

Appendix F

Polycarp's Death

The date of Polycarp's death, as reported in the final chapters of the famous letter from the assembly in Smyrna to the assembly in Philomelium, entitled *Μαρτυριον του Αγιου Πολυκαρπου Επισκοπου Σμυρνης* (*Martyrdom of Saint Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna*),¹ has been an issue of much debate. The year for Polycarp's martyrdom has been variously calculated by modern critics as occurring anywhere from 155 to 177 C.E.² A discussion of this issue is not only required to present the evidence for the actual date of his martyrdom but it shall also demonstrate that the conservative Quarto-decimans observed the last of the seven days of unleavened bread as a high Sabbath. In our present appendix we shall determine which of the variant dates are legitimate for Polycarp's death and determine the outside limits for all the possible years in which he could have died. Our following appendix will then coordinate the evidence and will allow us to determine the exact year of Polycarp's death.

The Text

Today's scholars admit that the first 20 chapters of the *Martyrdom of Saint Polycarp* are legitimate, written shortly after the death of Polycarp.³ The appendices that follow offer different results.

The manuscripts present three appendices to the letter: a chapter giving a date (21), a pious paragraph which probably dates from the fourth century (22. 1), and a description of the transmission of the text (22. 2/3, with an expanded version in the Moscow manuscript). The last appendix contains one very suspicious feature: 'Pionius' rediscovered the text of the *Martyrdom* after Polycarp showed it to him in a vision.⁴

This first appendix gives evidence of tampering, in that it provides two contradictory dates for the death of Polycarp (one Greek and one Roman). The second and third appendices, as the last two appendices report, were composed by Pionius, who lived in the mid-third century C.E. The attribution of the comments to Pionius and the suspicious mythology attached to these last two appendices give little doubt as to its later date. The Moscow manuscript

¹ PG, 5, pp. 1029–1046.

² For an account of the various reckonings see JTS, NS, 19, pp. 510–514; TAF, 2.1, pp. 646–724.

³ JTS, NS, 19, p. 510; Lake, *AF*, ii, p. 309.

⁴ JTS, NS, 19, p. 510.

(13th century C.E.)⁵ provides an even newer and extended version of this ending and appears to be very late, possibly originating in the 10th or 11th century C.E.

The appendices also provide a history of the early transmission of the text. Gaius (late second century C.E.), a contemporary of Irenaeus, bishop of Gaul (who as a youth personally knew Polycarp), copied the text from a manuscript possessed by Irenaeus.⁶ Later, someone named Socrates, while in Corinth, Greece copied the text left by Gaius.⁷ Still later, Pionius (first half of the third century C.E.), having seen Polycarp in a vision, rediscovered the text of Socrates and produced a new copy, to which he attached the last two appendices.⁸ From copies descended from the text of Pionius are derived all of our present-day manuscripts.

Variant Dates

The earliest manuscripts of the *Martyrdom of Saint Polycarp* that remain to us provide three different dates for the death of Polycarp. The earliest manuscripts are the Greek MSS b, p, s, and v. They are copies made during the 10th and 11th centuries and clearly reflect editions derived from the fourth through sixth centuries C.E.⁹ They provide us with the following double dating:

Now, the blessed Polycarp suffered martyrdom on the second day of the month of Xanthicus just begun, the seventh before the Kalends of May, on the great (high) Sabbath, at the eighth hour.¹⁰

Setting aside for the moment the strange use of double dating, there is an inherent contradiction in this passage. The Greek Macedonian date is “the second day of the month of Xanthicus,” i.e., February 23.¹¹ The Roman date, “the seventh before the Kalends of May,” meanwhile, is April 25,¹² a quite different date. The early Latin translation supports the Roman version by rendering it, “in the month of April, the seventh before the Kalends of May, on the great Sabbath.”¹³

Next, the recently discovered Moscow MS m (13th century C.E.), preserves the variant “the seventh before the Kalends of March,” i.e., February 23.¹⁴ This document, though written well, is a much later version. Its scribe made a clear attempt to coordinate the Roman date with the Macedonian by changing the Roman date from the earlier April date to one falling in February, thereby making both the Macedonian and Roman dates agree.¹⁵

⁵ Lake, *AF*, ii, p. 310.

⁶ Polycarp, 22:2.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Polycarp, 22:2, cf., Moscow manuscript at 22:6 (Lake, *AF*, ii, p. 345).

⁹ Lake, *AF*, ii, p. 310.

¹⁰ Polycarp, 21; see PG, 5, p. 1044.

¹¹ TAF, 2.1, pp. 678–713; Lake, *AF*, ii, p. 310.

¹² ANF, 1, p. 43, n. 13.

¹³ TAF, 2.1, p. 678.

¹⁴ TAF, 2.1, p. 677f.

¹⁵ Those who try to by-pass the fact that the early reading, “the seventh before the Kalends of May,” is found in various texts do so by claiming that the one piece of evidence from the

Finally, we have the *Chronicon Paschale* (originally composed in the seventh century C.E. but our most recent copy coming from the 10th century C.E.).¹⁶ This text omits any mention of the Macedonian month of Xanthicus and gives the date of Polycarp's death as "the seventh before the Kalends of April," i.e., March 26.¹⁷ This record is also comparatively late, though not as late as the creation of the Moscow MS m. It makes its own attempt to coordinate the contradictory dates by reckoning the high Sabbath day on which Polycarp died with Phasekh. As Joseph Barber Lightfoot argues, there were four motives for the author of the *Chronicon Paschale* to alter the original date:

- The seventh before the Kalends of March (February 23) and the seventh before the Kalends of May (April 25) both fall outside any possible limits of the Phasekh as practiced by early Christians (inclusive of Systems A through F). Yet the mentioning of Polycarp's death on a high Sabbath would suggest the day of Phasekh to the eighth century C.E. Roman Christians. Joseph Barber Lightfoot writes that "both the Paschal interests of the chronicler himself and the parallelisms to the Lord's Passion in the document before him would suggest the Easter time as the date of the martyrdom."¹⁸
- The author would "naturally interpret the 'great sabbath' according to the technical sense which it bore in his own day, as the Saturday before Easter Day; and this necessitated an alteration of the month."¹⁹
- In the age and country in which the author lived, "the only calendar retaining the Macedonian names of the months, with which he was acquainted, would be the Syromacedonian; and in this, as we have seen, the months were pushed forward," so that Xanthicus no longer represented the sixth month, as in the Asiatic calendar, but the seventh month.²⁰ This allowed for a March date.

Moscow manuscript (13th century C.E.), reading, "the seventh before the Kalends of March," is derived from a better and more reliable source. There is no substantive support for this view and it ignores the confounding of the date of Polycarp's death with that of Pionius. It is based merely upon the fact that the latter date agrees with their preconceived ideas. The fact is that the early reading, "of the seventh before the Kalends of May," appears in text from the 10th and 11th centuries in perfectly good texts. This reading was even earlier than the Latin translation giving the same date. The reading of the seventh before the Kalends of May is by far not only earlier than that of the seventh before the Kalends of March, as found in the Moscow manuscript, but is clearly a superior unbiased reading. It is used by PG, 5, p. 1044; and ANF, 1, p. 43. It is presumptuous to leap to the conclusion that the late single reading is more correct merely because it agrees with the Xanthicus date. To the contrary, the Moscow manuscript date is merely one more attempt to make the false double dating agree and carries no authority at all.

¹⁶ This anonymous work purports to give a history of the world from its creation until the 10th year of the reign of Emperor Heraclius (630 C.E.). This latter date and the reference in the text to Heraclius as "our emperor" indicates that its composition was contemporary with that emperor and was most likely finished in 631 C.E. The earliest manuscript remaining is found in the Vatican library and dates to the 10th century C.E. (DCB, 1, p. 510).

¹⁷ Chron. Paschale, p. 481.

¹⁸ TAF, 2.1, p. 708.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

- Finally, the arbitrary character of his alterations is demonstrated by the failure of the *Chronicon Paschale* to mention the Xanthicus date. Joseph Barber Lightfoot notes that this was due “perhaps because he could not make this date fit in with the calendar with which he was acquainted, perhaps because the mode of expression would be unfamiliar to his readers.”²¹

To this information we should add that some believe the date supplied in the *Chronicon Paschale* appears to be an attempt to match the date of Polycarp’s death as found in Eusebius *Chronicon* with an actual date of Phasekh. The Saturday preceding the Roman Sunday Phasekh festival in the year 169 C.E. fell on March 26, and according to James Ussher might be properly thought of by the author of the *Chronicon Paschale* as the “great Sabbath.”²²

Source of Confusion

A close examination of all the evidence reveals that the source for all of this variation and confusion is the double dating found in the best and earliest manuscripts. The Greek Macedonian and Roman dates are clearly contradictory, which in itself suggests that one of these two dates was an interpolation and not part of the original text. The attempts to correct the contradiction is the source for all later variations. The true culprit is the Greek Macedonian date.

The Greek Macedonian date was inserted into the letter because, during the fifth and subsequent centuries, writers confounded the records dealing with the apprehension and martyrdom of Pionius with the martyrdom of Polycarp. Pionius, as we have already mentioned, was the scribe who re-copied the *Martyrdom of Saint Polycarp* text transmitted by Socrates of Corinth. Pionius also wrote a book about Polycarp’s life.²³

The confusion, whatever its source, took root in the *Ecclesiastical History* of Eusebius (written in various editions between 311 to 323 C.E.).²⁴ In this book Eusebius makes, what Joseph Barber Lightfoot calls, “an almost incredible blunder.”²⁵ He reports that other martyrdoms “took place in the same Smyrna at the same time as the martyrdom of Polycarp,” and then he makes the comment that “a famous martyr of those at that time was Pionius.”²⁶ Eusebius himself dates the martyrdom of Polycarp to the reign of Marcus Aurelius Verus (Antoninus Verus) (March, 161 to March, 180 C.E.).²⁷ In the *Chronicon* of Eusebius, he lists Polycarp’s death with the events following the seventh or eighth year of Marcus Aurelius Verus (167/168 or 168/169 C.E., March reckoning).²⁸ Pionius, on the other hand, is known to have died during

²¹ Ibid.

²² James Ussher adopted the year 169 C.E. for this reason (see TAF, 2.1, p. 651). For the date provided by Eusebius, see below App. G, pp. 451ff.

²³ For the Greek texts and a translation of *The Life of Polycarp* by Pionius see TAF, 2.3, pp. 433–465, 487–506.

²⁴ Lake, *Euseb.*, i, pp. xix–xx.

²⁵ TAF, 2.1, p. 651.

²⁶ Eusebius, *H.E.*, 5:15:46f.

²⁷ Eusebius, *H.E.*, 4:14:9–4:15:1.

²⁸ Eusebius, *Arm.*, yr. 2183; cf., Jerome, *Euseb.*, yr. 2183.

the persecutions in the reign of Emperor Decius (249–251 C.E.), and more precisely in 250 C.E.²⁹ Even more important, the date of the apprehension of Pionius was February 23,³⁰ the precise date given for the martyrdom of Polycarp.

For some unknown reason—though it surely must be connected with the fact that Pionius copied the *Martyrdom of Saint Polycarp* and wrote a book on the life of Polycarp—the apprehension and death of the two martyrs were associated together. Later writers then concluded that both had died at the same time. Some put another twist on the confusion. The *Menaea*, based upon Eusebius' error, places Polycarp's martyrdom under Decius (249–251 C.E.).³¹ Joseph Barber Lightfoot writes:

Being however more familiar with the Acts of Pionius than with the circumstances of Polycarp's death, and knowing that Pionius suffered under Decius, they post-dated it accordingly. This is the converse to the error of Eusebius himself, who ante-dated the martyrdom of Pionius and placed both under M. Aurelius.³²

Therefore, the apprehension and subsequent martyrdom of Pionius was by a gross error associated with the apprehension and martyrdom of Polycarp, many believing that they died at the same time. Socrates Scholasticus carries on a similar error when he writes that Polycarp suffered martyrdom under Emperor Gordian (238–244 C.E.).³³ It is clear that Scholasticus had also associated some event in the life of Pionius with Polycarp—for it was during Gordian's time that Pionius flourished. This confusion brings into focus the real error that is to be found in the manuscripts on the *Martyrdom of Saint Polycarp*. The key element in the contradiction is the fact that Pionius is known to have been apprehended in the year 250 C.E., on February, 23, which is the "the second day of the month of Xanthicus," the precise date given in the double dating for Polycarp. In fact, the Greek Church later places the festival of Polycarp's martyrdom on February 23, continuing the confounding of the identity of the two men.³⁴

It is also obvious that the later attempts to alter the Roman date—whether to "the seventh before the Kalends of March," i.e., February 23, as found in the Moscow manuscript, or to "the seventh before the Kalends of April," i.e., March 26 (based upon the late Syromacedonian reckoning of Xanthicus and an attempt to equate the high Sabbath with Phasekh) as found in the *Chronicon Paschale*—must also be dismissed. They are fabricated, based either upon the original false assumption that Polycarp died on the same day as Pionius or by the attempt to equate the high Sabbath in the text with the Phasekh.

²⁹ TAF, 2.1, pp. 715–718.

³⁰ TAF, 2.1., p. 719.

³¹ TAF, 2.1, p. 651.

³² Ibid.

³³ Socrates Schol., 5:22.

³⁴ TAF, 2.1, pp. 678, 708.

Two reasons make it clear that double dating was not used in the original text of the *Martyrdom of Saint Polycarp*: not only is such a format unusual but the dates simply do not agree. Further, once we expunge the false date of “the second day of the month of Xanthicus” from the original text, we are left with the Roman date of “the seventh before the Kalends of May,” i.e., April 25, the date found in the earliest and best Greek texts. Therefore, this Roman date—the inhabitants of Asia Minor being under the Roman government—as found in the earliest and best manuscripts, must be the original and true date of Polycarp’s martyrdom.

The Day of His Death

A letter written by the Quartodeciman assembly at Smyrna deals with the day on which Polycarp, their beloved bishop, died. In this letter we are told that Polycarp had gone to stay in “a country house not far distant from the city” of Smyrna.³⁵ The enemies of Polycarp discovered his whereabouts and at supertime, on “the day of preparation” (i.e., the day before a Sabbath or high Sabbath day),³⁶ set out to capture him.³⁷ We are then told, “ὄψε δὲ τῆς ὥρας (*opse de tes oras*; and the hour was late),” when these men arrived at Polycarp’s home and found him “lying (sleeping) in an upper chamber.”³⁸ Accordingly, Polycarp was captured at night.

After allowing Polycarp time to pray, his captors conducted him back into the city of Smyrna. The events of this night are recorded as occurring on the “Σαββάτου μεγάλου (great Sabbath).”³⁹ The old Latin translators of the *Letter of the Smyrnaeans* and the *Acts of Pionius* both correctly translate this expression by the Latin *sabbatum majus* (a high Sabbath).⁴⁰

The fact that the date of Polycarp’s death was a high Sabbath is extremely important. Some, trying to justify the February 23 date, have audaciously claimed that this high Sabbath was really a weekly Sabbath, which is wholly unsupported by any ancient statement or record. A high Sabbath always refers to one of the festival days, such as the high Sabbaths of Phasekh, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. As Timothy Barnes observes, “At the very least, it is doubtful if anyone has yet adequately explained how a Saturday in late February can be a ‘great sabbath’.”⁴¹ Even Joseph Barber Lightfoot, who accepts the argument that the high Sabbath mentioned in the records was the weekly Sabbath day, was forced to admit:

Nor indeed in Polycarp’s age and country would it be possible; for according to Quartodeciman usage there could not be any ‘great Saturday’.⁴²

³⁵ Polycarp, 5.

³⁶ For the use of the “day of preparation” as the day before a Sabbath (whether weekly or a high Sabbath, cf., John, 19:14, 31) see JE, 3, p. 502; NBD, pp. 1026f; NCE, 11, p. 744; and see our discussion in FSDY, 2. For supertime see CGS, pp. 641f; and see above Chap. XIII, p. 216, the last part of n. 36.

³⁷ Polycarp, 7.

³⁸ Eusebius, *H.E.*, 4:15:12; Polycarp, 7.

³⁹ Polycarp, 8; Eusebius, *H.E.*, 4:15:15.

⁴⁰ TAF, 2, 1, p. 710f.

⁴¹ JTS, NS, 19, p. 513.

⁴² TAF, 2.1, p. 710.

To reconcile the contradiction, Joseph Barber Lightfoot and others required connecting the event with the Jewish Festival of Purim and other Jewish interpretations, which, as we shall momentarily discuss, are hardly germane to a Quartodeciman Christian report. Meanwhile, the claim by the *Chronicon Paschale* that Polycarp's death occurred on "the seventh before the Kalends of April." i.e., March 26, is an attempt to rectify the problem by connecting that event with Phasekh.

Another claim is that this high Sabbath was, in fact, a reference to the Jewish Festival of Purim, which equally stretches credulity.⁴³ Polycarp and his followers were for the most part non-Jewish Christians.⁴⁴ Further, there is not one single record claiming that any of the early Christians, let alone the conservative Quartodecimans, ever observed Purim, a celebration that lies outside of the commands of the Torah. Further, the celebration of Purim was never a Christian high Sabbath. To conclude that the Christians living in Smyrna would date the death of their bishop by some vague reference to the Jewish celebration of Purim is wholly without support.

Next, the Greeks, like the Hebrews, observed a day that began at sunset.⁴⁵ The Romans, on the other hand, began their day at midnight. In either case, Polycarp was seized during the night, that is, after the change of the day. As his captors were bringing him back to Smyrna, the new day was described as a great Sabbath (high Sabbath) and was further defined as a day which followed a preparation day (i.e., a day before a weekly or high Sabbath).⁴⁶ After arriving, Polycarp was taken to a stadium where he was tried. Refusing to deny the messiah or to swear by Caesar, Polycarp was sentenced to death by burning.⁴⁷ Then, in the closing passages of the letter, the date that Polycarp suffered his martyrdom is given: "the seventh before the Kalends of Μαῖων (*Mayon*; May),⁴⁸ on the great Sabbath, at the eighth hour."⁴⁹

The seventh day before the Kalends of May, as we have already said, is early Roman (Julian) dating and is otherwise called the 25th of April.⁵⁰ The eighth hour of the day, if counted by the Roman method from midnight, means that Polycarp died around 8 A.M. If it was the eighth hour of the night, counting from sunset (Greek time), it would have been 2 A.M.; and if its reference is to the eighth hour of daylight, it would be approximately 2 P.M. Since Polycarp's death is dated by the Roman system, it is most probable that the eighth Roman hour is intended, i.e., 8 A.M. Whichever hour is the

⁴³ TAF, 2.1, pp. 711–713; Lake, *Euseb.*, i, p. 347, n. 2.

⁴⁴ Pionius, *Poly.*, 3, refers to Polycarp as "a native of the East."

⁴⁵ Pliny, 2:79; CGS, p. 589.

⁴⁶ See above n. 36.

⁴⁷ Polycarp, 12. Finding that the fire would not consume Polycarp, the executioner was ordered to pierce him with a dagger. Polycarp died from the wound. The body was then burnt (Polycarp, 15–18).

⁴⁸ See PG, 5, pp. 1043, 1044.

⁴⁹ Polycarp, 21.

⁵⁰ The first day of each month was termed *kalendae* (Kalends or Calends), from the Latin term *calare* and Greek *καλῶ* (*kalō*), meaning "to call." In this cumbersome system, the first day of the month is also the first day when counting backward (HBC, pp. 75–77; ANF, 1, 43, n. 13). Therefore, since there are only 30 days in April, one counts the seven days before the Kalends of May as follows: May 1 = 1, April 30 = 2, April 29 = 3, April 28 = 4, April 27 = 5, April 26 = 6, April 25 = 7 days.

case, every possibility falling after midnight, when one reckons the date by the scriptural method, that high Sabbath day on which he died would begin at sunset on April 24 and end at sunset on April 25, Julian dating (the Roman day changing at midnight). This fact will prove vitally important for our final conclusion.

The Age and Time of Polycarp

Our next factor is the age of Polycarp and the time frame in which he lived and died. In both the *Martyrdom of Saint Polycarp* and Eusebius, we read that Polycarp died having been a servant of the messiah for 86 years.⁵¹ Irenaeus, who personally knew Polycarp, also informs us that Polycarp “lived a long time and in extreme old age passed from life,” referring to him as “a splendid and glorious martyr.”⁵² On the other side of the equation, Pionius notes that Polycarp, as a non-Christian, was sold as a servant to a Christian woman named Callisto. At the time he was bought, Polycarp is described as being a “*παιδάρριου* (*paidariou*; a young slave).”⁵³ Subsequently, Polycarp is said to have quickly acquired the Christian faith, learning the commandments and how to do well.⁵⁴

This information indicates that his service in the messiah began when he was still a “*paidariou* (a young slave).”⁵⁵ This term refers to a youngster in the age group above a βρέφος (*brephos*; infant)⁵⁶ and a παιδίον (*paidion*; little or young child “up to 7 years”),⁵⁷ yet below the age of maturity at 18.⁵⁸ Accordingly, his age must have been somewhere between 8 and 17 when he entered a Christian home. Such would indicate that he died sometime between the age of 94 and 103 years, which agrees with Irenaeus’ statement that Polycarp lived to an extremely old age. We shall take the greater age into consideration in order to include all possibilities.

Polycarp’s age must now be placed in context with two major events of his life. First, Eusebius dates the year of Polycarp’s appointment as bishop of Smyrna. Referring to the third year of emperor Trajan (101 C.E.), he writes:

At this time (101 C.E.) there flourished in Asia Polycarp, the companion of the apostles, who was appointed to the bishopric of the Church in Smyrna by the eyewitnesses and ministers of the sovereign.⁵⁹

More especially, Polycarp is specifically said to have been appointed bishop by John the divine and the apostles living in Asia Minor,⁶⁰ John the divine himself having died shortly thereafter.⁶¹ Despite the fact that Polycarp

⁵¹ Eusebius, *H.E.*, 4:15:20; Polycarp, 9.

⁵² Eusebius, *H.E.*, 4:14:3f; Irenaeus, *Ag. Her.*, 3:3:4.

⁵³ Pionius, *Poly.*, 3.

⁵⁴ Pionius, *Poly.*, 4.

⁵⁵ GEL, 1968, p. 1286.

⁵⁶ SEC, Gk. #1025.

⁵⁷ GEL, 1968, p. 1287.

⁵⁸ DCB, 3, p. 254.

⁵⁹ Eusebius, *H.E.*, 3:36:1, cf., 3:34:1 for date.

⁶⁰ Irenaeus, *Ag. Her.*, 3:3:4; Eusebius, *H.E.*, 4:14:3–6; Tertullian, *Prescript.*, 32.

⁶¹ John the divine died in the reign of Emperor Trajan (98–117 C.E.), see Irenaeus, *Ag. Her.*, 2:22:5; Eusebius, *H.E.*, 3:18:1–3:23:4.

rapidly advanced in the faith as a youth, it is unlikely that he could have attained such an important post until he was at least 30 years of age, the earliest age at which a man could receive ordination as a bishop.⁶² This detail would indicate the very high probability that Polycarp could have been born no later than about 71 C.E.

Second, Polycarp visited Rome when Anicetus was bishop (157–168 C.E.), at which time he argued that the Romans should return to the Quartodeciman Phasekh practice.⁶³ It was also at this time that he saw the heretic Marcion in Rome.⁶⁴ Anicetus is specifically said to have come into his position as bishop in the 20th year of Antoninus Pius (July of 157 until July of 158 C.E.) and was bishop for 11 years.⁶⁵ Though we do not know the exact year that Polycarp came to visit Anicetus and celebrated the Phasekh in Rome, it was probably shortly after the latter had been appointed to his office. Accordingly, the earliest possible date for Polycarp's Phasekh celebration in Rome is in the spring of 158 C.E.⁶⁶

Conclusion

The evidence demonstrates that Polycarp died on April 25 (Roman reckoning) on a day that was also a high Sabbath. If Polycarp was only 30 years old at the time that he became bishop of Smyrna (101 C.E.), he would have been at least

⁶² DCB, 3, p. 253. This concept is based on the fact that under the Torah a man could not become a priest and give service in the Tabernacle or Temple unless he was at least 30 years of age (Num., 4:46f, cf., 4:2f, 22f, 29f, 34f, 38f, 42f). For this reason, it was also believed that the messiah did not begin his teaching and ministry until after he was 30 years old (Luke, 3:23; cf., Irenaeus, *Ag. Her.*, 2:22:5, "Now, that the first stage of early life embraces 30 years, and that this extends onwards to the 40th year, every one will admit; but from the 40th and 50th year a man begins to decline toward old age, which our sovereign possessed while he still fulfilled the office of a teacher, even as the Good News and all the elders testify; those who were conversant in Asia with John, the disciple of the sovereign, [affirming] that John conveyed to them that information.").

⁶³ Eusebius, *H.E.*, 5:24:16f, cf., 4:19.

⁶⁴ Moscow Epilog., 22:4; cf., Irenaeus, *Ag. Her.*, 3:3:4, 3:4:3.

⁶⁵ Jerome, *Euseb.*, yr. 2173 (Oly. CCXXXIII). Jerome gives Anicetus leadership for 11 years. He then places the beginning of the next bishop, Soter, to the ninth year of Verus (Jerome, *Euseb.*, yr. 2185 [Oly. CCXXXVII]). Eusebius supports this with the statement, "Now by this time, εἰς ὄγδοον ἐλαυνούσης ἔτος (*eis ogdoon elainouses etos*; at the driving out of the eighth year) of (emperor Verus) showing forth his leadership, Soter succeeded Anicetus in the bishopric of Rome, who had served in all eleven years." (Eusebius, *H.E.*, 4:19). That ἐλαυνούσης (*elainouses*) means "to drive away, expel . . . to drive to extremities" see GEL, p. 248. The eighth year of Verus was 168/169, March reckoning. Counting the eighth year of Verus as the 11th year of Anicetus, we are brought back to the 20th year of Antoninus Pius (157/158 C.E., July reckoning). This detail is supported by the statement that Soter, who "ended his life within the eighth year of his leadership," was succeeded by Eleutherus in "the 17th year of Emperor Antoninus Verus" (Eusebius, *H.E.*, 5:1:1; cf., Jerome, *Euseb.*, yr. 2193 [Oly. CCXXXVIII]), i.e., in 177/178 C.E., March reckoning). Once again, this places the first year of Soter in the ninth year of Emperor Verus, in turn placing the first year of Anicetus in the 20th year of Emperor Pius.

⁶⁶ Irenaeus relates that Polycarp came to Rome to converse with Anicetus "about some difficulty as to the day of the Phasekh" (Eusebius, *H.E.*, 4:14:1). They discussed the matter fully but were unable to change one another's opinion (*ibid.*, 5:24:16). The most appropriate time for this visit from the leader of the eastern assemblies to Rome would have been shortly after Anicetus obtained his post. We also know that they partook of the Eucharist together, which demonstrates that Polycarp was in Rome during the spring Phasekh season (Eusebius, *H.E.*, 5:24:17). These details suggest that Polycarp was probably in Rome in the spring of 158 C.E., not long after Anicetus became bishop. Those adhering to the notion that Polycarp died in 155 or 156 C.E. have disregarded these important chronological points.

87 years of age at the time he visited Anicetus in 158 C.E. It is also highly unlikely that Polycarp would have died shortly after his visit to Rome. Socrates Scholasticus reports that, after Polycarp left Anicetus at Rome and returned home, he “continued to communicate with Anicetus,” suggesting some passage of time.⁶⁷ This leaves very little room for communication between the two men if Polycarp left Rome in the spring of 158 and died later that year.

Indeed, we do not even know that it was the year 158 that Polycarp visited Anicetus; it is merely the earliest possible date. It is also possible that Anicetus might have become bishop after the Phasekh of the year of 158 but before the end of the 20th year of Antoninus Pius (July of 157 until July of 158 C.E.), the year in which he obtained that office. In that case, the earliest possible year would have been the spring of 159 C.E.

Using these factors, we can establish the outermost limits for the year of Polycarp’s death. The maximum age that can be given to Polycarp, as we have shown above, is 103 years, 86 years of service to the messiah beginning at age 17. If he attained the high office as bishop of Smyrna in 101 C.E. at the earliest possible age of 30, and lived until he was 103 years old, his death could be no later than 174 C.E. At the same time, since he was observing Phasekh in Rome no earlier than in the spring of 158 C.E., he must have been martyred at some point after that date. Our range, therefore, is from 158 to 174 C.E.

⁶⁷ Socrates Schol., 5:22.