The Year of Polycarp's Death

We must now coordinate the various known facts and focus in on which year was the precise year of Polycarp's martyrdom. This effort must be guided by the established outer limits for Polycarp's death—from 158 to 174 C.E. Our first effort, therefore, will be to use the historical records to further narrow the time span of the persecution of the Christians of Asia Minor among whom Polycarp was murdered. We shall then utilize all of the relevant systems for calculating the beginning of the year and month during this period in order to properly count which high Sabbaths are eligible. To achieve the exact year, we shall then clock in any high Sabbath that fell on April 25, as reported in the *Martyrdom of Saint Polycarp*. The evidence will prove that Polycarp died on the high Sabbath representing the last day (Abib 20) of the Quartodeciman seven days of unleavened bread. In turn, it will be demonstrated that the conservative Quartodecimans continued to practice this last day as a high Sabbath well into the latter part of the second century C.E.

Narrowing the Time Span

The year of Polycarp's death is mentioned in the first appendix of the *Martyrdom of Saint Polycarp* as the one wherein "Philip of Tralles was high priest, when Statius Quadratus was proconsul."[1] Unfortunately, all efforts to connect these men with a specific year in Asia Minor have failed, due to the fact that precise data from this region and for this period is almost negligible.[2] Therefore, we must begin by narrowing the possible time span by referring to collateral evidence. For example, the actual year of Polycarp's death is approximated by Eusebius. He writes:

> Antoninus, called Pius, held the sovereignty for 22 years and was succeeded by Marcus Aurelius Verus, also called Antoninus, his son, together with his brother Lucius. And ἐν τούτῳ (*en touto*; in this period) Polycarp was consecrated by martyrdom when great persecution again disturbed Asia, and I think it most necessary to give in this history the account of his end, which is still extant in writing.[3]

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[1]   Polycarp, 21:1.
[2]   Little more than guesses are offered (see a discussion of the various attempts in TAF, 2.1, pp. 646–677).
[3]   Eusebius, *H.E.*, 4:14:9–4:15:1.

The above discussion is centered upon the end of the reign of Antoninus Pius and the time when his sons came to power. The words "ἐν τούτῳ (*en touto*; in this period)" are a vague expression of time. Though some construe that it might make reference to any of the years of Pius up to his death, other evidence shows that, as W. Telfer concludes,[4] it points to the period of his son, Marcus Aurelius Verus, who succeeded his father Antoninus Pius to the throne at Rome on March 7, 161 C.E. and died in March of 180 C.E.[5] Jerome, for example, similarly dates Polycarp's death "during the reign of Marcus Antoninus and Lucius Aurelius Commodus in the fourth persecution after Nero, in the presence of the proconsul holding court at Smyrna."[6]

Therefore, both Eusebius and Jerome date Polycarp's death within the reign of Marcus Aurelius Verus (Antoninus Verus), i.e., between March of 161 and March of 180 C.E., well beyond the scope of Polycarp's visit to Rome during the spring of 158 C.E.[7] Meanwhile, the Armenian version of the *Chronicon* of Eusebius associates the discussion of the persecutions of Christians living in Asia Minor and the martyrdom of Polycarp with the events of the seventh and following years of Marcus Aurelius Verus.[8] Jerome, in his version of Eusebius' *Chronicon*, took Eusebius more literally than his words warrant and actually dated the event to the seventh year of Marcus Aurelius Verus (March, 167–March, 168 C.E.).[9]

Eusebius did not intend an exact year. Joseph Barber Lightfoot, for example, observes that the notice given in the *Chronicon* itself "is not placed opposite to, but after this year" in the chronological list, i.e., actually associated with the year 168/169 C.E. He then adds:

> Moreover Polycarp's martyrdom is associated with the persecutions at Vienne and Lyons, which we know to have happened A.D. 177. The bearing of these facts seems to be obvious. Eusebius here connects together all the incidents relating to the persecution of the Christians, which he supposed to have taken place about this time. He had no knowledge of the precise year or years in which they occurred.[10]

At the same time, Polycarp's death is specifically said to have ended a long period of persecution.[11] The year 167/168 C.E., or more probably 168/169 C.E., therefore, was most likely the beginning of a major period of persecutions against Christians living in Asia Minor. Polycarp's death was the last of those in the Asian group. His death was later followed by the persecutions in Gaul, which are known to have occurred in 177 C.E. It is therefore understood that

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4   JTS, 3, pp. 79–83.
5   Dio, 72:33, 34; cf., SHA, *Anton. Pius*, 12, *Marc. Anton.*, 7.
6   Jerome, *Lives*, 17.
7   Eusebius, *H.E.*, 4:14:10–4:15:1; Jerome, *Euseb.*, yr. 2183.
8   Eusebius, *Arm.*, yr. 2183.
9   Jerome, *Euseb.*, yr. 2183.
10   TAF, 2, 1, p. 646f.
11   Polycarp, 1, states that Polycarp's death "put and end to the persecution" in Asia; cf., Eusebius, *H.E.*, 4:14:10–4:15:1, 3.

the Asian persecutions did not end until sometime after 168 C.E. yet before those of Gaul in 177 C.E. We are now coming very close to our outer limit of 174 C.E., established in our last appendix as the last possible year of Polycarp's death. The historical data, accordingly, narrows the year of death to sometime between 167 and 174 C.E.

The Irenaeus Connection

A date toward the last part of the 160's or during the early years of the 170's for the death of Polycarp is further supported by a record that he died while Irenaeus was living and teaching at Rome. The epilogue to the Moscow manuscript of the *Martyrdom of Saint Polycarp* reports:

> Now this Irenaeus was in Rome at the time of the martyrdom of the bishop Polycarp and taught many there. . . . And this is also recorded in the writings of Irenaeus: On the day and at the hour when Polycarp suffered martyrdom in Smyrna, Irenaeus—who was in the city of Rome—heard a voice like that of a trumpet proclaiming, "Polycarp has suffered martyrdom."[12]

Irenaeus (c.140–202 C.E.)[13] spent his youth in Asia among the Quartodecimans and while living there personally knew Polycarp.[14] He is even said to have, along with the heretic Florinus, been a pupil of Polycarp's.[15] From this experience, Irenaeus developed fond memories of his former bishop.[16] For such an attachment to form, Ireneaus must have been at least a teenager while a student of Polycarp's in Asia. After the examination of the context of the word "παῖς (*pais*; young person)," used by Polycarp to describe the period in his life when he knew Florinus and while they were both pupils of Polycarp,[17] Richard Lipius writes:

> If, according to this, the *indoles juvenis* begin about the 30th year, the age of παῖς will commence with that of youthful maturity, say about the 18th year, and just that time of life will be the one denoted by the expression πρώτη ἡλικία [[*prote helikia*]]—so that not the age of childhood, but that of early young-manhood will have been the period of Irenaeus's connexion with St. Polycarp.[18]

[12] Moscow Epilog., 22:3, 5, see Lake, *AF*, ii, pp. 342–245.

[13] Irenaeus died under Emperor Septimius Severus in about the year 202 C.E. (Gregory Trs., *Franks*, 1:27–29). He became bishop of Lyons in 177 C.E. (DCB, 3, p. 253). Since Irenaeus could not have held that post any earlier than his 30th year, this places his birth no later than 147 C.E. We also know that Irenaeus flourished in the period approaching the eighth year of Emperor Antoninus Verus (i.e., approaching March of 168 C.E.) (Eusebius, *H.E.*, 4:19:1–4:21:1, cf., 4:18:2), indicating at least an age of teaching (over 20 years of age). We are not far from the truth if we place his birth around 140 C.E.

[14] Polycarp, 22:2; Eusebius, *H.E.*, 5:20:4–6; Irenaeus, frag. 2.

[15] Eusebius, *H.E.*, 5:20:4–6; Irenaeus, *Ag. Her.*, 3:3:4, frag. 2.

[16] Irenaeus, *Ag. Her.*, 3:3:4, frag. 2; Eusebius, *H.E.*, 3:28:6, 4:14:1–4:15:48, 5:20:4–6, 5:24:14–18.

[17] Quoted in Eusebius, *H.E.*, 5:30:4f; Irenaeus, frag. 2.

[18] DCB, 3, p. 254.

Leaving Asia Minor, Irenaeus and his family moved to Rome, where he studied under the guidance of the leaders of the Roman assembly. He apparently had moved to Rome around the time of the great controversy that raged in Laodicea during the spring of 167 C.E.,[19] for Eusebius notes that Irenaeus began to flourish in the period approaching the eighth year of Emperor Antoninus Verus (i.e., at the end of his seventh year, 167/168 C.E., March reckoning).[20] It was about this time that the persecutions began in Asia Minor, which may be the cause of his leaving that country.[21] Not many years afterward, "after studying in Rome," Irenaeus moved to Lyons, in southern Gaul (France).[22] It was sometime after 150 C.E., and also quite possibly due to the persecution of Christians in Asia Minor, which began in 167/168 C.E. (or the next year), that a Christian community had been organized in the Roman colony of Lyons to take care of a large group of Greek settlers coming from Asia.[23] Here Irenaeus joined other Christian settlers who had earlier arrived from Asia Minor.[24]

In 176/177 C.E. a persecution broke out against the Christians living in Lyons, and among those who died was their first bishop, Pothinus.[25] At the time of its outbreak, the presbyter Irenaeus had already been sent from Lyons to Rome on a mission.[26] When the persecution ceased, Irenaeus returned to Gaul where he was appointed the new bishop of the diocese of Lyons (177 C.E.).[27] As we have already established, Polycarp could not have died any later than 174 C.E. This information proves that Irenaeus must have heard of the death of Polycarp during his previous stay in Rome, i.e., in the years while he was studying in Rome and before he migrated to Gaul.

Because of his education and contacts in Rome, Irenaeus became a strong ally of Eleutherus (177–192 C.E.) and Victor (192–202 C.E.), the bishops of Rome.[28] Under Roman influence, Irenaeus led the assembly at Gaul into a close affiliation with the Roman assembly. This kinship with Rome is not only seen in his theological writings but is reflected by his participation in the conferences in 196 C.E., which created Victor's decree to celebrate Phasekh according to the System E scenario.[29] Irenaeus' early association with Rome

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[19] See above Chap. XVII, pp. 282f, n. 51; and Chap. XVIII, p. 291, n. 11.

[20] Eusebius, *H.E.*, 4:19:1–4:21:1, cf., 4:18:2.

[21] Eusebius, *H.E.*, 4:14:9–4:15:1; Eusebius, *Arm.*, yr. 2183; cf., Jerome, *Euseb.*, yr. 2183.

[22] WDCH, p. 441.

[23] NCE, 6, p. 305. Pectorius left a Greek epitaph, discovered at Autun, which indicates that there were Christians in that city by the second half of the second century C.E.

[24] ANF, 1, p. 309, notes, "southern Gaul is evangelized from Asia Minor." For this reason, for centuries many Christians living in Gaul continued their Quartodeciman and quasi-Quartodeciman views. Irenaeus, on the other hand, was heavily influenced by his training while at Rome and forsook his previous Quartodeciman upbringing. Nevertheless, he continued a fondness for the Quartodecimans and always spoke highly of his former teacher Polycarp. It was most likely due to his split loyalties that, during the Phasekh controversy of 196 C.E., Polycarp spoke against Victor's attempt to excommunicate Asia, pointing out that the previous agreement between Rome and Asia was to allow each side to continue in the Phasekh tradition of their choice (Eusebius, *H.E.*, 5:24:9–18).

[25] Eusebius, *H.E.*, 5:pref., dates it to the eighth year of Soter, bishop of Rome, (i.e., 176/177 C.E.). For the story see Eusebius, *H.E.*, 5:1:1–63.

[26] Eusebius, *H.E.*, 5:4:1f, 5:5:8; Jerome, *Lives*, 35.

[27] Eusebius, *H.E.*, 5:5:8, cf., 5:4:1f, 5:23:4, 5:24:11; Jerome, *Lives*, 35.

[28] Eusebius, *H.E.*, 5:4:1, 5:23:4, 5:24:9–18; Jerome, *Lives*, 35.

[29] Eusebius, *H.E.*, 5:23:1–4, 5:24:11. See above Chap. XVII, p. 287, n. 80.

reflects the fact that he had lived and studied in Rome for a number of years prior to his moving to Gaul, and prior to his becoming bishop in 177 C.E.

Accordingly, the death of Polycarp must be dated during the time that Irenaeus was first living in Rome, both studying and instructing many in the faith.[30] This information agrees with two important facts provided by Eusebius: that Irenaeus began to flourish in the period approaching the eighth year of Emperor Antoninus Verus (i.e., approaching 168/169 C.E., March reckoning), and that the persecution of Christians in Asia was under way that same year. A reference to Irenaeus teaching in Rome during this period, therefore, is in full accord with the other facts about Polycarp's death. Placing the data from Eusebius and Irenaeus together, limiting ourselves only with the outermost possible year for the death of Polycarp, it becomes clear that Polycarp must have died sometime between 168 and 174 C.E.

The Beginning of the Year

To calculate the date of the high Sabbath that fell on April 25, we must first keep in mind that the Christians of Asia Minor, especially Polycarp and the assembly at Smyrna, were Quartodecimans. Therefore, they would have used a Quartodeciman calculation for the beginning of the year. Polycarp is said to have been personally instructed by apostles and knew some of those who had seen the messiah.[31] Further, he was appointed bishop of the assembly in Smyrna by these apostles and John the divine.[32] It is most likely, therefore, that he and his assembly followed the ancient Aristocratic reckoning for the new moons and the beginning of the year.

Supporting the idea that the Smyrna assembly used the Aristocratic reckoning, Anatolius points out that the more ancient Jews (i.e., those under Sadducean authority) and the conservative Quartodecimans both observed the same reckoning for their first month of the year. Anatolius points out that among those who correctly began the year were the eminent third century B.C.E. priest and scholar Aristobulus of Paneas, the second century B.C.E. book of Enoch, and the first century priests and writers Philo and Josephus.[33] Anatolius then writes:

> These writers, in solving some questions which are raised with respect to the Exodus, say that all alike ought to sacrifice the Phasekh after the vernal equinox in the middle of the first moon; and that this is found to be when the sun passes through the first segment of the solar, or, as some among them have named it, the zodiacal circle. But this Aristobulus also

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30 Moscow Epilog., 22:3–5, see Lake, *AF*, ii, pp. 342–245.

31 The statements that Polycarp knew John the apostle and was instructed and placed in the bishopric of Smyrna by the apostles (Eusebius, *H.E.*, 3:36:1, 14:14:3, 5:20:6, 5:24:16; Irenaeus, *Ag. Her.*, 3:3:4) seems better timed for the generation following the twelve apostles. The leading apostle who taught Polycarp was John the presbyter, also called John the divine, who is often confused with the apostle John, one of the original twelve (see FSDY, 2).

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

33 Anatolius, 3.

adds, that for the Festival of Phasekh it was necessary
not only that the sun should pass the equinoctial seg-
ment, but the moon also. . . . and since the day of the
Phasekh is fixed for the 14th day of the moon, at twi-
light, the moon will have the position diametrically
opposite the sun; as is to be seen in full moons.[34]

Socrates Scholasticus also notes that the early Samaritans, the conservative
Quartodecimans of Asia, and the ancient Jews (i.e., under the direction of the
Aristocratic priests) all observed the Phasekh following the vernal or spring
equinox.[35] This Aristocratic practice, indeed, became the mainstay for most of
Christianity, including the Roman assembly.

The ancient Aristocratic practice was based upon the requirement found in
Exodus, 34:22, that a תקופה (*tequphah*; equinox or solstice)[36] must come during
the season of Tabernacles (i.e., the autumnal *tequphah*),[37] i.e., in the seventh
month (almost exactly six months after Phasekh).[38] Tabernacles is also called
the Khag of Ingathering held at the "outgoing," i.e., after the middle, "of the
year."[39] The first month of the year, therefore, is determined under the
Aristocratic system when the 14th day of the moon passes the spring equinox.
If the 14th day of the moon falls before this equinox, that month is counted as
part of the previous year.[40] This system was used as long as the Sadducees
maintained control over the Temple (no later than c.68 C.E.). Afterward, the
Pharisees gradually changed the system for Judaism based upon other more
complicated criteria (i.e., ripened green ears of barley, a visual sighting of the
new moon, a reliance on the approval of the rabbis, and so forth).[41]

Returning to the ancient Jewish method, which was followed by the con-
servative Quartodecimans, Anatolius adds:

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34 Anatolius, 3f; cf., 1 En., 3:78:6f, "When the moon comes out (i.e., begins its cycle), it appears
in the sky one half of a seventh part; it will become fully illumined from the 14th (day); it com-
pletes its illumination the 15th (day), its light become fulfilled according to the sign of the year
and becoming 15 parts. Thus the moon waxes 15 parts." Philo, *Exod.*, 1:9, likewise states that the
moon "becomes on the 14th (day)."

35 Socrates Schol., 5:22.

36 The *tequphah* is either one of the two equinoxes (vernal or autumnal) or one of the two sol-
stices (summer or winter) see HBC, p. 44, "The four Tequfoth were the Tequfah of Nisan which
began the vernal equinox when the sun enters the constellation of Aries; the Tequfah of Tammuz
at the summer solstice when the sun enters Cancer; the Tequfah of Tishri at the autumnal equinox
when the sun enters Libra; and the Tequfah of Tebeth at the winter solstice when the sun enters
Capricorn." CHAL, p. 394, explains תקופה (*tequphah*), as the "turning (of sun at solstice) Ps, 19:7;
(of the year, i.e. end of year, at autumnal equinox) Ex. 34:22; (of the days [i.e. of the year] = end of
year) 1 S 1:20." The only *tequphah* coming around the time of the seventh scriptural lunar month
(see Lev., 33–43) is the autumnal equinox.

37 The seven days of the Khag of Tabernacles must fall during the "outgoing" of the scrip-
tural year (Exod., 23:16) and within the seventh lunar month (see below n. 38).

38 Num., 29:1–40; Lev., 23:24–43 (cf., Philo, *Spec.*, 1:35 §182, 186); 2 Chron., 5:3; Ezek., 45:25.

39 Exod., 23:16.

40 Anatolius remarks that, if one keeps Phasekh in the 12th astronomical constellation, he is
"guilty of no small or ordinary mistake" (Anatolius, 2). Abbot Ceolfrid explained the rule this
way, "But if the full moon goes but one day before the day and night be of one length (i.e., the
equinox), the aforesaid reason proves that this moon must be assigned not to the first month of
the year beginning, but rather to the last month of the year that is past" (Bede, *Hist.*, 5:21).

41 For a discussion of the Pharisaic system see VT, 7, pp. 259–307; EJMC; and FSDY, 3. That the
Pharisaic calendar system was derived from the Babylonian system see HUCA, 42, pp. 227–242.

> But that the first month among the Hebrews is about the equinox is clearly shown also by what is taught in the book of Enoch.[42]

Copies of the book of Enoch have been found at Qumran and date well within the Maccabaean period (second century B.C.E.).[43] The book of Enoch points out that the conjunction of the moon must take place prior to sunrise. Otherwise, the conjunction and the last day of the month are counted as belonging to the next day. For example, the book of Enoch describes how the ancient Jews determined the first day of the moon when it reports:

> It (the moon) rises in this manner: Its crescent faces the easterly direction, coming out on the 30th day, on that day, (that is,) on the 30th day, it comes into existence, and it appears with the sun in the gate through which the sun exits; and you have the beginning of the month.[44]

Yet the book of Enoch also recognizes that the orbit of the moon is not consistent and that a month normally varies from 29 to 30 days and at other times to a shorter length of 28, or even longer to 31 days.[45] How then is the exact determination made? The text continues by explaining.

> Then when the sun rises (in the morning), THE MOON RISES TOGETHER WITH IT. Taking a portion of one half (of one seventh) of its light, that night, just beginning its (the moon's) monthly journey on its first lunar day, it sets with the sun and becomes dark, in respect to its thirteen parts that night.[46]

The key is that the moon must rise with the sun in the morning before the the night that it appears after sunset, staying but a few minutes, and then setting in the same gate entered by the sun. This night is counted as the beginning day of the lunar month (the scriptural day beginning at sunset). Put another way, the moon has by definition already passed its conjunction by rising with the sun in the morning of the last day of the month.

This determination of the conjunction before morning is based upon the scriptural injunctions that the sun and its illumination ממשלת (*mamashalath*; govern, regulate)[47] the day and "in the day," while the moon and its

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[42] Anatolius, 5.

[43] NBD, p. 1060.

[44] 1 En., 3:73:4.

[45] 1 En., 3:72:8, 16, 31, 73:4, 78:9, 15–17, 82:4.

[46] 1 En., 3:73:7.

[47] The Hebrew term ממשלת (*mamashalath*), a form of ממשלה (*mamashalah*) means, "*dominion, rule*" (HEL, p. 154); "(ruling power =) **dominion**, **authority** over" (CHAL, p. 200; "*rule*; also (concr. in plur.) a *realm* or a *ruler*:—dominion, government power, to rule" (SEC, Heb. #4475). This term is translated into the Greek of the LXX as ἀρχὰς (*arkhas*), a form of ἀρχή (*arkhe*), meaning, "*first place* or *power, sovereignty . . . empire, realm . . . magistracy, office*" (GEL, 1968, p. 252). Both the Hebrew and Greek terms carry the meaning of governmental authority to regulate (i.e., the time).

illumination "ממשלת (*mamashalath*; govern, regulate) the night" and "in the night."[48] In Scriptures it is stated that Yahweh "made the ירח (*yerakh*; moon, month)[49] for the *moadim* (appointed times)."[50] That is, the moon is used to calculate and regulate the *moadim*—but it holds rulership only at night (after sunset and before sunrise). Therefore, the conjunction of the moon can only be counted for regulation purposes when it reaches nighttime. If the conjunction occurs during the daytime (i.e., if it has not risen with the sun before morning), it cannot be counted until the next night arrives. This system assures us that at least 12 hours and 30 minutes, but no more than about 24 hours, have passed from the time of the moon's conjunction, guaranteeing that an illumination has begun to occur on the face the moon (whether visible to the naked eye or, on very rare occasions, visible with a visual aid).[51]

This early Aristocratic calculation, as Anatolius points out, is further described by the Jewish priest Philo (c.45 C.E.). Though Philo was a Pharisee who celebrated the Phasekh supper on the 15th of Abib, he lived during the time that the Sadducees held dominance in the matter of how to begin the month and year.[52] To this issue, Philo points out that the days of the lunar month represent the "period between one conjunction and the next."[53] He adds that the number of days in the lunar month are counted until the moon "wanes to her conjunction with the sun" and "dies away into the conjunction."[54]

Likewise, the book of Enoch states that the moon gradually wanes "until all the illumination disappears and the days of the moon expire, its disk empty without light."[55] This means that the last day of the lunar month is the day of the conjunction, at which point the month ends. It becomes a new moon when the moon "resumes its natural brightness" and appears after sunset, beginning a new day.[56] Similarly, the book of Enoch states, "it is called the new moon because on that day the illumination rises on her."[57] Philo clarifies

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In the Samuel Bagster & Sons edition of the LXX (reprinted by Zondervan in 1972), for example, this word is translated at Gen., 1:16, as "regulating" the night.

[48] Gen., 1:16; Ps., 136:7–9, the *yerakh* (moon) and stars regulate "בלילה (*be-laylah*; in the night)." Cf., Jub., 2:8–10; 2 En., J–30:5f.

[49] HEL, p. 116, "*month*, one revolution of the moon round the earth"; CHAL, p. 144. A *yerakh* is "a lunation, i.e. month," "the moon" (SEC, Heb. #3391, 3393, 3394). It is often used as the name of the moon itself in Ugaritic, Phoenician, and other Semitic languages (NBD, p. 841). The Greek of the LXX has σελήνη (*selene*): "brilliancy," "the moon," "i.e. the month" (SEC, Gk. #4582; GEL, pp. 725f).

[50] Ps., 104:19; and more at length in Ecclus., 43:6f. Also see Philo, *Spec.*, 2:26 §142.

[51] At the time of the equinox, there are approximately 12 hours of daylight and 45 minutes of twilight after sunset. It is during the 45-minute period of twilight that the moon's crescent will appear. With a telescope the first reflections of light can be seen on the moon at about 12 hours. Therefore, even if the conjunction happens right before sunrise, which is extremely rare, there is adequate time for a lunation. Yet in almost all cases, the conjunction will fall at a time well-ahead of sunrise, so as to be visible to the naked eye and not requiring a visual aid. We shall deal with the particulars in more detail in FSDY, 3.

[52] In the time of Philo, the Hillelic view had not yet attained dominance among all the Pharisees. For a discussion of the Hillelic view see FSDY, 3.

[53] Philo, *Spec.*, 2:26. Also see Philo, *Exod.*, 1:9, the moon "recedes from its fullness of light into its conjunction."

[54] Philo, *Spec.*, 1:35 §178.

[55] 1 En., 78:14.

[56] Philo, *Spec.*, 2:26 §140.

[57] 1 En., 3:78:12.

his definition when he states that the "new moon," i.e., the first day of the lunar month, "FOLLOWS the conjunction of the moon with the sun."[58]

We should also mention that other systems were used for the region of Asia Minor during the second century C.E. Peter of Alexandria (c.300–311 C.E.) notes that the Jews of his day "erroneously sometimes celebrate their Phasekh according to the course of the moon in the month Phamenoth, or according to the intercalary month, every third year in the month of Pharmuthis," i.e., "before the equinox."[59] According to Socrates Scholasticus, many quasi-Quartodecimans of Asia "thought the Jews should be followed, though they were NOT EXACT." The conservative Quartodecimans, on the other hand, he reports, "kept Phasekh after the equinox, refusing to celebrate with the Jews"; for, they said, "it ought to be celebrated when the sun is in Aries, in the moon called Xanthicus by the Antiochians, and April by the Romans."[60]

According to this information, some of the quasi-Quartodecimans of Asia Minor followed the Jewish cycle for the calendar, though it was "not exact." One form of the Jewish cyclic calendar of the second half of the second century C.E. was based upon precalculated cycles and did not always rely upon the visual monthly sighting of the moon's first crescent or on the conjunction, as the earlier Jewish reckoning had done.[61] Ofttimes, the first day of this Jewish month did not correlate with the appearance of the first moon's crescent or the passing of the conjunction. Yet these quasi-Quartodecimans apparently did not exist in the mid-second century C.E. It is unlikely that their system was in use in Asia Minor during that time. Nevertheless, we shall consider it as a possibility.

At the same time, Socrates Scholasticus shows that the conservative Quartodecimans did not utilize the current Jewish calculation to determine which moon represented the first lunar month of the year. Some of the Jews of that period, including those in Asia Minor, often kept the 14th of the moon prior to the spring equinox and not the one following it. The conservative Quartodecimans, on the other hand, used the more ancient Jewish system and counted the first moon cycle of the year as the one wherein its 14th day (i.e., coming in of the full moon) always fell after the arrival of the spring equinox.[62] No doubt, the Quartodecimans (as did the Jews of that period) followed the scriptural edict that the Law and word of Yahweh is to go forth from Zion (Jerusalem) to the nations,[63] and accordingly they determined the first day of the moon from its position in Jerusalem. Along with this reckoning, the conservative Quartodecimans would have applied the "night of the conjunction" rule for the last day of the month.

Timing the High Sabbath

Our effort must now turn to establishing which years contained a high Sabbath on the Roman date April 25 (= April 24/25 sunset-to-sunset reckoning). For

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58 Philo, *Spec.*, 2:11 §41.
59 Peter Alex., frags. 5:2, 3.
60 Socrates Schol., 5:22.
61 HBC, pp. 40–44; JE, 3, pp. 499f.
62 Noted by Anatolius, 3–7, 10; Socrates Schol., 5:22.
63 Isa., 2:1–4; Micah, 4:1–4.

any comprehensive examination, all the possible systems for establishing the first day of the year that would have been used by the Jews and the Christians in second century C.E. Asia Minor must be tried. These include the calculations of a Jewish cyclic calendar, the method of actually having a visual sighting of the first crescent of the moon, and the Aristocratic method used by the conservative Quartodecimans (a conjunction before sunrise = the last day of the month). The variant dates for the vernal equinox advocated by some must also be mentioned. The actual Julian dates for the equinox fell in those days from the 21st to 22nd of March but these other groups, especially the Montanists and a late quasi-Quartodeciman group, calculated it to be as late as March 24 or 25. Fortunately, the religious teachings of these groups have no bearing on our subject, for they never kept a high Sabbath any later than April 6.[64]

Taking into consideration all the possible dates and variations produced by these calculations for the seven days of unleavened bread during the years from 155 to 177 C.E. (covering all the years suggested by various ancient and modern day historians as well as our own limits),[65] one thing is immediately noticed. Despite which system one uses, the occurrence of any high Sabbath falling on April 25 is an extremely rare event. To begin with, regardless of which beginning of the year and month system one uses and which form of Phasekh one observed (whether the Hasidic, which observes from the 15th, or the Quartodeciman, which observes the 14th as Phasekh), the high Sabbath that occurred on the 24/25th of April (sunset-to-sunset reckoning) was far too late in the year to be the first day of unleavened bread.

To demonstrate, under the cycle of years used by Anatolius, a quasi-Quartodeciman who used the conservative Quartodeciman system for beginning the year, Phasekh would "circulate between the sixth day before the Kalends of April (March 26) and the ninth before the Kalends of May (April 23)."[66] Certain African Christian groups used a 19-year cycle that did not celebrate Phasekh "before the eleventh day before the Kalends of April (March 24), nor after the moon's 21st (day), and the eleventh day before the Kalends of May (April 21)."[67]

Nevertheless, even if one followed the Jewish method of keeping Phasekh on the 15th of Abib, mathematically the outermost date possible is April 23/24 (sunset-to-sunset reckoning). Yet, as we have already demonstrated in our study, the conservative Quartodecimans ridiculed both the Hasidic and quasi-Quartodeciman practices of the high Sabbath or Phasekh and kept only the

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[64] The Montanists always kept Phasekh on the 6th of April, counting it as the 14th day after the spring equinox, thereby making the equinox fall March 24 (Sozomenus, 7:18; Ps.-Chrysostom, 9; SC, 48, p. 119). Epiphanius speaks of one group of quasi-Quartodecimans who always kept Phasekh on the day of the vernal equinox, dating it to March 25 (Epiphanius, *Pan.*, 50:1; PG, 41, p. 886A). This idea originated from the belief in some quarters that the messiah died on the vernal equinox (Africanus in Jerome, *Com. Dan.*, 9; Tertullian, *Adv. Jud.*, 8; Lactantius, *Div. Instit.*, 4:10, *Morte Perse.*, 2). Neither of these notions were followed by the conservative Quartodecimans, who always followed the 14th day of the lunar moon for Phasekh and observed the first moon of the year whose 14th day followed the vernal equinox.

[65] For a discussion of the various dates suggested see JTS, 3, pp. 79–83; TAF, 2, 1, pp. 646–724; AnB, 69, pp. 1–38; SBE, 2, pp. 105ff.

[66] Anatolius, 14.

[67] Anatolius, 15.

14th as the Phasekh and from the beginning of the 14th until the end of the 20th day of Abib for the seven days of unleavened bread.[68] At the same time, regardless of which year and month system is applied, April 24/25 is also far too early in the year to ever represent the day of Pentecost (late May or early June).

Accordingly, we must look at our problem from a different perspective. Kirsopp Lake, for example, suggests as one possibility that the high Sabbath referred to as the day of Polycarp's death "may mean the Sabbath after the Passover."[69] Yet it cannot refer to a weekly Sabbath, for it is specified as a "great Sabbath," i.e., a high Sabbath, by the Quartodecimans. Neither can it refer to Phasekh Sunday of the quasi-Quartodecimans and the Saturday prior to Phasekh Sunday, as practiced in the Western Phasekh system, for again both Polycarp and his assembly at Smyrna were conservative Quartodecimans.

As a result, this particular high Sabbath can only refer to the last day of the seven days of unleavened bread—either the 20th day of Abib according to the Aristocratic method or the 21st day of Abib according to Pharisaic reckoning. Once more we find ourselves eliminating one possibility. The various calculations prove that the 21st of Abib, as required under the Hasidic method for the last day of unleavened bread, never fell on the 24/25th of April during this period.

Regardless of whether we use a Jewish cycle, a purely visual calculation, or the Aristocratic conjunction method, there is only one year from 155 to 177 C.E. that April 24/25 (sunset-to-sunset reckoning) is a high Sabbath: the year 170 C.E. In that year the 24/25th of April (sunset-to-sunset reckoning) falls on the 20th day of the first moon, the high Sabbath of the conservative Quartodecimans.[70] This date is confirmed both by the Aristocratic conjunction method and by a purely visual method for dating the new moon (the results being the same for that year). Further, the year 170 C.E. falls within the period designated by Eusebius as the time of the Asian persecution (i.e., the period extending from about 167 to 177 C.E.). It is also prior to the last possible year for the age of Polycarp at his death (174 C.E.).

Conclusion

It is clear from this evidence that Polycarp, being viewed as the ringleader of the Christians in Smyrna, was martyred on April 25 in the year 170 C.E., ending a long period of persecution. Polycarp became bishop in 101 C.E., a post he was not eligible for until he was 30 years old. Therefore, when Polycarp died in 170 C.E., having lived 86 years as a Christian, he could have been no less than 99 years old at his death. These details mean that Polycarp would have been born at the latest in 71 C.E. and was 13 years old when he became a Christian. If he lived to the maximum possible age of 103, then he would have been born in 67 C.E., became a Christian at age 17, and became bishop at age 34.

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[68] See above Chaps. XVII–XIX.

[69] Lake, *Euseb.*, 1, p. 347, n. 2.

[70] Computer Program: Jewish Calendar V2.0 by Frank Yellin. Based on algorithms by N. Dershowitz and E. M. Reingold.

Important for our research is the additional fact that Polycarp died on a high Sabbath that fell on April 24/25 (sunset-to-sunset reckoning). The only possible way this can be true is if this particular high Sabbath was the seventh day of unleavened bread and calculated as the 20th of Abib. It was well-known that the conservative Quartodecimans followed the instructions of the Mosaic Law regarding dates. They observed the 14th as a high Sabbath and observed the seven days of unleavened bread from the 14th to the 20th. Yet the failure of later non-Quartodeciman Christian writers, as well as more recent pundits, to recognize or acknowledge that the conservative Quartodecimans also celebrated the seventh day as a high Sabbath, as required in Scriptures, was one of the main reasons that they fell into confusion about the date of Polycarp's death.