Recall the two quotes from the beginning of this chapter. Hegesippus said that the Church was a virgin up to the period of Trajan (98-117 AD). Clement of Alexandria said that the heresies arose during the reign of Hadrian (117-138).

These factors, all of which were happening or happened at the same time, made Christianity vulnerable to outside influences – especially heresy.

Chapter 3

The Rise of Heresy

The four factors discussed in the last chapter made Christianity vulnerable to outside influences, especially heresy. The term translated as heresy in the New Testament is *haireisis*, and it means a choice, choosing (for oneself), a sect, or to capture. As I pertains to this subject, it refers to those individuals and teachings which are different than the first believers. The connotation is that they are destructive and harmful to the faith of others.

The chief heresy that impacted Christianity in the second century was called gnosticism. The term is derived from the Greek word *gnosis*, which means knowledge. It was a blend of oriental mythology and Greek philosophy. While it was not a unified belief system, there were some commonalities found among its teachers.

First, most gnostics held that the physical world was evil but spiritual things were good. This is sometimes called dualism. Secondly, they believed that an inferior God created the physical world, but a superior god created spiritual things. Third, one is ‘saved’ from this evil, material world by possessing certain knowledge and mysteries. This knowledge allows a person to leave the bondage of the physical world and ascend into the spiritual realm.

Some groups employed elaborate mythologies to explain their beliefs. They also mixed their beliefs with the Bible – this is called syncretism.

To the gnostic, one’s knowledge saved the soul, so the treatment of the body was not as important. They already considered the physical world to be evil. Therefore, a person could do as much evil as they wanted in their physical body so long as they ‘fed’ themselves spiritually. This belief system led some of these people to commit gross sin and sexual immorality (since it is done in the physical). Marriage was usually rejected because procreation creates another material being, which they viewed as evil. They usually rejected the eating of any meat.

Because they viewed the physical matter as evil, they rejected the

idea that a perfect Messiah, the Son of God, could have been physically born, suffer, and die. Some of them rejected the idea of a resurrection. There are some warnings in the New Testament against these beliefs because a form of it existed in the first century. We have a few examples below.

The Corinthians were focused on obtaining mysteries and operating in spiritual gifts, but they were loose in their morals. Paul explained in I Corinthians 3:16-17, 6:13-19 that sin committed in the body is still sin against God in body and spirit.

“But the Spirit saith expressly, that in later times some shall fall away from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons, 2 through the hypocrisy of men that speak lies, branded in their own conscience as with a hot iron; 3 **forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats**, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by them that believe and know the truth....” (I Tim. 4:1-3, ASV).

“turning away from the profane babblings and oppositions of the knowledge which is falsely so called...” (I Tim. 6:20, ASV).

“2 Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: 3 and every spirit that confesseth not Jesus is not of God: and this is the spirit of the antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it cometh; and now it is in the world already...” (I John 4:2-3, ASV)

In the late second century, several writers composed extensive works refuting heresies – such as those by Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Hippolytus. Up to that point, Christian works devoted solely to refuting heresies are not found.

Among the first false teachers were Basilides and Saturninus, who began to spread heresy during the reign of Hadrian. Irenaeus wrote about their errors:

“1. Arising among these men, Saturninus (who was of that Antioch which is near Daphne) and Basilides laid hold of some favourable opportunities, and promulgated different systems of doctrine — the one in Syria, the other at Alexandria.... Man, too, was the workmanship of angels, a shining image bursting forth below

from the presence of the supreme power...2. **He has also laid it down as a truth, that the Saviour was without birth, without body, and without figure, but was, by supposition, a visible man; and he maintained that the God of the Jews was one of the angels; and, on this account, because all the powers wished to annihilate his father, Christ came to destroy the God of the Jews, but to save such as believe in him...** This heretic was the first to affirm that two kinds of men were formed by the angels — the one wicked, and the other good. And since the demons assist the most wicked, the Saviour came for the destruction of evil men and of the demons, but for the salvation of the good” (*Against Heresies*, 1.24.2; emphasis mine throughout).

Saturninus also taught that marriage was prohibited, clean animal meat was forbidden, and that some prophetic words in the Old Testament were from angels and others were from satan. He even held himself to be an angel. He denied that Christ had come in the flesh – only appearing as an apparition (*ibid*). He thought marriage and procreation were from satan (Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies*, 7.16).

Basilides was another false teacher of this time. His beliefs are summarized below:

“Basilides again, that he may appear to have discovered something more sublime and plausible, gives an immense development to his doctrines...**Those angels who occupy the lowest heaven, that, namely, which is visible to us, formed all the things which are in the world,** and made allotments among themselves of the earth and of those nations which are upon it. **The chief of them is he who is thought to be the God of the Jews;** and inasmuch as he desired to render the other nations subject to his own people, that is, the Jews, all the other princes resisted and opposed him. Wherefore all other nations were at enmity with his nation. But the father without birth and without name, perceiving that they would be destroyed, sent his own first-begotten Nous (he it is who is called Christ) to bestow deliverance on those who believe in him, from the power of those who made the world. He appeared, then, on earth as a man, to the nations of these powers, and wrought miracles. **Wherefore he did not himself suffer death, but Simon, a certain man of Cyrene, being compelled, bore the cross in his stead...**” (Irenaeus, *Against Heresy*, 1.24.3-

4; emphasis mine throughout).

Basilides had viewpoints similar to Saturninus. He also denied Christ's suffering in the flesh and affirmed that salvation came to the soul alone (ibid). His followers engaged in idolatry, magic, and sorcery; they claimed it was part of their worship of the true god.

In the last chapter, we discussed Aristides. He claimed that the Jewish people followed the practices of angels. The teachings of Saturninus and Basilides are very similar to him in this respect. Their rhetoric also echoed the anti-Semitic statements of prior Roman authors. The attack was clear: they sought to portray the God of the Old Testament as a separate God than that of the New Testament.

Saturninus went as far to say that Jesus came to destroy the God of the Jews! How could anyone read the Bible and come to such conclusions? Saturninus operated out of Syria and Basilides in Alexandria. We don't hear much about them after their initial activities; they did start movements that lasted for some time after their deaths.

The most popular and dangerous of the gnostic teachers were Valentinus, Cerdon, and Marcion. We will review their beliefs below.

“For Valentinus came to Rome in the time of Hyginus, flourished under Pius, and remained until Anicetus. Cerdon, too, Marcion's predecessor, himself arrived in the time of Hyginus. Coming frequently into the Church, and making public confession, he thus remained, one time teaching in secret, and then again making public confession; but at last, having been denounced for corrupt teaching, he was excommunicated from the assembly of the brethren. Marcion, then, succeeding him, flourished under Anicetus, who held the tenth place of the episcopate” (ibid, 3.4.3; emphasis mine throughout).

Irenaeus discussed when these teachers were active based on the bishops of Rome. To give you an idea of the era we are discussing, we will list the years that these bishops served:

- **Hyginus (136-140)**

- Pius (140-154)
- Anicetus (155-166)

It is interesting to note that Anicetus' time as the bishop of Rome seems particularly fruitful for these heretics. We will explore this detail more in the next chapter.

At least some of these teachers claimed to have derived their doctrine from Simon Magus. "...**declaring at the same time the doctrine of Simon Magus of Samaria, their progenitor**, and of all those who succeeded him. **I mentioned, too, the multitude of those Gnostics who are sprung from him...**" (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 2.Preface)

Who is Simon Magus of Samaria? In Acts chapter 8, he tried to buy the gift of the Holy Spirit with money. Peter rebuked him harshly for this gesture. Many of the early church writers were convinced that Simon started his own movement after this event, and that these gnostic teachers claimed him as their spiritual forefather.

The Valentinians were very numerous and influential. They blended Bible verses with other common sayings from their day to present what they claimed was a more perfect truth.

Tertullian wrote: "The Valentinians, who are **no doubt a very large body of heretics**--comprising as they do so many apostates from the truth, who have a propensity for fables..." (*Against the Valentinians*, 1).

"They gather their views from other sources than the Scriptures; and, to use a common proverb, they strive to weave ropes of sand, while they endeavour to adapt with an air of probability to their own peculiar assertions the parables of the Lord, the sayings of the prophets, and the words of the apostles, in order that their scheme may not seem altogether without support. In doing so, however, they disregard the order and the connection of the Scriptures, and so far as in them lies, dismember and destroy the truth. By transferring passages, and dressing them up anew, and making one thing out of another, they succeed in deluding many through their wicked art in adapting the oracles of the Lord to their opinions" (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 1.8.1).

“...he did not invent Scriptures to square with his own subject-matter, but adapted his matter to the Scriptures; and yet he took away more, and added more, by removing the proper meaning of every particular word, and adding fantastic arrangements of things which have no real existence...” (Tertullian, *Prescription Against Heretics*, 38)

“But those who are from Valentinus, being, on the other hand, altogether reckless, while they put forth their own compositions, boast that they possess more Gospels than there really are. Indeed, they have arrived at such a pitch of audacity, as to entitle their comparatively recent writing “the Gospel of Truth,” though it agrees in nothing with the Gospels of the Apostles, so that they have really no Gospel which is not full of blasphemy. For if what they have published is the Gospel of truth, and yet is totally unlike those which have been handed down to us from the apostles...” (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.11.9).

In the mid-twentieth century, several ancient works were found compiled in a codex, which has been called the Nag Hammadi Library. Within this codex are a spectrum of works, some of which are non-gnostic, some are semi-gnostic, and others are certainly gnostic. Among them are several books titled as ‘gospels’, including one titled ‘the gospel of truth’.

The Codex Tchacos was found later in the same century. One of the works contained in it was the gospel of Judas, which Irenaeus discussed in *Against Heresies*, 1.31.1. To read more about these findings, read Trompf’s article “The Epistle of Jude, Irenaeus, and the Gospel of Judas” and Pagels’ article “Irenaeus, the ‘Canon of Truth,’ and the ‘Gospel of John’: Making a Difference through Hermeneutics and Ritual” (more information found in the Bibliography section).

These archaeological findings confirm Irenaeus’ statement that there were more gospels in circulation than originally composed in the first century, especially the ones titled ‘the gospel of truth’ and the ‘gospel of Judas’. Some of these other gospels contain some quotes which are found in the original gospels, but they also contain much content which is not found there. This also corroborates with the description of them given by Irenaeus and Tertulli-

an. Other works were found that corroborate with Irenaeus, such as a commentary by the Valentinians on the gospel of John.

The Valentinians melded Christianity with pagan festivals and encouraged breaking the commandments of God. They believed it was necessary to satisfy the lusts of the flesh in addition to spiritual needs.

“Then, again, at every heathen festival celebrated in honour of the idols, these men are the first to assemble; and to such a pitch do they go, that some of them do not even keep away from that bloody spectacle hateful both to God and men, in which gladiators either fight with wild beasts, or singly encounter one another. Others of them yield themselves up to the lusts of the flesh with the utmost greediness, maintaining that carnal things should be allowed to the carnal nature, while spiritual things are provided for the spiritual.” (ibid, 1.6.3)

They taught that mankind was not made from the earth as described in Genesis (ibid, 5.15.4). They declared birth as an evil event, which subsequently led them to deny the bodily birth, suffering and resurrection of Christ (Clement, *Stromata*, 3.17.102).

Cerdon was another false teacher. He came to Rome in the time of Hyginus, but it was his student Marcion that had the greater impact. The second century author Justin the Martyr said that people of every nation believed in Marcion’s doctrine. While this may be a bit of an exaggeration, it attests to his widespread influence. We have some quotes about them below:

“Cerdon was one who took his system from the followers of Simon, and came to live at Rome in the time of Hyginus... He taught that the God proclaimed by the law and the prophets was not the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ... Marcion of Pontus succeeded him, and developed his doctrine. In so doing, he advanced **the most daring blasphemy against Him who is proclaimed as God by the law and the prophets**, declaring Him to be the author of evils, to take delight in war, to be infirm of purpose, and even to be contrary to Himself. But Jesus being derived from that father who is above the God that made the world, and coming into Judæa in the times of Pontius Pilate the governor, who was the procurator of Tiberius Cæsar, was manifested in the

form of a man to those who were in Judæa, abolishing the prophets and the law, and all the works of that God who made the world, whom also he calls Cosmocrator. Besides this, he mutilates the Gospel which is according to Luke, removing all that is written respecting the generation of the Lord, and setting aside a great deal of the teaching of the Lord, in which the Lord is recorded as most dearly confessing that the Maker of this universe is His Father..." (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 1.27.1-2; emphasis mine).

"And there is Marcion, a man of Pontus, who is even at this day alive, and teaching his disciples to believe in some other god greater than the Creator. **And he, by the aid of the devils, has caused many of every nation to speak blasphemies**, and to deny that God is the maker of this universe, and to assert that some other being, greater than He, has done greater works. All who take their opinions from these men, are, as we before said, called Christians;...but we do know that they are neither persecuted nor put to death by you, at least on account of their opinions" (Justin, *First Apology*, 26; emphasis mine).

Marcion taught that Christ's statements in Matthew chapter 5 forbidding adultery, murder, and swearing were an indication that they had been overturned and no longer applied (Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, 4.13.1). He prohibited marriage (Tertullian, *Against Marcion*, 5.7). He taught that Christ's actual body was not crucified – but a phantom one (ibid, 4.40). He did not believe that the resurrection of the flesh was possible, but only the salvation of the soul (ibid, 5.10).

Among the doctrines more specific to his teaching was a hatred for the Law of God. Tertullian wrote:

"Marcion's special and principal work is the separation of the law and the gospel...[his works] aim at committing the gospel to a variance with the law, in order that from the diversity of the two documents which contain them, they may contend for a diversity of gods also. Since, therefore, it is this very opposition between the law and the gospel which has suggested that the God of the gospel is different from the God of the law...Marcion, the author of the breach of peace between the gospel and the law. Now this peace, which had remained unhurt and unshaken from Christ's

appearance to the time of Marcion's audacious doctrine, was no doubt maintained by that way of thinking, which firmly held that the God of both law and gospel was none other than the Creator, against whom after so long a time a separation has been introduced by the heretic of Pontus" (ibid, 1.19).

Tertullian contended that before Marcion, the law and the gospel were taught in harmony with each other. This provides corroboration statement of Sulpicius Severus from the last chapter. Marcion caused this breach, which unfortunately exists in Christendom down to our present day. This false teacher had a much greater influence than the other heretics in dividing the Old Testament from the New. He also had a special hatred for the Sabbath. Tertullian further wrote:

"Nor could there be any discussion about His annulling the Sabbath, if He had a right to annul it. Moreover, He would have the right, if He belonged to the rival god...Thus Christ did not at all rescind the Sabbath: He kept the law thereof, and both in the former case did a work which was beneficial to the life of His disciples, for He indulged them with the relief of food when they were hungry, and in the present instance cured the withered hand; in each case intimating by facts, 'I came not to destroy, the law, but to fulfil it...' although Marcion has gagged His mouth by this word....O Pharisee, and you too, O Marcion, how that it was proper employment for the Creator's Sabbaths of old to do good, to save life, not to destroy it; how that Christ introduced nothing new, which was not after the example, the gentleness, the mercy, and the prediction also of the Creator" (ibid, 4.12).

Tertullian defended the ongoing importance of the Sabbath against Marcion's claim that Christ broke that commandment. Because Marcion viewed Christ as coming from a different god than that of the Old Testament, he re-interpreted Christ as transgressing the Sabbath to differentiate the Messiah from the god of the Old Testament. Consider the following quote attributed to him:

"Since that day is the rest of the God of the Jews, who made the world and rested the seventh day, we therefore fast on that day, that we may not do anything in compliance with the God of the Jews" – (Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 42; Translated by Bingham, p

52).

The false teachers who hated the Sabbath had another motive to do so. One purpose of the Sabbath is to remind us that God made all things—said another way, it is a memorial of creation. Since they viewed the material world as being created by an evil god, it led to their rejection of the Sabbath.

He was also known to take verses out of the Bible that were inconvenient to his doctrine. For instance, He removed statements in the gospels that referred to Christ as an Israelite so that Christ would not have any connection to Israel (Tertullian, *Against Marcion*, 4.7). He removed Matthew 5:17 from the New Testament gospels. Tertullian relates:

“But since both the place and the work of illumination according to the prophecy are compatible with Christ, we begin to discern that He is the subject of the prophecy, which shows that at the very outset of His ministry, ‘He came not to destroy the law and the prophets, but rather to fulfil them’ **for Marcion has erased the passage as an interpolation**” (ibid; emphasis mine).

Marcion removed Ephesians 6:2 because it referenced the fifth commandment (ibid, 5.18). He rejected the book of Revelation (ibid, 4.5). He even wrote a book called the Gospel of Marcion. Tertullian expressed concern that this heretical work might fill the whole world, which echoes Justin’s statement (ibid, 5.19). He attempted to compile a canon of the New Testament, which included one gospel (Luke), but it was greatly edited (ibid, 4.7). He admitted ten of Paul’s letters.

He rejected all messianic prophecies of the Old Testament because he did not view Christ to be the Son of the God revealed in the Old Testament. “Marcion has laid down the position, that Christ who in the days of Tiberius was, by a previously unknown god, revealed for the salvation of all nations, is a different being from Him who was ordained by God the Creator for the restoration of the Jewish state, and who is yet to come” (ibid, 4.6).

In the space of about 20 years, Christianity was flooded with these teachings. The heretics, especially Valentinus and Marcion, spread their anti-Semitic heresy in Rome and other parts of the

Christian world. They tried to diminish the Old Testament. They decried Biblical practices, including the Sabbath. They sought to edit the New Testament to remove anything that was contrary to their doctrine. They took parts of the New Testament and blended it with common sayings to create a mutilated text.

Recall this earlier quote: “For Valentinus came to Rome in the time of Hyginus, flourished under Pius, and **remained until Anicetus**...**Marcion, then, succeeding him, flourished under Anicetus**, who held the tenth place of the episcopate” (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies.*, 3.4.3)

The tenure of Anicetus in Rome seemed to be a problematic era. Today, the Roman Catholic Church maintains that their bishops hold Apostolic Succession. The term ‘Apostolic Succession’ is used to refer to a lineage of bishops going back to the first Apostles. The fact that these errors were allowed to flourish under Anicetus’ tenure means he participated in them to some degree, did not know how to deal with them, did not care, or did not have the authority to stop them. The Church of Rome began to falter at this same time.

With these events going on in the city of Rome, where Paul originally founded a congregation, who would intervene? Who would stand up to this rising tide of heresy in Christendom?

One person stood in the way of these errors. His name was Polycarp.

Chapter 4

Polycarp: Hero of the Faith

Another claim made by the false teachers is that they received their teachings from the first Apostles or that their ordinations came through Apostolic Succession. As discussed in the last chapter, this term refers to a line of succession going back to the first Apostles.

This concept of Apostolic Succession was of paramount importance in the second century in that it was used to legitimize a person's teachings and position/ordination. Tertullian discussed this subject in his work *Prescription Against Heretics*:

“But if there be any (heresies) which are bold enough to plant themselves in the midst of the apostolic age, that they may thereby seem to have been handed down by the apostles, because they existed in the time of the apostles, we can say: Let them produce the original records of their churches; let them unfold the roll of their bishops, running down in due succession from the beginning in such a manner that [that first bishop of theirs] bishop shall be able to show for his ordainer and predecessor some one of the apostles or of apostolic men, — a man, moreover, who continued steadfast with the apostles. For this is the manner in which the apostolic churches transmit their registers: as the church of Smyrna, which records that Polycarp was placed therein by John... In exactly the same way the other churches likewise exhibit (their several worthies), whom, as having been appointed to their episcopal places by apostles, they regard as transmitters of the apostolic seed. Let the heretics contrive something of the same kind...For their very doctrine, after comparison with that of the apostles, will declare, by its own diversity and contrariety, that it had for its author neither an apostle nor an apostolic man; because, as the apostles would never have taught things which were self-contradictory, so the apostolic men would not have inculcated teaching different from the apostles, unless they who received their instruction from the apostles went and preached in a contrary manner. To this test, therefore will they be submitted for proof by those churches, who, although they derive not their founder

from apostles or apostolic men (as being of much later date, for they are in fact being founded daily), yet, since they agree in the same faith, they are accounted as not less apostolic because they are akin in doctrine. Then let all the heresies, when challenged to these two tests by our apostolic church, offer their proof of how they deem themselves to be apostolic...” (idem, 32).

Tertullian asserted that there were two tests to determine if a teacher or leader was considered Apostolic. They either had to prove Apostolic Succession by lineage or that their doctrine lined up with the first Apostles. The heretics could not prove either.

Tertullian listed Polycarp as the FIRST of the bishops to prove Apostolic succession (before Rome). Rome was listed second. He said that there were written records in his day that the Apostle John ordained Polycarp as the Bishop of Smyrna. In another work that will be released later this year, *Persecution in Early Christianity*, we discuss how Tertullian is a reliable witness of written documents. Check www.sabbath.blog for updates.

We learn about Polycarp chiefly through those who knew him and through one of his writings. Eusebius wrote:

“Pothinus having died with the other martyrs in Gaul at ninety years of age, Irenæus succeeded him in the episcopate of the church at Lyons. We have learned that, in his youth, he was a hearer of Polycarp” (*Church History*, 5.5.8).

In his youth, Irenaeus heard Polycarp. He said the following about him:

“For, while I was yet a boy, I saw you in Lower Asia with Polycarp, distinguishing yourself in the royal court, and endeavouring to gain his approbation. For I have a more vivid recollection of what occurred at that time than of recent events (inasmuch as the experiences of childhood, keeping pace with the growth of the soul, become incorporated with it); so that **I can even describe the place where the blessed Polycarp used to sit and discourse — his going out, too, and his coming in — his general mode of life and personal appearance, together with the discourses which he delivered to the people; also how he would speak of his familiar intercourse with John, and with the rest of those**

who had seen the Lord; and how he would call their words to remembrance. Whatsoever things he had heard from them respecting the Lord, both with regard to His miracles and His teaching, Polycarp having thus received [information] from the eye-witnesses of the Word of life, **would recount them all in harmony with the Scriptures...**" (*Fragments of Irenaeus*)

"But Polycarp also was not only instructed by apostles, and conversed with many who had seen Christ, but was also, by apostles in Asia, appointed bishop of the Church in Smyrna, whom I also saw in my early youth, for he tarried [on earth] a very long time... having always taught the things which he had learned from the apostles, and which the Church has handed down, and which alone are true" (Irenaeus, *Against Heresy*, 3.3.4).

From the testimony of Irenaeus, Polycarp often discussed what he was taught by John and others who had seen the Lord. He was also instructed by more than one Apostle. This means that other Apostles lived longer than originally thought. As discussed in *Persecution in Early Christianity*, Peter could have lived much longer than originally thought and been one of his teachers.

Depending on how long Polycarp lived, he could have known the Apostle Paul in his youth. One way or the other, Polycarp heard the testimonies of multiple people who had seen the Lord. Irenaeus said that more than one Apostle appointed him as the bishop of Smyrna.

Between 110 and 140, Polycarp wrote *Letter to the Philippians*. In it, he affirmed many beliefs found in the New Testament and combated heretical teachings (such as Gnosticism). Here's what Irenaeus said about this work:

"There is also a very powerful Epistle of Polycarp written to the Philippians, from which those who choose to do so, and are anxious about their salvation, can learn the character of his faith, and the preaching of the truth" (ibid).

This letter will help us learn more about Polycarp and affirm the truth of the gospel. Jerome, who lived approximately from 347-420 AD, wrote about him and the *Letter to the Philippians*.

“Polycarp – disciple of the apostle John and by him ordained bishop of Smyrna was chief of all Asia, where he saw and had as teachers **some of the apostles** and of those who had seen the Lord...**He wrote a very valuable Epistle to the Philippians which is read to the present day in the meetings in Asia**” (*On Illustrious Men*, 17).

Jerome affirmed the account from Irenaeus that Polycarp was the disciple of John, appointed by him as bishop of Smyrna, and taught by other Apostles in Asia. He also shared that the *Letter to the Philippians* was still being read among Christians in Asia in the late fourth century. This was about 250-280 years after it was written.

Jerome’s testimony attests to the weightiness of this letter as it relates to Apostolic teaching. It was considered of paramount importance to the early Church. Below, we have a summary of its contents and some quotes from it.

Summary of the Letter to the Philippians:

The introduction is similar to Paul’s Letters.

Chapter 1 – An encouragement to produce fruit in Christ and salvation by grace.

Chapter 2 – Obedience to commandments of God, the resurrection, and eternal judgment are discussed.

Chapter 3 – He credits Paul for founding the Church at Philippi and writing a letter to them.

Chapter 4 – Practical instruction for Christian living is discussed (very Pauline).

Chapters 5 & 6 – He reviewed standards for ordained people, rulership in the Kingdom with Christ, and the *bema* judgment.

Chapter 7 – He affirmed the bodily birth of Christ, His death, and His resurrection.

Chapter 12 – He quoted the letter to the Ephesians and calls it the Scriptures and encourages them to know the Scriptures.

Excerpts from the *Letter to the Philippians*:

“But He who raised Him up from the dead will raise up us also, if we do His will, and walk in His commandments, and love what He loved, keeping ourselves from all unrighteousness...” (idem, chapter 2).

“‘But the love of money is the root of all evils.’ Knowing, therefore, that ‘as we brought nothing into the world, so we can carry nothing out,’ let us arm ourselves with the armour of righteousness; and let us teach, first of all, ourselves to walk in the commandments of the Lord” (ibid, chapter 4).

“Knowing, then, that ‘God is not mocked,’ we ought to walk worthy of His commandment and glory ...For it is well that they should be cut off from the lusts that are in the world, since ‘every lust warreth against the spirit;’ and ‘neither fornicators, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, shall inherit the kingdom of God,’ nor those who do things inconsistent and unbecoming” (ibid, chapter 5).

There is one direct quote from the Apostle John: “For whosoever does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, is anti-christ” (ibid, chapter 7; this is a quote from John 4:1-3).

If you would like to read more from this letter, its full contents are provided in **Appendix A** of this work.

Though Polycarp is attributed to be a disciple of the Apostle John, the *Letter to the Philippians* has a significant number of quotes from the New Testament. He mentioned the Apostle Paul by name four times and quoted his letters as many as 26 times. He also quoted the Apostle Peter nearly word for word at least 10 times. Altogether, it seems that Polycarp quoted from three gospels, Acts, ten of Paul’s Letters, I and II Peter, I John, and Jude. Some have said that he quoted every book in the present New Testament canon. This letter is part of his amazing testimony.

Polycarp knew sections of the New Testament by heart (before it had ever been fully formed), he had copies of the documents, or both. His letter also contains references to the Old Testament. Over the next few pages, we will see how his knowledge of the New Testament became invaluable to combat the destructive teachings of the mid-second century.

Irenaeus provides us with some quotes from Polycarp. One of them had to do with heresy. “And I can bear witness before God, that if that blessed and apostolic presbyter had heard any such

thing, he would have cried out, and stopped his ears, exclaiming as he was wont to do: ‘O good God, for what times have You reserved me, that I should endure these things?’” (*Against Heresies*, 3.3.4)

In about 155, the time came for Polycarp to fulfill another major purpose of his calling. He wondered the reason why he was still alive, but God knew that his life experiences and training were needed at that hour. He lamented the false teachings which were being mixed with Christianity, but the time came for him to personally stand against them. He had been preserved for a special purpose.

Polycarp went to Rome about 155. His first reason for going was to correct Anicetus, the Bishop of Rome, for deviating from the example of our Lord and Savior. Polycarp and most of Christianity celebrated Passover on the 14th day of the Hebrew month called Aviv or Nissan. This is also the same day that the Jewish people and the early disciples observed it. Anicetus abandoned the practice. Eusebius, who quotes Irenaeus, relates:

“At this time, while Anicetus was at the head of the church of Rome, Irenaeus relates that Polycarp, who was still alive, was at Rome, and that he had a conference with Anicetus on a question concerning the day of the paschal feast...” (*Church History*, 4.14.1-7).

“And when the blessed Polycarp was at Rome in the time of Anicetus, and they disagreed a little about certain other things, they immediately made peace with one another, not caring to quarrel over the matter. **For neither could Anicetus persuade Polycarp not to observe what he had always observed with John the disciple of our Lord, and the other apostles with whom he had associated;** neither could Polycarp persuade Anicetus to observe it, as he said that he ought to follow the **customs of the presbyters that had preceded him.** But though matters were in this shape, they communed together, and Anicetus conceded the administration of the eucharist in the church to Polycarp, manifestly as a mark of respect. And they parted from each other in peace, both those who observed, and those who did not, maintaining the peace of the whole church” (ibid, 5.24.16-17).

Essentially, the issue between Polycarp and Anicetus came to a standstill. Polycarp could not convince Anicetus to celebrate Passover the proper way as he received it from the first Apostles, and Anicetus could not convince Polycarp to change to his traditions.

Polycarp observed what he learned from John and the early disciples; they in turn learned it from the Lord Jesus. Anicetus decided to stay with the customs of man instead of those teachings which came from the early Apostles. The newer traditions of man were of greater weight to him than the example of Christ. While the two parties disagreed, they still maintained communication.

Polycarp had greater standing to maintain his view than did the bishop of Rome. He had direct communication with the Apostle John, who leaned on the Lord's chest at Passover. He also knew other early Apostles and disciples.

On the other hand, Anicetus was the 10th or 11th bishop of Rome from the time of Paul, who founded the church there. Under the watch of Anicetus, heresy was allowed to reach a climax (of that time). The bishop of Rome had no standing to refute the false teachers. He diverted people from the example of Christ. His view on Passover alone disqualified the Church of Rome from being considered Apostolic, using the second test of Tertullian (discussed above). While we will have to discuss this another time, the Apostolic lineage of these early Roman bishops is also questionable.

The issue about when to keep Passover became known as the Quartodeciman Controversy. Quartodeciman is a Latin word meaning "fourteenth." It would resurface in later times. Later this year, we will release a free book on this subject entitled *The Quartodeciman Controversy*. Check www.sabbath.blog for updates!

While Polycarp was in Rome, he also confronted the heretics such as Valentinus and Marcion. Irenaeus described this event:

“But Polycarp also was not only instructed by apostles, and conversed with many who had seen Christ, but was also, by apostles in Asia, appointed bishop of the Church in Smyrna...

having always taught the things which he had learned from the Apostles, and which the Church has handed down, and **which alone are true**. To these things **all the Asiatic Churches testify, as do also those men who have succeeded Polycarp down to the present time-- a man who was of much greater weight, and a more steadfast witness of truth, than Valentinus, and Marcion, and the rest of the heretics**. He it was who, coming to Rome in the time of Anicetus caused many to turn away from the aforesaid heretics to the Church of God, proclaiming that he had received this one and sole truth from the apostles -- that, namely, which is handed down by the Church..." (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.3.4; emphasis mine throughout).

We learn important details in this testimony. First, Polycarp's teachings were considered truth. Secondly, the Asiatic Churches were still practicing what was originally passed down to the Apostles, as he remained their leader. He went on to explain that these congregations continued to do so into his day (about 180 AD). At that time, the churches in the east were far more numerous than those in the west. The first Apostles did most of their missionary work in the east.

Polycarp arrived in Rome at an eventful time: it was the height of Valentinus' and Marcion's heresy and the bishop of Rome refused to honor Passover. Irenaeus testified that Polycarp turned many heretics back to the faith once delivered to the saints. He rebuked Marcion to his face!

"And Polycarp himself replied to Marcion, who met him on one occasion, and said, 'Dost thou know me?' [Polycarp replied] 'I do know thee, the first-born of Satan.'" (ibid).

Polycarp was the only one equipped for such a task of combating these various difficulties. As the heretics sought to cut out portions of the New Testament or add to it, he easily refuted them. He was unanimously accepted as an eyewitness of those who walked with Jesus and either knew the New Testament by heart or had access to the original documents.

As reviewed earlier, Polycarp quoted sections of the New Testament in his *Letter to the Philippians*. This letter is believed to have been composed between 110 and 140 AD. He refuted these

heresies (see chapters 1, 5-7 as an example). He set the record straight on true Apostolic teaching and had direct Apostolic succession.

Jerome also summarized this visit to Rome: “He, on account of certain questions concerning the day of the Passover, went to Rome in the time of the emperor Antoninus Pius (138-161) while Anicetus ruled the church in that city. There he led back to the faith many of the believers who had been deceived through the persuasion of Marcion and Valentinus, and when Marcion met him by chance and said ‘Do you know us?’ he replied, ‘I know, the firstborn of the devil’...” (*On Illustrious Men*, 17).

It is fascinating that these two subjects were addressed at the same time by Polycarp – the keeping of Passover and the gnostic teachings. Are these two subjects possibly linked?

Consider the following: the heretics taught against the physical life, suffering, and death of Jesus. Early believers observed Passover as a memorial for the suffering and death of Jesus. Paul taught early believers to keep Passover as a remembrance in honor of Jesus as the Lamb of God (see I Cor. 5:6-8).

Once we compare the gnostic heresies with the meaning of Passover for Christians, then it becomes evident why this celebration was targeted. Passover was an annual reminder that Jesus really lived, suffered, and died. This battle illustrates the even greater meaning that Passover had in the second century. Gnosticism would have frowned on such an observance. This also reiterates that the Roman Church was being influenced by this false doctrine.

For another example, consider that some gnostics, according to Tertullian and Epiphanius, fasted on the Sabbath. This was adopted by the Roman Church within a generation of Polycarp’s death (see Hippolytus, *Commentary on Daniel*, 4.20.3). It eventually became common practice (see McDonald, “Fasting on the Sabbath in Early Christianity (Part 1)” on www.sabbath.blog – for online viewers, [CLICK HERE to read this article](#)).

God left a strong witness in Polycarp to stand against these dual issues. Most congregations of the East kept Passover for at least

another generation. Polycrates, bishop of Ephesus, wrote a letter some 30-40 years later to rebuke Victor, the bishop of Rome, for refusing to keep Passover. He argued it should be moved to the Sunday after the 14th of Nissan.

Neither Peter nor Paul were the first ones to start the trend away from Passover. The New Testament is clear that Paul taught others to observe it. Eusebius explained that the first bishop to deviate from keeping Passover was Sixtus I (also called Xystus), who was bishop of Rome during the first several years of Hadrian's reign. This was the time in which heresy entered Christianity. These details further affirm that the move away from Passover was not an Apostolic practice. This will be discussed more in our work *The Quartodeciman Controversy*.

In the early to mid-second century, the bishops of Rome were losing their connection to the original Apostles in practice and teaching. This explains further why heresy flourished under their watch. Recall a quote from the last chapter:

“For Valentinus came to Rome in the time of Hyginus, flourished under Pius, and remained until Anicetus...**Marcion, then, succeeding him, flourished under Anicetus...**” (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.4.3; emphasis mine throughout).

In an era when the bishops of Rome were going astray and being influenced by false doctrines, Polycarp came to sort out the mess. This affirms that the mantle of orthodoxy never fell on the Roman bishops, as is commonly thought. Instead, it landed on the shoulders of Polycarp. He carried the weight and authority of Apostolic Succession in his generation. He had connection to the root, who is Christ.

About two years after this great stand for the faith, Polycarp took his last stand for the faith. Irenaeus briefly mentions this event. “...and, when a very old man, gloriously and most nobly suffering martyrdom, departed this life, having always taught the things which he had learned from the apostles...” (ibid, 3.3.4).

A work called the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* describes the end of his life. In it, we learn that Polycarp was betrayed by one of his own disciples. He was then put to death in front of a stadium full

of people on the Sabbath. We have an excerpt from it below:

“...the day being that of the great Sabbath. And the Irenarch Herod, accompanied by his father Nicetes (both riding in a chariot), met him, and taking him up into the chariot, they seated themselves beside him, and endeavoured to persuade him, saying, ‘What harm is there in saying, Lord Caesar, and in sacrificing, with the other ceremonies observed on such occasions, and so make sure of safety?’ But he at first gave them no answer; and when they continued to urge him, he said, ‘I shall not do as you advise me.’ So they, having no hope of persuading him, began to speak bitter words unto him, and cast him with violence out of the chariot, insomuch that, in getting down from the carriage, he dislocated his leg [by the fall]. But without being disturbed, and as if suffering nothing, he went eagerly forward with all haste, and was conducted to the stadium, where the tumult was so great...”

“Then the proconsul urging him, and saying, ‘Swear, and I will set thee at liberty, reproach Christ;’ Polycarp declared, ‘Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He never did me any injury; how then can I blaspheme my King and my Savior?’...The proconsul then said to him, ‘I have wild beasts at hand; to these will I cast thee, except thou repent.’ But he answered, ‘Call them then, for we are not accustomed to repent of what is good in order to adopt that which is evil; and it is well for me to be changed from what is evil to what is righteous.’ But again the proconsul said to him, ‘I will cause thee to be consumed by fire, seeing thou despisest the wild beasts, if thou wilt not repent.’ But Polycarp said, ‘Thou threatenest me with fire which burneth for an hour, and after a little is extinguished, but art ignorant of the fire of the coming judgment and of eternal punishment, reserved for the ungodly. But why tarriest thou? Bring forth what thou wilt’” (*The Martyrdom of Polycarp*, 8.1-2, 9.3, 11).

Later in the account, we learn that Polycarp was burned at the stake. To read the full account, read **Appendix B** at the end of this work.

Polycarp refused to call a man his Lord. His death reminds us of Paul’s words in Romans 10:9: “...because if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved...” (ASV) To

the early disciples, proclaiming that Jesus was your Lord did not amount to simply a phrase. It meant to declare that you had no other Lord and that you were willing to die for the faith.

In this account, Polycarp said that he had served the Lord 86 years. It is not clear if this was his age or if that many years had passed since he was baptized. One way or the other, Polycarp had lived a long life. He was preserved until the end of his life to serve God's great purpose for him and others.

Recent scholarship has unearthed some lost teachings from Polycarp. To learn more about this subject, read **Appendix C** at the end of this work.

In the conclusion, we will put these events in perspective and look at lessons we can learn from the life of Polycarp.

Conclusion

Lessons From the Life of Polycarp

If there was someone who could be trusted to teach doctrine that agreed with the first Apostles, it was Polycarp. He had a unique position as one who was trained by the original Apostles. He may have been the only one still alive at that time to be trained in such a way. He had remained steadfast his entire life and even in death.

In some ways, Polycarp had to feel alone or an anomaly. On one hand, he was likely the last living person to know the first disciples. On the other hand, his experience and training was desperately needed. He was a Godsend for second-century Christianity.

While we may not know much about the life of Polycarp, what we do possess is very weighty and significant. He did what others were either not willing or not able to do – and he did so at an advanced age (especially considering the era). In the conclusion, we want to put his life into perspective with the times in which we live. Also, we will discuss some lessons we could learn from his life.

First, the measure of a person's life is not how much is written about them, but the gravity of the stands they make. In the case of a man like Polycarp, he took monumental stands for the faith. It was timely and needed for the era in which he lived. He did not allow age or distance to hinder him from doing what he knew was right.

Second, our lives leave a testimony about ourselves and God. In the case of Polycarp, the testimony is that he always taught in accordance with the early Apostles and the testimony of Jesus – what an example to imitate! He quoted the Scriptures with accuracy and was considered beyond reproach. Over 1,800 years after his passing, we are still talking about the work he did for God. His witness is so strong that he is considered a saint in the Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, Anglican, and Lutheran Churches, though his teachings were different on various points with them all. He is acknowledged as orthodox by nearly every major Christian group.

Third, we must resist the urge to conform to those things which are novel and different but not true. Not everything that is new and trendy is right. Like a current of water, they come and go. While the gnostics claimed to have new books and revelations about Jesus, it contradicted what was sound and true. Fads come and go, but truth remains.

Fourth, our stand for what is right will inspire others to do the same. Without Polycarp's great witness for the faith, others may not have made their stand. About 40 years after Polycarp, Polycrates stood against the bishop of Rome, Victor, concerning Passover. When we are willing to resist the temptation to go astray, we can pass on the torch to someone else. Resisting conformity to what is popular (but not righteous) will inspire people no matter the distance in time or how far away they live. You are not done setting an example until you leave this world.

Fifth, God preserves you until the time is right. Every person has moments in life when they are faced with being like everyone else or standing for truth. We don't always know when these moments will come, but God wants to prepare us for them. He equips us to fight and overcome them if we will take the time to prepare ourselves and be sensitive to His Spirit.

Sixth, God can use us at every age. I have known many people who thought that God was finished with them or that they were beyond being used simply due to age. Polycarp was at least 86, but he could have been older. This goes back to our fifth point.

God uses us in His plan, but we may not know when that will happen. There are always people to be influenced, even in the smallest degree. We must acknowledge His ability to use us and be ready for action no matter our age. This extends to those who are younger as well.

Seventh, we must set ourselves apart to be used by him. This point ties into point numbers five and six. God preserves us for the right moments, but we must do our part to stay set apart and persevere for Him – even when it is inconvenient. While Polycarp was older when he made his biggest impact, he had to stay set apart before that time arrived.

This is a lesson for younger people to stay focused, passionate, holy, and temperate. We do not have to or need to waste time on sin and pursuits of the flesh. We can pursue God and seek Him all the days of our lives.

Eighth, Polycarp exemplifies the importance of knowing the written Word of God. We need to know the Scriptures – they enabled Polycarp to refute the heretical teachings of his day. A person who knows the Bible well is better able to resist fads and nuances that appear in human history. It provides for us the solid foundation for a lifetime.

Polycarp led a life of constancy and consistency – he sought the Lord, stayed pure from the fads of the time, and was preserved to take a great stand. And thus, he has become for the people of that time and for the saints of all time, **a great hero of the faith.**

Appendix A

Letter to the Philippians

The translation is taken from Roberts and Donaldson. I have inserted some statements along the way. This translation also contains parentheses around New Testament verses being quoted or sayings very similar to what is in the New Testament.

Greeting

Polycarp, and the presbyters with him, to the Church of God sojourning at Philippi: Mercy to you, and peace from God Almighty, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, our Saviour, be multiplied. (this introduction is very much like Paul)

Chapter 1. Praise of the Philippians

I have greatly rejoiced with you in our Lord Jesus Christ, because you have followed the example of true love [as displayed by God], and have accompanied, as became you, those who were bound in chains, the fitting ornaments of saints, and which are indeed the diadems of the true elect of God and our Lord; and because the strong root of your faith, spoken of in days (Phil. 1:5) long gone by, endures even until now, and brings forth fruit to our Lord Jesus Christ, who for our sins suffered even unto death, [but] whom God raised from the dead, having loosed the bands of the grave (Acts 2:24). “In whom, though now you see Him not, you believe, and believing, rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory;” (1 Peter 1:8) into which joy many desire to enter, knowing that “by grace you are saved, not of works”, (Eph. 2:8-9) but by the will of God through Jesus Christ.

Chapter 2. An exhortation to virtue

“Wherefore, girding up your loins”, (1 Peter 1:13; Eph. 6:14) serve the Lord in fear and truth, as those who have forsaken the vain, empty talk and error of the multitude, and “believed in Him who raised up our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, and gave Him glory”, (1 Peter 1:21) and a throne at His right hand. To Him all things (1 Peter 3:22; Phil. 2:10) in heaven and on earth are subject. Him every spirit serves. He comes as the Judge of the living and the dead. (Acts 17:31) His blood will God require of

those who do not believe in Him. But He who raised Him up from the dead will raise up us also (2 Cor. 4:14), if we do His will, and walk in His commandments (I John 14:15-21, 15:10, Cor. 7:19, I John 2:3-4, 3:22-24, I John 5:2-3, Rev. 12:17, 13:12, 22:14), and love what He loved, keeping ourselves from all unrighteousness, covetousness, love of money, evil speaking, false witness (this list is repeated in scattered portions of the New Testament – see Col. 3:5-8 and Eph. 5:3-5 examples); not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing, (1 Peter 3:9) or blow for blow, or cursing for cursing, but being mindful of what the Lord said in His teaching: Judge not, that you be not judged; (Matt. 7:1) forgive, and it shall be forgiven unto you; be merciful, that you may obtain mercy; (Luke 6:36) with what measure you measure, it shall be measured to you again; (Matt. 7:2; Luke 6:38) and once more, Blessed are the poor, and those that are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of God. (Matt. 5:3,10, Luke 6:20)

Chapter 3. Expressions of personal unworthiness

These things, brethren, I write to you concerning righteousness, not because I take anything upon myself, but because you have invited me to do so. For neither I, nor any other such one, can come up to the wisdom (2 Peter 3:15) of the blessed and glorified Paul. He, when among you, accurately and steadfastly taught the word of truth in the presence of those who were then alive. And when absent from you, he wrote you a letter, which, if you carefully study, you will find to be the means of building you up in that faith which has been given you, and which, being followed by hope, and preceded by love towards God, and Christ, and our neighbour, is the mother of us all. (Gal. 4:26) For if any one be inwardly possessed of these graces, he has fulfilled the command of righteousness, since he that has love is far from all sin.

Chapter 4. Various exhortations

But the love of money is the root of all evils. (1 Tim. 6:10) Knowing, therefore, that as we brought nothing into the world, so we can carry nothing out, (1 Tim. 6:7) let us arm ourselves with the armour of righteousness; (Eph. 6:11) and let us teach, first of all, ourselves to walk in the commandments of the Lord (I John 14:15-21, 15:10, Cor. 7:19, I John 2:3-4, 3:22-24, I John 5:2-3, Rev. 12:17, 13:12,

22:14). Next, [teach] your wives [to walk] in the faith given to them, and in love and purity tenderly loving their own husbands in all truth, and loving all [others] equally in all chastity; and to train up their children in the knowledge and fear of God. Teach the widows to be discreet as respects the faith of the Lord, praying continually (1 Thess. 5:17) for all, being far from all slandering, evil-speaking, false-witnessing, love of money, and every kind of evil; knowing that they are the altar of God, that He clearly perceives all things, and that nothing is hid from Him (Matthew 10:26, Mark 4:22, Luke 8:17, 12:2), neither reasonings, nor reflections, nor any one of the secret things of the heart.

Chapter 5. The duties of deacons, youths, and virgins

Knowing, then, that God is not mocked, (Gal. 6:7) we ought to walk worthy of His commandment and glory. In like manner should the deacons be blameless before the face of His righteousness, as being the servants of God and Christ, and not of men. They must not be slanderers, double-tongued, (1 Tim. 3:8) or lovers of money, but temperate in all things, compassionate, industrious, walking according to the truth of the Lord, who was the servant (Matt. 20:28) of all. If we please Him in this present world, we shall receive also the future world, according as He has promised to us that He will raise us again from the dead (2 Cor. 4:14), and that if we live worthily of Him, we shall also reign together with Him, (2 Tim. 2:12) provided only we believe. In like manner, let the young men also be blameless in all things, being especially careful to preserve purity, and keeping themselves in, as with a bridle, from every kind of evil. For it is well that they should be cut off from the lusts that are in the world, since every lust wars against the spirit; (1 Peter 2:11) and neither fornicators, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, shall inherit the kingdom of God, (1 Cor. 6:9-10) nor those who do things inconsistent and unbecoming. Wherefore, it is needful to abstain from all these things, being subject to the presbyters and deacons, as unto God and Christ. The virgins also must walk in a blameless and pure conscience.

Chapter 6. The duties of presbyters and others

And let the presbyters be compassionate and merciful to all, bringing back those that wander, visiting all the sick, and not neglecting the widow, the orphan, or the poor, but always providing

for that which is becoming in the sight of God and man; (Rom. 12:17; 2 Cor. 8:31) abstaining from all wrath, respect of persons, and unjust judgment; keeping far off from all covetousness, not quickly crediting [an evil report] against any one, not severe in judgment, as knowing that we are all under a debt of sin. If then we entreat the Lord to forgive us, we ought also ourselves to forgive; (Matt. 6:12-14) for we are before the eyes of our Lord and God, and we must all appear at the judgment-seat of Christ, and must every one give an account of himself. (Rom. 14:10-12; 2 Cor. 5:10) Let us then serve Him in fear, and with all reverence, even as He Himself has commanded us, and as the apostles who preached the Gospel unto us, and the prophets who proclaimed beforehand the coming of the Lord [have alike taught us]. Let us be zealous in the pursuit of that which is good, keeping ourselves from causes of offense, from false brethren, and from those who in hypocrisy bear the name of the Lord, and draw away vain men into error.

Chapter 7. Avoid the Docetæ, and persevere in fasting and prayer For whosoever does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, is antichrist; (1 John 4:3) and whosoever does not confess the testimony of the cross, is of the devil; and whosoever perverts the oracles of the Lord to his own lusts, and says that there is neither a resurrection nor a judgment, he is the first-born of Satan. Wherefore, forsaking the vanity of many, and their false doctrines, let us return to the word which has been handed down to us from (Jude 3) the beginning; watching unto prayer, (1 Peter 4:7) and persevering in fasting; beseeching in our supplications the all-seeing God not to lead us into temptation, (Matt. 6:13; Matt. 26:41) as the Lord has said: The spirit truly is willing, but the flesh is weak. (Matt. 26:41; Mark 14:38)

Chapter 8. Persevere in hope and patience

Let us then continually persevere in our hope, and the earnest of our righteousness, which is Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1:30), who bore our sins in His own body on the tree, (1 Peter 2:24) who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth, (1 Peter 2:22) but endured all things for us, that we might live in Him. (1 John 4:9) Let us then be imitators of His patience; and if we suffer (Acts 5:41; 1 Peter 4:16) for His name's sake, let us glorify Him. For He has set us this example (1 Peter 2:21) in Him-

self, and we have believed that such is the case.

Chapter 9. Patience inculcated

I exhort you all, therefore, to yield obedience to the word of righteousness, and to exercise all patience, such as you have seen [set] before your eyes, not only in the case of the blessed Ignatius, and Zosimus, and Rufus, but also in others among yourselves, and in Paul himself, and the rest of the apostles. [This do] in the assurance that all these have not run (Phil. 2:16; Gal. 2:2) in vain, but in faith and righteousness, and that they are [now] in their due place in the presence of the Lord, with whom also they suffered. For they loved not this present world (2 Tim. 4:10), but Him who died for us, and for our sakes was raised again by God from the dead (Rom. 4:25, 2 Cor. 5:15).

Chapter 10. Exhortation to the practice of virtue

Stand fast, therefore, in these things, and follow the example of the Lord, being firm and unchangeable in the faith, loving the brotherhood, (1 Peter 2:17) and being attached to one another, joined together in the truth, exhibiting the meekness of the Lord in your intercourse with one another, and despising no one. When you can do good, defer it not, because alms delivers from death. Be all of you subject one to another (1 Peter 5:5) having your conduct blameless among the Gentiles, (1 Peter 2:12) that you may both receive praise for your good works, and the Lord may not be blasphemed through you. But woe to him by whom the name of the Lord is blasphemed! (Isaiah 52:5) Teach, therefore, sobriety to all, and manifest it also in your own conduct.

Chapter 11. Expression of grief on account of Valens

I am greatly grieved for Valens, who was once a presbyter among you, because he so little understands the place that was given him [in the Church]. I exhort you, therefore, that you abstain from covetousness, and that you be chaste and truthful. Abstain from every form of evil. (1 Thess. 5:22) For if a man cannot govern himself in such matters, how shall he enjoin them on others? If a man does not keep himself from covetousness, he shall be defiled by idolatry, and shall be judged as one of the heathen (Eph. 5:3-5). But who of us are ignorant of the judgment of the Lord? Do we not know that the saints shall judge the world? (1 Cor. 6:2) as Paul teaches. But I have neither seen nor heard of any such thing among you, in the midst of whom

the blessed Paul laboured, and who are commended in the beginning of his Epistle. For he boasts of you in all those Churches which alone then knew the Lord; but we [of Smyrna] had not yet known Him. I am deeply grieved, therefore, brethren, for him (Valens) and his wife; to whom may the Lord grant true repentance! And be then moderate in regard to this matter, and do not count such as enemies, (2 Thess. 3:15) but call them back as suffering and straying members, that you may save your whole body. For by so acting you shall edify yourselves. (1 Cor. 12:26)

Chapter 12. Exhortation to various graces

For I trust that you are well versed in the Sacred Scriptures (similar to 2 Tim. 3:15), and that nothing is hid from you; but to me this privilege is not yet granted. It is declared then in these Scriptures, 'Be angry, and sin not, and, Let not the sun go down upon your wrath' (Eph. 4:26). Happy is he who remembers this, which I believe to be the case with you. But may the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ Himself, who is the Son of God, and our everlasting High Priest (Heb. 3:1, 4:14), build you up in faith and truth, and in all meekness, gentleness, patience, long-suffering, forbearance, (Col. 3:12-13) and purity; and may He bestow on you a lot and portion among His saints, and on us with you, and on all that are under heaven, who shall believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, and in His Father, who raised Him from the dead (Gal. 1:1) Pray for all the saints. Pray also for kings, (1 Tim. 2:2) and potentates, and princes, and for those that persecute and hate you, (Matt. 5:44) and for the enemies of the cross (Phil. 3:18), that your fruit may be manifest to all, and that you may be perfect in Him.

Chapter 13. Concerning the transmission of epistles

Both you and Ignatius wrote to me, that if any one went [from this] into Syria, he should carry your letter with him; which request I will attend to if I find a fitting opportunity, either personally, or through some other acting for me, that your desire may be fulfilled. The Epistles of Ignatius written by him to us, and all the rest [of his Epistles] which we have by us, we have sent to you, as you requested. They are subjoined to this Epistle, and by them you may be greatly profited; for they treat of faith and patience, and all things that tend to edification in our Lord. Any more certain information you may have obtained respecting

both Ignatius himself, and those that were with him, have the goodness to make known to us.

Chapter 14. Conclusion

These things I have written to you by Crescens, whom up to the present time I have recommended unto you, and do now recommend. For he has acted blamelessly among us, and I believe also among you. Moreover, you will hold his sister in esteem when she comes to you.

Appendix B

The Martyrdom of Polycarp

I am using the Roberts and Donaldson translation. Some of this work, I admit, has been interpolated by later writers. I intend to give this work a more critical view at a later time. I have pointed out an obvious issue or two I noticed in the text.

Greeting

The Church of God which sojourns at Smyrna, to the Church of God sojourning in Philomelium, and to all the congregations in every place: Mercy, peace, and love from God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, be multiplied.

Chapter 1. The subject of which we write

We have written to you, brethren, as to what relates to the martyrs, and especially to the blessed Polycarp, who put an end to the persecution, having, as it were, set a seal upon it by his martyrdom. For almost all the events that happened previously [to this one], took place that the Lord might show us from above a martyrdom becoming the Gospel. For he waited to be delivered up, even as the Lord had done, that we also might become his followers, while we look not merely at what concerns ourselves but have regard also to our neighbours. For it is the part of a true and well-founded love, not only to wish one's self to be saved, but also all the brethren.

Chapter 2. The wonderful constancy of the martyrs

All the martyrdoms, then, were blessed and noble which took place according to the will of God. For it becomes us who profess greater piety than others, to ascribe the authority over all things to God. And truly, who can fail to admire their nobleness of mind, and their patience, with that love towards their Lord which they displayed?— who, when they were so torn with scourges, that the frame of their bodies, even to the very inward veins and arteries, was laid open, still patiently endured, while even those that stood by pitied and bewailed them. But they reached such a pitch of magnanimity, that not one of them let a sigh or a groan escape them; thus proving to us all that those holy martyrs of Christ, at the very time when they suffered such torments, were absent from

the body, or rather, that the Lord then stood by them, and communed with them.

And, looking to the grace of Christ, they despised all the torments of this world, redeeming themselves from eternal punishment by [the suffering of] a single hour. For this reason the fire of their savage executioners appeared cool to them. For they kept before their view escape from that fire which is eternal and never shall be quenched, and looked forward with the eyes of their heart to those good things which are laid up for such as endure; things which ear has not heard, nor eye seen, neither have entered into the heart of man, (1 Corinthians 2:9) but were revealed by the Lord to them, inasmuch as they were no longer men, but had already become angels. And, in like manner, those who were condemned to the wild beasts endured dreadful tortures, being stretched out upon beds full of spikes, and subjected to various other kinds of torments, in order that, if it were possible, the tyrant might, by their lingering tortures, lead them to a denial [of Christ].

Chapter 3. The constancy of Germanicus. The death of Polycarp is demanded

For the devil did indeed invent many things against them; but thanks be to God, he could not prevail over all. For the most noble Germanicus strengthened the timidity of others by his own patience, and fought heroically with the wild beasts. For, when the proconsul sought to persuade him, and urged him to take pity upon his age, he attracted the wild beast towards himself, and provoked it, being desirous to escape all the more quickly from an unrighteous and impious world. But upon this the whole multitude, marvelling at the nobility of mind displayed by the devout and godly race of Christians, cried out, Away with the Atheists; let Polycarp be sought out!

Chapter 4. Quintus the apostate

Now one named Quintus, a Phrygian, who was but lately come from Phrygia, when he saw the wild beasts, became afraid. This was the man who forced himself and some others to come forward voluntarily [for trial]. Him the proconsul, after many entreaties, persuaded to swear and to offer sacrifice. Wherefore, brethren, we do not commend those who give themselves up [to suffering], seeing the Gospel does not teach so to do. (Matthew

10:23)

Chapter 5. The departure and vision of Polycarp

But the most admirable Polycarp, when he first heard [that he was sought for], was in no measure disturbed, but resolved to stay in the city. However, in deference to the wish of many, he was persuaded to leave it. He departed, therefore, to a country house not far distant from the city. There he stayed with a few [friends], engaged in nothing else night and day than praying for all men, and for the Churches throughout the world, according to his usual custom. And while he was praying, a vision presented itself to him three days before he was taken; and, behold, the pillow under his head seemed to him on fire. Upon this, turning to those that were with him, he said to them prophetically, I must be burnt alive.

Chapter 6. Polycarp is betrayed by a servant

And when those who sought for him were at hand, he departed to another dwelling, whither his pursuers immediately came after him. And when they found him not, they seized upon two youths [that were there], one of whom, being subjected to torture, confessed. It was thus impossible that he should stay hidden, since those that betrayed him were of his own household. The Irenarch then (whose office is the same as that of the Cleronomus), by name Herod, hastened to bring him into the stadium. [This all happened] that he might fulfil his special lot, being made a partaker of Christ, and that they who betrayed him might undergo the punishment of Judas himself.

Chapter 7. Polycarp is found by his pursuers

His pursuers then, along with horsemen, and taking the youth with them, went forth at supper-time on the day of the preparation with their usual weapons, as if going out against a robber. (Matthew 26:55) And having come about evening [to the place where he was], they found him lying down in the upper room of a certain little house, from which he might have escaped into another place; but he refused, saying, The will of God be done. (Matthew 6:10; Acts 21:14) So when he heard that they had come, he went down and spoke with them. And as those that were present marvelled at his age and constancy, some of them said. Was so much effort made to capture such a venerable man? Immediately then, in that very hour, he ordered that something to eat

and drink should be set before them, as much indeed as they cared for, while he besought them to allow him an hour to pray without disturbance. And on their giving him leave, he stood and prayed, being full of the grace of God, so that he could not cease for two full hours, to the astonishment of those who heard him, insomuch that many began to repent that they had come forth against so godly and venerable an old man.

Chapter 8. Polycarp is brought into the city

Now, as soon as he had ceased praying, having made mention of all that had at any time come in contact with him, both small and great, illustrious and obscure, as well as the whole Church throughout the world, the time of his departure having arrived, they set him upon an ass, and conducted him into the city, the day being that of the great Sabbath. And the Irenarch Herod, accompanied by his father Nicetes (both riding in a chariot), met him, and taking him up into the chariot, they seated themselves beside him, and endeavoured to persuade him, saying, What harm is there in saying, Lord Cæsar, and in sacrificing, with the other ceremonies observed on such occasions, and so make sure of safety? But he at first gave them no answer; and when they continued to urge him, he said, I shall not do as you advise me. So they, having no hope of persuading him, began to speak bitter words unto him, and cast him with violence out of the chariot, insomuch that, in getting down from the carriage, he dislocated his leg [by the fall]. But without being disturbed, and as if suffering nothing, he went eagerly forward with all haste, and was conducted to the stadium, where the tumult was so great, that there was no possibility of being heard.

Chapter 9. Polycarp refuses to revile Christ

Now, as Polycarp was entering into the stadium, there came to him a voice from heaven, saying, Be strong, and show yourself a man, O Polycarp! No one saw who it was that spoke to him; but those of our brethren who were present heard the voice. And as he was brought forward, the tumult became great when they heard that Polycarp was taken. And when he came near, the proconsul asked him whether he was Polycarp. On his confessing that he was, [the proconsul] sought to persuade him to deny [Christ], saying, Have respect to your old age, and other similar things, according to their custom, [such as], Swear by the fortune of Cæsar; repent, and say, Away with the Atheists. But Polycarp, gazing

with a stern countenance on all the multitude of the wicked heathen then in the stadium, and waving his hand towards them, while with groans he looked up to heaven, said, Away with the Atheists. Then, the proconsul urging him, and saying, Swear, and I will set you at liberty, reproach Christ; Polycarp declared, Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He never did me any injury: how then can I blaspheme my King and my Saviour?

Chapter 10. Polycarp confesses himself a Christian

And when the proconsul yet again pressed him, and said, Swear by the fortune of Cæsar, he answered,

Since you are vainly urgent that, as you say, I should swear by the fortune of Cæsar, and pretend not to know who and what I am, hear me declare with boldness, I am a Christian. And if you wish to learn what the doctrines of Christianity are, appoint me a day, and you shall hear them.

The proconsul replied, Persuade the people. But Polycarp said, To you I have thought it right to offer an account [of my faith]; for we are taught to give all due honour (which entails no injury upon ourselves) to the powers and authorities which are ordained of God. (Romans 13:1-7; Titus 3:1) But as for these, I do not deem them worthy of receiving any account from me.

Chapter 11. No threats have any effect on Polycarp

The proconsul then said to him, I have wild beasts at hand; to these will I cast you, unless you repent.

But he answered, Call them then, for we are not accustomed to repent of what is good in order to adopt that which is evil; and it is well for me to be changed from what is evil to what is righteous. But again the proconsul said to him, I will cause you to be consumed by fire, seeing you despise the wild beasts, if you will not repent. But Polycarp said, You threaten me with fire which burns for an hour, and after a little is extinguished, but are ignorant of the fire of the coming judgment and of eternal punishment, reserved for the ungodly. But why do you tarry? Bring forth what you will.

Chapter 12. Polycarp is sentenced to be burned

While he spoke these and many other like things, he was filled

with confidence and joy, and his countenance was full of grace, so that not merely did it not fall as if troubled by the things said to him, but, on the contrary, the proconsul was astonished, and sent his herald to proclaim in the midst of the stadium thrice, Polycarp has confessed that he is a Christian. This proclamation having been made by the herald, the whole multitude both of the heathen and Jews, who dwelt at Smyrna, cried out with uncontrollable fury, and in a loud voice, This is the teacher of Asia, the father of the Christians, and the overthrower of our gods, he who has been teaching many not to sacrifice, or to worship the gods. Speaking thus, they cried out, and besought Philip the Asiarch to let loose a lion upon Polycarp. But Philip answered that it was not lawful for him to do so, seeing the shows of wild beasts were already finished. Then it seemed good to them to cry out with one consent, that Polycarp should be burnt alive. For thus it behooved the vision which was revealed to him in regard to his pillow to be fulfilled, when, seeing it on fire as he was praying, he turned about and said prophetically to the faithful that were with him, I must be burnt alive.

Chapter 13. The funeral pile is erected

This, then, was carried into effect with greater speed than it was spoken, the multitudes immediately gathering together wood and sticks out of the shops and baths; the Jews especially, according to custom, eagerly assisting them in it. And when the funeral pile was ready, Polycarp, laying aside all his garments, and loosing his girdle, sought also to take off his sandals — a thing he was not accustomed to do, inasmuch as every one of the faithful was always eager who should first touch his skin. For, on account of his good behavior he was, even before his martyrdom, adorned with every kind of good. Immediately then they surrounded him with those substances which had been prepared for the funeral pile. But when they were about also to fix him with nails, he said, Leave me as I am; for He that gives me strength to endure the fire, will also enable me, without your securing me by nails, to remain without moving in the pile.

Chapter 14. The prayer of Polycarp

They did not nail him then, but simply bound him. And he, placing his hands behind him, and being bound like a distinguished ram [taken] out of a great flock for sacrifice, and prepared to be an acceptable burnt-offering unto God, looked up to heaven, and

said,

O Lord God Almighty, the Father of your beloved and blessed Son Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the knowledge of You, the God of angels and powers, and of every creature, and of the whole race of the righteous who live before you, I give You thanks that You have counted me, worthy of this day and this hour, that I should have a part in the number of Your martyrs, in the cup of your Christ, to the resurrection of eternal life, both of soul and body, through the incorruption [imparted] by the Holy Ghost. Among whom may I be accepted this day before You as a fat and acceptable sacrifice, according as You, the ever-truthful God, have foreordained, have revealed beforehand to me, and now have fulfilled. Wherefore also I praise You for all things, I bless You, I glorify You, along with the everlasting and heavenly Jesus Christ, Your beloved Son, with whom, to You, and the Holy Ghost, be glory both now and to all coming ages. Amen.

Chapter 15. Polycarp is not injured by the fire

When he had pronounced this amen, and so finished his prayer, those who were appointed for the purpose kindled the fire. And as the flame blazed forth in great fury, we, to whom it was given to witness it, beheld a great miracle, and have been preserved that we might report to others what then took place. For the fire, shaping itself into the form of an arch, like the sail of a ship when filled with the wind, encompassed as by a circle the body of the martyr. And he appeared within not like flesh which is burnt, but as bread that is baked, or as gold and silver glowing in a furnace. Moreover, we perceived such a sweet odour [coming from the pile], as if frankincense or some such precious spices had been smoking there.

Chapter 16. Polycarp is pierced by a dagger

At length, when those wicked men perceived that his body could not be consumed by the fire, they commanded an executioner to go near and pierce him through with a dagger. And on his doing this, there came forth a dove, and a great quantity of blood, so that the fire was extinguished; and all the people wondered that there should be such a difference between the unbelievers and the elect, of whom this most admirable Polycarp was one, having in our own times been an apostolic and prophetic teacher, and bishop of the Church which is in Smyrna. For every word that went

out of his mouth either has been or shall yet be accomplished.

Chapter 17. The Christians are refused Polycarp's body

But when the adversary of the race of the righteous, the envious, malicious, and wicked one, perceived the impressive nature of his martyrdom, and [considered] the blameless life he had led from the beginning, and how he was now crowned with the wreath of immortality, having beyond dispute received his reward, he did his utmost that not the least memorial of him should be taken away by us, although many desired to do this, and to become possessors of his holy flesh. For this end he suggested it to Nicetes, the father of Herod and brother of Alce, to go and entreat the governor not to give up his body to be buried, lest, said he, forsaking Him that was crucified, they begin to worship this one. This he said at the suggestion and urgent persuasion of the Jews, who also watched us, as we sought to take him out of the fire, being ignorant of this, that it is neither possible for us ever to forsake Christ, who suffered for the salvation of such as shall be saved throughout the whole world (the blameless one for sinners), nor to worship any other. For Him indeed, as being the Son of God, we adore; but the martyrs, as disciples and followers of the Lord, we worthily love on account of their extraordinary affection towards their own King and Master, of whom may we also be made companions and fellow disciples!

Either the entire eighteen chapter or at least the portion I have placed in bold below is an interpolation. The content is strangely uncharacteristic of the second century.

Chapter 18. The body of Polycarp is burned

The centurion then, seeing the strife excited by the Jews, placed the body in the midst of the fire, and consumed it. (**Accordingly, we afterwards took up his bones, as being more precious than the most exquisite jewels, and more purified than gold, and deposited them in a fitting place, whither, being gathered together, as opportunity is allowed us, with joy and rejoicing, the Lord shall grant us to celebrate the anniversary of his martyrdom, both in memory of those who have already finished their course, and for the exercising and preparation of those yet to walk in their steps.**)

Chapter 19. Praise of the martyr Polycarp

This, then, is the account of the blessed Polycarp, who, being the twelfth that was martyred in Smyrna (reckoning those also of Philadelphia), yet occupies a place of his own in the memory of all men, insomuch that he is everywhere spoken of by the heathen themselves. He was not merely an illustrious teacher, but also a pre-eminent martyr, whose martyrdom all desire to imitate, as having been altogether consistent with the Gospel of Christ. For, having through patience overcome the unjust governor, and thus acquired the crown of immortality, he now, with the apostles and all the righteous [in heaven], rejoicingly glorifies God, even the Father, and blesses our Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour of our souls, the Governor of our bodies, and the Shepherd of the Church throughout the world.

Chapter 20. This epistle is to be transmitted to the brethren
Since, then, you requested that we would at large make you acquainted with what really took place, we have for the present sent you this summary account through our brother Marcus. When, therefore, you have yourselves read this Epistle, be pleased to send it to the brethren at a greater distance, that they also may glorify the Lord, who makes such choice of His own servants. To Him who is able to bring us all by His grace and goodness into his everlasting kingdom, through His only-begotten Son Jesus Christ, to Him be glory, and honour, and power, and majesty, forever. Amen. Salute all the saints. They that are with us salute you, and Evarestus, who wrote this Epistle, with all his house.

Chapter 21. The date of the martyrdom
Now, the blessed Polycarp suffered martyrdom on the second day of the month Xanthicus just begun, the seventh day before the Kalends of May, on the great Sabbath, at the eighth hour. He was taken by Herod, Philip the Trallian being high priest, Staius Quadratus being proconsul, but Jesus Christ being King for ever, to whom be glory, honour, majesty, and an everlasting throne, from generation to generation. Amen.

Chapter 22. Salutation
We wish you, brethren, all happiness, while you walk according to the doctrine of the Gospel of Jesus Christ; with whom be glory to God the Father and the Holy Spirit, for the salvation of His holy elect, after whose example the blessed Polycarp suffered, following in whose steps may we too be found in the kingdom of

Jesus Christ!

These things Caius transcribed from the copy of Irenæus (who was a disciple of Polycarp), having himself been intimate with Irenæus. And I Socrates transcribed them at Corinth from the copy of Caius. Grace be with you all.

And I again, Pionius, wrote them from the previously written copy, having carefully searched into them, and the blessed Polycarp having manifested them to me through a revelation, even as I shall show in what follows. I have collected these things, when they had almost faded away through the lapse of time, that the Lord Jesus Christ may also gather me along with His elect into His heavenly kingdom, to whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Appendix C

The Lost Teachings of Polycarp

In Irenaeus' work *Against Heresies*, he has sections with teachings that came from "presbyter" who heard the first Apostles. Charles Hill has composed a fascinating, breakthrough work on this subject titled *From the Lost Teaching of Polycarp* (Mohr Siebeck, 2006). In this work, he defends the position that the "presbyter" mentioned by Irenaeus is none other than Polycarp. He explains the arguments for this identification in a very convincing manner and defends against criticisms of it. He also proposes that another early Christian work *Epistle to Diognetus*, should also be attributed to Polycarp.

While I am not yet convinced on the *Epistle to Diognetus*, I am thoroughly persuaded by Hill's arguments and presentation in favor of Polycarp being the 'presbyter' in Irenaeus' work. He connects Irenaeus' quotes of the presbyter directly to issues that existed in his day, such as the teaching of Marcion. As pointed out in chapter four of this work, Irenaeus was a hearer of Polycarp. In at least one direct reference, Irenaeus calls Polycarp "that blessed and apostolic presbyter."

In this appendix, I have included the section of Irenaeus' work *Against Heresies* which contains references to the presbyter from the *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, volume 1. Some sections are in bold because they are likely direct quotes from the apostolic presbyter. The sections before and after these quotes are either more teachings Irenaeus heard from Polycarp or teachings Irenaeus developed from Polycarp's instruction.

Before the text is presented, I will provide a summary of Polycarp's lost teachings. The chief focus of his teachings, as recalled by Irenaeus, was to fight false doctrine which was present in the mid to late second century. We reviewed the false teachings in chapter three of this work. The focus of Irenaeus' work *Against Heresies* was to combat these issues, so it is logical that he would recall those teachings of Polycarp that were congruent to that purpose.

Polycarp taught that the ancients (meaning, those saints in the Old Testament) were punished when they went astray from the guidance of the Holy Spirit. They were each punished according to their deeds and that the same God corrected them all. This was to humble them. He went on to share that we should not be severe upon them but realize that greater punishment awaits us if we live in disobedience.

Moreover, Polycarp taught that we should be cautious not to ridicule the ancients or seek more fault in them beyond what the Scriptures teach because we could fall into sin as well – since we are also human. He used Ham’s shaming of his father as an example of what could come upon us for shaming them.

His teachings contained a heavy emphasis on what is commonly called typology. This term refers to finding types in the Old Testament as examples to teach us about salvation and our expected lifestyle as a Christian. Paul first explained this concept in I Corinthians 10:1-13, and it is quoted in reference to Polycarp’s teaching. The presbyter employed examples such as David, Saul, Solomon, and others.

This use of typology by Paul and later Polycarp was a necessary part of defending against the Marcionites and others who claimed that a separate god authored the Old Testament. In I Corinthians, Paul tied these ancient examples into our calling into the Kingdom of God at the end of the age – Polycarp continues this theme. The presbyter encouraged others to seek out types in the Old Testament that could be utilized as examples to teach us about salvation, obedience, and our responsibilities in the Kingdom of God.

Another fascinating typological example Polycarp discussed was the Exodus. He explained that it was foreshadowing the current exodus of those who are being called out from among the Gentiles to receive salvation in the Messiah. This is incredible to me, as just two years ago I began to teach the same thing in a short book entitled *Passover Preparation* (at that time, I did not have the knowledge of Polycarp’s teaching on this subject).

Lastly, it appears that Polycarp emphasized the continuity between the ‘two testaments’ – meaning the Old and New. This is among the first references in early Church history to a division

between the two. He argued that they were from one and the same God who also made all things. He denied that an angel or another god made the world; this was another rejection of Marcionite doctrine.

In the quotes from Irenaeus, extensive uses of the Scripture are employed. Many of the examples mentioned by Irenaeus were probably used by Polycarp or at the least developed from presbyter's teaching. You would have expected this from a hearer of Polycarp, especially based upon the content of his *Letter to the Philippians*. Below, we have the lengthy excerpt from *Against Heresies*.

Against Heresies, Book 4, chapters 27-32

Chapter 27

“1. As I have heard from a certain presbyter, who had heard it from those who had seen the apostles, and from those who had been their disciples, **‘the punishment [declared] in Scripture was sufficient for the ancients in regard to what they did without the Spirit's guidance. For as God is no respecter of persons, He inflicted a proper punishment on deeds displeasing to Him.’** As in the case of David, (1 Samuel 18) when he suffered persecution from Saul for righteousness' sake, and fled from King Saul, and would not avenge himself of his enemy, he both sung the advent of Christ, and instructed the nations in wisdom, and did everything after the Spirit's guidance, and pleased God. But when his lust prompted him to take Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, the Scripture said concerning him, Now, the thing which David had done appeared wicked in the eyes of the Lord; (2 Samuel 11:27) and Nathan the prophet is sent to him, pointing out to him his crime, in order that he, passing sentence upon and condemning himself, might obtain mercy and forgiveness from Christ:

‘And [Nathan] said to him, There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor. The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds; but the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe-lamb, which he possessed, and nourished up; and it had been with him and with his children together: it ate of his own bread, and drank of his cup, and was to him as a daughter. And there came a unto the rich man; and he spared to take of the flock of his own ewe-lambs, and from the herds of his own oxen, to entertain

the ; but he took the ewe-lamb of the poor man, and set it before the man that had come unto him. And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As the Lord lives, the man that has done this thing shall surely die: and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he has done this thing, and because he had no pity for the poor man. And Nathan said to him, You are the man who has done this.' (2 Samuel 12:1-7)

And then he proceeds with the rest [of the narrative], upbraiding him, and recounting God's benefits towards him, and [showing him] how much his conduct had displeased the Lord. For [he declared] that works of this nature were not pleasing to God, but that great wrath was suspended over his house. David, however, was struck with remorse on hearing this, and exclaimed, I have sinned against the Lord; and he sung a penitential psalm, waiting for the coming of the Lord, who washes and makes clean the man who had been fast bound with [the chain of] sin. In like manner it was with regard to Solomon, while he continued to judge uprightly, and to declare the wisdom of God, and built the temple as the type of truth, and set forth the glories of God, and announced the peace about to come upon the nations, and prefigured the kingdom of Christ, and spoke three thousand parables about the Lord's advent, and five thousand songs, singing praise to God, and expounded the wisdom of God in creation, [discoursing] as to the nature of every tree, every herb, and of all fowls, quadrupeds, and fishes; and he said, Will God whom the heavens cannot contain, really dwell with men upon the earth? (1 Kings 8:27)

And he pleased God, and was the admiration of all; and all kings of the earth sought an interview with him that they might hear the wisdom which God had conferred upon him. (1 Kings 4:34) The queen of the south, too, came to him from the ends of the earth, to ascertain the wisdom that was in him: (1 Kings 10:1) she whom the Lord also referred to as one who should rise up in the judgment with the nations of those men who do hear His words, and do not believe in Him, and should condemn them, inasmuch as she submitted herself to the wisdom announced by the servant of God, while these men despised that wisdom which proceeded directly from the Son of God. For Solomon was a servant, but Christ is indeed the Son of God, and the Lord of Solomon. While, therefore, he served God without blame, and ministered to His

dispensations, then was he glorified: but when he took wives from all nations, and permitted them to set up idols in Israel, the Scripture spoke thus concerning him:

And King Solomon was a lover of women, and he took to himself foreign women; and it came to pass, when Solomon was old, his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God. And the foreign women turned away his heart after strange gods. And Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord: he did not walk after the Lord, as did David his father. And the Lord was angry with Solomon; for his heart was not perfect with the Lord, as was the heart of David his father. (1 Kings 11:1) **‘The Scripture has thus sufficiently reprov’d him’**, as the presbyter remarked, **‘in order that no flesh may glory in the sight of the Lord’** (I Cor. 1:29).

2. It was for this reason, too, that the Lord descended into the regions beneath the earth, preaching His advent there also, and [declaring] the remission of sins received by those who believe in Him. Now all those believed in Him who had hope towards Him, that is, those who proclaimed His advent, and submitted to His dispensations, the righteous men, the prophets, and the patriarchs, to whom He remitted sins in the same way as He did to us, which sins we should not lay to their charge, if we would not despise the grace of God. For as these men did not impute unto us (the Gentiles) our transgressions, which we wrought before Christ was manifested among us, so also it is not right that we should lay blame upon those who sinned before Christ's coming. For all men come short of the glory of God, and are not justified of themselves, but by the advent of the Lord, — they who earnestly direct their eyes towards His light. And it is for our instruction that their actions have been committed to writing, that we might know, in the first place, that our God and theirs is one, and that sins do not please Him although committed by men of renown; and in the second place, that we should keep from wickedness. For if these men of old time, who preceded us in the gifts [bestowed upon them], and for whom the Son of God had not yet suffered, when they committed any sin and served fleshly lusts, were rendered objects of such disgrace, what shall the men of the present day suffer, who have despised the Lord's coming, and become the slaves of their own lusts?

And truly the death of the Lord became [the means of] healing

and remission of sins to the former, but Christ shall not die again on behalf of those who now commit sin, for death shall no more have dominion over Him; but the Son shall come in the glory of the Father, requiring from His stewards and dispensers the money which He had entrusted to them, with usury; and from those to whom He had given most shall He demand most. **‘We ought not, therefore’, as that presbyter remarks, ‘to be puffed up, nor be severe upon those of old time, but ought ourselves to fear, lest perchance, after [we have come to] the knowledge of Christ, if we do things displeasing to God, we obtain no further forgiveness of sins, but be shut out from His kingdom.’** And therefore it was that Paul said, ‘For if [God] spared not the natural branches, [take heed] lest He also spare not you, who, when you were a wild olive tree, were grafted into the fatness of the olive tree, and were made a partaker of its fatness.’ (Romans 11:21, 17)

3. You will notice, too, that the transgressions of the common people have been described in like manner, not for the sake of those who did then transgress, but as a means of instruction unto us, and that we should understand that it is one and the same God against whom these men sinned, and against whom certain persons do now transgress from among those who profess to have believed in Him. **‘But this also’, [as the presbyter states,] ‘has Paul declared most plainly in the Epistle to the Corinthians, when he says, Brethren, I would not that you should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and were all baptized unto Moses in the sea, and did all eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them; and the rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not well pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness. These things were for our example, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted; neither be idolaters, as were some of them, as it is written: The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play (Exodus 32:6). Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them also did, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand (Numbers 25:9). Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents (Numbers 21:6). Neither murmur, as some of them murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. But all these things happened to them in a figure, and were written for our admonition, upon whom the**

end of the world has come. Wherefore let him that thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall.’
(1 Corinthians 10:1-12)

4. Since therefore, beyond all doubt and contradiction, the apostle shows that there is one and the same God, who did both enter into judgment with these former things, and who does inquire into those of the present time, and points out why these things have been committed to writing; all these men are found to be unlearned and presumptuous, nay, even destitute of common sense, who, because of the transgressions of them of old time, and because of the disobedience of a vast number of them, do allege that there was indeed one God of these men, and that He was the maker of the world, and existed in a state of degeneracy; but that there was another Father declared by Christ, and that this Being is He who has been conceived by the mind of each of them; not understanding that as, in the former case, God showed Himself not well pleased in many instances towards those who sinned, so also in the latter, ‘many are called, but few are chosen’. (Matthew 20:16)

As then the unrighteous, the idolaters, and fornicators perished, so also is it now: for both the Lord declares, that such persons are sent into eternal fire; (Matthew 25:41) and the apostle says, ‘Do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, not effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God’. (1 Corinthians 6:9-10)

And as it was not to those who are without that he said these things, but to us, lest we should be cast forth from the kingdom of God, by doing any such thing, he proceeds to say, ‘And such indeed were you; but you are washed, but you are sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of our God’ (1 Cor. 6:11). And just as then, those who led vicious lives, and put other people astray, were condemned and cast out, so also even now the offending eye is plucked out, and the foot and the hand, lest the rest of the body perish in like manner. (Matthew 18:8-9) And we have the precept: ‘If any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunk-

ard, or an extortioner, with such an one go not to eat.’ (1 Corinthians 5:11)

And again does the apostle say, ‘Let no man deceive you with vain words; for because of these things comes the wrath of God upon the sons of mistrust. Be not therefore partakers with them.’ (Ephesians 5:6-7) And as then the condemnation of sinners extended to others who approved of them, and joined in their society; so also is it the case at present, that ‘a little leaven leavens the whole lump.’ (1 Corinthians 5:6) And as the wrath of God did then descend upon the unrighteous, here also does the apostle likewise say: ‘For the wrath of God shall be revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of those men who hold back the truth in unrighteousness.’ (Romans 1:18)

And as, in those times, vengeance came from God upon the Egyptians who were subjecting Israel to unjust punishment, so is it now, the Lord truly declaring, ‘And shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him? I tell you, that He will avenge them speedily.’ (Luke 18:7-8) So says the apostle, in like manner, in the Epistle to the Thessalonians: ‘Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled rest with us, at the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ from heaven with His mighty angels, and in a flame of fire, to take vengeance upon those who know not God, and upon those that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall also be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power; when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them who have believed in Him.’ (2 Thessalonians 1:6-10)

Chapter 28

1. Inasmuch, then, as in both Testaments there is the same righteousness of God [displayed] when God takes vengeance, in the one case indeed typically, temporarily, and more moderately; but in the other, really, enduringly, and more rigidly: for the fire is eternal, and the wrath of God which shall be revealed from heaven from the face of our Lord (as David also says, ‘But the face of the Lord is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth’ [Psalm 34:16]), entails a heavier punishment on those who incur it — the elders pointed out that

those men are devoid of sense, who, [arguing] from what happened to those who formerly did not obey God, do endeavour to bring in another Father, setting over against [these punishments] what great things the Lord had done at His coming to save those who received Him, taking compassion upon them; while they keep silence with regard to His judgment; and all those things which shall come upon such as have heard His words, but done them not, and that 'it were better for them if they had not been born', (Matthew 26:24) and that 'it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrhah in the judgment than for that city which did not receive the word of His disciples.' (Matthew 10:15)

2. For as, in the New Testament, that faith of men [to be placed] in God has been increased, receiving in addition [to what was already revealed] the Son of God, that man too might be a partaker of God; so is also our walk in life required to be more circumspect, when we are directed not merely to abstain from evil actions, but even from evil thoughts, and from idle words, and empty talk, and scurrilous language: thus also the punishment of those who do not believe the Word of God, and despise His advent, and are turned away backwards, is increased; being not merely temporal, but rendered also eternal. For to whomsoever the Lord shall say, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire', (Matthew 25:41) these shall be damned for ever; and to whomsoever He shall say, 'Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you for eternity', (Matthew 25:34) these do receive the kingdom for ever, and make constant advance in it; since there is one and the same God the Father, and His Word, who has been always present with the human race, by means indeed of various dispensations, and has wrought out many things, and saved from the beginning those who are saved, (for these are they who love God, and follow the Word of God according to the class to which they belong,) and has judged those who are judged, that is, those who forget God, and are blasphemous, and transgressors of His word.

3. For the self-same heretics already mentioned by us have fallen away from themselves, by accusing the Lord, in whom they say that they believe. For those points to which they call attention with regard to the God who then awarded temporal punishments to the unbelieving, and smote the Egyptians, while He saved those that were obedient; these same [facts, I say,] shall neverthe-

less repeat themselves in the Lord, who judges for eternity those whom He does judge, and lets go free for eternity those whom He does let go free: and He shall [thus] be discovered, according to the language used by these men, as having been the cause of their most heinous sin to those who laid hands upon Him, and pierced Him. For if He had not so come, it follows that these men could not have become the slayers of their Lord; and if He had not sent prophets to them, they certainly could not have killed them, nor the apostles either. To those, therefore, who assail us, and say, If the Egyptians had not been afflicted with plagues, and, when pursuing after Israel, been choked in the sea, God could not have saved His people, this answer may be given — Unless, then, the Jews had become the slayers of the Lord (which did, indeed, take eternal life away from them), and, by killing the apostles and persecuting the Church, had fallen into an abyss of wrath, we could not have been saved. For as they were saved by means of the blindness of the Egyptians, so are we, too, by that of the Jews; if, indeed, the death of the Lord is the condemnation of those who fastened Him to the cross, and who did not believe His advent, but the salvation of those who believe in Him.

For the apostle does also say in the Second [Epistle] to the Corinthians: ‘For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them which are saved, and in them which perish: to the one indeed the savour of death unto death, but to the other the savour of life unto life.’ (2 Corinthians 2:15-16) To whom, then, is there the savour of death unto death, unless to those who believe not neither are subject to the Word of God? And who are they that did even then give themselves over to death? Those men, doubtless, who do not believe, nor submit themselves to God. And again, who are they that have been saved and received the inheritance? Those, doubtless, who do believe God, and who have continued in His love; as did Caleb [the son] of Jephunneh and Joshua [the son] of Nun, (Numbers 14:30) and innocent children, who have had no sense of evil. But who are they that are saved now, and receive life eternal? Is it not those who love God, and who believe His promises, and who in malice have become as little children? (1 Corinthians 14:20)

Chapter 29

1. But, say they, ‘God hardened the heart of Pharaoh and of his

servants.’ (Exodus 9:35) Those, then, who allege such difficulties, do not read in the Gospel that passage where the Lord replied to the disciples, when they asked Him, Why do You speak unto them in parables?— Because it is given unto you to know the mystery of the kingdom of heaven; but to them I speak in parables, that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not hear, understanding they may not understand; in order that the prophecy of Isaiah regarding them may be fulfilled, saying, ‘Make the heart of this people gross and make their ears dull, and blind their eyes. But blessed are your eyes, which see the things that you see; and your ears, which hear what you hear.’ (Matthew 13:11-16; Isaiah 6:10) For one and the same God [that blesses others] inflicts blindness upon those who do not believe, but who set Him at naught; just as the sun, which is a creature of His, [acts with regard] to those who, by reason of any weakness of the eyes cannot behold his light; but to those who believe in Him and follow Him, He grants a fuller and greater illumination of mind.

In accordance with this word, therefore, does the apostle say, in the Second [Epistle] to the Corinthians: ‘In whom the this world has blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ should shine [unto them].’ (2 Corinthians 4:4) And again, in that to the Romans: ‘And as they did not think fit to have God in their knowledge, God gave them up to a reprobate mind, to do those things that are not convenient.’ (Romans 1:28) Speaking of antichrist, too, he says clearly in the Second to the Thessalonians: ‘And for this cause God shall send them the working of error, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be judged who believed not the truth, but consented to iniquity.’ (2 Thessalonians 2:11)

2. If, therefore, in the present time also, God, knowing the number of those who will not believe, since He foreknows all things, has given them over to unbelief, and turned away His face from men of this stamp, leaving them in the darkness which they have themselves chosen for themselves, what is there wonderful if He did also at that time give over to their unbelief, Pharaoh, who never would have believed, along with those who were with him? As the Word spoke to Moses from the bush: ‘And I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, unless by a mighty

hand.' (Exodus 3:19) And for the reason that the Lord spoke in parables, and brought blindness upon Israel, that seeing they might not see, since He knew the [spirit of] unbelief in them, for the same reason did He harden Pharaoh's heart; in order that, while seeing that it was the finger of God which led forth the people, he might not believe, but be precipitated into a sea of unbelief, resting in the notion that the exit of these [Israelites] was accomplished by magical power, and that it was not by the operation of God that the Red Sea afforded a passage to the people, but that this occurred by merely natural causes.

Chapter 30

1. Those, again, who cavil and find fault because the people did, by God's command, upon the eve of their departure, take vessels of all kinds and raiment from the Egyptians, and so went away, from which [spoils], too, the tabernacle was constructed in the wilderness, prove themselves ignorant of the righteous dealings of God, and of His dispensations; as also the presbyter remarked: **'For if God had not accorded this in the typical exodus, no one could now be saved in our true exodus; that is, in the faith in which we have been established, and by which we have been brought forth from among the number of the Gentiles.'** For in some cases there follows us a small, and in others a large amount of property, which we have acquired from the mammon of unrighteousness.

For from what source do we derive the houses in which we dwell, the garments in which we are clothed, the vessels which we use, and everything else ministering to our every-day life, unless it be from those things which, when we were Gentiles, we acquired by avarice, or received them from our heathen parents, relations, or friends who unrighteously obtained them?— not to mention that even now we acquire such things when we are in the faith. For who is there that sells, and does not wish to make a profit from him who buys? Or who purchases anything, and does not wish to obtain good value from the seller? Or who is there that carries on a trade, and does not do so that he may obtain a livelihood thereby? And as to those believing ones who are in the royal palace, do they not derive the utensils they employ from the property which belongs to Cæsar; and to those who have not, does not each one of these [Christians] give according to his ability? The Egyptians were debtors to the [Jewish] people, not alone as

to property, but as their very lives, because of the kindness of the patriarch Joseph in former times; but in what way are the heathen debtors to us, from whom we receive both gain and profit? Whatsoever they amass with labour, these things do we make use of without labour, although we are in the faith.

2. Up to that time the people served the Egyptians in the most abject slavery, as says the Scripture: 'And the Egyptians exercised their power rigorously upon the children of Israel; and they made life bitter to them by severe labours, in mortar and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field which they did, by all the works in which they oppressed them with rigour.' (Exodus 1:13-14) And with immense labour they built for them fenced cities, increasing the substance of these men throughout a long course of years, and by means of every species of slavery; while these [masters] were not only ungrateful towards them, but had in contemplation their utter annihilation. In what way, then, did [the Israelites] act unjustly, if out of many things they took a few, they who might have possessed much property had they not served them, and might have gone forth wealthy, while, in fact, by receiving only a very insignificant recompense for their heavy servitude, they went away poor?

It is just as if any free man, being forcibly carried away by another, and serving him for many years, and increasing his substance, should be thought, when he ultimately obtains some support, to possess some small portion of his [master's] property, but should in reality depart, having obtained only a little as the result of his own great labours, and out of vast possessions which have been acquired, and this should be made by any one a subject of accusation against him, as if he had not acted properly. He (the accuser) will rather appear as an unjust judge against him who had been forcibly carried away into slavery. Of this kind, then, are these men also, who charge the people with blame, because they appropriated a few things out of many, but who bring no charge against those who did not render them the recompense due to their fathers' services; nay, but even reducing them to the most irksome slavery, obtained the highest profit from them. And [these objectors] allege that [the Israelites] acted dishonestly, because, forsooth, they took away for the recompense of their labours, as I have observed, unstamped gold and silver in a few vessels; while they say that they themselves (for let truth be spoken, although to

some it may seem ridiculous) do act honestly, when they carry away in their girdles from the labours of others, coined gold, and silver, and brass, with Cæsar's inscription and image upon it.

3. If, however, a comparison be instituted between us and them, [I would ask] which party shall seem to have received [their worldly goods] in the fairer manner? Will it be the [Jewish] people, [who took] from the Egyptians, who were at all points their debtors; or we, [who receive property] from the Romans and other nations, who are under no similar obligation to us? Yea, moreover, through their instrumentality the world is at peace, and we walk on the highways without fear, and sail where we will. Therefore, against men of this kind (namely, the heretics) the word of the Lord applies, which says: You hypocrite, first cast the beam out of your eye, and then shall you see clearly to pull out the mote out of your brother's eye. (Matthew 7:5)

For if he who lays these things to your charge, and glories in his own wisdom, has been separated from the company of the Gentiles, and possesses nothing [derived from] other people's goods, but is literally naked, and barefoot, and dwells homeless among the mountains, as any of those animals do which feed on grass, he will stand excused [in using such language], as being ignorant of the necessities of our mode of life. But if he do partake of what, in the opinion of men, is the property of others, and if [at the same time] he runs down their type, he proves himself most unjust, turning this kind of accusation against himself. For he will be found carrying about property not belonging to him, and coveting goods which are not his. And therefore has the Lord said: Judge not, that you be not judged: for with what judgment you shall judge, you shall be judged. (Matthew 7:1-2) [The meaning is] not certainly that we should not find fault with sinners, nor that we should consent to those who act wickedly; but that we should not pronounce an unfair judgment on the dispensations of God, inasmuch as He has Himself made provision that all things shall turn out for good, in a way consistent with justice.

For, because He knew that we would make a good use of our substance which we should possess by receiving it from another, He says, 'He that has two coats, let him impart to him that has none; and he that has meat, let him do likewise.' (Luke 3:11) 'And, For I was an hungered, and you gave Me meat; I was thirsty, and you

gave Me drink; I was naked and you clothed Me.’ (Matthew 25:35-36) And, ‘When you do your alms, let not your left hand know what your right hand does’. (Matthew 6:3) And we are proved to be righteous by whatsoever else we do well, redeeming, as it were, our property from strange hands. But thus do I say, from strange hands, not as if the world were not God's possession, but that we have gifts of this sort, and receive them from others, in the same way as these men had them from the Egyptians who knew not God; and by means of these same do we erect in ourselves the tabernacle of God: for God dwells in those who act uprightly, as the Lord says: ‘Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that they, when you shall be put to flight, may receive you into eternal tabernacles.’ (Luke 16:9) For whatsoever we acquired from unrighteousness when we were heathen, we are proved righteous, when we have become believers, by applying it to the Lord's advantage.

4. As a matter of course, therefore, these things were done beforehand in a type, and from them was the tabernacle of God constructed; those persons justly receiving them, as I have shown, while we were pointed out beforehand in them — [we] who should afterwards serve God by the things of others. For the whole exodus of the people out of Egypt, which took place under divine guidance, was a type and image of the exodus of the Church which should take place from among the Gentiles; and for this cause He leads it out at last from this world into His own inheritance, which Moses the servant of God did not [bestow], but which Jesus the Son of God shall give for an inheritance. And if any one will devote a close attention to those things which are stated by the prophets with regard to the [time of the] end, and those which John the disciple of the Lord saw in the Apocalypse, he will find that the nations [are to] receive the same plagues universally, as Egypt then did particularly.

Chapter 31

1. When recounting certain matters of this kind respecting them of old time, the presbyter [before mentioned] was in the habit of instructing us, and saying: **‘With respect to those misdeeds for which the Scriptures themselves blame the patriarchs and prophets, we ought not to inveigh against them, nor become like Ham*, who ridiculed the shame of his father, and so**

fell under a curse; but we should [rather] give thanks to God in their behalf, inasmuch as their sins have been forgiven them through the advent of our Lord; for He said that they gave thanks [for us], and gloried in our salvation. With respect to those actions, again, on which the Scriptures pass no censure, but which are simply set down [as having occurred], we ought not to become the accusers [of those who committed them], for we are not more exact than God, nor can we be superior to our Master; but we should search for a type [in them]. For not one of those things which have been set down in Scripture without being condemned is without significance.’ (*I will point out here that Ham was not cursed, but Canaan. Perhaps Polycarp referred to one of Ham’s lineage. But he is correct in saying that Ham was the one who shamed his father.) An example is found in the case of Lot, who led forth his daughters from Sodom, and these then conceived by their own father; and who left behind him within the confines [of the land] his wife, [who remains] a pillar of salt unto this day. For Lot, not acting under the impulse of his own will, nor at the prompting of carnal concupiscence, nor having any knowledge or thought of anything of the kind, did [in fact] work out a type [of future events].

As says the Scripture: And that night the elder went in and lay with her father; and Lot knew not when she lay down, nor when she arose. (Genesis 19:33) And the same thing took place in the case of the younger: And he knew not, it is said, when she slept with him, nor when she arose. (Genesis 19:35) Since, therefore, Lot knew not [what he did], nor was a slave to lust [in his actions], the arrangement [designed by God] was carried out, by which the two daughters (that is, the two churches), who gave birth to children begotten of one and the same father, were pointed out, apart from [the influence of] the lust of the flesh. For there was no other person, [as they supposed], who could impart to them quickening seed, and the means of their giving birth to children, as it is written: And the elder said to the younger, And there is not a man on the earth to enter in unto us after the manner of all the earth: come, let us make our father drunk with wine, and let us lie with him, and raise up seed from our father. (Genesis 19:31-32)

2. Thus, after their simplicity and innocence, did these daughters

[of Lot] so speak, imagining that all mankind had perished, even as the Sodomites had done, and that the anger of God had come down upon the whole earth. Wherefore also they are to be held excusable, since they supposed that they only, along with their father, were left for the preservation of the human race; and for this reason it was that they deceived their father. Moreover, by the words they used this fact was pointed out — that there is no other one who can confer upon the elder and younger church the [power of] giving birth to children, besides our Father. Now the father of the human race is the Word of God, as Moses points out when he says, Is not He your father who has obtained you [by generation], and formed you, and created you? At what time, then, did He pour out upon the human race the life-giving seed — that is, the Spirit of the remission of sins, through means of whom we are quickened? Was it not then, when He was eating with men, and drinking wine upon the earth?

For it is said, The Son of man came eating and drinking; (Matthew 11:19) and when He had lain down, He fell asleep, and took repose. As He does Himself say in David, I slept, and took repose. And because He used thus to act while He dwelt and lived among us, He says again, And my sleep became sweet unto me. (Jeremiah 31:26) Now this whole matter was indicated through Lot, that the seed of the Father of all — that is, of the Spirit of God, by whom all things were made — was commingled and united with flesh — that is, with His own workmanship; by which commixture and unity the two synagogues — that is, the two churches — produced from their own father living sons to the living God.

3. And while these things were taking place, his wife remained in [the territory of] Sodome, no longer corruptible flesh, but a pillar of salt which endures for ever; and by those natural processes which appertain to the human race, indicating that the Church also, which is the salt of the earth, (Matthew 5:13) has been left behind within the confines of the earth, and subject to human sufferings; and while entire members are often taken away from it, the pillar of salt still endures, thus typifying the foundation of the faith which makes strong, and sends forward, children to their Father.

Chapter 32

1. After this fashion also did a presbyter, a disciple of the apostles, **reason with respect to the two testaments, proving that both were truly from one and the same God. For [he maintained] that ‘there was no other God besides Him who made and fashioned us, and that the discourse of those men has no foundation who affirm that this world of ours was made either by angels, or by any other power whatsoever, or by another God.’** For if a man be once moved away from the Creator of all things, and if he grant that this creation to which we belong was formed by any other or through any other [than the one God], he must of necessity fall into much inconsistency, and many contradictions of this sort; to which he will [be able to] furnish no explanations which can be regarded as either probable or true. And, for this reason, those who introduce other doctrines conceal from us the opinion which they themselves hold respecting God, because they are aware of the untenable and absurd nature of their doctrine, and are afraid lest, should they be vanquished, they should have some difficulty in making good their escape.

But if any one believes in [only] one God, who also made all things by the Word, as Moses likewise says, ‘God said, Let there be light: and there was light’; (Genesis 1:3) and as we read in the Gospel, ‘All things were made by Him; and without Him was nothing made’; (John 1:3) and the Apostle Paul [says] in like manner, ‘There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father, who is above all, and through all, and in us all’ (Ephesians 4:5-6) — this man will first of all hold the “head, from which the whole body is compacted and bound together, and, through means of every joint according to the measure of the ministration of each several part, makes increase of the body to the edification of itself in love.” (Ephesians 4:16; Colossians 2:19) And then shall every word also seem consistent to him, if he for his part diligently read the Scriptures in company with those who are presbyters in the Church, among whom is the apostolic doctrine, as I have pointed out.

2. For all the apostles taught that there were indeed two testaments among the two peoples; but that it was one and the same God who appointed both for the advantage of those men (for whose sakes the testaments were given) who were

to believe in God, I have proved in the third book from the very teaching of the apostles; and that the first testament was not given without reason, or to no purpose, or in an accidental sort of manner; but that it subdued those to whom it was given to the service of God, for their benefit (for God needs no service from men), and exhibited a type of heavenly things, inasmuch as man was not yet able to see the things of God through means of immediate vision; and foreshadowed the images of those things which [now actually] exist in the Church, in order that our faith might be firmly established; and contained a prophecy of things to come, in order that man might learn that God has foreknowledge of all things.”

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Below are listed more short books available for FREE download on www.sabbath.blog and www.biblesabbath.org Look at the **Free Resources** page.

A Beginner's Guide to the Sabbath

The Sabbath is a weekly celebration from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset. This delight was given to mankind to help us spend more time with God and our family. In this booklet, you will learn answers to basic questions such as “What is the Sabbath?”; “When is the Sabbath?”; and “How Do We Keep the Sabbath?” You will also learn important reasons to keep this holy day and ways to practice it so that you can be in tune with God’s Sacred Rhythm.

A Beginner's Guide to Understanding the Bible

This booklet will help you understand the Bible on a very basic level. It will give you practical tips to help you understand God’s word. These simple tips will transform your view of the Bible and your walk with God.

Defending the Ten Commandments

There is a general hostility towards the commandments of God (see Matthew 24:12). Many people believe that the Law of God is done away with, including the Sabbath. People try to use verses from Jesus and the Apostles Paul to try and explain them away. This booklet will explain these verses and other questions people have about God’s Law. This resource will teach you to defend your faith. It is also a way to reach out to other believers and help them understand the truth of God’s Word.

How Do We Know Jesus Really Lived?

Imagine for a moment that you did not have a Bible to learn about Jesus. How would you know that He ever lived on earth? Would it be possible to prove His existence? In modern times, there has been skepticism about the historical validity of Jesus’ existence and the New Testament account. In this book, we will address the historical, archaeological, and textual evidence to see if Jesus and His earliest followers ever existed.

More Materials (Page 2 of 2)

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A Brief History of the Sabbath in Early Christianity

Many people who attend Church today meet on Sunday. In the New Testament, the early Church met on Sabbath, which is from Friday sunset through Saturday sunset. Did you know that most Christians 400 years after Jesus still honored the Sabbath? In this informative booklet, you will learn the seven major historical factors that affected the Sabbath in the early Church.

Prevalence of the Sabbath in the Early Roman Empire

When the Gentiles heard the early gospel message, how did they respond as it relates to the Sabbath? Were Gentile converts persuaded to keep the Sabbath like their Jewish counterparts? Did they seek to abandon it? In this work, the author reviews two Jewish, two Christian, fifteen Gentile primary sources, and the New Testament to examine the prevalence of the Sabbath in the early Roman Empire. The answer will surprise you!

Sabbath and Sunday Laws in the Roman Empire

In the Roman Empire, a series of laws were passed concerning the Sabbath. Hundreds of years later, Sunday laws were also passed. These laws help us to understand the protection of Sabbath observance in broader Judaism and Christianity as well as the development of Sunday as a day of rest in the Roman Church.

How Did Sunday Become the First Day of the Week?

How did the first day of the week, which does not have a name in the Bible, come to be called Sunday? How did the other days of the week come to have their names? In this work, you will learn about the history of two seven-day cycles in the early Roman Empire: The Biblical week and the planetary week. This study will also reveal insight into the development of Sunday as a day of gathering among certain groups in early Christianity.

After the death of the first Apostles, confusion entered the Christian community. Persecution and false teachers threatened the purity of the faith. In the midst of this chaos stood a man named Polycarp. He was taught and ordained by the first Apostles; he battled false teachings.

In this work, you will learn about the events surrounding Polycarp's fight for the faith. You will also gain key insight into his teachings and life. He is a true hero for all Christians.



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