

Bio for
Hippolytus of Rome
(AD ~170 – ~236)

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- Hippolytus was another prolific Christian author of the 2nd and 3rd centuries, an elder of the Church of Rome, and possibly the first Antipope¹.
 - He was a Greek, though he lived in Rome.
 - Photius (c. 845) claimed that he was a disciple of Irenæus.
 - Origen was influenced by his preaching.
 - He may have been a bishop in Portus, a harbor within Rome.
- It is known that he wrote (in Greek, instead of Latin like Tertullian) many, many books on many topics, but unfortunately, most of them are lost to us or exist only in fragments, and many are attributed to him that he probably did not write.
 - Some of his most well known books are:
 - *The Refutation of All Heresies*² — a ten-volume work including both pagan and Gnostic falsehoods
 - Commentary on the Prophet Daniel
 - Commentary on the Song of Songs
 - *On Christ and the Antichrist*
 - *The Apostolic Tradition*
 - This was a compilation of older second century traditions of the Church, which Hippolytus wanted to preserve.
 - From *The Apostolic Tradition*, we learn that:
 - Bishops were chosen by the people.
 - The “sign of the cross” was already a tradition among Christians.
 - Those who were persecuted could become elders without the laying on of hands.
 - The following liturgy, which is still used in modified form today, was already in place:

The Lord be with you.
And also with your spirit.
Lift up your hearts.
We have them with the Lord.
Let us give thanks to the Lord.
It is right and just.
 - No one in the Church was permitted to be an actor, gladiator, charioteer, or soldier, as well as other immoral jobs.
 - Baptisms were performed in the nude.

Sources:

<http://www.earlychurch.org.uk>

<http://ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf04.html>

http://www.religionfacts.com/christianity/history/church_fathers.htm

<http://www.bombaxo.com/hippolytus.html>

¹ An Antipope was someone who opposed the Bishop of Rome and claimed to be the true Pope.

² It is also called *Philosophoumena*, “Philosophical Teachings”, even though it is not really a philosophical work.

- Women could not be bishops or elders, but they could be deaconesses.
 - Hippolytus believed that Daniel's prophecies in Daniel 2 and 7 refer to the Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans, respectively.
 - He thought it important to figure out who the Antichrist in the book of Revelation is.
- He was influential in establishing church law, and some of his laws used to serve as the basis of constitutional law in Ethiopia.
- He also established a timeline of the history of the world from Creation until the 3rd century.
- He came into strong disagreement with the Bishops of Rome — Zephyrinus, Callixtus, Urban, and Pontian, respectively — for two main reasons:
 - He thought these Bishops of Rome were too lenient towards the followers of Monarchianism, in which God was thought to be one person, not three.³
 - He thought that the Bishops of Rome should not have allowed back into communion those who had rejected Christ rather than be executed by the Romans.
- Because of his disagreements, he and his followers started a separate church in Rome, with him as the bishop.
- In 235, Emperor Maximinus Thrax exiled both Hippolytus and Pope Pontian to Sardinia⁴, where the two of them seem to have been reconciled.
- Hippolytus was martyred in 236 in Sardinia along with Pontian.
 - Prudentius (5th century) claimed he was killed by being dragged behind horses, but this most likely was taken from the mythological character Hippolytus⁵, who was killed in this way. (The Romans did not execute people this way.)
 - His body was brought back to Rome along with Pontian's, and he seems to have been accepted as a member of the Church and not as a schismatic bishop.

³ Hippolytus himself may not have believed in the Trinity in the same way as we currently do, but it is hard to determine exactly what he believed. In any case, he believed that Jesus was a separate person from God the Father and yet still divine.

⁴ the second-largest island off the shore of Italy, second to Sicily

⁵ The name Hippolytus means "horse rescuer". He is the same as the Roman forest god Virbius.