
The Apostolic Fathers

From International Standard Bible Encyclopedia

Any attempt to classify the Christian literature of the second and early third centuries under distinct headings is bound to be somewhat arbitrary. The original editors of ISBE included in "Subapostolic Literature" the writings more commonly known as the "Apostolic Fathers" (except for the Martyrdom of Polycarp) plus the fragments of Papias, and two of the early apologists, Aristides and Justin Martyr. These were the documents believed to have been written before A.D. 156, the date of the death of Polycarp who was, according to Irenaeus, a disciple of the apostle John and therefore presumably the last surviving disciple of an apostle. Excluded from the list (even if they fell within the stipulated dates) were writings falsely attributed to apostles (i.e., the NT Apocrypha) and writings which by later standards were judged to be "heretical" (e.g., the fragments of the Gnostics Basilides and Valentinus).

Such a method of classification exhibits many arbitrary features and creates a number of problems. For example, there is now wide agreement that the so-called Epistle to Diognetus belongs not to this early period but to the end of the 2nd and the beginning of the 3rd century. Moreover, the thirteen papyrus codices discovered in 1945 near NAG HAMMADI on the banks of the Nile in Upper Egypt, have enriched and virtually revolutionized our picture of this "subapostolic age." Although they may generally be described as Gnostic, some of them, such as the Valentinian Gospel of Truth and Epistle to Rheginos, stand almost as close to "orthodoxy" (depending on how that term is defined) as parts of the Apostolic Fathers and the Apologists. The "subapostolic age" was in any case a period in which the bounds of orthodoxy and heresy had not yet been firmly established. All sides on virtually every question seem to have claimed support for their views in some kind of apostolic tradition. It is historically misleading to abstract one group of early second-century writings, no matter how diverse a group it may be, from the rest and distinguish it with the title of "subapostolic

literature." Only on the basis of tradition, remembering the subsequent influence which the "Apostolic Fathers" have had on the Christian Church, can such a procedure be justified. These documents have functioned as a kind of secondary "canon" for centuries, and as such are entitled to separate treatment. The only misconception to be avoided is that they offer anything like a complete picture of the era immediately following the death of the last apostles.

With these considerations in mind, this article will confine itself to the works included in the series *The Apostolic Fathers: A New Translation and Commentary*, ed Robert M. Grant (1964).

I. First Clement

This epistle is the earliest and best known of the so-called "Apostolic Fathers." It is extant in two Greek MSS: the fifth-century biblical Codex Alexandrinus, where it stands at the end of the NT, and the Constantinople MS written in 1056 and rediscovered by Philotheos Bryennios in 1873, containing both 1 and 2 Clement, as well as Barnabas, Didache, and a long recension of the letters of Ignatius. In addition there are Latin, Syriac, and Coptic versions of 1 Clement, as well as extensive quotations by Clement of Alexandria.

The salutation of this letter designates it as an epistle from the church at Rome to the church at Corinth. No author is mentioned by name, but tradition uniformly identifies the author as Clement. As early as A.D. 170 Dionysius bishop of Corinth wrote to Soter bishop of Rome in answer to a letter received from Rome by the Corinthian church: "Today we observed the holy day of the Lord, and read out your letter, which we shall continue to read from time to time for our admonition, as we do with that which was formerly sent to us through Clement" (EusebiusHE iv.23.11). Clement of Alexandria quotes this letter frequently, referring to it both as "the letter of the Romans to the Corinthians" (Misc v.80.1) and as the letter of "Clement" (i.38.5), or even "the apostle Clement" (iv. 105.1).

This Clement of Rome is probably to be identified with the Clement whom Eusebius mentions as the third bishop of Rome after Peter (HE iii.4.9; iii.15.1f). Eusebius' assumption that the Roman church at this early period was ruled by a single bishop is in all likelihood an anachronism, even though it was believed already by Irenaeus near the end of the 2nd cent (*Adv. haer.* iii.3). Much earlier, when Ignatius wrote his letter to the Roman church, the monarchical bishop is conspicuously absent, while 1 Clement itself speaks consistently in terms of a body of presbyters rather than a single ruling bishop. Clement was therefore most likely one of the chief presbyters in the Roman church near the end of the 1st cent and wrote his epistle on behalf of the congregation (cf. Eusebius HE iii.38.1). In the Shepherd of Hermas (Vis 2:4:3) a Clement is mentioned whose duty it was, presumably in the church of Rome, to send messages to other cities, and it is possible that the same individual is in view.

Two other identifications are more speculative: the ancient one of Origen and Eusebius that this Clement is also Paul's co-worker mentioned in Phil. 4:3, and the modern one that he is the same as, or belonged to the household of, the consul Titus Flavius Clemens who was put to death about A.D. 95 for disloyalty to the gods and pro-Jewish tendencies (Dio Cassius Hist lxxvii. 14). These are no more than guesses. Essentially 1 Clement is not the product of an identifiable "great personality," but a letter from one important church to another in response to a particular crisis.

The situation in the Corinthian church is sketched in the first three chapters. Chs. 4–36 consist of a general discourse on the Christian virtues (with the Corinthian problem in view). Chs. 37–61 bring the argument to bear on the immediate crisis. Chs. 62–65 function as a summary and final exhortation from the Roman church.

The author begins by apologizing for the congregation's delay in addressing itself to the predicament of its sister church. He refers vaguely to "misfortunes and calamities" in Rome which have hindered this ministry of exhortation (1:1). We have no way of knowing

what these troubles were, but possibly the reference is to provocations against Christians late in the reign of the Emperor Domitian (A.D. 81–96). The threat in Corinth, however, was from within, an "abominable and unholy schism" (1:1) in which there had been a rebellion against those in authority in the church (3:1–4). The description becomes more explicit later on when the author states that "in spite of their good service you have removed some from the ministry which they fulfilled blamelessly" (44:6). He contrasts the present sedition with an idealized past when Corinthians were obedient to their leaders and wholly at peace among themselves (1:2–2:8). The reader of the NT will think that the divisions Paul faced at Corinth have been overlooked, but Clement later qualifies this simplistic picture by admitting that when "the blessed Paul the Apostle" wrote his epistle, "even then you had made yourselves partisans" (47:3). But in those days they had at least aligned themselves with apostles (cf. 1 Cor. 1:12), "men of high reputation," while now they had overturned all authority, so that "on account of one or two persons the old and well-established church of the Corinthians is in revolt against the presbyters" (47:6).

The central section of 1 Clement (4:1–36:6) draws on many sources for examples to combat the rebellion. Jealousy and envy have brought about all kinds of evil in the past, not only in the OT (4:1–13) but in "our own generation" in the trials which confronted Peter and Paul and the other martyrs (5:1–6:4). But God has always given repentance to those who will turn to Him, and according to the "venerable rule of our tradition" (7:2) has made this repentance available to all through Jesus Christ (7:1–8:5). Thus Clement anticipates the outright appeal for repentance which he will make in ch 57. He similarly extols the virtues of obedience, faithfulness, and hospitality as exemplified in such OT figures as Abraham, Lot, and Rahab (9:1–12:8). These were evidently the qualities he felt to be conspicuously lacking in the rebels at Corinth. The frequent mention of hospitality in particular suggests that antagonism had been directed not only toward the Corinthian presbyters, but perhaps toward emissaries from other churches as well, possibly to

messengers from Rome (cf. 63:3; 65:1). What is needed above all else is humility, and Clement speaks of many who exemplified this virtue (13:1–19:1), preeminently Christ Himself (16:1–17) and David (18:1–16).

The keynote of the next subsection is peace and harmony, which Clement illustrates from the natural creation (19:2–20:12). He reinforces his appeal to the Corinthians by pointing to the reality of divine judgment and the hope of resurrection (21:1–28:4). Creation and redemption are inextricably bound together as the basis on which he presses home his argument. To support the idea of a future resurrection he can appeal without much distinction to Scripture, to the raising of Jesus Christ, to the regularity of nature, and even to the strange legend of the phoenix bird who renews himself every fifty years (25:1–5), a legend which is paralleled in several of the pagan “natural histories.” Clement brings to a close his general discourse on the Christian life with an emphasis on holiness as the way to the blessedness that comes from God (29:1–36:6). Here his argument is heavily laced with Scripture citations, not only from the OT but from the NT as well (esp in ch 36, the Epistle to the Hebrews). The words of 36:6, “Who then are the enemies?” anticipate the last main section of 1 Clement, which turns once more to the Corinthian situation.

Clement adopts military imagery as the framework for his solution to the problem afflicting the church. He reiterates the divinely established order which must govern all things (37:1–43:6) and simultaneously pleads with and warns those who he feels have violated this order (44:1–48:6). After a short excursus on love (49:1–50:7) he renews his appeal for repentance (51:1–59:2), closing with a long liturgical prayer for harmony (59:3–61:3) and a summary of his argument (62:1–65:2). The epistle is carried from Rome to Corinth by “faithful and prudent men, who have lived among us without blame from youth to old age, and they shall be witnesses between you and us” (63:3). These three messengers are named in 65:1 with the request that they be allowed quickly to return to Rome, hopefully with news of reconciliation.

1 Clement has considerable historical importance as a witness to the authority exercised by the church of Rome over a sister church near the end of the 1st century. Such authority is not surprising in view of the city of Rome’s relation to Corinth as a Roman colony, and in any case it should not be forgotten that two decades later Ignatius bishop of Antioch does not hesitate to instruct the churches of Asia Minor. There is therefore no reason to assume that the authority reflected in 1 Clement belonged to the Roman church in any exclusive way.

II. Second Clement

The designation of Clement’s epistle as “first” is really a misnomer, for there is no authentic “second” letter from him to any church. The document known in tradition as 2 Clement is not an epistle but an anonymous sermon of uncertain date. Doubt was expressed about its authenticity as early as Eusebius (HE iii.38.4). It generally circulated with 1 Clement in the later Church, and is extant in the same two Greek manuscripts and Syriac version as the other writing, though it is not found in the Latin or Coptic versions. Codex Alexandrinus breaks off after ch 12 so that the complete Greek text was unknown until the Bryennios discovery of the Constantinople manuscript in 1873. This find made it clear that the document was indeed a sermon, for a specific occasion of public worship is presupposed. The hearers are exhorted to “pay attention” both “now” and “when we have gone home,” and to “try to come here more frequently” (17:3; cf. 19:1).

The traditional association with 1 Clement suggests that it was written in Rome, though its non-epistolary character weakens Harnack’s theory that it is the lost letter of Bishop Soter to the Corinthian church. Certain similarities with the Shepherd of Hermas (e.g., 2Clem 8:6) tend to confirm Roman origin. The use of material otherwise more familiar to us in Gnostic writings suggests that 2 Clement comes from a time and place in which orthodox and Gnostic alike drew on a common stock of traditions. In 12:2–6 the author takes a saying now known to us from the Nag Hammadi Gospel of Thomas Logion 22 and (with no trace of polemic)

attaches to it a wholly orthodox interpretation (much as the Gnostics took apostolic traditions and without hesitation interpreted them in Gnostic fashion). R. M. Grant feels that such a practice points to the time around A.D. 140 when such Gnostic teachers as Marcion and Valentinus were active in Rome without being immediately rejected as heretics. This is possible, though there is every likelihood that this kind of fluidity between “orthodox” and “Gnostic” traditions existed in many times and places in the 2nd century.

This ancient Christian sermon begins with a reflection on the salvation which God has granted to the gentile hearers (1:1–4:5). They must not take lightly either the salvation itself or Jesus Christ through whom it has come. He must be acknowledged as Lord, along with God the Father, not only with words but with deeds as well. The preacher appeals to Isa. 54:1 and to certain sayings of Jesus (cf. Mk. 2:17; Lk. 19:10) to make his point that those who were lost are now saved (2:1–7). It is perhaps significant for an understanding of authority in the second-century Church that the author appeals to Scripture and tradition, and to the OT and “the Gospel” (8:5; cf. 2:4) in much the same way. He confronts his hearers with the choice between this world and the world to come (5:1–7:6) and calls them to repentance (8:1–20:5). This repentance is defined as “self-control” (15:1) or “keeping the flesh pure” (8:6). This demand is grounded in the complicated argument that Christ (and with Him the Church) was originally “spirit” but became “flesh,” and that in the resurrection the flesh will rise again as it “receives the Spirit” (9:1–5; 14:1–5). More broadly and simply, the demand is grounded in the fear of judgment and hope of the kingdom of God (10:1–12:6; 16:1–3; 17:4–7). Again and again the preacher renews his call to repentance (8:1f; 13:1; 16:1; 17:1; 19:1), urging that if they repent, his hearers will save both themselves and him their counsellor (15:1; cf. 19:1). Like the ancient prophets, he sees his own fate intertwined with those to whom he ministers.

III. Barnabas

Once again the title (the Epistle of Barnabas) is a misnomer. Though Clement of Alexandria (e.g., Misc. ii.31.2) and Origen (*Contra Celsum* i.63) attributed it to Barnabas the companion of Paul, it is an anonymous work, and Eusebius classed it among the “spurious” (HE iii.25.4) or at least “disputed” (vi.13.6; 14.1) books circulating in the ancient Church. Yet its inclusion in the fourth-century Greek manuscript of the Bible, Codex Sinaiticus, testifies to the great esteem and near-canonical status it enjoyed in some sectors of the Church. In addition it is contained in the Constantinople manuscript (see above under First Clement), and in a family of nine Greek manuscripts in which Barn 5:7ff is abruptly joined to Polycarp’s Epistle to the Philippians (after 9:2) without a break of any kind. There is also a Latin version, in somewhat abridged form, of the first seventeen chapters of Barnabas, as well as a few Syriac fragments and a number of quotations by Clement of Alexandria.

The date of this work cannot be established with any certainty. A statement in 16:4 indicates that the Jerusalem temple is in ruins, thus supporting a date between A.D. 70 and 135, but attempts to be more specific are only conjectures. The reference in 4:4 to the ten kingdoms of Dnl. 7:24 is simply traditional apocalyptic language and should probably not to be made the basis for any conclusions about the epistle’s date.

Though it cannot be proved that Barnabas the companion of Paul did *not* write this book, neither the range of possible dates nor the nature of the document itself makes the tradition that he did very plausible. The author is apparently writing to Gentiles who have been saved out of darkness and idolatry (14:5–8; 16:7), and he claims to write as one of their own (1:8; 4:6). The most obvious affinities of Barnabas are with Alexandrian Christianity, as evidenced on the one side by similarities in its OT exegesis with Philo, and on the other by the acquaintance with Barnabas shown by Clement and Origen. Barnabas is more likely the work of a gentile Christian of Alexandria in the early 2nd cent than of the Jewish Christian from Cyprus mentioned in the book of Acts.

The introduction (1:1–2:3) is rather general and gives only a slight indication of what is to follow. The author presents himself as one whose task it is to impart perfect knowledge to his readers (1:5), not as a teacher (which he apparently is), but as a father to the children he loves. This knowledge has to do with the past, the present, and the future (1:7; cf. 5:3). The knowledge about the future turns out to be conventional eschatological teaching (e.g., ch 4); the knowledge of past and present, which comprises most of the epistle, turns out to be a series of allegorical interpretations of the OT. In the ancient prophetic tradition, the author makes it clear that God does not desire ceremonial fasts and sacrifices, but justice and mercy (2:4–3:6). The readers are called on to be ready for the eschatological crisis and not to be lured into the false security that deceived the Jews under the old covenant (4:1–14). He underscores the greatness of the Christian calling by a discussion of the work of Christ, who suffered to prepare a new people and to bring to completion the sins of the old Israel. He illustrates many aspects of Jesus' career by quotations and allegorical interpretations of OT passages (5:1–8:7). Especially elaborate is his exegesis of Gen. 1:26, 28 and Ex. 33:1, 3 (6:8–19), of the ritual of the Day of Atonement (7:3–11) and of the red heifer ritual of Nu. 19:1–10 (8:1–7). Then he offers "spiritual" interpretations of such Jewish institutions as circumcision and the various Mosaic food laws (9:1–10:12). His procedure is to reinterpret ceremonial rules as moral and ethical exhortations. Even though he employs these interpretative principles in the framework of a polemic against the Judaism of his day, the author of Barnabas had ample precedent for his sometimes fanciful exegesis within Judaism itself (notably Philo and the Letter of Aristeas). Turning his attention to what is distinctly Christian, "Barnabas" finds many subtle intimations in the OT of the water of baptism, the wood and the shape of the cross, and even the name and person of Jesus Himself (11:1–12:11). Here Barnabas exhibits several of the same interpretative traditions which show up in more detail in the writings of Justin Martyr.

The heart of the Epistle of Barnabas is the contrast between the old covenant and the new, with the assertion that God's true covenant belongs not to the Jews but to the Christians (13:1–14:9). Correspondingly the ancient sabbath has given way to the Christian "eighth day," or Sunday, in which Jesus rose from the dead (15:1–9), just as the physical temple in Jerusalem has been replaced by the spiritual temple, the Christian community where God has made his dwelling (16:1–10). Chapter 17 reads like a conclusion; though there is more he could write about present and future (cf. 1:7; 5:3), it is "hidden in parables" and he judges that what he has said is sufficient (17:2).

There is thus a definite break at the end of ch 17 and in fact the Latin version ends at this point. But the Greek manuscripts make a new beginning with the words, "But let us move on to other knowledge and teaching" (18:1). This begins the famous "Two Ways" section of Barnabas (18:1–21:9), which is paralleled in Did 1:1–6:2. The way of light (ch 19) is under the rule of God through his angels, while the way of darkness (ch 20) belongs to the angels of Satan (18:1f). This "Two Ways" teaching is by no means profound or "hidden in parables," but sounds more like elementary instruction for new converts (which is exactly how it functions in the Didache). Older commentators argued for literary dependence of Barnabas on the Didache or of the Didache on Barnabas, but the more recent tendency has been to favor the dependence of both on a common primitive source. There are, for example, close parallels between the "Two Ways" tradition and the Qumrân Manual of Discipline (1QS 3:18ff). It is surprising to find in such an anti-Jewish document as Barnabas a section like this in which there is little or nothing that is distinctively Christian, but in which all that is said can function appropriately in either a Christian or a Jewish setting. The most plausible explanation is that Barnabas comes from a gentile Christian community in which the basic instruction given to new converts from idolatry and paganism necessarily focused as much on general moral principles and things which Christianity inherited from Judaism as it did on the distinctively new Christian message of the cross. New converts needed to be taught

to love each other and give alms, and to shun idolatry, murder, lies, and witchcraft. Nothing could be assumed. There is some evidence that “Barnabas” is at times alluding to this moral catechism even in the earlier parts of his epistle (e.g., 1:4; 2:9; 4:1, 10; 5:4), and chs 18–21 give the impression that the author (or someone else) has simply appended the full text of his source for the sake of completeness. Certainly the Latin tradition witnesses to the fact that Barnabas circulated without this material as well as with it. But in any case the author or final editor has attached a summary which draws together chs 1–17 and 18–20 and serves as the conclusion to both (ch 21). The very first verse of this concluding statement makes it clear that “Barnabas” has made use of the primitive “Two Ways” material in written form (21:1). Like the NT writers, the author knows that his readers are never too mature to be reminded of what they have been taught at conversion.

IV. Didache

The longer title of this work, “The Teaching of the Lord, through the Twelve Apostles, to the Gentiles,” gives a clue to its nature. It seems to be a work conceived against the background of Mt. 28:18–20, purporting to give the content of that which the twelve apostles taught to the “Gentiles” or “nations” of the things which Jesus the Lord had commanded. It therefore stands in a tradition somewhat different from the one which sees Paul as the apostle to the Gentiles par excellence and the Twelve as missionaries to the Jews (cf., e.g., Gal. 2:9); instead the Twelve, representing the whole Church, are sent to the whole world, and indeed especially to the Gentiles. Shorter variations of this title (e.g., Teaching [or Teachings] of the Apostles) are cited by several patristic writers (e.g., Eusebius HE iii.25.4; Athanasius *Festal Letter* 39; the ninth-century Stichometry of Nicephorus), but there is no way to be sure that they are identical to the work now known by this name.

This work really came to light for the first time in the Constantinople MS discovered by Bryennios. As a result of the publication of the full text of the Didache in 1883, the “canon” of

the Apostolic Fathers was enlarged by one. It then became possible to go back and see that the Didache in Greek was actually to be found (in a somewhat revised form) in book vii of the fourth-century Egyptian Apostolic Constitutions. In addition there are fragments in Greek (Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 1782), Coptic, and Ethiopic, and a complete Georgian version. For the “Two Ways” section there is (besides the witness of Barn 18–20) a Latin version (the *Doctrina*) the fourth-century Apostolic Church Order, and three other manuals of the 4th cent or later. There is no way of being sure that the Constantinople MS represents the “original” Didache nor even what the term “original” exactly means in such a context. We are not dealing here simply with textual variants as we do when studying the NT, but with a developing tradition, and our various witnesses to the Didache merely afford us glimpses of this tradition at various stages. Total agreement is seldom possible as to which forms are primitive and which are later adaptations. Therefore it is difficult to speak about dates, but the compilation of purportedly apostolic material under the name of the apostles as a group indicates that the apostles are already figures of the past. This together with the apparent use of Matthew’s Gospel tends to suggest a date of composition in the 2nd cent, though many specific elements (e.g., the prayers, the “Two Ways,” and the eschatological teaching) may well go back to the apostolic age and even perhaps to the early days of the Jerusalem church.

The “Two Ways” section of the Didache comes at the beginning (1:1–6:2) rather than at the end as in Barnabas. The “way of life” is found in 1:2–4:14 and the “way of death” in 5:1f, with a brief summary in 6:1–3. The parallels with Barnabas are rather close, though by no means verbal. Didache contains an interpolation in its “Two Ways” material, consisting of words of Jesus based on Matthew and Luke and/or an unknown collection of traditional sayings (1:3b–2:1). This section is missing from the “Two Ways” both in Barnabas and in the *Doctrina*. It has been inserted here as the “teaching” or explanation of the negative form of the Golden Rule found in 1:2. Thus 2:2–7 (which does belong to the “Two Ways”)

becomes the *second* such explanation (2:1), this time using a traditional list of prohibitions based on the Ten Commandments.

Didache 3:1–6 is another interpolation into the “Two Ways,” this time designed to warn against certain attitudes and practices which lead to the more serious sins enumerated in ch 2. In good rabbinic fashion the author or compiler is “building a fence around the law” (cf. *Mish Pirke Aboth* i.1) by avoiding even that which might lead to sin. Unlike the NT, however, the Didachist seems to locate the real sin in the act rather than in the heart. The attitudes are dangerous because of what they engender, not because they indicate a sinful nature already at work. In his appended conclusion to the “Two Ways” (6:1–3) the editor adds a pragmatic touch to bring the commands within reach of everyone: if the readers can bear the whole “yoke of the law” they will be perfect, but if not, they must simply do the best they can (6:2).

In 7:1–4 the theme is baptism, with a clear indication that the “Two Ways” material has functioned in the Didache as instruction designed for baptismal candidates. After reviewing “all these things” the community is to “baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (7:1). This closely parallels Mt. 28:19f, where “teaching the Gentiles” to obey Jesus’ commands is linked to baptism involving the same trinitarian formula. Ch. 8 deals with fasting and prayer, centering on a version of the Lord’s Prayer quite similar to that found in Matthew. Here for the first time a doxology is attached to the prayer; this doxology is repeated twice in chs 9f, and along with a shorter formula (“To thee be glory forever”) is used to punctuate the eucharistic meal prayers found in those chapters. These prayers, before (9:1–5) and after (10:1–7) the meal, are traditional and very ancient, exhibiting a number of parallels with Jewish table prayers, and embodying traces of a primitive Palestinian Christology which described Jesus as God’s servant or as the “holy Vine of David.”

The rest of the Didache addresses itself to other concerns of the ancient Church in no particularly logical sequence: the testing of traveling teachers and prophets to tell the true

from the false (11:1–12:5); the responsibility of the congregation to those who are found to be worthy (13:1–7); the Sunday gatherings for worship (14:1–3, possibly eucharistic again as in chs 9f); the qualifications for resident leaders (bishops and deacons) with an appeal to have respect for them and to be at peace with one another (15:1–4); and finally a chapter of eschatological instruction, including a call to readiness and a small apocalypse (not unlike Mt. 24) which sets forth the events leading up to the end of the age and the return of Christ (16:1–8).

Thus the Didache as we know it is a compendium of practical teaching on various subjects which must have come up in the course of the Church’s fulfillment of its commission to teach the Gentiles. The Jewish or Jewish Christian origin of much of the material makes the Didache (along with Matthew) an important witness to the fact that segments of Jewish Christianity besides the Apostle Paul took seriously their calling to be a light and a blessing to the nations. Syria is a plausible locale for such a community of Jewish Christians. Though recensions of the Didache, or parts of it, can be traced to Egypt, Ethiopia, Rome, etc., many scholars have suggested Syria or Palestine as the setting of the form of the tradition found in the Bryennios MS. The parallels with Matthew and the references to bread or wheat gathered from the “mountains” (9:4) point in this direction, but no one really knows.

V. Ignatius

The letters of Ignatius, bishop of Antioch at the beginning of the 2nd cent, are known to us in three recensions.

(1) The short recension, accepted today as the authentic collection of Ignatius’ writings, consists of the seven letters mentioned by Eusebius in HE iii.36.5–11: four from Smyrna, to the churches of Ephesus, Magnesia, Tralles, and Rome; and three from Troas (after leaving Smyrna), to the churches of Philadelphia and Smyrna, and to Smyrna’s bishop, Polycarp. They were said to have been written while Ignatius was en route from Syria to Rome to suffer martyrdom (HE iii.36.3f; cf. Ign Rom. 5:1).

(2) The long recension consists of thirteen letters in all, in the following order: two from Antioch — one from a certain Mary of Cassobola (a neighboring town) to Ignatius, and Ignatius' letter to her in reply; the four from Smyrna and three from Troas found in the short recension; three from Philippi, to Tarsus, Antioch, and Hero (Ignatius' successor as bishop of Antioch); and one from Italy to Philippi. In addition there are some extensive interpolations in the seven letters from Smyrna and Troas mentioned by Eusebius. In the early Middle Ages this collection was enlarged still further by two letters to the apostle John, one to Mary the mother of Jesus, and one from Mary to Ignatius in return! Even though these latter were soon rejected as forgeries, the works of Ignatius continued to be known in the Church only in the long recension until the middle of the 17th century.

(3) The Syriac abridgement, discovered by W. Cureton in 1845, is a Syriac version consisting of only three epistles (to the Ephesians, to the Romans, and to Polycarp), similar in form to the short recension.

The dominance of the long recension began to be broken in 1644 when Archbishop James Ussher published an edition of Ignatius based on two medieval Latin MSS which, while containing all the letters of the long recension, provided an uninterpolated text of the seven core epistles known to Eusebius. Soon afterward a Greek MS was found which confirmed the existence of the short recension. It contained the epistles of the short recension in the same uninterpolated form, except for Romans; a martyrological text discovered a few decades later supplied this lack with a similarly short text of Romans. Since then, as the result of careful investigations of Theodor Zahn, J. B. Lightfoot, and others, scholarship came to a point of virtual consensus in favor of the short recension. Though some for a time defended the originality of the Syriac abridgment, the consensus still stands. In addition to the Greek and Latin witnesses and the Syriac abridgment mentioned above, there are fragments in Greek, Syriac, and Coptic, and an Armenian version. In his letter to Polycarp, Ignatius states that he was unable to write to all the churches because

he was taken on short notice from Troas to Neapolis on the Macedonian coast. He asks Polycarp to write to the churches that lay ahead on his itinerary, so that they might have news of Ignatius and send messengers or letters to him (Ign Polyc 8:1). The first of these churches would be the one at Philippi, and we have Polycarp's letter to this church, in which he states clearly that he is sending them "the letters of Ignatius, which were sent to us by him, and others which we had by us" (Polyc Phil. 13:2). Presumably these would include Ignatius' letters to Smyrna and to Polycarp as well as copies of the four letters written from Smyrna (i.e., all the letters except that to the Philadelphians, a copy of which *may* have been sent to Polycarp as well). Thus Polycarp was the earliest collector of the Ignatian corpus and the person chiefly responsible for its preservation.

Without discussing each of Ignatius' letters in detail, it can be said that they share a common structure which enables the reader to know more or less what to expect: first there is an elaborate salutation with praise for the church and its bishop; then often an appeal to live in harmony with the bishop; then usually some attention to the particular heresy threatening the church; and finally some reference to Ignatius' own situation and that of the church in Syria.

The theology and Christology of Ignatius arises out of a life situation in which three factors were at work: (1) his sense of impending martyrdom, (2) his awareness of the threat of heresy and schism, and (3) his concern for unity in the churches under the authority of the bishop.

(1) The factor of martyrdom looms largest in his letter to the Romans, where his aim is to make sure that the church at Rome does nothing to prevent his execution by the Roman authorities. For him to die as a martyr is to "attain to God" (Ign Rom. 1:2; 2:1; 9:2) or to Christ (5:3), to "become a disciple" (4:2; 5:1, 3) or a true Christian (3:2), to be reborn (6:1) and thus fully to "become a man" (6:2). His death is a sacrifice (2:2; 4:2), sometimes specifically a eucharistic sacrifice. For Ignatius, violent death means participation in the sacrifice of the flesh

and blood of Jesus Christ. To be martyred is to receive the sacrament of the eucharist in the ultimate sense (7:3). He longs to be devoured by wild beasts and ground as wheat so as to become the “pure bread of Christ” (4:1). If the beasts are reluctant, he will entice and compel them to destroy him (5:2). Such language has led to a widespread characterization of Ignatius as morbid and fanatical in his longing for self-annihilation, but two qualifying factors must be kept in mind: first, his language is only an extension and a heightening of similar phrases used by the apostle Paul (e.g., Phil. 1:23; 2:17; 3:10; Col. 1:24; ff); second, he saw his death as virtually inevitable and so addressed his concern to the one church which, for its own sake, most needed to see Ignatius’ death as a victory and to interpret it in this way to other Christians and to the world.

Ignatius draws freely on Pauline language, and a case can be made that he, like Paul, sees himself as a decisive figure in the redemptive historical plan of God for the world. Though (like Paul) he is the “least” and like an “untimely birth” (Ign Rom. 9:2; cf. 1 Cor. 15:8f), his great journey from East to West is as crucial to him as Paul’s collection journey to Jerusalem (and from there to Rome and possibly Spain) was to the apostle (cf. Paul in Rom. 15:16–33; also 1Clem 5:5–7). Mal. 1:11 seems to stand behind Ignatius’ thinking here as a kind of hidden Scripture citation: observance of the eucharist in the gentile churches “from furthest east to furthest west” is the proof that now God’s name is “great among the nations” (cf. Did 14:3; Justin Martyr Dial 41.2; 117:1). To Ignatius this eucharistic sacrifice finds supreme expression in the sacrifice of his own life (Ign Rom. 2:2; 7:3).

(2) The threat of false teaching comes to the surface especially in his letters to the Magnesians, Trallians, Smyrneans, and Philadelphians. Heresy is compared to a deadly poison (Ign Trall. 6). It seems to have confronted Ignatius in two forms: a re-Judaizing of the Christian message not unlike the threat which Paul faced, and a docetic denial of the reality of Jesus’ human nature. With regard to the first, Ignatius follows Paul in warning that “if we are still living according to Judaism, we

acknowledge that we have not received grace” (Ign Magn 8:1; cf. Ign Philad 6:1). He argues that even the ancient prophets were disciples of Jesus Christ in the Spirit (Ign Magn 9:2; cf. 8:2), and that we who stand in their tradition must therefore observe not the sabbath but the Lord’s Day, on which Christ rose from the dead (9:1). Though Ignatius retains and respects the OT, his supreme authority is Jesus Christ whom he knows first of all not through ancient Jewish prophecies but through the proclaimed message of the gospel (Ign Philad 8:2; 9:2). Having placed his faith firmly in Christ on this basis, Ignatius then goes back and “after the fact” sees the prophets and the OT scriptures as witnesses to him. His answer to the Judaizers is to test the Jewish Scriptures by means of the new Christian tradition, not the tradition by the Scriptures. It is no accident that he seems much more influenced by Paul and John and certain freely quoted sayings of Jesus than by the OT. We have no way of knowing who these Judaizers were, but one statement (Ign Philad 6:1) suggests that they may have been gentile converts to Judaism and Jewish Christianity who developed an extreme zeal for the law. We are reminded of the references in the book of Revelation (2:9; 3:9) in letters to Smyrna and Philadelphia (!) to “those who claim to be Jews, but are not.”

With regard to Docetism, the second heresy which he faced, Ignatius even provides us with the derivation of the term. He speaks of those who say that the suffering of Jesus was unreal, a semblance (Gk *tó dokein*), and condemns them by claiming that it is they who are unreal, for they shall become like phantoms, without bodies (Ign Trall 10:1; cf. Smyrn 2:1). He affirms that Christ *really* suffered and *really* rose from the dead (Ign Smyrn 2:1). Because they deny this, the heretics abstain from the eucharist, which witnesses to the reality of Jesus’ flesh (7:1). Once again Ignatius’ appeal is to the validity and necessity of this sacrament, the “medicine of immortality” and antidote to all such poisonous teachings (Ign Eph. 20:2); more immediately, he argues from his own experience of imminent death. If Christ’s sufferings are unreal, then why is Ignatius a prisoner, longing for the sword and the beasts of the arena? (Ign Smyrn 4:2; Trall 10:1). His

campaign against heresy is thus not waged in a vacuum but always and inevitably within the context of his life (and death) situation.

(3) The third concern of Ignatius has to do with church order and submission to the bishop's authority. His theology may be described as *sacramental* in both a narrower and a broader sense. In the narrow sense it is clear that he puts great emphasis on the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. But in the broad sense his thought is sacramental in its insistence that spiritual realities must find their embodiment in that which is visible and physical. Just as Jesus was no phantom but actually "became flesh" (cf. Jn. 1:14), so the Spirit must "become flesh" in different ways in order to have any validity or authority. Flesh is not a worldly or evil principle opposed to the Spirit, as it is sometimes in Paul, but rather as in John the natural and appropriate sphere in which the Spirit must express Himself. This is clear in Ignatius' theology of the eucharist, which builds upon Jn. 6:52–58 with its demand to eat the flesh and drink the blood of the crucified and risen Lord (see Ign Eph. 20:2; Smyrn 7:1). But where John limited his insistence on "flesh" to the sacrament and to the historical reality of Jesus Christ, Ignatius extends it also to the matter of church organization. In fact there can be no valid eucharist unless the bishop (or someone he appoints) is present to celebrate it (Ign Smyrn 8:1f; cf. Magn 4:1). John's sacramentalism is combined with virtual silence about particular offices or ministries, but to Ignatius spiritual realities must find their embodiment in the structure of the institutional Church. Ignatius is the first real advocate of episcopacy in the ancient Church — probably not episcopacy in the modern sense of one bishop supervising a group of churches each with its individual pastor, but in an incipient form involving "one man rule" in each local congregation. This is of course a form of "episcopacy" which is found today in the vast majority of Christian denominations, even those which follow a "congregational" type of church government, but it is not characteristic of the NT period.

Ignatius undergirds his high view of episcopal authority with theological arguments and

elaborate imagery. At Ephesus the presbytery "is attuned to the bishop like the strings of a harp" so that "by your concord and harmonious love, Jesus Christ is sung" (Ign Eph. 4:1). Unity is essential to the Church, and for Ignatius this means unity with the bishop, even as the Church is united with Jesus Christ and Jesus with the Father (5:1). The bishop is sent from the Lord and is therefore to be regarded as if he were the Lord himself (6:1; cf. Mt. 10:40). Sometimes the bishop represents Jesus Christ (e.g., Ign Trall 2:1); at other times the bishop represents the Father, while the deacons represent Christ the servant, and the presbytery the apostles (Ign Trall 3:1; cf. Magn 6:1). While on the one hand he is the divine representative, on the other he is the embodiment of the whole congregation, especially as it ministers to the needs of Ignatius himself, the prisoner (e.g., Ign Eph. 1:3, Trall 1:1). The churches must recognize and submit to his authority and do nothing apart from him, just as Jesus did nothing apart from the Father (Ign Magn 7:1; Trall 2:2). Even though his function is not primarily that of prophecy or teaching, his authority is beyond question (Ign Eph. 6:1; 15:1), for he is the administrative leader of the church. There can be only one bishop even as there is only one eucharist (Ign Philad 4:1). Nevertheless, Ignatius knows that the bishop is not absolutely essential for a church. His own church at Antioch is of course without its bishop for a time. God is its shepherd in place of Ignatius, and Jesus Christ alone is its bishop (Ign Rom. 9:1). For this reason, however, the other churches are to support Antioch with their prayers. The one church in which nothing is said of a bishop is the church of Rome, and it is possible that the supreme authority there still lies with the presbytery, as it did a short time earlier according to the witness of 1 Clement. There is every indication that these major theological concerns of Ignatius are all tied together in his mind. His martyrdom is a kind of ultimate expression or illustration of the reality of the eucharist; the eucharist depends for its validity on the authority of the bishop; the sacrament and the episcopal office together bring about and guarantee the unity of the Church so as to furnish the antidote to the

deadly poison of false teaching. This means that Ignatius is also a pivotal figure in preserving and drawing together several strands from the NT: Paul's intense consciousness of mission, John's emphasis on the reality of the "flesh" both in the Incarnation and the sacraments, the developing institutionalism which can be seen in Matthew and in the Pastoral Epistles, and the concern over heresy which appears conspicuously in the Pastoral and the Catholic Epistles (e.g., 2 Peter, Jude, 1–3 John). Perhaps more than any other theologian, Ignatius bridges the apostolic and the subapostolic periods.

An especially valuable feature of Ignatius' corpus, from the standpoint of the history of Christian thought, is his preservation of earlier creedal formulations, some of which must reach well back into the NT era. Even more conspicuous here than the customary emphasis on the cross and the resurrection is the particular attention given to the birth of Jesus, somewhat in the manner of the Pauline formula in Rom. 1:3. Jesus is born of Mary from the family of David (see Ign Eph. 18:2; Trall 9:1; Smyrn 1:1; cf. Ign Eph. 7:2; Magn 11:1). The virgin birth takes its place in the core of the Christian message, not primarily as a proof of Jesus' deity, but as a witness to his humanity and his messianic descent from David (cf. Mt. 1f). A different expression of this theology of birth comes in the great hymn in Ign Eph. 19 to the new revelation in Jesus Christ by which God broke the ancient powers of magic and wickedness. Mary's virginity and childbearing introduce nothing less than the manifestation of God to man "for the newness of eternal life" (19:3).

VI. Polycarp

The letter of Polycarp bishop of Smyrna to the church at Philippi appears to be a kind of "covering letter" for the Ignatian corpus which Polycarp sends on to the Philippians (Polyc Phil. 13:2; and see above). It exists in nine Greek MSS, all apparently based on a single archetype. These MSS break off after ch 9 (see above on Barnabas), though there exists a Latin version which is complete. Thus most of chs 10–14 are known to us only in Latin. Ch. 13,

however (all but the last sentence), can be found (along with ch 9) quoted in Greek in EusebiusHE iii.36.13–15.

As a man — though not as a theologian — Polycarp stands even more than Ignatius as a link between the apostolic and the subapostolic ages (HE iii.36.1, 10). Irenaeus, who claims to remember him, identifies him as a disciple of the apostle John, and an opponent of Gnosticism (*Adv. haer.* iii.3.4; cf. his letter to Florinus in EusebiusHE v 20.4–8). Polycarp's traditional connection with John on the one hand and Irenaeus on the other makes Irenaeus' testimony to the apostolic authorship of the Fourth Gospel a particularly weighty piece of evidence. Polycarp seems to have been involved not only in the Church's conflict with Gnosticism, but also (somewhat more amicably) in the early disputes over the date of Easter (Irenaeus, in EusebiusHE v.24.14–18).

Irenaeus speaks of several letters of Polycarp to various churches, but only the letter to the Philippians is now extant. It may be dated as roughly contemporary with the letters of Ignatius (i.e., within the reign of Trajan, and probably around A.D. 110). P. N. Harrison argued that the Philippian epistle is really two epistles copied on the same scroll: the first, consisting of chs 13f, was the original covering letter for the Ignatian epistles, while the second was written perhaps twenty years later, when the name of "blessed Ignatius" the martyr had become a memory (see 9:1f). This is possible, but MS evidence for it is lacking. Moreover, (a) it is not altogether certain that Ignatius is assumed to be dead in 9:1; (b) sufficient time may have elapsed between Ignatius' letter to Polycarp and Polycarp's letter to the Philippians for Polycarp to assume that Ignatius was by this time a martyr; (c) it is not entirely clear whether the end of 13:2 refers to an inquiry about Ignatius' current situation or about the circumstances of his death.

Whether regarded as one letter or two, the Epistle to the Philippians is a rather conventional document, especially in contrast with the writings of the creative and almost flamboyant Ignatius. To a considerable extent it is a patchwork of allusions to NT books (e.g., 1 Peter, 1 Timothy, and most of the rest of the

Pauline letters) and to 1 Clement. Polycarp commends the Philippians for their faith and endurance, and summons them to continue in the service of God (chs 1f). He speaks to them of righteousness at their invitation, though he declines to compare himself with “the blessed and glorious Paul” who had taught the word of truth and written letters to them. In the Pauline tradition, Polycarp sees righteousness as coming through faith, hope, and love (ch 3). He sets forth the duties of groups in the church, husbands, wives, widows, deacons, younger men, and presbyters (chs 4–6; no bishop is mentioned). He then warns against heresy in terms reminiscent of John: “Everyone who does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is an anti-Christ” (7:1; cf. 1 Jn. 4:2f; 2 Jn. 7). In the face of denials of resurrection and judgment, the Church must return to the tradition it received in the beginning (7:2), and imitate the endurance of Christ and the martyrs (chs 8f). Christian believers are to love each other and give alms (ch 10), avoiding the greed that has led some astray (e.g., a certain presbyter named Valens, 11:1–12:1). Polycarp closes the epistle with a benediction, an appeal to pray for fellow Christians and for rulers, some final remarks about Ignatius and his letters, and a word of recommendation for the messenger who will bring the epistles to Philippi (12:2–14:1).

If any one theme can be singled out, it is expressed by the phrase “concerning righteousness” in 3:1 (cf. 3:3; 4:1; 8:1; 9:1f). Though Polycarp connects this theme with Paul, he develops it not in the Pauline sense but in terms of rather conventional exhortations to virtue and faithfulness. He is more concerned to preserve and hand down traditions of generally-accepted Christian truth than to shape or adapt them to particular needs or situations, much less to move out in any new directions. Polycarp’s epistle is of more interest for its sources than for itself.

VII. Martyrdom of Polycarp

This most ancient of Christian martyr accounts takes the form of a letter from the church of Smyrna to the church of Philomelium in Phrygia, and beyond that church “to all the

parishes of the holy universal church in every place” (Mart. Polyc, inscr; cf. 20:1 and 1 Cor. 1:1). It gives every evidence of being what it claims to be, an eyewitness report (15:1), apparently written within a year of the event it describes (18:3).

The Martyrdom of Polycarp is known in six Greek MSS, in extensive quotations by Eusebius (HE iv.15) and a Latin version (Armenian, Syriac, and Coptic versions are simply based on Eusebius). The most reliable Greek witness is generally considered to be the so-called Moscow MS. Several appendices volunteer information about the Martyrdom’s transmission: a certain Gaius claims to have copied it from papers belonging to Irenaeus (a disciple of Polycarp), and at a later time a certain Pionius claims to have transcribed it from a copy whose location was revealed to him by “the blessed Polycarp” himself in a vision (22:2f). Another conclusion, found only in the Moscow MS, seems to attribute the actual writing of the Martyrdom to Irenaeus and goes to great lengths to emphasize the close connection of Irenaeus with Polycarp. (At the exact moment when Polycarp died in Smyrna, Irenaeus heard a voice in Rome saying, “Polycarp has been martyred”!) Such traditions seem to be shaped by a desire to reinforce the links between the orthodox fathers and the apostles. Though the reference to Gaius may well be authentic, much of the rest is open to serious question. Still another appendix (21:1) offers an exact date for the martyrdom (Feb. 23, 155, or Feb. 22, 156, according to different methods of reckoning), which disagrees with the date of 166/167 fixed by Eusebius in his *Chronicon*. The ruling officials mentioned in 21:1 and 12:2 suggest in any case a date before 160. But in general the epistle itself carries more marks of its own authenticity than do the appendices which were written to validate it.

The writer introduces his narrative as a “martyrdom in accord with the Gospel” (1:1), and prefaces the actual story of Polycarp with a few briefer accounts of those who had just previously suffered for Christ (2:1–4:2). He makes the point that to give oneself up voluntarily or to seek martyrdom is not in accordance with the teaching of the gospel

(4:2). Polycarp's martyrdom was thus "in accord with the Gospel" by virtue of the fact that "he waited to be betrayed, as also the Lord had done" (1:2). Such martyrdom is also "in accord with the will of God" (2:1). This theme of not forcing God's hand or the hand of the oppressors is part of a larger complex, in which parallels between Polycarp's death and the death of Christ are noted and stressed. After withdrawing from the city, Polycarp is hunted by a police captain named Herod and betrayed by young slaves who belong to his own house (6:2). He is arrested late in the evening in an "upper room" by police armed as if advancing against a robber (7:1; cf. Mt. 26:55). He refuses to flee, but like Jesus in Gethsemane says "the will of God be done." After a long prayer (7:3) he is taken back to the city riding on an ass on a "great Sabbath day" (8:1). Because of his great age, he is urged to say "Caesar is Lord," offer the right sacrifices, and so spare himself; but he refuses and is taken to the arena (8:2f). Here he is questioned and commanded to denounce Christ and the Christians by shouting "Away with the atheists" (i.e., those who deny the Roman gods). Instead he motions to the pagan crowds looking on and says of *them*, "Away with the atheists" (9:2). He then confesses that he is a Christian and has been for 86 years (thus dating his birth at A.D. 70 or earlier), and refuses to renounce his faith, even under the severest threats (9:3–11:2). The martyrdom itself is described in some detail (12:1–16:2), focusing on such features as the particular role of the Smyranean Jews — even in violation of the sabbath (12:2; 13:1; 17:2; 18:1; cf. Rev. 2:9), the last prayer of Polycarp (14:1–3), and the miracles attending the death itself (15:2; 16:1). He is burned alive, in fulfillment of his own vision (cf. 5:2).

It is clear from this account that although there is an interest in showing similarities between the martyr's death and that of his Lord, this interest has not been pushed so far as to violate the probabilities of what actually happened. Several features (e.g., Polycarp's great age, the death by burning, the "great Sabbath day"), do not fit this pattern and are not forced. Though he is like a ram to be sacrificed he is not nailed but bound in the fire (14:1). Moreover the element of the miraculous, though present, is

somewhat more restrained than in later martyr accounts.

After his death Polycarp's body is destroyed and his bones are taken by the Christians to an appropriate place (17:1–18:2) where they intend to celebrate "the birthday of his martyrdom" (18:3). Here we have the beginning of the later custom of treasuring the relics of the saints, but also the concept that martyrdom is not an end, but a birth into another life. It is fully in accord with Ignatius' notion that he will truly become a disciple only when he gives up his life.

The concluding chapters summarize Polycarp's career (19:1f), and identify a certain Marcion (not the heretic) as the one who drafted the letter on behalf of the church of Smyrna (20:1f). Though we know nothing else of this person, he probably deserves to be called the author of this church epistle just as much as Clement deserves to be called the author of the famous letter from the Romans to the Corinthians (see above).

In the appendices (21:1–22:3) a noteworthy feature is the exact time reference in 21:1, where the names of the asiarch and the proconsul are given, but instead of naming the emperor the text concludes "Jesus Christ was reigning for ever, to whom be glory, honor, majesty, and an eternal throne" Whatever its claim to authenticity, this citation has caught the point of Polycarp's confession (see 8:2; 9:2f). Not Caesar but Christ is Lord.

VIII. Papias

Papias, like Polycarp, was traditionally believed to have been a disciple of the apostle John (Irenaeus *Adv. haer.* v.33.4). He was bishop of Hierapolis in Phrygia during the first half of the 2nd cent A.D. (Eusebius HE iii.36.2), whose writings are known to us only in fragments quoted by later fathers. At first (in his *Chronicon*) Eusebius accepted the claim that Papias was a hearer and eyewitness of the apostles, but later disputed it on the basis of an interpretation of one of Papias' own statements (HE iii.39.2). He attributes to Papias a work consisting of five treatises and entitled "Interpretation of the Sayings of the Lord," in

which Papias claims to draw much of his information from “the presbyters” or their followers concerning what the Lord’s disciples had said or were saying (iii.39.1–4). Eusebius argues that this puts intermediaries between Papias and the apostles. But the case is not conclusive, for a few lines later Eusebius himself speaks of “the apostles” and “their followers” (iii.39.7), apparently as a clarification of Papias’ reference to the presbyters and their followers. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that for Eusebius no less than for Papias, “presbyters” and “apostles” can be used interchangeably. This raises a serious question about Eusebius’ effort in the context to draw a sharp distinction between the two, especially between John the apostle (whom Papias mentions with other members of the Twelve), and John the presbyter (named with a certain Aristion as Papias’ contemporary). Many theories have been built on Eusebius’ exegesis here, but it should not be too quickly assumed that two Johns are mentioned, especially since: (a) both times the name occurs, it refers to a “disciple of the Lord,” and (b) both times it is found in close association with “presbyter.” It is clear that Eusebius is not self-consistent at this point, and the traditional view that Papias speaks of the aged apostle John first as a man of the past and then as a contemporary should not be summarily ruled out. All this has considerable bearing on the traditions about the Fourth Gospel, but does not enable us to fix the role of Papias with any exactness. Whether mediated by “presbyters” or simply by “followers,” Papias’ knowledge does seem to be at least once removed from the apostles themselves. In this respect Eusebius is right.

Another tradition preserved by Papias describes the Gospels of Mark and Matthew. According to Eusebius, Papias attributes to “the Presbyter” a statement that Mark presented his Gospel without making an ordered arrangement of what Jesus had said and done. He simply followed the oral teaching of Peter, becoming in effect Peter’s recorder (HE iii.39.15). Matthew on the other hand did what Mark did not do: he made an ordered arrangement of the gospel in the Hebrew language (or a Hebraic style). Thus each of

them presented the gospel according to the possibilities open to him (iii.39.16). We have no statement of Papias preserved about Luke and John, but the Gospels are presumably the “interpretations” or “presentations” which he proposes to supplement with the oral traditions of the presbyters (iii.39.3). Though he does not disdain the written Gospels, he attributes equal or greater authority to “the living and abiding voice” of the apostles or of those who (like Mark) were their followers (iii. 39.4).

Other statements attributed to Papias reflect this interest in oral traditions. He cites, for example, otherwise unknown sayings of Jesus about a coming thousand-year reign on earth (iii.39.11f; cf. Rev. 20:1–6), and about unbelievably plentiful harvests of grapes and wheat on the earth in those days (IrenaeusAdvhaer v.33.3f, a tradition supposedly from Jesus by way of John and the “presbyters”). He also preserves stories of apostolic miracles involving in one case the daughters of Philip (cf. Acts 21:8), and in another the Justus Barsabbas of Acts 1:23f (EusebiusHE iii.39.8–10). He refers to an account of a woman accused of many sins in the Lord’s presence (HE iii.39.17; cf. Jn. 7:53–8:11), and is said to have been responsible for a particularly gruesome report of the death of Judas Iscariot now found in commentary fragments of a fourth-century writer named Apollinaris of Laodicea. A number of other statements are assigned to Papias by late historians and epitomists, including references to a martyrdom of the apostle John, and even a legend that Papias wrote the Gospel of John at the apostle’s dictation! In such accounts the uncertainty about Papias himself is compounded by the tendentious and confusing growth of legends about him and about the apostles he is supposed to have known.

Largely because of his extravagant depictions of millennial plenty, Eusebius described Papias as a “man of very little intelligence” (HE iii.39.13). Though this verdict is perhaps unfair on such limited data, Papias seems to have been a person who was fascinated by eschatological hopes, especially when they involved extravagant and bizarre projections of certain features of the present life into the future.

IX. Shepherd of Hermas

The longest of the writings of the Apostolic Fathers is also one of the most remarkable. The Shepherd of Hermas is part novel and part apocalypse, with the literary features of both of these genres directed toward an overall purpose of edification and moral exhortation. It is divided into three sections, commonly known as the Visions, the Mandates, and the Similitudes.

The work is found in three Greek MSS: the fourth-century biblical Codex Sinaiticus, containing only Vis 1:1:1 through Mand 4:3:6; Codex Athous, from the 15th cent, ending at Sim 9:30:2; and Papyrus 129, containing Sim 2:8 through Sim 9:5:1. In addition there are a number of Greek fragments, two complete Latin versions (the Vulgate and the Palatine version), an Ethiopic version, and a few fragments in Coptic and Middle Persian. This means in Sim 9:30:3 through 10:4:5 we are mainly dependent on the Latin for our text.

The first four visions form a literary unit. The fifth and last of the visions is really the introduction to the twelve Mandates and ten Similitudes which are to follow, and in a very real sense belongs with them in the structuring of the book. This is acknowledged even in the MS tradition. Codex Sinaiticus entitles the fifth Vision the fifth "Revelation"; before the fifth Vision the Palatine version says, "Here begin the Twelve Mandates of the Shepherd," and (most significantly) the Vulgate says, "The fifth Vision is the beginning of the Shepherd." There is indeed a sense in which the Shepherd of Hermas proper begins with the fifth Vision. The Coptic Sahidic version and apparently Papyrus 129 originally began at this point, and some of the patristic citations provide further evidence that at times the book circulated in this shorter form. The most obvious difference between the two major divisions is that in the first four Visions the Church in the form of a woman is the revealer of what is seen, while in the fifth Vision to the end the mysterious figure known as the "Shepherd" assumes this role.

The Visions are unusual among apocalyptic writings in that the author writes in his own name instead of assuming the guise of some

great man of the past. He begins in an autobiographical vein, introducing himself as a former slave in Rome who entertains desire in his heart for a woman named Rhoda, who had once been his owner. She reproves him in an initial vision by a river for his evil desire, and warns him to repent (Vis 1:1:1-9). In subsequent visions an aged woman (representing the Church) appears to him assuring him that his sin is thus far potential rather than actual, but that he must take steps to convert and discipline his family (1:2:1-1:4:3). More important he is to bring a message to the Church that a limiting day has been fixed: Christians who have sinned and repent before that day will be forgiven, but those who have not repented by that time will not be forgiven (second Vision). He is shown a tower being built, which like the aged lady represents the Church. The different kinds of stones put into the tower represent various types of Christian believers who comprise the Church which, though old as creation, is nevertheless still in process of being completed. Around the tower are seven maidens representing the virtues which must belong to those who find a place in the tower (third Vision). Finally he sees a vision of a great dragon or Leviathan, representing the great persecution to come and is shown how to escape it through faithfulness (fourth Vision).

In the fifth Vision Hermas meets the shepherd to whom he has been "handed over" (5:1:3f), and who dictates to him the Mandates and the Similitudes (Vis 5:1:5f). In spite of the familiarity of the biblical image of the Good Shepherd (e.g., Jn. 10), this shepherd is not Christ. Elsewhere the Son of God is identified with the "glorious man" who appears in a later sequence as the lord of the tower (Sim 9:12:8), and even he is not so much Christ himself as the Spirit of God manifest in human flesh, whether of Jesus or of Christians (see Sim 5:6:5f; cf. 9:1:1). As for the shepherd, he is identified as the "angel of repentance" (e.g., Vis 5:7; Mand 12:4:7). He is a christological figure in that he carries out certain functions normally assigned to Christ. But in himself he is simply an angel sent to watch over and instruct Hermas.

The Mandates are a series of moral injunctions (not unlike the Didache) perhaps intended in

part for new converts. They urge such things as belief in God, simplicity and generosity, truth, purity, faith, and cheerfulness, and warn against bitterness, double-mindedness, grief, and evil desire. They grapple with the specifics of such problems as divorce and second marriage and the testing of false prophets. They bear the marks of very early traditional material and, like the "Two Ways" in Barnabas, recognize two angels at work in man, one of righteousness and one of wickedness. Their aim is to help believers to know the difference and to choose always what is good.

The Similitudes, or Parables, are told to Hermas by the shepherd to illustrate the things he has learned from the Visions and the Mandates. Among these are the parables of the two cities (on the heavenly citizenship of the Christian), the elm and the vine (on mutual responsibilities of rich and poor), the trees in winter and summer (on the differences between the righteous and the sinners, which become apparent only in the "summer" of the world to come), the vineyard (on the Christian's stewardship of the Spirit that God has given him), and the willow tree (on different types and classes of believers, distinguished by the use they have made of their gifts and by the quality of their repentance).

The ninth Similitude, the so-called parable of the tower, is by far the longest, and in fact encompasses more than a fourth of the whole Shepherd of Hermas. Essentially it is a long elaboration and reinterpretation of the third Vision, the vision of the Church as a tower. It is set apart from the first eight Similitudes by a time lapse of a few days (Sim 8:11:5) and seems to presuppose that Hermas has already written down the rest of the Similitudes and Mandates (9:1:1). This distinction of the ninth Similitude from the rest is anticipated as early as Vis 5:5, in which the shepherd tells Hermas, "First of all write my commandments and the parables; but *the rest* you shall write as I shall show you." Some have argued from this that the ninth Similitude is a later addition, but if so the final editor has prepared for it carefully and woven it skillfully into the literary structure of the whole work. Possibly the first four Visions represent a substratum (either of traditions or

of personal visionary experiences) which the author has drawn up and made the basis of a moral appeal to the Church. Thus the ninth Similitude in particular would be a special adaptation of the third Vision to the needs of a somewhat later time. Certainly the ninth Similitude speaks more overtly to a real ecclesiastical situation. The Church is no longer an idealized eschatological community as in the third Vision but a real institution existing in history. Instead of being kept out of the tower altogether (Vis 3:2:7-9; 3:7:5) the unsuitable stones are already there and need to be removed (Sim 9:4:7; 9:6:5), like the bad fish in Jesus' parable of the net (Mt. 13:44-50).

Such signs of development in the tradition suggest that the dating of the Shepherd of Hermas is no simple matter, and the external evidence and internal evidence confirm this. The threat of persecution in the fourth Vision and the apparent absence of a monarchical bishop suggest the last decade of the 1st cent or slightly later. The locale is clearly Rome (Vis 1:1:1), and the mention of Clement in Vis 2:4:3 may indeed refer to the Roman presbyter who wrote 1 Clement. There is even a remarkable confirmation of the "limiting day" for the forgiveness of sins committed after baptism (Vis 2:2:4f) in a tradition recorded by Hippolytus of Rome that a Jewish Christian (Ebionite) prophet named Elkesai announced just such a day in the third year of Trajan (i.e., about A.D. 100; Ref. ix.13). A multitude of distinctly Jewish features in the thought and terminology of the Shepherd of Hermas suggest that this document's tradition arises not in the church of Rome as such but probably in a distinctly Jewish Christian subculture within, or on the property of, the church from which Clement wrote and to which Ignatius addressed his letter.

Over against the evidence for an early date is the witness of the Muratorian Canon (from Rome shortly before 200) that "Hermas composed the Shepherd quite recently in our times in the city of Rome, while his brother Pius held the office of bishop." This would yield a date close to 150. Though certainty is impossible, perhaps a series of visions originating in a small Jewish Christian

community in Rome were later made available and began to circulate in the mainstream of the Roman church, and in the process were greatly enlarged (by either the original author or someone else) and adapted to the needs and ecclesiastical situation of a larger Christian community made up of Jews and Gentiles.

In any case there is no doubt that the Shepherd of Hermas became popular in the later Church; it was an exciting story with allegorical features (like *Pilgrim's Progress* in another era), and it spoke pointedly to the ever-recurring problem of sin and repentance in the life of the baptized Christian. Origen considered it inspired and identified its author with the Hermas of Rom. 16:14 (comm *on Romans*, inloc). Though Eusebius rejected it, he admitted that it was widely quoted and read publicly in the churches, being considered especially valuable "for those who need elementary instruction" (HE iii.3.6). Irenaeus' quotation of the elementary instruction in the first Mandate as "Scripture" (*Adv. haer.* iv.20) seems to support this, though it is not impossible that Irenaeus is drawing on an earlier catechism to which Hermas itself is also indebted. The value of the Shepherd of Hermas today does not lie in its theology; its author can hardly be called one of the "Fathers" (apostolic or otherwise?). Rather, like the somewhat later NT apocrypha, it is worthwhile because of the vivid glimpse it affords of the "grass roots" piety and the practical concerns of the churches around Rome in the 2nd century.

Thus the so-called "Apostolic Fathers," though brought together in later tradition arbitrarily and seemingly almost by chance, offer to the student of the Bible by their very diversity at least a cross section of the Christian literature produced in the first few decades after the NT period. If he is perceptive they will teach him that diversity is no scandal for the Church, but is always the inevitable and healthy result when revealed truth confronts a variety of life situations.

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