

7. What great contribution did John make to the church while he was on the island of Patmos?
8. What is another word for a false teacher?
9. Give two reasons why it took a long time to decide what writings to include in the New Testament.

Church Leaders After the Apostles

One by one the apostles passed from the scene. Who would guide the church now? Other men who had been taught by the apostles arose as church leaders. These men, who had known the apostles personally, were called **apostolic fathers** (ap uh STAHL ihk).

One of the apostolic fathers was Ignatius (ihg NAY shuhs), who had been a disciple of the apostle John. He served as a leader at Antioch in Syria, where the believers were first called Christians.

When the emperor Trajan (TRAY juhn) visited Antioch and sacrificed to the gods there, Ignatius openly reproved him. Furious at this rebuke, the emperor sent

Ignatius to Rome to be torn to pieces by wild beasts.

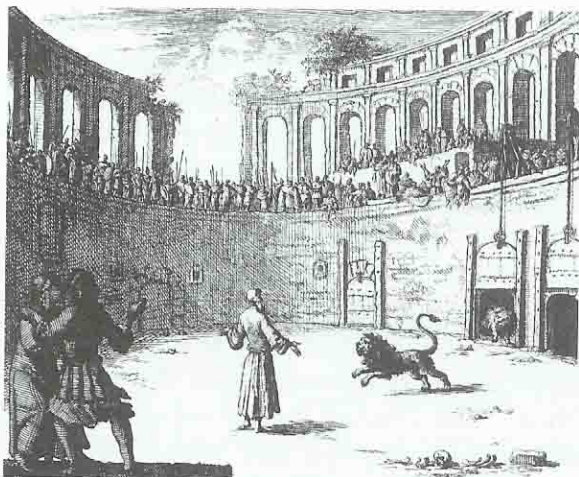
On the day of his death, Ignatius said, "I feel confident that if my heart were to be cut open and chopped to pieces, the name of Jesus would be found written on every piece."

While Ignatius waited in the arena for the hungry, roaring lions to be set upon him, he gave his testimony to the assembled crowd. The Christians who witnessed his death later spread the word that he had died faithfully.

Polycarp (PAHL ee kahrp) was another disciple of the apostle John. He was ordained bishop of the church at Smyrna. Smyrna was one of the seven churches mentioned in the first chapters of Revelation. To this church the Lord had said, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Revelation 2:10).

When one of the authorities threatened to burn him, Polycarp replied, "Thou threatenest me with a fire, which will perhaps burn for an hour, and then soon go out; but thou knowest not the fire of the future judgment of God, which is prepared for the everlasting punishment and torment of the ungodly." Strangely, when the executioners lit the fire and the flames rose high, Polycarp did not seem to be hurt. Someone finally had to put him to death with a sword. Apparently God wanted the heathen to realize that they could do nothing to His saints unless He allowed it.

There were many other leaders and teachers in those early days. They were not all apostolic fathers, but each one who was faithful filled an important place in the Christian church.



Starved lions tore Christians to pieces almost instantly. Here, Ignatius awaits his death with calmness and a sure hope of eternal life in heaven.

Study Exercises

10. Name the emperor who had Ignatius put to death for personal reasons.