Twitter Thread by Matt B. Redmond



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Thread

re: How the early church responded to a plague.

A few days ago I started reading *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church* by Alan Kreider. It's an interesting read for many reasons.
1/

One of the reasons he wrote the book was to answer the question, "Why did the early church spread in the first three centuries?"

In answering that question he looks at how the church in Carthage in the 250s responded to a plague. This plague is known as "the Cyprian Plague."
2/

Pontius was the biographer of Cyprian, who was the leading bishop in North Africa and it is because of him we know what Cyprian taught the people about how to live during the plague.
3/

Keep in mind that these people had just lived through an empire-wide persecution under the reign of Decius. The Christians themselves would have been blamed for the plague because they did not offer sacrifices to the gods.
4/

What did Cyprian say to the Christians?
5/

"What Pontius does tell us is Cyprian responded to the crisis of the plague by urging the people to live lives marked by the habitus of patience–trusting God, living without being able to control the outcome, living unhurriedly, living unconventionally, loving their enemies."
6/

This is not how American Christians live at any time and certainly not during the pandemic. We are marked by impatience and the slinging of insults at each other and at politicians and scientists and anyone else we can find to voice our frustration about.
7/

We are nothing if not impatient, despising our enemies.

Their hope was not in another year.

Their hope was in a different God other than the gods their neighbors worshiped.
8/

Their hope was in the God who actually could control outcomes and so patience was needed—the "strange patience" Justin Martyr spoke of.

I can only assume we need it too.
9/fini