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*LECTURES IN PATROLOGY*

**THE**  
***APOSTOLIC FATHERS***

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For the English Texts of the Apostolic Fathers writings refer to:

1. Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. 1.
2. J.B. Lightfoot: The Apostolic Fathers, Michigan, 1956.
3. Penguin Classics, Maxwell Stanifort: Early Christian Writings, 1968.
4. The Apostolic Fathers, Light and Life Publishing Co., Minnesota, 1978.

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Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, King of Kings and  
Lord of lords



**THE BEHOLDER OF GOD  
MARK THE EVANGELIST  
SAINT AND MARTYR**



*H.H. Pope Shenouda III, 117th Pope of  
Alexandria and the See of St. Mark*

*LECTURES IN PATROLOGY*

*INTRODUCTION  
TO  
PATROLOGY*

# **THE CONCEPT OF PATROLOGY<sup>1</sup>**

The importance of Patrology is of a growing interest, for this science researches in the lives of the Fathers, their literature, and thoughts.

Contemporary Christians are eager to discover the faith of the early (Universal) catholic<sup>2</sup> Orthodox Church and acknowledge her spirit. In fact, the story of the Fathers is the story of the early church in all its aspects of worship, pastorship, social concepts, preaching, spirituality, etc. It is the story of the living church of the time, who embraced her children through divine love. It taught them to face the pagan world and the heretics with love, to deliver them as her beloved children, guide them to overcome their evils, and to acknowledge their errors and heresies. The mother church strives for their spiritual growth and ultimately their salvation.

## **METHODS OF PATRISTIC STUDIES**

In studying Patrology, we face two integral systems:

1- The scientific system, which the West adopts: Scholars are interested in publishing the texts of the Patristic literature in a scientific accurate translation to modern languages, criticizing them and studying their doctrines and thoughts: theological, ascetic, spiritual, biblical, etc.

2- The spiritual system, which the East adopts: The Eastern churches are interested in enjoying the richness of the Fathers' spirituality, by penetrating the depth of the texts and putting them to practice within the church life.

These two systems are inseparable, for they are integral. The scientific system helps to establish sound basics, and the spiritual system transfers the texts into life and practice.

## **PATROLOGY**

The word “Patrology” is derived from the Latin word “Pater” which means “Father.”

Patrology is the science which deals with the life, acts, writings, sayings, doctrines and thoughts of the orthodox writers of the early church.

1) The life of the Fathers: In order to understand their writings and sayings, their lives and the environment in which they lived, must also be considered.

2) Their acts: The writings, sermons, dialogues, letters, etc. of the Fathers are inseparable from their own lives. Patrology’s message is to be sure of the authenticity of these acts scientifically, publishing them and translating them in modern languages.

3) More importantly is the discovery of the thoughts of the Fathers, their dogma, doctrines and concepts concerning God, man, church, salvation, worship, creation, the body, the heavenly life, etc.

Patrology is the door through which we can enter into the church and attain her spirit, which affects our inner life, conduct and behavior. Through Patrology, the acts of the Fathers are transferred into living thoughts and concepts which are based on a sound foundation, without ignoring the world around us.

## **THE FATHERS OF THE CHURCH**

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are called the “Patriarchs,” or the Fathers of Israel (Gen. 1:24 LXX; Exod. 3:13, 15; Duet. 1:8; Acts 3:13; 7:2, 12; Rom. 4:12, 16; 2 Pet. 3:4).

According to the Jewish tradition the official title of the scribes was “Father.”

In the New Testament Church, the Jewish and pagans on the martyrdom of St. Polycarp of Smyrna, were crying: “This is the Father of the Christians<sup>3</sup>.”



When St. Athanasius referred to St. Dionysius of Alexandria, St. Dionysius of Rome and others, he used the term “Fathers.”

## **WHAT DO WE MEAN BY THE TERM “FATHER” IN PATROLOGY?**

In the first century, teaching was a bishopric work, or a “Fatherly” work. Teaching was not merely presenting some dogmas or doctrines, but presenting a living experience, which the disciples examined, together with their Fathers. Teaching and discipleship were inseparable. Through true Fatherhood, the bishops and priests, looked to “teaching” not merely as a fruit of theoretical dogmas, but of their fatherly love, through which they can repeat the words of St. Paul, “In Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the Gospel” 1 Cor. 4:15.

✠ *When a man learns from the mouth of another, it is said that he is the son of the person who teaches him, and the latter is called his father.*

St. Irenaeus<sup>4</sup>

✠ *The speech is the son of the soul, therefore we call those who teach us our fathers.*

St. Clement of Alexandria<sup>5</sup>

In Patrology the term “Fathers” was not confined to bishops, priests and deacons, but included all those who supported us with orthodox Christian literature. This designated the apologists who defended the Christian faith in the early church even though they were not clergymen. It also designated the leaders of the monastic life who escaped from priesthood but they had many disciples who practised evangelical asceticism.

Certain qualifications are necessary and only some of the ecclesiastical writers are called Church Fathers . These qualifications are:

a. The “Father” according to Patrology, is the one who participates in the Christian Literature, such as discourses, dialogues, letters, sermons, advises and (or) commentaries on some books of the Scripture.

b. Orthodoxy of doctrine: The “Father” examines the church life without deviation from orthodox doctrines.

There are, however, some exceptions for the title “Father.” It has been conferred upon those who have valuable literature, although they have inclined towards some heretic attitudes, e.g. Tertullian, Tatian, Origen, Eusebius of Caesarea.

Patrology is concerned with the study of the writings of heretics and the apocryphal in order to understand the whole environment of the church, and its surroundings. This gives an insight into how she stood in the face of heresies and witnessed to the truth, struggling to serve even the heretics themselves and win them back to the kingdom of God.

c. Holiness of Life: Orthodoxy of doctrine and holiness of life are integral. We study Patrology to enjoy the evangelical life of the church, and to attain the spirit of the early church, through her saints who offered their lives, side by side with their teachings, as a living record that witnesses the living truth.

To ensure the orthodoxy and holiness of life, the writings of the fathers were mostly introduced by the words, “an essay (or an epistle) of our Father, Saint...”

d. Antiquity: Some scholars see that the Patristic epoch starts by the Apostolic Fathers down to the sixth century. Others take it further to the eighth century while others see that there is no specific era for the Fathers. They believe that it extends throughout all ages, for

the Spirit of God is working in the Church of Christ, as in every age there are saintly teachers and “Fathers.”

e. The Catholic Church admits another condition: the approval of the Church through canonization. However the Orthodox Church does not canonize the Fathers. She has no official list of saints and Fathers, but suffices to proclaim the heretical writings and excommunicate the heretics until they return to the truth, denying their heresies. The Church has only a list of the saints who are referred to in the liturgy of the Eucharist and in the church hymns, asking for their prayers for the salvation of the world.

## **THE AUTHORITY OF THE FATHERS**

To what extent do we have to accept what the patristic literature has included?

The holy fathers’ sayings represent the thoughts of the universal (catholic) Church, as received from the Apostles, guided by the Holy Spirit Who unceasingly acts in the church.

St. Augustine says: [*They hold fast with what they found in the Church, practised what they had learned and what they had received from the fathers*<sup>6</sup>.] [*He who despises the holy Fathers, must know that he despises the whole Church*<sup>7</sup>.]

This authority is based on two elements:

1. Natural element: The Fathers are mostly known by their saintly lives and their faithfulness in receiving the deposit of the living faith from the Apostles. They were witnesses to the true Church life in all aspects. They acquired almost the same spirit as the Apostles in spite of the great differences in their cultures, gifts and circumstances.

2. Divine element: The Fathers lived under the guidance of the Holy Spirit who directed the Church to the truth. We do not be-

lieve in the infallibility of the Fathers as individuals. However, the church as a whole, is always preserved in her faith by the Spirit of God.

### **HOW CAN WE USE THE WRITINGS OF THE FATHERS?**

1. We must not rely on the writings of a single Father, because no one is capable of acknowledging the “truth” in its entirety. We only accept the opinion of a Father, if it is in harmony with the Bible and the church tradition.

2. We must not rely on one or more separate quotation from the acts of any Father, but rather study all his thoughts and understand the quotations within his whole work. We must also consider the circumstances and the church environment, at that time. We must not single out one or more quotations to form our own opinion.

3. We must study the meaning of the terms which a Father had used. Sometimes they had certain contemporary philosophical or popular concepts of the era. Some Fathers used the same pagan or heretic terms of that time, especially when they wrote to certain worldly groups. They wrote to them, using their (pagan) own terms, language and concepts.

4. It is very useful to study the meaning of some difficult terms by comparing them with the same terms used by their contemporary Fathers.

### **USING THE WRITINGS OF THE FATHERS**

St. Athanasius used some quotations from the writings of the Fathers in his works<sup>8</sup>.

St. Basil depended on many quotations from the writings of the Fathers.

This attitude increased in the fourth century, and increased more and more in the fifth century<sup>9</sup>. As an example, St. Cyril of Alexandria in his writings to the Egyptian monks<sup>10</sup>, to defend the use of the term

“Theotokos,” referred to the writings of the saints. Secondly, in assuring the Trinitarian faith, he used the wisdom of the holy Fathers. Again in his writings against Nestorius<sup>11</sup>, he declared that the Holy Spirit spoke in the holy Fathers.

## **THE COPTS’ INTEREST IN THE WRITINGS OF THE FATHERS**

From the early centuries the Copts were interested in the writings of the Fathers. This is evidenced by the increased Coptic manuscripts that are found. They translated Patristic literature into the popular language.

✳ As an example there are many Coptic papyrus for the Apostolic Fathers:

✳ A papyrus preserved in the National Library in Berlin contains Coptic translations (Akhmimic) of the Epistle of St. Clement of Rome to Corinth (4th century).

✳ Another at Strasbourg contains quotations from a translation of the same letter (7th century).

✳ Many copies of the Coptic translation of the Epistles of St. Ignatius of Antioch, which the scholar Joseph Lightfoot refers to, are preserved in the National Library of Vienna and the British Museum.

✳ Manuscripts contain Coptic translations (Sahidic dialect), for the “Shepherd” of Hermas, published by Delaporte. Other manuscripts contain a translation of the same act bought by Lefort in Cairo.

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1. Fr. T. Y. Malaty: The Apostolic Fathers. 1992, Ch. 1. (in Arabic).

2. The word “Catholic” is an eastern term (Greek) was used to express the universality of the church.

3. Marty. Polyc. 12:3.

4. Adv. Haer 4:41:2.
5. 4:41:2.
6. Contra Julian 2:9.
7. Ibid 37.
8. Ep. ad Afros 6.
9. Kelly: Early Christian Doctrines, p. 48-49.
10. Ad. Monach p. 77: 12, 13.
11. In Joan. Nest. 4:2.

# THE HISTORY OF PATROLOGY<sup>1</sup>

The Lutheran theologian, John Gerhard, from the seventeenth century, was the first scholar who used the word “Patrologia” as a title of his work, which he published in 1653. But the idea of publishing the sayings of the fathers dates back to the early centuries of Christianity.

We may divide the history of Patrology into four epochs, which may be introduced in succession:

- 1. The beginning of the spread of Christianity.*
- 2. The church historians epoch.*
- 3. The setting of “De viris Illustribus.”*
- 4. A new scientific epoch.*

## 1. THE BEGINNING OF THE SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY

In this epoch the Patristic literature was considered as a part of the church tradition. Every generation receives it as a living gift (deposit) which is passed on to the following generation. Thus the Patristic literature was spread not for scientific research, but as a precious gift (deposit) that declared the life of the church and her faith, to be practised throughout ages.

In other words, it is not preserved in museums or libraries of scientific institutions or seminaries to be studied and criticized, but as an open living gospel written by the life and acts of the church guided by the Holy Spirit. A continuous testimony for the unceasing redeeming work of God throughout ages.

Thus, our Fathers were interested in this precious treasure, not as an ancient spiritual literature to be preserved, but as a continuous church life to be experienced.

## **HOW THE PATRISTIC LITERATURE WAS PRESERVED AT THAT EPOCH:**

a. It was preserved as part of the deposit of faith. One can acknowledge how the church was interested in its preservation from the following quotations:

✠ *It is fit for us to preserve the tradition we have received from our forefathers without change.*

St. Gregory of Nyssa

✠ *I am a lover of the true teachings, pursuing the spiritual steps of my Fathers.*

St. Cyril of Alexandria<sup>2</sup>

It is preserved through the discipleship system, that every generation enjoys the discipleship of the former one. Many disciples wrote in their private diaries statements and stories about their spiritual Fathers who helped them in their spiritual progress.

On many occasions, when a spiritual Father departed from this world, one of his disciples, especially the one who was in close contact with him, would write a biography of him, including his private behavior, sayings, and advises.

b. Some believers were eager to record the sermons of their spiritual fathers. These sermons included commentaries on biblical texts, spiritual topics, theological items etc. Many sermons of St. John Chrysostom and St. Augustine were recorded by those who admired them.

c. Many diaries, memories and books were written by pilgrims. St. John Cassian (360-435 A.D) for example who visited Egypt and met many Abbots of the monasteries in Egypt, wrote his well-known two books: The “Conferences” (dialogues with many desert fathers), and the “Institutes” which dealt with the canons of mo-



nasticism and the methods of victory for a monk in his spiritual struggle.

Palladius, the historian of monks (c. 365-425) visited Egypt and acknowledged her ascetics. He also met St. Didymius the Blind, the dean of the school of Alexandria several times. He wrote his book “The Lausic History” or “The Paradise of the Fathers.”

The historian Rufinus (c. 345-410) recorded in his work, “The History of Monasticism,” some speeches of the Egyptian desert fathers. He visited Egypt in 372 A.D, and studied there for some years, and became a disciple of St. Didymius the Blind.

d. The school of Alexandria attracted many church leaders who transferred its literature to their churches.

e. The translation of the Patristic literature, especially from Greek to Latin, Syriac and Ethiopian.

St. Jerome devoted himself for a long time in translating the works of Origen, whom he admired.

The work of St. Athanasius “The life of Anthony” was translated in many languages.

The sayings of the Egyptian fathers were recorded in Greek and translated into Latin.

Rufinus translated some works of Origen and St. Clement of Alexandria.

Many Coptic literature was translated to Ethiopian and Nubian languages.

f. Many Coptic monks and deans of the school of Alexandria visited other countries with the aim of preaching and establishing monasteries. They spread some of the Coptic literature in new areas.

## **2. THE CHURCH HISTORIANS' EPOCH**

Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 260 - c. 340 A.D) is considered as “The Father of Patrology,” who established the idea of publishing the sayings and writings of the fathers<sup>3</sup>. In the introduction to his work: “The Ecclesiastical History,” written in 326 A.D, he states that he intends to report about “the number of those who, in each generation, were the ambassadors of the word of God either by speech or by pen, the names, the number and the age of those who were driven by the desire of innovations to an extremity of error, have heralded themselves as the introducers of knowledge, falsely so called<sup>4</sup>.”

He actually presented a list of all the writers and their works. He also recorded part of the quotations to most of them. His book is the most important reference in Patrology, though some of the works from which he quoted had been lost. In spite of its numerous errors it is still the only reference to some of the early Christian writers.

This book motivated many of the writers in the East and the West to complete it. They are called “The Church Historians,” such as Socrates, Sozomen and Theodoret. Their works are similar, but they mostly ignore the western church. In the west Rufinus translated Eusebius’ work into Latin, and added to it some events until the age of Theodosius the Great (392 A.D). These additions have little value.

## **3. THE SETTING OF “DE VIRIS ILLUSTRIBUS”**

This book “The Illustrious Men” is composed by St. Jerome (342 - 420 A.D), in 392 or 393 A.D, by the demand of his friend Dexter. This work defended the church from the accusation of Celsus, Prophyry, Julian and other pagans who thought Christians were not intelligent. St. Jerome records the Christian writers (till 379 A.D), who were rich in their literature. It consists of 135 chapters, starting with the

apostolic age until his days. Each chapter represents a biography of a writer and his works.

In his work, St. Jerome, imitated Suetonius, who published his book: “The Illustrious Fathers” in c. 100 A.D. He dealt in brief with the renowned Latin writers<sup>5</sup>.

### **REMARKS ON “DE VIRIS ILLUSTRIBUS”**

a: St. Jerome depended on Eusebius in the first 78 chapters, though he stated that he did not depend on previous writings. Yet he repeated Eusebius’ same errors. He was considered the only source for some early writers, i.e. Marcius Felix, Novetian, Tertullian etc.

b: In the introduction he mentioned that his work was bound by those who wrote concerning the holy Scripture, but in fact it included those who wrote on theological issues.

c: As he published it, St. Augustine criticized it<sup>6</sup>, saying that Jerome did not separate the Orthodox writers from the heretics. It included some heretics, i.e. Tatian, Priscillian, Basdesanes and Eunomius; and pagan philosophers, such as Seneca. It also included some Jewish writers, such as Philo of Alexandria and Josephus.

d: E. C. Richardson stated that Jerome did not compose it for scientific purposes but for practical reasons. He wrote very briefly about well-known writers, such as. SS. Athanasius, Basil the Great, Cyprian, Gregory of Nyssa, Epiphanius and Ambrose.

e: St. Jerome ignored the writings of St. Augustine which were published at that time, perhaps because of the contention which existed between them.

This work has its precious value in the West. Although it is more than a thousand years old, it is regarded as a basis of all their studies in this branch. Attempts are still being made to complete it.

This work was well-connected with the work of Gennadius, a priest in Marseilles (died at 496 A.D).

### **REMARKS ON GENNADIUS' WORK**

a: Richardson states that this work has little value, and is out of sequence when compared with that of St. Jerome. However, we cannot ignore the fact that it is a very useful addition, which may be considered as a second volume of Jerome's work.

b: It consists of 99 chapters, and continues till 495 AD. It concludes with the writings of the author himself.

c. Gennadius was semi-Pelagian, and this has influenced his work, at the same time he was a man of extensive knowledge and accurate judgment. His work remains of prime importance for the history of ancient Christian literature.

Many writers composed works in the same style, such as Isidore of Seville (died 646 A.D.), who gave special interest to the Spanish writers<sup>7</sup>; and his disciple Ildephonsus of Toledo (d. 667 AD).

Before the end of the eleventh century and the beginning of the twelfth, in Belgium, the Benedictine historian, Sigebert of Gemblou, tried to compose a book that included the Christian literature up to his age. In his book he dealt with the ancient Christian writers after Jerome and Gennadius. He set the biography of the Fathers in order, and wrote his remarks on the Latin theological authors in the beginning of the middle age, without referring to the Eastern Fathers.

In 1122 Honorius Augustodunum composed similar work, giving it the title, "*De Luminarebus Ecclesiae* (The Luminous church)."

In 1135 the so-called Mellicesis published his book "*De Scriptoribus Ecclesiasticis*."

Around 1494 Fr. Johannes Trithemius provided us with a biography of 963 fathers and writers, with some details concerning their writings. Some of them were not theologians.

Fr. Trithemius was a well-known Benedictine abbot Sponheim, who established a library of about 2000 volumes. Many nobles used to visit him to read about the Greek and Latin fathers. Deacon Myraus embraced this work and corrected it.

Afterwards Cardinal R. Bellarmine was interested in the ancient church Literature in a practical way.

In the East, Photius (died on 891 A.D), the Patriarch of Constantinople, composed a similar work, which was known by its accuracy, and it included the works of some pagan authors.

In the Coptic church, the Synixarium, which included the biography of saints, was composed. Some historians, such as John (Yohana) of Necius appeared. The monasteries were also very interested in copying the writings of the early fathers.

In the 15th century, Neceforius Kalisty of Constantinople, made a summary of the previous works and wrote the history of the church from its establishment until 911 A.D.

#### **4. A NEW SCIENTIFIC EPOCH.**

A new epoch started in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, by publishing the first series of the ancient church writings in an exquisite style.

In the nineteenth century many patristic texts were discovered and there were serious desires to study these texts scientifically. Many academic institutions and universities established special branches for this subject.

The twentieth century has been predominantly concerned with the history of ideas, concepts, and terms in Christian literature, and the doctrine of the various ecclesiastical authors<sup>8</sup>.

## **OUR CONCERN**

When the western scholars are involved in Patrology, they look to the Church of Alexandria as a living fountain that spreads on the Christendom a great deal of the Patristic literature texts and spirit.

At the end of the middle age and the beginning of the modern age treasures of our libraries had been brought to the western museums and universities, which form a great part of the material of Patrology. J. Quasten says, “Moreover, the newly discovered papyri of Egypt enabled scholars to regain many patristic works which had been lost<sup>9</sup>.”

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1. Fr. T. Malaty: The Apostolic Fathers, 1991, p. 19-29 (in Arabic).

2. Fr. T. Malaty: The Church and Tradition, p. 9 (in Arabic).

3. J. Quasten: Patrology, vol. 1; The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, 1974, p. 481.

4. Eccl. Hist. 1:1:1.

5. J. N. D. Kelly: Jerome, 1975, p 175.

6. Epist. 40:9, written in 397.

7. F. Arvala: S. Isidore....., Rome 1797 to 1803, vol. 5, p. 138- 178. PL 83: 1018-1106; 96: 195-206.

8. Quasten, vol 1, p. 5.

9. Ibid.

# **IMPORTANCE OF PATROLOGY<sup>1</sup>**

Patrology is not just a branch of Christian Theology, it is an essential source of all branches of theology, because the lives and writings of the Fathers are an open and practical gospel that testifies to the whole aspect of Christian life and doctrines.

Patrick J. Hamell says, “Theological training is incomplete without the elements of the history of Dogma and Positive Theology. All the great theologians studied the Fathers carefully, and reveal that in their works by extensive quotations<sup>2</sup>.”

## **1. PATROLOGY AND BIBLICAL STUDIES**

The holy Bible is the book of the church, who accepts the Bible as the treasure of the divine promises, preserves it as her own, and interprets it in her life through the writings of her Fathers.

The church defended the Old Testament in her dialogue against the Gnostics, especially Marcion, and explained the harmony and unity between the Old and the New Testaments.

The Fathers present a treasure of the allegorical interpretation of the whole Bible, in addition to many historical and moral interpretations, through which one can enjoy the Bible today and offer its interpretation to the modern man.

## **2. PATROLOGY AND DOGMATIC LIFE**

Almost all the writings of the Fathers reflect the works of the Holy Trinity in our life, which is the core of our dogmas.

Patrology, which embraces the minutes and the statements of the local and Ecumenical Councils, helps us to deepen our understanding of the Christian dogmas and doctrines, at that time.

### **3. PATROLOGY AND COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY**

From the very start of Christianity the Church faced those who attacked her faith: Jews, Philosophers and Heretics. The church also endured the pressure practised by the rulers of the land. The church faced every group with its own terms and mentality. For example she depended on the prophesies from the Old Testament in facing the Jews, and philosophical logic and terms in facing the philosophical atheists, and the New Testament in facing the heretics, and love and long-suffering in facing the persecution.

Patrology supports us not only with the material but also with method by which we are to face the adversaries.

Moreover, Patrology discovers the Spirit of the Christian in facing those who resist his faith, taking care not to be absorbed into their errors and violence, rather desiring their salvation through love.

### **4. PATROLOGY AND ECCLESIASTICAL THEOLOGY**

Rarely do we find writings of the Fathers that looks into the Church, her concept, her worship etc. Almost all the writings of the Fathers reveal the work of the Holy Trinity in the Church, as God's own people, Christ's own Body, the temple of the Holy Spirit and the kingdom of God.

The church is declared through the Biblical-exegetical, apologetic, ascetic, sacramental, and spiritual writings.

Patrology reveals the meaning of the living Church tradition, and its contents: the faith in the Holy Trinity, Christ's works and sayings, the Christian morality and Christian worship. At the same time Patrology is an essential part of Church tradition.

### **5. PATROLOGY AND SACRAMENTAL THEOLOGY**

Patrology preserves the ancient liturgical texts which are the source of the sacramental theology. The early sacramental writings were offered mostly to the catechumens and the newly- baptized, but



for others, practising the sacraments was sufficient. The sacramental theology, as a branch of theology, appeared only after the attack against church sacraments, which occurred in the 16th century in Europe.

## **6. PATROLOGY AND CHURCH HISTORY**

The Early Church in her eschatological attitude was not interested in recording her history. The first true Church historian was Eusebius of Caesarea. By his work “Church History” he created the school of the Church historians in the East and the West. Nevertheless, Patrology supports us with many historical events and helps us to understand the meanings of many Church events.

## **7. PATROLOGY AND MARIOLOGY**

For many centuries we rarely find a homily and discourse on Mariology, for it is unseparated from Christology. In spite of that, we can say that Mariology had appeared in two attitudes:

a. Dogmatic: St. Ignatius of Antioch speaks concerning the Virgin birth of Christ as a living Church tradition that assures the Divinity of Christ<sup>3</sup>.

b. Apologetic: St. Justine strongly defends this Virgin birth against the Jews who said that he was a mere man<sup>4</sup>.

According to St. Irenaeus, the attitudes are met together when he compares St. Mary with Eve, calling her “second Eve.”

The school of Alexandria offered much in Mariology for it looked to the personality of St. Mary being fulfilling the genuine Christian thought in its triple aspects: ascetic, allegorical and dogmatic, because St. Mary is the model of virgins and ascetics. She also represents the inner glorious life. The title “Theotokos” assures the hypostatic union between Christ’s humanity and divinity, for He who was born is the true Son of God.

## **8. PATROLOGY AND ASCETIC WRITINGS:**

Patrology is the science that looks into the sayings and writings of the Fathers to acknowledge their own Spirit.

The work of St. Athanasius “*Vita Anotonii*,” the writings of pilgrimages, such as St. John Cassian, Palladius and St. Jerome; the Apophthegmata Patrum, the writings of some leaders of the monks, such as that of St. Isaac of Nineveh, uncover the ascetic life in the Early Church, as an evangelical life which touches the heart of the believer to enjoy the inner kingdom of God and to prepare his soul as a heavenly bride. It elevates his mind and soul to experience the pledge of the eschatological life.

This life is not an escape from the world for rest, but an entrance into an unceasingly spiritual battle.

It is worthy to note that the ascetic attitude has its effect almost on the life of every believer, and on the writings of the Fathers.

## **9. PATROLOGY AND THE SPIRITUAL THEOLOGY**

The spirituality of the Early Church can be uncovered not only through the ascetic writings, homilies and sermons on moral topics, but even through the apologetic writings and the texts of Church liturgies. Spirituality is a main line in the life, worship and writings of the Fathers.

## **10. PATROLOGY AND THEOLOGY OF EVANGELISM AND PASTORSHIP**

The Church’s spirit of witnessing to the evangelical life, by preaching and shepherding people is extended almost in all early Church writings, even in the ascetic writings. For preachers, the values of Patrology are immense.

## **11. PATROLOGY AND ECUMENISM**

Patrology helps us not only to acknowledge ecumenism, but also in realizing it. For the early Churches all over the world had

their ecumenical spirit, not out of gathering together in certain meetings and activities, but rather through their love for the salvation of all human being, and their unity in faith.

Ecumenism in fact is the return to the apostolic faith and thought, for it means oneness in faith, and openness of hearts for heavenly love, and unity with one God in Jesus Christ by the One Holy Spirit.

Embracing Patrology helps the Churches to attain the early ecumenical concepts.

Hamell says, “All Christian bodies hold the Fathers in high esteem, and the study of the Patristic writings should bring Christians to better knowledge of Christ’s teaching and promote unity<sup>5</sup>.”

## **PATROLOGY AND DEVELOPMENT**

For a long time many Christians regarded Patrology as a rigid work, which drew the church back to the ancient ages, without any progress. Now, many theologians and churchmen discovered the importance of Patrology in the success, progress and edification of the contemporary church. For Patrology explains the spirit of the early church and offers the experience of the church living tradition according to the needs of the contemporary church. Patrology gives us the genuine basics of the church life and thought, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit who guides her in the spiritual way to be united with the Father in the Son.

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1. See Fr. T. Y. Malaty: Introduction to Patrology, 1974, ch. 2 (in Arabic).

2. Patrick J. Hamell: Handbook of Patrology, 1968, p. 12.

3. Ad Eph. 19:1.

4. Dial. 48.

5. Hamell, p. 12 .

## **THE LANGUAGES AND TEXTS OF THE FATHERS<sup>1</sup>**

At the spread of Christianity during the early centuries of the Roman Empire, the Greek language became the dominant language throughout the Mediterranean region. Hellenistic civilization and literature had made such a thorough conquest of the Roman world, that there was hardly any town in the West in which the Greek language was not in everyday use. For this reason, Greek must be regarded as an essential language of patristic literature.

The Fathers did not write in classical Greek, which the Greek writers used in poetry, history, and philosophy, but in Koine (slang Greek), which became the official language of the Roman Empire from 300 B.C. to 500 A.D, the language of the Holy Scriptures, and the Fathers of the Early Church<sup>2</sup>.

In the East the Coptic, Syriac and Armenian languages took over the Greek language.

### **THE LANGUAGE OF THE EGYPTIAN FATHERS**

Some Egyptian Fathers preferred to write in Greek beside their national language (Demotic), for many reasons, such as the following<sup>3</sup>:

1. The Greek language was easier in writing.
2. It was the official language in Egypt. All official documents were in Greek, and whoever was ignorant of it used special scribes to write on his behalf.
3. It was the language of those who were well-educated in the great cities.
4. It was the Church language, used in the books of the New Testament and the Ecumenical Councils.

In the second century St. Pantaeus introduced the Coptic alphabet, by using the Greek letters added to seven letters from the ancient Demotic language, as the development of the Egyptian (Pharaoh's) language. Under the guidance of St. Pantaeus, his disciples especially St. Clement translated the holy Scripture to the Coptic language. All the Egyptian Christian literature was translated into Coptic before the fifth century.

Because of the accuracy of the meaning, the Copts were very cautious not to translate the theological Greek terms. Warrell states that the Copts refused the translation of the Theological terms<sup>4</sup>. For example, when they referred to the Holy Spirit they did not use the Coptic word (nevi) but the Greek (Pnevma).

After the Arab Conquest, the Copts were obliged to use the Arabic language. In the 8th century the Coptic language started to flourish, and in the 12th century the Coptic writings started to be in two columns: Coptic and Arabic<sup>5</sup>. In the 16th century it disappeared as a popular spoken language in Lower-Egypt, but it was used as the spoken language till the 17th century in Upper-Egypt.

In the 13th century the Arabic language became the language of the Copts in their theological and church writings.

It is worth noting that the ancient Coptic monks were known by piety and self-denial, therefore they were interested in practice more than writing. Their monastic advises and words were recorded by the pilgrims who visited them from East and West, written in Greek, Latin Syriac etc.

## **THE TEXT OF THE FATHERS<sup>6</sup>**

The first additions of the Patristic texts cannot be regarded as critical editions, since scientific rules for the selection of the manuscripts were not in existence. Nevertheless, many of these first editions are now very valuable, because the manuscripts on which their texts is based has been lost.

Those editions, containing either a single work or the complete works of each author, began in the sixteenth century and improved in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The French Benedictines of St. Maur des Fosses are worthy of special mention for their distinguished scholarship.

Single Collections of several writers began with Marguerin de la Bigne (d. 1589). In his “*Bibliotheca Sanctorum Patrum*” he collected the works of more than 200 early or mediaeval writers. This collection gradually increased and in Cologne in 1616 it had become the “*Magna Bibliotheca Veterum Patrum*” in 14 vols. - later it was re-edited at Lyons in 27 volumes (1677) *Maxima Bibliotheca V.P. et antiq. scriptorum ecclesiasticorum.*”.

The Oratorian, A. Galland (d. 1779), published his “*Bibliotheca Veterum Patrum*” in Venice in 1765-81, and 1788 (14 vols.), the 19th century M. J. Routh (*Reliquiae Sacrae*, 1814, Oxford), Cardinals A. Mai, S. J. and J. Pitra, O.S.B., are outstanding.

## MIGNE

The greatest and most important collection of patristic texts is “*Patrologiae Cursus Completus*” edited by Abbé J. P. Migne (d. 1875) compiled the (PG, PL)- which is immense and needs substantial re-editing. This collection is in two series:

1. **Latin Patrology** contains 221 volumes, four of which are indexes, printed in Paris 1844-1855.

2. **Greek Patrology** (1857-1866), contains 161 volumes. At present it is made up of:

(1) the original edition;

(2) reprints of a certain number of volumes after the fire of 1868, many misprints etc.

(3) photomechanical reproductions made since 1904 of volumes out of print, of poor quality. Dom Olivier Rousseau reported to the Pa-

tristic Conference, 1959, his project of a photomechanical reproduction, but of much better standard of volumes is no longer available.

Many works of these two series were translated into modern languages, such as German, French and English.

## **COLLECTIONS AND TRANSLATIONS**

### **(a) Collections which supplement Migne**

“*Patrologia Syriac*,” by R. Griffin. Paris, 1894 ff., 3 vols.

“*Patrologia Orientalis*,” by R. Griffin and F. Nau. Paris 1903 ff., 28 vols.

“*Corpus scriptorum christianorum Orientalium*,” by J. Chabot, 1903 I. Guidi, H. Hyvernat, B. Carra de Vaux, Forget, Paris, 1903 ff. Louvain - Washington, 228 vols.

### **(b) Collections which supplement and revise Migne**

“*Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum*,” edited by the Academy of Vienna, 1866 ff., 78 vols, Latin text only.

“*Monumenta Germaniae historica, Auctores antiquissimi*,” Berlin, 1877 ff., 13 vols. (later Latin writers up to the Middle Ages).

“*Die Griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller* (Greek Christian writers of the first three centuries), Berlin, 1897 ff.

“*Bibliotheca Teubneriana*”, Leipzig.

“*Loeb Classical Library*,” edd. Page, Capps, Rouse. London - New York 1912.

“*Sources chrétiennes*,” edd. H. de Lubac, J. Danielou. Paris, 1941 ff.

“*Corpus Chriscianorum*.” Series Latina, Turnhout: Brepols. 1954 ff., c. 30 vols.

“*Corpus Christianorum*” under the Benedictines of Steenbrugge promises to be the most comprehensive collection since Migne.

## **ENGLISH TRANSLATION**

*Library of the Fathers*, edited by Pusey, Keble and Newman. Oxford, 1838-1888, 45 vols.

*The Ante-Nicene Christian Library.* Translations of the writings of the Fathers down to A.D 325, edited by A. Roberts and J. Donaldson. Edinburgh, 1872. 24 vols. with a supplementary volume, edited by A. Menzies, Edinburgh, 1897.

*The Ante-Nicene Fathers.* American reprint of the Edinburgh edition revised by A. Cleveland Coxe. Buffalo. 1884-1886, 8 vols., with a supplement by A. Menzies (vols. 9) and A. Cleveland Coxe (vol. 10). The 10th vol. contains a bibliographical synopsis and a general index.

*A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church,* edited by Ph. Schaff and H. Wace. Buffalo and New York, 1886-1900, 28 vols.

*Translations of Christian Literature,* edited by W. J. Sparrow-Simpson and W. K. Lowther Clarke (London, 1917 ff.). This collection, published by the SPCK in London, comprises a series of:

1. Greek Texts.
2. Latin Texts.
3. Liturgical Texts.
4. Oriental Texts.

*Ancient Christian Writers,* edited by J. Quasten and J. C. Plumpe. Westminster, Md., 1946 ff.

*The Fathers of the Church,* edited by L. Schopp. New York, 1947 ff.

*The Early Christian Fathers (Selection),* edited by H. Bettenson, London, 1956.

## **FRENCH TRANSLATION**

*Les Pères de L'Eglise,* edited by A. De Genoude. Paris, 1839. 10 vols.

*Bibliothèque choisie des Pères de L'Eglise,* edited by N. S. Guillion. Paris, 1828, 36 vols. Reprinted at Brussels and Louvain, 1828-1834, 27 vols.

*Chefs-d'oeuvre des Pères de l'Eglise.* Paris, 1837. 15 vols.

*Textes et documents pour L'etude historique du christianisme,* edited by H. Hemmer and P. Lejay. Paris, 1904-1912. 20 vols. Text and translation.

*Bibliothèque patristique de spiritualité.* Paris, 1932. ff. Text and translation.

*Les grands écrivains chrétiens.* Lyon-Paris, 1942 ff.



## **TRANSLATIONS IN OTHER LANGUAGES**

Writings and sayings of the Fathers had been translated to German, Italian, Spanish, Dutch, Polish and Norwegian. Also, Publishing Egyptian Houses of Lebanon started a new Arabic translation. However, Egyptian translations are mostly for the spiritual fulfillment of the readers rather than academic research. Therefore, often translations are summarized and started into chapters and headings relating to the topic, with an introductory editorial, highlighting the spiritual thoughts of the Fathers, similar to the “Early Fathers” series published in St. George church, Sporting, Alexandria. It is hoped that in the near future, an accurate academic translation, will be published. The Center of Patristic Studies in Cairo is currently producing good results.

## **PATRISTIC CONFERENCES**

International conferences, for the study of patristic writings is held once every four years at Oxford, England, for researchers of all denominations, ecumenically to exchange views, experiences and studies

## **COPTIC MANUSCRIPTS**

Since the 17th century, there were studies of the Coptic manuscripts by the European researchers who discovered the authority and value of the Coptic tradition and the treasures of the Coptic manuscripts. This encouraged western missionaries to visit Egypt to copy or obtain old manuscripts from monasteries and churches. Thus, we (the Copts) lost our treasures to the museums and libraries of Europe. Deacon Youssef Habib made the comparison of how our libraries in the churches and monasteries were full previously, compared to what they are now.

1. Aguidious Lukensious Liebrisc, after his visit to Egypt in 1623 AD, stated that “he found many rare and precious books in many of the monasteries, one of the monasteries particularly had over 8000 books and manuscripts dating back to the era of St. Anthony (he meant the monastery of St. Mary known as the Syrian Monastery at the Societ desert).

2. Such description as above encouraged many to raid many of the monasteries to obtain manuscripts. The following year, to the above incident, Agathane de Vendome came and obtained a manuscript of the Psalms in six languages.

3. Robert Huntington, visited the monasteries between 1682-1683 and took some rare manuscripts, Bibles and books from the monastery of St. Makarius.

4. In the 8th century (1706) the Vatican sent Elias Assemani, a librarian, who returned with a collection of rare Syriac manuscript. In 1715 A.D he was followed by a cousin, Joseph Simon Assemani, who did the same from the monastery of St. Makarius. He carried a huge amount of manuscripts, containing 11 volumes of original manuscripts and other works. He stated that he had obtained a collection of very valuable and important Coptic manuscripts of so much importance and value from the monks of St. Makarius Monastery... and he did not leave behind anything of value, which anyone would benefit from. However, Evelyn White who came after him stated that he who picked up anything from the library had gained a great treasure.

5. Andèossy (1799), took some manuscripts belonging to the 12th century.

6. The trend continued during the 19th century throughout all monasteries to obtain rare manuscripts. Some of these are:

- B. Drovetti (1818 )- copy of the Psalms and others.
- Robert Kurzon 1837, boasted that he obtained very rare books.
- Henry Tattam and his step daughter Platt 1839 - books now held by the library of Rylands - Manchester.
- Constantine Tishendorf, 1844 - books held by the libraries of Liebig and Cambridge.
- The monks of St. Makarius Monastery refused to grant permission to Mr. Halamfel Cester to visit the library of the Monastery because

prior to this visit a French man, named “Fortune Ame,” after visiting the library came later at night and took a number of rare manuscripts and smuggled them out to his companions.

- The monastery of St. Anthony and St. Paul was destroyed in the 5th century.

- The British museum obtained part of the books and manuscripts from the White Monastery, near the town of Sohag, in Southern Egypt, while the National library of Paris took the remainder of the books.

8. An American, of good fortune, named “B. Morgan” purchased 56 manuscripts in 1910 from the Hanoly Monastery near Fayoum, South of Cairo.

Thus, Egypt was left with only a few of the Coptic manuscripts which were kept by some of the monasteries and churches and the majority were taken to the Coptic Museum and the papal house.

During the 19th century and early 20th century some of the manuscripts had been translated and published, such as works by Budge, Ameliniu, Zoega and Crum.

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1. Fr. T. Y. Malaty: *The Apostolic Fathers*, 1991, p. 30ff.; Quasten: *Patrology*, vol. 1, p. 20-21.

2. Quasten, p. 20-21; Yassa Abdel Messieh: *The Coptic dialects and their effects - Page from the History of the Copts*, p. 36 (in Arabic).

3. They used Greek for writing and the Coptic or Demotic for sermons, because the commons in villages were ignorant of the Greek language. St. Anthony the Great himself ignores it, and he used to speak with his visitors in Coptic.

4. Warrell: *A Short Account of the Copts*, 1955.

5. Yassa Abdel Messieh: *The Coptic dialects and their effects - Page from the History of the Copts*, p. 36 (in Arabic).

6. Patrick J. Hamell: *Handbook of Patrology*, 1968, p. 13ff; Fr. T. Y. Malaty: *The Apostolic Fathers*, p.32ff; J. Quasten: *Patrology*, vol. 1, p. 13 ff.

# THE CLASSIFICATION OF THE PATRISTIC WRITINGS

We can classify the patristic writings on many bases:

## 1. TIME

The Patristic writings, especially of the first five centuries may be classified on “Time” bases. Some scholars see that the first ecumenical council separated the Fathers into two kinds according to their literature;

- a. The Ante-Nicene Fathers. Their literature are very simple.
- b. The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers.

## 2. LANGUAGES

a. The Greek (Eastern) Fathers: the majority of the eastern Fathers wrote in Greek beside their national languages, such as the Coptic, Syriac and Armenian.

- b. The Latin (Western) Fathers.

## 3. PLACE

a. The Egyptian Fathers, especially those of the School of Alexandria, and the Desert Fathers.

- b. The Antiochenes.
- c. The Capadocian Fathers.
- d. The Latin Fathers.

## 4. THE MATERIAL

- a. Apologetic writings.
- b. Biblico-exegetical writings.
- c. Homilies and sermons.
- d. Letters.
- e. Liturgical works.
- f. Christian poetry and songs.

- g. Dialogues.
- h. Ascetic writings.
- i. Church canons.
- j. Church history.

Many scholars had set a classification which is a mixture of some of the above-mentioned ones.

# **THE OUTLINE OF THE PATRISTIC LITERATURE**

We can present the patristic literature in five stages, using Quasten's system to some extent:

## **1. THE BEGINNINGS OF THE CHRISTIAN PATRISTIC LITERATURE**

- \* The beginnings of Canonical Legislation, and Liturgical formulas.

- \* The writings of the Apostolic Fathers, who were disciples of the Apostles.

- \* The Apocryphal Literature of the New Testament, which were separated from the canonical books.

- \* The beginning of Christian Poetry and early hymns.

- \* The first Acts of the Martyrs.

- \* The works of the Apologists.

- \* The beginnings of Heretical Literature.

- \* The beginnings of Anti-Heretical Literature.

## **2. THE ANTE-NICENE LITERATURE AFTER ST. IRENAEUS**

- \* The writings of the Early Fathers of the School of Alexandria.

- \* The Fathers of Asia Minor, Syria and Palestine.

- \* The beginning of the Western Christian literature by Minucius Felix, Hippolytus of Rome, Novitian etc..

- \* The African Christian Fathers, such as Tertullian, St. Cyprian, Arnobius of Sicca and Lactantius.

- \* Other writings of the West, such as Victorinus of Pettau, Reticus of Autun etc..

## **3. THE GOLDEN AGE AND THE EASTERN FATHERS**

The period between the Nicene Council (325 A.D) and the Chalcedonian Council (425 A.D):

\* The Egyptian Fathers, such as SS. Alexander who faced Arius, Athanasius the Apostolic, Serapion of Thmuis, Didymus the Blind, Theophilus, Synesius of Cyrene, Nonnus of Panopolis, Cyril the Great...

\* The Founder of the monastic movement in Egypt, and the writings of those who visited Egypt to practise and / or to record the monastic life.

\* The writings of Asia Minor: Eusebius of Nicomedia, Theognis of Nicaea, Asterius the Sophist, Marcellus of Ancyra, Basil of Ancyra .

\* The Cappadocian Fathers: Basil the Great, Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa, Amphilochius of Iconium and Asterius of Amasea etc.

\* The writers of Antioch and Syria: Eustathius of Antioch, Aetius of Antioch, Eunomius of Cyzicus, Eusebius of Caesarea, Acacius of Caesarea, Gelasius of Caesarea, Euzoius of Caesarea, Eusebius of Emesa, Nemesius of Emesa etc.

\* Christianity And Manichaeism: Hegemonius, Titus of Bostra, Cyril of Jerusalem, Apollinaris of Laodicea, Epiphanius of Salamis, Diodore of Tarsus, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Polychronius of Apamea, John Chrysostom, Acacius of Beroea, Antiochus of Ptolemais, Severian of Gabala, Macarius Magnes, Hesychius of Jerusalem, Nilus of Ancyra, Mark the Hermit, Diadochus of Photice, Nestorius, Eutherius of Tyana, Proclus of Constantinople, Gennadius of Constantinople, Basil of Se-leucia etc.

\* Church Historians of Constantinople: Philip Sidetes, Philostorgius, Socrates, Sozomen, Theodoret of Cyrus.

#### **4. THE WESTERN FATHERS IN THE FOURTH AND FIFTH CENTURIES**

\* St. Hilary of Pitiers,

\* Anti-Arian Writers: Hosuis, Eusebius of Vercelli, Lucifer, Maruis Victorinusetc.

\* St. Ambrose Of Milan.

\* St. Jerome, Rufinus of Aquileia

\* Christian Poetry: Commodian, Iuvenus, Centones, Damasus, Ausonius, Prudentius, Paulinus of Nola, Claudianus etc.

\* St. Augustine and the Pelagian controversy.

\* The writers of Gaul: Eucherius of Lyons, Eutropius, Evagrius, Hilary of Arles, Honoratus of Arles, John Cassian, Sulpicius Severus, Etheria etc.

\* Italian writers: Fortunatius of Aquileia, Maximus of Turin, Peter Chrysologus, Siricus, Anastasius, Innocent I, Zosimus, Boniface I, Celestine I, Sixtus III, Leo.

*[See Angelio Di Berardino, J. Quasten: Patrology, vol. IV.]*

## **5. THE WRITINGS AFTER THE COUNCIL OF CHALCEDON**

\* The Great Miaphesite Fathers: SS. Severus of Antioch, Timothy of Alexandria and Philoxenos of Mobagh.

\* The Egyptian Fathers in the middle age.



***THE BEGINNINGS***  
***OF THE***  
***CHRISTIAN PATRISTIC***  
***LITERATURE***

- \* **The beginnings of Canonical Legislation, and Liturgical formulas.**
- \* **The writings of the Apostolic Fathers.**
- \* **The Apocryphal Literature of the New Testament.**
- \* **The beginning of Christian Poetry and early hymns.**
- \* **The first Acts of the Martyrs.**
- \* **The works of the Apologists.**
- \* **The beginnings of Heretical Literature.**
- \* **The beginnings of Anti-Heretical Literature.**

***THE BEGINNINGS OF***  
***LITURGICAL FORMULAS***  
***AND***  
***CANONICAL LEGISLATION***



The eternal Logos was incarnated and lived among us as a Son of Man, to create His Church as His holy body, who shares in His characteristics. As the Heavenly Head he grants Her the practice of the heavenly life, and attaining the participation in the divine nature. This new life is practised here on earth through our daily life. In other words, this eschatological attitude is revealed in the church worship, preaching, and conduct.

The Church preached this heavenly life to the world through human languages. Her liturgies, order, and canons witness to this evangelical life. Therefore, we start our study by referring to the Apostles' Creed (*Symbolum Apostolorum*) and the Didache.

Two of the most striking features of the early Church are :

- ✠ Her eschatological nature and life.
- ✠ The development of her visible organization.

# 1

## THE APOSTLES' CREED<sup>1</sup>

### CREED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The Christian faith is a life which the believer experiences personally together with his brothers, through the unity with the Father in the Son by the work of the Holy Spirit. This life cannot be defined by a certain creed, nor limited by a canon because it cannot be expressed by human language. Nevertheless, there was a necessity for those who accept faith to proclaim this faith in a brief and simple form before attaining the membership in the Body of Christ, i.e, before receiving baptism, this form is called a baptismal creed.

St. Hilary of Poitiers states that we have to utter with what is unspeakable, and instead of the mere faith we have to deposit our religious doctrines in human expressions<sup>1</sup>.

When our Lord asked His disciples about their faith St. Peter said. "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" Matt. 16:16. Perhaps it was the starting point of setting a Church creed that ensured our faith in Christ.

Again when our Lord granted His disciples the universal authority to preach, teach and baptize the believers, He said, "Go you therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" Matt. 28:19. Our Lord Himself revealed the Trinitarian formula as a baptismal creed.

The Book of the Acts of the Apostles preserved the original form of the Creed (8: 37). The apostle Philip baptized the eunuch of Ethiopia after the latter had professed his faith thus: "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." This passage proves that the starting point of the Creed was the confession of faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God. There was no need to require more from the candidates

for baptism. The confession of Jesus as the Messiah proved sufficient, especially for converts from Judaism.

As time went by, more and more titles were added. Soon afterwards the word “Savior” was included in the formula, and thus the acrostic (ICHTHUS) appeared, a favorite Creed in the Hellenistic world, because (ICHTHUS) ‘fish’ contains the initials of the five Greek words for “Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior.”

Tertullian and the inscription of Abercius testify to the popularity of this formula in the second half of the second century. Far earlier, however this formula was found, in ancient Christian literature, expressions of faith in Christ, at once were more formal in character and more extensive in scope. Already St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans (1,3) formulates the Gospel of God as the message of His son, flesh, who was predestined the Son of God in power, according to the spirit of sanctification by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. Similar formulas can be found in 1 Cor. 15, 3, and in 1 Petr. 3, 18-22. It is possible that these formulas had been in liturgical use.

About the year 100 A.D, Ignatius of Antioch<sup>2</sup> declared his faith in Jesus Christ in words that remind us very much of the second article in the Apostle’s Creed: [*Jesus Christ, who was of the race of David, who was of Mary, who was truly born, both ate and drank, was truly persecuted under Pontius Pilate, was truly crucified and died, while being heavenly, earthly... . He was also truly raised from the dead, His Father raised Him up, as in similar fashion His Father will raise us up in Christ Jesus as we believe in Him, without whom we have no true life.*]

## **THE HISTORY OF CREEDS**

1. As we have said, from the earliest days of the Church the need of some kind of profession of faith before receiving baptism was felt. Simple and brief creeds containing a doctrinal summary of

Christianity, or a compound of the faith of the church were used by candidates for baptism.

2. When the heresies appeared, especially “Gnosticism,” they considered the bodies and all materials as evil and created by Satan, denying the reality of incarnation. They almost said that Christ had a heavenly body, different from our own body, and that He appeared as if He was a man, but He never suffered nor was crucified. Therefore the primitive formula was not sufficient. There was a need of emphasizing the reality of incarnation, suffering, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension of our Incarnate God.

When heresies, concerning the Trinitarian faith spread, reciting a creed with emphasis on church faith became necessary, not only for baptism, but in every worship, private or communal. “Say the creed daily,” St. Augustine advised his flock, “when you compose yourself to sleep, repeat your creed, render it to the Lord, be not irked to say it over<sup>3</sup>.”

## **PRIMITIVE CREEDS**

Patrology presents many creed formulas mentioned in the writings of the Eastern and Western Fathers. Schaff presents a comparative table of the Ante-Nicene Rules of Faith, as related to the Apostles’ Creed and Nicene Creed:

1. *The Apostles’ Creed (Rome), about 340 A.D.*
2. *Irenaeus of Lyon, 180 A.D.*
3. *Tertullian of Carthage, 200 A.D.*
4. *Cyprian of Carthage, 250 A.D.*
5. *Novatian of Rome’ 250 A.D.*
6. *Origen, Alexandria, 250 A.D.*
7. *Gregory of Neo-Caesarea, 270 A.D.*
8. *Lucian of Antioch, 300 A.D.*
9. *Eusebius of Caesarea, 325 A.D.*
10. *Marcellus of Ancyra, 340 A.D.*
11. *Cyril of Jerusalem, 350 A.D.*
12. *Epiphanius of Salamis, 374 A.D.*

13. *Rufinus of Aquileia, 390 A.D.*

14. *The Creed mentioned in the Apostolic Constitution.*

## **THE APOSTLES' CREED**

This creed has a special importance for the Western church, considering it as the basic of her creeds. Schaff states that the Apostles' Creed (Symbolum Apostolicum) is the Creed of creeds, as the Lord's prayer is the Prayer of prayers<sup>4</sup>.

It is a brief summary of the principal doctrines of Christianity; hence it may be called a compendium of the theology of the Church. Its present form, consisting of twelve articles, does not antedate the sixth century. From the beginning of the sixth century it was used with certain variation, as a profession of faith in Gal, Spain, and a little later in Ireland and Germany in the courses of instruction intended for catechumens.

Rufinus of Aquileia, at the end of the fourth century, had composed a "Commentary on the Symbol of the Apostles." Creed<sup>5</sup> in which he explains its origin. According to him, there was a tradition which stated that the ancient text of the Creed goes back to the Apostles, not only in contents, but verbally.

In the sixth century, we meet, for the first time with the assertion that each of the Apostles composed one of the twelve articles of the apostolic symbol. A pseudo-Augustinian sermon, of that century, thus explains its origin: 'Peter said: I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth... Andrew said: And in Jesus Christ his only Son, our Lord...<sup>6</sup>', each of the Apostles contributed to one of the twelve articles. This sixth century explanation of the origin of the Apostles' Creed remained the prevailing belief throughout the Middle Ages.

It created great surprise, therefore, when Marcus Evgenicus, the Greek Archbishop of Ephesus, declared at the Council of Ferrara (1438), that the Eastern Churches knew nothing either of the form of

Creed used in the Western Church, nor of its derivation from the Apostles. A few years later the Italian humanist, Lorenzo Valla, denied emphatically the apostolic authorship of the *Symbolum Apostolicum*.

F. L. Cross States that this creed had been set after the apostolic age, but it was called an apostolic, because all its articles express the faith of the Apostles<sup>7</sup>.

It is agreed that the contents of the old Creed are apostolic, but it is not possible to prove that the phraseology goes back to the Apostles, nor is it possible to prove that it does not<sup>8</sup>.

## ITS CONTENTS

A study of the earliest history of the Creed reveals two distinct forms: the christological and the Trinitarian formulas.

K. S. Latourette states that this creed was used by the candidates of baptism, declaring that they deny the beliefs of Marcion.

[The opening affirmation “I believe in God the Father Almighty” (in original Greek the word translated “almighty” means “all governing” or “all controlling,” as one who governs all the universe), quite obviously this rules out Marcion’s contention that the world is the creation of the **Demiurge** and not of the loving Father. The phrases which, “and in Jesus Christ His Son, who was born of Mary the Virgin, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, on the third day rose from the dead, ascended into Heaven, sitteth on the right hand of the Father, from which he cometh to judge the living and the dead,” clearly do not permit the Marcionite teaching that Christ was a phantom, but asserts positively that He was the Son, not of the previously unknown God, but of God who is also the Creator, who was born of a woman, and so from his conception shared man’s flesh that as sharing as an individual human being He had a specific place in history, having been crucified and buried under a Roman official whose name is known. This, of course, does not deny that He is also

the Son of God and so divine, but, as against Marcion, it asserts the fact that Jesus Christ was also fully human. The symbol likewise declares that the risen Christ is seated by the right hand of the Father, the God who is the Creator and ruler of the universe, so stressing the conviction that there is only one God, not two gods. By emphasizing the belief that Christ, the Son of the Father, is to be the Judge, the creed is repudiating, either deliberately or without that view explicitly in mind, the Marcionite contention that it is **Demiurge**, not the Father of The Son, who is the Judge. Of the concluding phrases {I believe} “In the Holy Spirit, and the resurrection of the flesh,” the first was not in controversy and so was not amplified, but the second an addition to the primitive formula, seems to have been intended as a protest against the view which counted flesh as evil<sup>9</sup>.]

## THE TEXT

1. I believe in God the Father Almighty, *Maker of heaven and earth*;
2. And in Jesus Christ, His Only Son, our Lord:
3. Who was *conceived* by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary; 4. *suffered* under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, *dead*, and buried;
5. *He descended into Hades*, the third day He rose from the dead; 6. He ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of God the Father *Almighty*;
7. from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.
8. And I believe in the Holy Spirit;
9. the holy *Catholic* Church; *the communion of saints*;
10. the forgiveness of sins;
- 11 the resurrection of the body;
12. *and the life everlasting*.

## NOTE

The term “symbol” comes from a word which in one of its usages meaning a watchword, or a password in a military camp. As applied to a creed, it was a sign or test of membership in the Church<sup>10</sup>.

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- 1 .Anne Fremantle: A Treasury of Early Christianity, p. 275; Fr. T. Y. Malaty: The Apostles' Creed and the Didache, Alexandria, 1975, p. 6. (in Arabic).
2. Ad Trall. 9.
3. Sermon 5:11. PL 38:399f.
4. Schaff, vol. II, p. 533.
5. PL. 21:337.
6. PL 39: 2189-2190.
7. The Early Christian Fathers.
8. Hamell: A Handbook of Patrology, p. 22.
9. Kenneth Scott Latourette: A History of Christianity, vol. 1, 1975, p.135, 136.
10. Ibid 135.

## 2

### THE DIDACHE

*THE LORD'S INSTRUCTION  
TO THE GENTILES  
THROUGH  
THE TWELVE APOSTLES<sup>1</sup>*

#### ITS IMPORTANCE

It is undoubtedly one of the oldest documents, if not the oldest, of Christian antiquity. It is the oldest source of ecclesiastical law or church manual which we possess. In early Church, especially in Egypt, Syria and Palestine, the Didache was very highly esteemed. It was known by name, and in part (by quotation), from St. Clement of Alexandria, Origen and St. Athanasius<sup>2</sup>.

F. L. Cross states that the discovery of this work as a guide of an educational teaching and church order is the most important discovery in the field of the Fathers' literature in the last one hundred years<sup>3</sup>.

This work was used in many liturgical works and the writings concerning the church order and law, such as the Didascalia, Apostolic Tradition of Hypolitus and the Apostolic Constitutions.

#### THE AUTHOR

It would be rash to presume, as Duchebne suggested, that the title points to apostolic authorship. The text in no wise justifies this. This author's intention, evidently, was to give a brief summary of the doctrine of Christ as taught to the nations by the Apostles. This then explains the title<sup>4</sup>.

Naturally, the Didache was not attributed to a specific author, as it was a summary of our Lord's teachings to the Apostles through their evangelism to the Gentiles. It is in fact, a collection, which the writer

put in harmony. There is no ground for a theory of borrowing from a Jewish work; no evidence for such a work, and the Didache is specifically Christian in character<sup>5</sup>.

## **DATE**

The question of the date of this work was raised, and it has been located all the way from A.D 70 to A.D 180. J. P. Audet, who published a very thorough study of the title work in 1958, has argued that the first half (thorough 11:2) comes from about A.D 70, while the rest was added not long afterwards. Perhaps as a whole book it should be dated about the last third of the first century, possibly around A.D 90<sup>6</sup>.

Its writing dated back to the second half of the first century and not to the Apostolic era for the following reasons:

1 The details contained in it refer to the stability of the Church situation. This had been realized at the end of the Apostolic time.

2. Most of the quotations are derived from the Gospel according to St. Matthew, which means that it was not collated before 90 A.D.

3. It does not deal with the attitude of Judaism, which was the first and the essential problem the Church faced at the Apostolic age.

Nevertheless, the work had an inner witness that it was collated at a time very close to the Apostolic era, for the following reasons:

1. Mentioning the running water in baptism, and the absence of any text of the creed.

2. Its language was very simple, which fitted the period of the change, from the writing of the New Testament to the writings of the church.

## **PLACE**

Some scholars state that the method of the Two Ways used here indicates its place of origin as the East, perhaps Syria or Alexandria<sup>7</sup>.

Some scholars state that Alexandria is the place of its origin for the following reasons:

1. Alexandria used the method of the Two Ways, such as in the Apostolic Church order (The Egyptian Church Order).

2. Some statements were quoted by Egyptian writers, such as St. Clement of Alexandria .

3. The Egyptian bishop, Serapion, (4th Century) used it in his Eucharistic Prayers.

4. It used the doxology, which was popular in Egypt, for it used the words “power” and glory and did not use the word “kingdom.”

Other scholars see that the place of writing was in Syria or Palestine depending on the allusion in § 9 to the “corn scattered upon the mountains<sup>8</sup>.”

## **ITS HISTORY**

The complete text of this book of religious instructions was discovered in 1873 A.D. by Philotheos Bryennios, Greek Orthodox Metropolitan of Nicomedia, in the Jerusalem Codex (A.D. 1052 or 1056) and was published in 1883. (Barnabas and St. Clement of Rome were discovered also.)

## **CONTENTS**

Judging by the title only, one might expect the Didache to reveal the evangelical preaching of our Lord Jesus Christ. Rather it contains ecclesiastical rituals of the time, instructions on the organization of communities, and regulations pertaining to liturgical functions. We here present a summary of directions, which offer us an excellent picture of Christian life in the second century. In fact we here have the oldest Church-Order, and the venerable prototype of all the later collections of Constitutions or Apostolic Canons with which church law in the East and in the West began<sup>9</sup>.

This document enriched and deepened, in an amazing way, our knowledge of the beginnings of the Church..

This work can be divided into four sections, or rather in three sections and a conclusion:

**FIRST SECTION: CHRISTIAN BEHAVIOR (1-6).**

**SECOND SECTION: LITURGICAL AND SACRAMENTAL LIFE (7-10, 14).**

**THIRD SECTION: DISCIPLINARY REGULATIONS (11-15).**

**FOURTH SECTION: THE PAROUSIA OF THE LORD.**

***FIRST SECTION: CHRISTIAN BEHAVIOR (1-6)***

Instructions in Christian ethics, containing description of the Two Ways: of Life (1-4), and of Death (5-6). It is a high-toned moral catechism preparatory to baptism, exhorting the catechumens to walk in the path of righteousness and be cautious of that of unrighteousness.

The method of the “Two Ways” was used by the Jewish writers, but here it is based on the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The author of this section may have borrowed from the description of the Two Ways in the Epistle of Barnabas, or vice versa, but it is unlikely that both borrowed from an older source<sup>10</sup>.

It illustrates that life is found in the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ, while death is ignoring these teachings. It focused on the Christian way of spiritual life, especially as demonstrated in the teachings of the sermon on the mount. The text begins thus:

*There are two ways, one of life and one of death, and there is a great difference between the two ways.*

*“First of all, love the God who made you;*

*secondly, your neighbor as yourself;*

*and all things whatsoever you would not have befall yourself, do not do to another.” 1:1,2.*

**The description of the way of life:**

1. Love, even to the enemies. [1:2-5]

2. Purity. [1:3]

3. Longing for giving and not for receiving. [1:5]

4. Obedience of the divine commandments. [4:13]

5. Teaching our children the fear of God [4:9].

6. Confession of sins: [*In church confess your transgressions, and do not come to prayer with an evil conscience 4:14.*]

7. Not to be outside God. [6:1]

8. Carrying the yoke of the Lord. [6:2].

**The description of the way of death:**

1. Committing sins and impurity. [5:1]
2. Violence, especially against the truth. [5:2]

***SECOND SECTION: LITURGICAL AND SACRAMENTAL LIFE (7-10, 14)***

This section gives directions affecting church rites and orders. It treats Baptism and Eucharist with the agape. The oldest Eucharistic prayers have come to light in the Didache.

It refers to some traditional practices at that time, such as;

1. .Baptism was practised by immersion in a running water, i.e. in the rivers. [7:1-3]. This custom was known in the Apostolic era and in the proceeding years.

2. Baptism by pouring water from a vessel or from the hand of the minister of baptism was allowed in cases of scarcity of water. Afterwards this mode was applied only to sick persons who could not leave their bed; hence called *clinical* baptism [the word κλινικοι from the word κλινη (bed). *Clinicus* designated one who was baptized on the sick bed.]

3. Fasting is necessary for candidates, the minister of Baptism, and others, for one or two days before Baptism. [7:4] In the Coptic Church this custom is still practised on the same day until Baptism takes place.

4. Weekly fasting on Wednesdays and Fridays, and praying thrice a day, without hypocrisy are necessary.

5. The necessity of regularly receiving the Holy Eucharist. [9]

A Coptic translation from the fifth century, of a prayer of thanksgiving to be said over the oil of chrism (μυρον) following the Eucharistic prayers has been found in a papyrus (927) of the British Museum.[10:8]

### ***THIRD SECTION: DISCIPLINARY REGULATIONS (11-15)***

#### **Mutual relations of the Christian communities:**

❖Scrutiny of wandering Christian ministers (apostles, prophets and teachers).[11]

❖Reception of traveling brethren. [12]

❖Support of prophets and teachers in the community. [13]

❖Religious life of each community ( e.g. divine service on Sunday). [14] It calls the first “the Lord’s Day .”

❖The superiors of the communities (bishops, deacons). [15] Here it mentions bishops and deacons, but no presbyter. St. Clement of Alexandria (2nd century) distinguishes the deaconate, the presbyterate, and the episcopate; but he assumes only a twofold official character, that of presbyters, and that of deacons, perhaps for the following reasons:

1. The word “presbyter” was used some times in a wide meaning to include the bishops and priests, and others in a narrow meaning to express only the priests.

2. The tradition of the church of Alexandria, from the time of evangelist Mark, down to the middle of the third century, the twelve priests elected one from amongst them to be a bishop, as their president<sup>11</sup>. He considered himself as their brother. As the Didache is an Alexandrine document it expresses these feelings at that time.

### ***FOURTH SECTION: THE PAROUSIA OF THE LORD***

This section is an apocalypse apparently based on Matthew 24. It exhorts watching in preparation for the last day, which is at hand. This is the purpose of the Church life in her three aspects: the Christian behavior, the liturgical and sacramental life, and the disciplinary regulations.

*[Be watchful over your life;  
never let your lamps go out or your loins be ungirt,  
but keep yourselves always in readiness, for you can never be  
sure of the hour when our Lord may be coming.]*

*Come often together for spiritual improvement; because all the past years of your faith will be no good to you at the end, unless you have made yourselves perfect.*

*In the last days of the world false prophets and deceivers will abound, sheep will be perverted and turn into wolves, and love will change to hate, for with the growth of lawlessness men will begin to hate their fellows and persecute them and betray them.*

*Then the Deceiver of the World will show himself, pretending to be a Son of God and doing signs and wonders, and the earth will be delivered into his hands, and he will work such wickedness as there has never been since the beginning.*

*After that, all humankind will come up for their fiery trial; multitudes of them will stumble and perish, but such as remain steadfast in the faith will be saved by the Curse.*

*And then the signs of the truth will appear:  
first the sign of the opening heavens,  
next the sign of the trumpet's voice,  
and thirdly the rising of the dead - not of the dead - not of all the dead, but, as it says, the Lord will come, and with him all his holy ones.*

*And then the whole world will see the Lord as He comes riding on the clouds of heaven...<sup>12]</sup>*

## **NOTE**

In the early ages some Christians tried to consider it as a book of the New Testament, but many of the Fathers emphasized that it was not canonized, such as Pope Athanasius of Alexandria<sup>13</sup>, Eusebius<sup>14</sup> and Rufinus<sup>15</sup>.

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1. Fr. T. Y. Malaty: *The Apostles' Creed and the Didache*, 1975 (in Arabic); *The Apostolic Fathers*, 1991, p. 188-213 (in Arabic).

2. Hamell: *A Handbook of Patrology*, p. 24.

3. *The Early Christian Fathers*, London 1960, p. 8.

4. J. Quasten: *Patrology*, vol. 1, p. 30.

5. *Ibid.* 24.

6. Edgar T. Goodspeed: *A History of Early Christian Literature*, Chicago 1966, p. 12.

7. *Ibid.* 13.



8. J. B. Lightfoot: *The Apostolic Fathers*, Michigan 1956, 122.
9. J. Quasten: *Patrology*, vol. 1, p. 30.
10. Hamell, p. 24.
11. Schaff, vol. 2, p. 140, 141; St. Jerome: *Ep. ad Evangelum*.
12. Penguin Classics: *Early Christian Writings*, 1968, p. 197-8.
13. *Ep. Fest.* 39.
14. *H. E.* 3:25:4.
15. *Comm. in Symb.* 38.

*LECTURES IN PATROLOGY*

***THE APOSTOLIC FATHERS***

Two letters: one by **St. Clement of Rome** and the other was attributed to him.

The seven letters of **St. Ignatius**.

A letter by **St. Polycarp**.

The epistle attributed to **Barnabas**.

The book “The Shepherd” by **Hermas**.

A letter to **Diognetus** (author unknown).

Excerpts by **Papias** of Hieropolis.

*Epistle to Quadratus*.

The “**Didache**” or “*The Lord’s teachings to the Gentiles as conveyed by the 12 Apostles.*”

# THE APOSTOLIC FATHERS<sup>1</sup>

The first contemporary generation and eyewitnesses of Jesus Christ passed away and many became disciples through His apostles and disciples.

The Church was no longer confined to a certain spot; she went off to the universe to leaven it with the leavening of truth, and kindle it with the fire of the divine love. Many local churches existed in the East and West with one faith, one hope, one love, even sometimes the same prayers, liturgies and rituals. It is right for us to say that these were not several churches, but rather the one Apostolic Church of Christ. The writings of the Apostolic Fathers express the spirit and concepts of this one catholic (Universal) Church.

If these writings by the Apostolic Fathers were only the tiny spring buds, nevertheless they were alive, bearing the spirit of the one church and unfolding to us the flower petals and fruits which the church tree carried throughout the generations<sup>2</sup>. They brought us the authentic echo of the apostles' evangelism, a true herald of a simplistic gospel of salvation and a true picture of the ecclesiastic tradition during that unique era<sup>3</sup>.

## THE APOSTOLIC FATHERS

The Apostolic Fathers were the Christian writers of the first and second centuries, who may be considered as the first teachers after the Apostles. Their writings presented to us the faith which these Apostolic Fathers received either through their direct contact with the Apostles or as handed to them by their disciples<sup>4</sup>.

The term 'Apostolic Fathers' was entirely unknown in the early Church. It was introduced by scholars of the seventeenth century. The French scholar Jean B Cotelier, a man from the 17th century published his two volumes under the title of "*Patres aevi Apostolici*" in the year 1672. They comprised the following five ecclesiastical writers:

1. The epistle attributed to **Barnabas**.
  2. The book “The Shepherd” by **Hermas**.
  3. Two letters : one by the Roman **Clement** and the other was attributed to him.
  4. The seven letters of **Ignatius**.
  5. A letter by **Polycarp** and an article about his martyrdom.
- In 1765 Andras Gallandi, in his series *Bibliotheca Veterum Patrum*, added to them the following works:
6. A letter to **Diognetus** (author unknown).
  7. Experts by **Papias** of Hieropolis, and the unknown author of the *Epistle to Quadratus*.
  8. In 1873 the “**Didache**” or “*The Lord’s teachings to the Gentiles as conveyed by the 12 Apostles*” was discovered. This was added to the writings of the Apostolic Fathers.

Finally, some of the scholars were of the opinion to add what was known as “**The Apostles’ Creed**” to the collection of the writings of the Apostolic Fathers. However, the majority did not agree to this.

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE APOSTOLIC FATHERS’ WRITINGS**

1. Most of these writings were similar to letters. However, in actual fact they did not have the same type or mode of literature.

✠ The first letter by Clement was meant as an approach to the conflict (and schism) issue which prevailed in the Church of Corinth; as to the second letter which was attributed to him, it was a sermon and not a letter.

✠ The letter of Barnabas was more of basic theological articles dealing with linking the Old Testament to Christianity.

✠ The letter to Diognetus is a discourse on the superiority of Christianity.

✠ The Shepherd of Hermas was a collection of visions, mandates or precepts dealing with the issue of repentance after Baptism, and similitudes or parables as moral lessons taught by allegory.

✠ The “Didache” was similar to an ecclesiastic manual.

✠ The excerpts of Papias, in essence, were commentaries on some of the Lord Christ's sayings, in a fine presentation of the oral tradition.

✠ The work of Quadratus was an apology addressed to Emperor Hadrian.

Therefore, it is not possible for us to relate these writings to each other neither from the characteristic aspect nor the issue. However, by a slight overlooking we can say that these articles, in toto, deal with two issues :

(a) The internal unity of the church and the preservation of her peace.

(b) Preservation of the pure faith without heathen flaws.

2. These writings were featured by simplicity with inflamed zeal, without reliance on Greek philosophy nor Hellenic eloquence. With the exception of the letter to Diognetus, these writings do not form a work of literature.

3. These writings came as a result of practical pastoral needs, and not for the purpose of a scholarly research. They did not offer us spiritual theological studies, they clarified through the practical simplistic faith what was the Gospel as lived by the early church before it clashed with the secular authority. "The Apostolic Fathers," it has been justly said, "are not great writers, but great characters<sup>5</sup>."

"The genuine pastoral concern" was the common factor in these writings. The Apostolic Fathers were not concerned with the presentation of specific views, rather entering everyone into the practical life of the faith. Hence they did not select difficult theological terminologies but offered hearts kindled with the love of the human race.

These writers were not genius intellectuals but simple saints inclined to piety, dedicating their lives and hearts to the Living Savior who lived in them and they in Him, through Him and for Him. They lived in a generation of practical spiritual heroism and not a generation of glittery

words. “Those were times of heroism, not of words; an age, not of writers, but of (spiritual) soldiers, not of talkers, but of sufferers <sup>6</sup>.”

4. Their writings were characterized by the eschatological character. The second coming of Christ the Lord was the ultimate “Christian Life” through their direct relationship with the Apostles, as they spoke of the person of Christ with enthusiasm.

Their writings revealed a deep yearning towards the ascended Christ the Lord and Savior who still remained alive and dwelt among them. They waited for His coming to see Him face to face. This yearning carried a saintly form in their lives, writings, and worship.

5. These writings were characterized by the ecclesiastic feature and it bore the spirit of communion - the church communion throughout the whole universe in faith, tradition, and worship regardless of the long distance between the churches and the difference in cultures and customs between each other.

6. Lightfoot states “(These writings) lack the scientific spirit which distinguished the Fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries, and enabled them to formulate the doctrines of the faith as bulwark against lawless speculation<sup>7</sup>.”

7. Finally, it is worth realizing that these writings, irrespect of their worth and irrespect of the sanctity of their writers, are not a divine revelation; whereby we regard every word in them as holy. They are the melody of the spirit, which the church sings. This eternal tune is extended from generation to generation in harmony through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, who works in the church, to admit the whole world to the union with the Father, in our Lord Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit.

The addition of some of these writings in several Bible manuscripts, and reading chapters of them in early Christian worship did not mean that these writings were considered as canonical books.

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1. Fr. T. Y. Malaty: *The Apostolic Fathers*, 1991, p. 52ff.
  2. Cf. *Chrétiens de tous tes temps(1): Les écrits des Pères Apostoliques*, Paris 1968.
  3. Maxwell Staniforth: *Early Christian Fathers*, 1963.
  4. Quasten: *Patrology*, vol. 1, p. VII.
  5. The Pressensé: *Trois Premiers Siècles*, II, p. 384; Lightfoot: *The Apostolic Fathers*, vol. 1, 1989, p. 7.
  6. *A. N. Fathers*, vol. 1, p. VII.
  7. Lightfoot: *The Apostolic Fathers*, vol. 1, 1989, p. 7.

V V V

# 1

## ST. CLEMENT OF ROME<sup>1</sup>

The letter of St. Clement of Rome was the first writing of the Apostolic Fathers. It had a special position among the writings, life and worship of the early church. According to St. Irenaeus, it is a considerable epistle<sup>2</sup>. In 170 A.D Dionysius of Corinth<sup>3</sup> referred to an ancient tradition that for many years this epistle was read in the church, on the Lord's Day. Eusebius also states that it was common for it to be read in many churches.

### ST. CLEMENT OF ROME

A name of great celebrity in the early Church. He was a disciple of the Apostles Paul and Peter, to whom he referred to as the chief examples of imitation<sup>4</sup>. There are however many opinions concerning his person:

1. Eusebius<sup>5</sup>, St. Jerome<sup>6</sup> and others followed Origen<sup>7</sup> in saying, that he was the same person, who was mentioned by St. Paul, as one of his faithful fellow workers in Philippi (Phil. 4:3).

2. According to Dio Cessius,<sup>8</sup> he was *Titus Flavius Clemns*, a member of the royal family, a grandson of the emperor Vespasian, and the cousin of the Emperor Dometian, who killed St. Clement in 59-69 A.D regarding him as an atheist, for he was converted to Christianity. Many historians refused this opinion for two reasons:

a. Had he been a member of the royal family, the Christian historians would have mentioned this fact.

b. The letter reveals him as of a Jewish origin and not Gentile, for one quarter of the text is quotations from the Old Testament<sup>9</sup>.

3. He was a Jewish slave, or a son of a Jewish slave, owned by Clemns, who freed him; then he received the name of his master<sup>10</sup>.



4. According to St. Irenaeus<sup>11</sup> he was the fourth bishop of Rome. Eusebius, relying on St. Irenaeus and Hegisippus, places Linus 68-80; Anaclycus 80-92; and St. Clement 92-101<sup>12</sup>.

5. Later legends have depicted his life in a romantic manner, both in the interest of the Catholic and in that of heresy. They pictured him as a noble and highly educated Roman who, dissatisfied with the wisdom and art of heathenism, journeyed to Palestine, became acquainted there with the apostle Peter, and was converted by him. He accompanied him on his missionary tours; composed many books in his name; was appointed by him as his successor as bishop of Rome, with a kind of supervision over the whole church, and at last, being banished under Trajan to the Taurian chersonese. He died the glorious death of a martyr in the waves of the sea<sup>13</sup>.

***Concerning his death:***

1. St. Jerome did not mention the way he died<sup>14</sup>. Other early writers said that he had died after receiving the holy communion<sup>15</sup>.

2. Rufinus<sup>16</sup> was the first writer, who stated that St. Clement had been martyred. An apocrypha, from the fourth century, stated that the people in Rome were enraged because he converted Theodora, a noblewoman in Rome, her husband, Sisinnus, and 423 people into Christianity; and he was exiled<sup>17</sup>. Others said, that the council of the senators was enraged because they saw Clement as a noble man converted to Christianity, attracted some of the noblemen to the same religion. They advised him to deny Christianity, but he refused. They presented a report against him to the emperor Trajan, who exiled and punished him by making him work in cutting stones. In the exile he met with about 2000 Christians and preached many pagans. Therefore the ruler ordered that he be thrown in the sea with a helm fixed in his neck.

# THE FIRST LETTER TO THE CORINTHIANS

Through mutual love, the early churches were not isolated from each other, but they shared in suffering. Thus the letters between them were mostly the type of their literature. Through these letters we discover love, modesty and openness of the church leaders.

## THE PURPOSE OF THE LETTER

In the first century a group of the youth rebelled against the clergy. They believed that they were wiser and more capable of teaching. They enraged the people and dismissed many of them. Therefore St. Clement sent this letter which is full of wisdom, modesty and love, quoting many texts from the Old Testament.

## ITS FEATURES

In the Alexandrian Bible manuscript, this letter is found after the book of Revelation, separated from the Apostolic letters. This indicated that it was not considered as a canonical book, nevertheless it had a special position in the early church.

Its features are:

1. A biblical letter, contains many quotations from the Holy Bible. St. Clement exhorted us to study the Bible. [*Look carefully into the Scriptures, which are the true utterances of the Holy Spirit.*] 45:2<sup>18</sup>.

2. It reveals that the memory of St. Clement concerning the teachings of Christ was abundant.

3. It presents a historical data concerning Nero's persecution. He said: [*Through envy, those women... being persecuted, after they had suffered terrible and unspeakable torments, finished the course of their faith with steadfastness, and though weak in body, received a noble reward.*] 6:2.

4. It declares valuable concepts and clear evidence concerning the Christian dogma and doctrines in the mind of the early Christians, such as:

a. Mentioning **the Holy Trinity**: the Father, the Son (Jesus Christ) and the Holy Spirit.

b. The necessity of **faith** for our salvation, without it our own deeds are invalid. He says: *[And we, too, being called by His will in Christ Jesus, are not justified by ourselves, nor by our own wisdom, or understanding, or godliness, or works which we have wrought in holiness of heart; but by that faith through which, from the beginning, Almighty God has justified all men.]* 32:4.

c. The necessity of **good deeds** which is bound with faith, for these deeds please God.

*[For what reason was our father Abraham blessed? was it not because he wrought righteousness and truth through faith?] 31:2.*

*[What shall we do, then, brethren?*

*Shall we become slothful in well-doing, cease from the practice of love?*

*God forbid that any such course should be followed by us!*

*But rather let us hasten with all energy and readiness of mind to perform every good work.*

*[For the Creator and Lord of all Himself rejoices in His works.] 33:1,2.*

d. Righteousness is realized by the free divine **grace**, together with the unceasingly struggling till death: *[Many women being strengthened by the grace of God, have performed numerous manly exploits.]* 55:3.

e. Sanctification is realized by the Holy Spirit.

f. The importance of the Christian **virtues**, such as love, modesty, long-sufferings etc.

*[The height to which love exalts is unspeakable.*

*Love unites us to God. Love covers a multitude of sins.] 49:4.*

*[Christ is of those who are humble-minded, and not of those who exalt themselves over His flock.] 16:1.*

g. The **unity** of the Church is based on mutual respect among the members.

*[The great cannot subsist without the small, nor the small without the great.*

*There is a kind of mixture in all things, and thence arises mutual advantage.] 37:4.*

5. For the first time we hear about the **Apostolic succession**. Truly it is the right of the people to choose their ministers, but their ordination is realized not by the people, but through those who received the apostolic authority [42; 44:1-3.].

6. In chapters 24, 25 he dealt with the topic of the **resurrection** from the dead. He used the myth of the phoenix. Some believed that this bird lived in the land of Arabia. When it became 500 years old it built a nest of frankincense, myrrh and other spices, into which it entered and died. But as the flesh decayed a kind of worm was produced, which being nourished by the juices of the dead bird, brought forth feathers. When it had acquired strength, it took up that nest in which were the bones of its parents, and bearing these it passed through to flee to Egypt, to the city of Heliopolis. In an open day it came on the altar of the sun-god.

7. He clarifies the loyalty of the church to **the state**, praying for her progress even while the emperor (Dometian) was persecuting her violently.

8. It offers us a picture of the **liturgy** in the early church, as it referred to:

a. The liturgical community which presents her offerings in a church order, as a divine work. *[He has enjoined us to perform offerings (to be presenting) and service to be performed (to Him), and not thoughtlessly or irregularly, but at the appointed times and hours.] 40.*

b. All clergymen and laity should partake in the liturgy. *[Let every one of you, brethren, give thanks to God in his own order, living*

*in all good conscience, with becoming gravity, and not going beyond the rule of the ministry prescribed to him.] 41:1.*

c. He mentioned to some church ministers, such as the sub-deacons, deacons, presbyters, bishops (episcopates), and classified that one of the essential works of the bishop is practising liturgies and presenting offerings [ch. 44].

d. Christ is the High Priest of all our offerings, the defender and helper of our infirmity. Then the priestly works of Christ, work mysteriously in His priests, .

e. He presented beautiful liturgical prayer [chs. 59-61], concluding with a doxology.

9. This letter also included **many spiritual practices**, such as:

**I. The Need of repentance:** [*Let us look steadfastly to the blood of Christ, and see how precious that blood is to God (the Father), which having been shed for our salvation, has set the grace of repentance for the whole world.*] 7:4.

**II. Confidence in God's promise:** [*Desiring, therefore that all His beloved should be partakers of repentance. He has, by His almighty will, established (these declarations concerning the benefits of repentance).*] 8:5.

**III. Confidence in God's promises:** [*How blessed and wonderful, beloved, are the gifts of God!*] 35:1.

**IV. Waiting for the promise of resurrection from the dead:** [*Having then this hope, let our souls be bound to him who is faithful in His promises, and just in His judgments.*] 27:1.

**V. Witness to God by our behavior:** [*Let testimony to our good deeds be borne by others, as it was in the case of our righteous forefathers*] 30:7.

**VI. Taking care of sinners:** [*Let us then also pray for those who have fallen into any sin, that meekness and humility may be given to them, so that they may submit, not unto us, but to the will of God. For in this way they shall secure a fruitful and perfect remembrance from us, with sympathy for them, both in our prayers to God, and our mention of them to the saints.*] 56:1.

**VII. Practising love** [18:19, 20; 48-50].

**VIII. Escaping from pride:** [*It is better for you that you should be found small and in an honorable place in the flock of Christ, rather than being highly exalted, and be castled out from His people.*] 57:2.

**IX. Offering unceasing thanksgiving to God:** [*Since we receive all these things from Him, we ought to give Him thanks for everything.*] 38:4.

## **ITS DATE**

Many scholars state that it was written after 96 A.D, for the following reasons:

a. It was written after the persecution of Nero, in the time of Domation, for the writers referred to the sudden troubles that delayed him to write the letter.

b. This date agreed with the tradition that it was written by St. Clement of Rome (92-101 A.D).

c. In the second century St. Polycarp had a knowledge with the letter, quoting many passages from it in his own letter.

## **ITS DIVISION**

\* Introduction.

1. The beauty of the church before her division [1,2].

2. The features of the church after the division [3].

3. The cause of division (envy!) [4-6].

4. The remedy of envy:

a. Repentance and practical faith [7-8].

b. Obedience [9-12].

c. Humility [13-21].

d. Contemplation in the judgment and the resurrection of the dead [22-29].

e. Struggling as children of God [30-36].

f. Submission to the order [37-47].

g. Love as the door of righteousness [48-58].

5. Supplication to God [59-61].

6. Conclusion [62-65].

# ***THE ATTRIBUTED WORKS OF ST. CLEMENT OF ROME***

## ***1. THE SO-CALLED SECOND EPISTLE OF CLEMENT***

### **ITS FEATURES AND CONTENTS**

1. It concentrates on **repentance** as the way of the kingdom. [*As long as we are upon earth, let us practise repentance, for we are as clay in the hand of the artificer.*] 8:1.

2. The practical **faith** through obedience to the commandments and despising the temporary lusts, for the sake of eternal life.

[*While we have an opportunity of being healed, let us yield ourselves to God Who heals us, and give to Him a recompense.*

*Of what sort?*

*Repentance out of a sincere heart!*] 9:7,8.

3. The church in her essence is the new life in Christ. She was created before the world, spiritual, and invisible. She became the body of Christ, and the mother of the believers. Our body is the image of the church, the body of Christ, he who corrupts the image will never partake of the original. [*Where, brethren, if we do the will of God our Father, we shall be of the first Church, that is, spiritual, that has been created before the sun and moon...*] 14

4. **Baptism** is called the “*Seal*” (Sphragis), must be preserved [7:6].

5. The power of **prayer**: [*Prayer out of a good conscience delivers from death.*] 16:4.

6. **Thinking highly of Christ:** The writer opens this homily by declaring the necessity of thinking of our salvation, our Savior, and witnessing to Him.

*[How great are the benefits which we owe Him!*

*He has graciously given us light,*

*as a Father, He has called us sons;*

*He has saved us when we were ready to perish...*

*Involved in blindness, and with such darkness before our eyes, we have received sight, and through His will have laid aside that cloud by which we were enveloped.] 1.*

*[Wherefore, brethren, let us confess Him by our works, by loving one another, and not by avaricious.] 4.*

7. Hope in **eternity:**

*[Wherefore, leaving willingly our sojourn in this present world,*

*let us do the will of Him that called us,*

*and not fear to depart out of this world.] 5:1.*

*[Let us expect, hour by hour, the kingdom of God in love and righteousness, since we do not know the day of the appearance of God.] 12:1.*

## **2. TWO LETTERS ON VIRGINITY**

Wetsein attempted to prove their ascribe to St. Clement, as many Catholic scholars did the same, but the majority of the Protestant scholars rejected this for the following reasons:

1. It was not mentioned by Eusebius.

2. Their ascetic attitude is in harmony with that of the first half of the third century.

3. The two letters differ from the genuine one of St. Clement in the mode of quoting from the New Testament. Also quotations from the Old Testament are very little compared with those of the genuine one.



## THEIR FEATURES AND CONTENTS

1. It seems that these letters constitute a single work, which in course of time came to be divided<sup>21</sup>.

2. The author begins his first letter with instructions on the nature and concept of virginity. Virginity is a divine and supernatural work. It lifts us up to the angelic and heavenly life, through the sanctification of the Holy Spirit.

*[For not by eloquence or by renown, or by station and descent or by beauty or strength, or by length of life, is the kingdom of heaven obtained, but it is obtained by the power of faith, when a man exhibits the works of faith.] 1:2.*

*[For he who covets for himself these things so great and excellent, withdraws and serves himself on this account from all the world, that he may go and live a divine and heavenly life, like the holy angels, in work pure and holy, and “in the holiness of the Spirit of God” 2 Thess. 2:13 and that he may serve God Almighty through Jesus Christ for the sake of the kingdom of heaven.] 1:4.*

3. Virginity is a life that touches the souls of the believers as well as their bodies, and not just an honorable title.

*[For virgins are a beautiful pattern to believers, and to those who shall believe.*

*The name alone, indeed, without works, does not introduce into the kingdom of heaven;*

*but, if a man be truly a believer, such an one can be saved.*

*For, if a person be only called a believer in name, while he is not such in works, he cannot possibly be a believer.*

*“Let no one,” therefore, “lead you astray with the empty words of error” Eph. 5:6. For, merely because a person is called a virgin, if he be destitute of works excellent and comely, and suitable to virginity, he cannot possibly be sacred.*

*For our Lord called such virginity as that “foolish,” as He said in the Gospel (Matt. 25:2);*

*and because it had neither oil nor light, it was left outside of the kingdom of heaven,  
and was shut out from the joy of the bridegroom,  
and was reckoned with His enemies.*

*For such persons as these “have the appearance only of the fear of God, but the power of it they deny” 2 Tim. 3:5.] 1:3.*

4. Virginitly is not an escape from the world for attaining earthly rest, but it is an entrance in the battle of the Cross, in which the virgin struggles against his / her ego, Satan, love of the world and bodily lusts.

*[He who desires to be a virgin, knows what hardship and irksomeness there is in true virginitly.] 1:5.*

*[Do you know how, like man, to enter “lawfully” upon this contest and “strive” 2 Tim. 2:5,*

*that, in the might of the Holy Spirit, chooses this for himself,*

*that may be crowned with a crown of light,*

*and that they may lead you about in triumph through “the Jerusalem above” Gal. 4:26?*

*If so then, the longest for all these things, conquer these vain things of time, which pass away and grow old, and decay, and come to an end; conquer the dragon (Rev. 12:7);*

*conquer the lion (1 Pet. 5:8);*

*conquer the serpent (2 Cor. 11:3);*

*conquer Satan;*

*through Jesus Christ, who strengthens us by hearing His words and divine Eucharist.*

*“Take up the cross and follow” Mat. 16:24 Him who makes us clean, Jesus Christ our Lord.] 1:5.*

5. The writer presented practical advice to the ascetics and to the virgins of both sexes, such as:

a. Their spiritual share in the growth of the kingdom of God, especially by unceasing prayers to God to send spiritual workmen to the harvest.

*[Let us, therefore, “ask of the Lord of the harvest” that He would send forth workmen into the harvest (Matt. 9:37,38); such workmen as “shall skillfully dispense the word of truth;” workmen “who shall not be ashamed;” faithful workmen; workmen who shall be “the light of the world” Matt. 5:14; workmen who “work not for the food that perishes, but for that food which abides unto eternal life” John 6:27; workmen who shall be such as the apostles; workmen who imitate the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit; who are concerned for the salvation of men.] 1:13.*

b. Avoiding stumbling-blocks, especially the friendship among both sexes of the virgins.

*[Blessed is that man who is circumspect and fearful in everything for the sake of purity!] 2:5.*

*[Now we, if God helps us, conduct ourselves: with maidens we do not dwell, nor have we anything in common with them; with maidens we do not eat, nor drink; and where a maiden sleeps, we do not sleep; neither do women wash our feet, nor anoint us; and on no account do we sleep where a maiden sleeps who is unmarried or has taken the vow: even though she is in some other place if she is alone, we do not pass the night there.] 2:1.*

*[But with us may no female, whether young maiden or married woman, be there at that time; nor she that is aged, nor she that has taken the vow; not even a maid-servant, whether Christian or heathen.] 2:2.*

*[Let us not be constantly with women, nor with maidens.*

*For this is not profitable for those who truly wish to “grid up their lions” Luke 12:35.*

*For it is required that we love the sister in all purity and chaste, and with all curbing of thought, in the fear of God, not associating constantly with them, nor finding access to them at every hour.] 2:8.*

6. The necessity of work, for those who are lazy are unworthy to eat.

7. These are the oldest documents, as a source of the history of the first Christian asceticism and the laws and customs of the ascetic life.

### **3. THE APOSTOLIC INSTITUTIONS<sup>22</sup>**

It contains the “*Clementine Liturgy*” in the 8th book. Until the 16th century scholars believed that this work was genuine. Now they acknowledge it as an Eastern Liturgy from the fourth century.

This work is basically spurious. The author has made use of documents that were already in existence, and ascribed his work to St. Clement of Rome, in order to give it great authority<sup>23</sup>.

In the sixteenth century, scholars still believed that they really possessed a work of St. Clement, and even F. Probst, writing in about 1870 concerning the liturgy of the third century, placed it in the second century. In Migne’s *Patrologia* also, the Apostolic Constitutions are found in the first volume. But it has been common knowledge for quite sometime that this is a work of the late fourth century<sup>24</sup> between 370 and 380 A.D. It was probably written in Syria or Antioch<sup>25</sup>.

#### **ITS CONTENTS**

The Apostolic Constitutions are a collection, forming a kind of manual of ecclesiastical law, and of Christian morality, doctrines and ceremonial.

1. Books 1-6: They are an exact resumption of the text of the *Discalia of the Apostles*.

The *Discalia* or “*the teaching of the 12 Apostles and holy disciples of our Savior,*” is an ecclesiastical Constitution which dates from the first half of the third century. Its author was a bishop in northern Syria.

11. Book 7: It is divided into 2 parts:
  - a. An expansion of the Didache.
  - b. An euchology grouping together some ancient prayers.

the order and prayers of the Liturgy in the fourth century.

Some liturgists say that it is derived from the Apostolic Tradition. Others look upon it as the most ancient and pure form of the Eucharist, and that the Apostolic Tradition had originated from it<sup>26</sup>.

Creswell sees that this liturgy indisputably resembles the Antiochene Liturgy, the parent rite of St. Basil and St. John Chrysostom.

#### ***4. THE PSEUDO-CLEMENTINES<sup>27</sup>***

who searching for truth, tries in vain the various schools of philosophers for a solution of his doubts concerning the immortality of the soul, the origin of the world and problems of a similar nature. St. Clement made a trip to the East. In Caesarea he met St. Peter, who dispelled his doubts and invited him to accompany him on his missionary journeys. He witnessed St. Peter’s conflict with Simon Magus. The work contains much legendary matter, especially about St. Clement’s family.

one gospel]. Therefore this work attacks the apostle Paul, while it praises the SS. Peter and James as the apostles of circumcision.

The following fragments of the Pseudo-Clementines are extant:

.1. The Clementine *Homilies*: 20 Ebionite homilies. Christ is a Divine Aeon who had previously been revealed in Adam and Moses. The title “Son of God” is restricted to Christ, but he is only a prophet and teacher and not a redeemer.

2. The Clementine *Recognition*, in which the Trinitarian faith sometimes is declared. Some scholars state the Trinitarian statements may have been inserted by the translator, Rufinus. It is difficult to determine whether or not he added them to the original.

3. The two Greek *Epitomes*, are evidently later. They omit most of the theological discussion of the earlier works and introduce an account of St. Clement’s martyrdom. Two Arabic epitomes also survive.

## ***THEOLOGY AND THOUGHTS***

### **MAN AS AN IMAGE OF GOD:**

We have to love men to regard even their bodies in sanctity, for man is the image of God:

*[For the image of God is man.*

*He who wishes to be pious in the eyes of God does good to man, because the body of man bears the image of God.*

*But all do not as yet bear His likeness, but the pure mind of the good soul does.*

*However, as we know that man was made after the image and after the likeness of God, we tell you to be pious towards him, that the favor may be accounted as done to God, whose image he is.] Homily 11:4.*

### **FREE-WILL:**

*[It is free for the mind to turn its judgment to which side it pleases, and to choose the way which it approves, it is clearly manifest that there is in men a liberty of choice.] Recogn. 5:5..*

*[Tell me how then God judges according to truth everyone for his doings, if men have it not in their own power to do anything?*

*If this opinion be held, all things are torn up by the roots; vain will be the desire of following after goodness;*

*yet, even in vain do the judges of the world administer laws and punish those who do amiss,*

*for they had it not in their power not to sin;*

*vain also will be the laws of nations which assign penalties to evil deeds.]* Recogn. 3:22.

### **THE NECESSITY OF BAPTISM:**

*[Now God has ordered everyone who worships Him to be sealed by baptism;*

*but if you refuse, and obey your own will rather than God's, you are doubtless contrary and hostile to His will.]* Recogn. 6:8.

*[For whether you be righteous or unrighteous, baptism is necessary for you in every respect:*

*for the righteous, that perfection may be accomplished in Him, and he may be born again to God;*

*for the unrighteous, that pardon may be vouchsafed by Him for the sins which he has committed in ignorance.*

*Therefore all should hasten to be born again in God without delay, because the end of everyone's life is uncertain.]* Recogn. 6:9.

*[Therefore, consider, should you be righteous or unrighteous.*

*For if you are righteous, baptism alone is lacking in order to attain salvation.*

*But if you are unrighteous, come to be baptized for the remission of sins formerly committed in ignorance.*

*And to the unrighteous man it remains that his well-doing after baptism be according to the proportion of his previous impiety.*

*Whereas he is righteous or unrighteous, hasten to be born in God, because delay brings danger, on account of the fore-appointment of death being unrevealed;*

*and show by well-doing your likeness to the Father, who begot you in the water (of baptism).*

*As a lover of truth, honor is that you live as Him, being Righteous, would have you live (otherwise).*

*And the will of the Righteous, would have you do wrong! No, for wrong is murder, hatred, envy, and suchlike; and of these are many forms.] Homily 11:27.*

*[For our first birth descends through the fire of lust, and therefore, by the divine appointment,*

*this second birth is introduced by water, which may extinguish the nature of fire;*

*and that the soul, enlightened the first birth: provided, however, it so live for the time to come, that it do not all seek after any pleasures of this world, but be, as it were, a pilgrim and a stranger, and a citizen of another city.] Recogn. 9:7.*

### **THE TRUTH AND MAN'S OWN ABILITIES:**

Man cannot acknowledge the truth by his own abilities without the divine grace:

*[All therefore who ever sought the truth, trusting to themselves to be able to find it, fell into a snare.*

*This is what both the philosophers of the Greeks, and the more intelligent of the barbarians, have suffered.] Homily 2:7.*

### **KNOWLEDGE:**

*[For this is the gate of life to those who will enter, and the road of good works to those going to the city of salvation.] Recogn. 5:5.*

*[Yet he himself, rejoicing in the riches of wisdom which he has found, desires insatiably to enjoy them, and is delighted with the practice of good works; hastening to attain, with a clean heart and a pure conscience, the world to come, when he shall be able even to see God, the King of all.] Recogn. 5:7.*

### **THE NEED OF TRUE INSTRUCTIONS**

*[For everyone, in expectation of being judged by the All-seeing God, receives the greater impulse towards virtue.*



*But if the doctrine be also true, it withdraws him who has lived virtuously from eternal punishment, and endows him with eternal and unspeakable blessings from God.] Homily 4:14.*

### **THE FEAR OF GOD:**

*[On every account it is advantageous to fear Him alone, not as an unjust, but a righteous God,*

*For one fears an unjust being, lest he be wrongfully destroyed, but a righteous one, lest he be caught in sin and punished.*

*You can therefore, by not fearing Him, the one Lord and Maker of all, you shall be the slaves of all evils to your own hurt, I mean of demons and diseases and of everything that can in any way hurt you.]*

Homily 10:5

### **RIGHTEOUSNESS**

It is not enough to be unconcerned with the earthly things, nor even to acknowledge the heavenly mystery, but we need to take care of our own salvation, seeking for the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

*[Wherefore the first duty of all is to inquire into the righteousness of God and His kingdom (Matt. 6:33); His righteousness, that we may be taught to act rightly; His kingdom, that we may know what is the reward appointed for labor and patience; in which kingdom there is indeed a bestowal of eternal good things upon the good, but upon those who have acted contrary to the will of God, a worthy infliction of penalties in proportion to the doings of everyone.] Recogn. 2:20.*

*[If our mind suggests to us to make any inquiry concerning secret and hidden things before we inquire into the words of righteousness, we ought to render to ourselves a reason, because if acting well we shall merit to obtain salvation:*

*then, going to God chaste and clean, we shall be filled with the Holy Spirit, and shall know all things that are secret and hidden, without any caviling of questions;*

*whereas now, even if any one should spend the whole of his life in inquiring into these things, he, not only shall not be able to find them ,*

*but shall involve himself in greater errors, because he did not first enter through the way of righteousness, and strive to reach the haven of life.]* Recogn. 2:21.

## **OBEDIENCE**

It is our duty to obey the Lord, therefore the clergy must not give orders with what is not proper.

*[And your work is to **order what things are proper**; and that of the brethren is to submit, and not to disobey. Therefore, submitting they shall be saved, but disobeying they shall be punished by the Lord, because the president is entrusted with the place of Christ.]*

Homily 3:66

## **THE HOLY ANGER**

*[For this is the righteous and necessary anger, by which every one is indignant with himself, and accuses himself for those things which he has erred and done amiss;*

*and by this indignation a certain fire is kindled in us, which, applied as it were to a barren field, consumes and burns up the roots of vile pleasure, and renders the soil of the heart more fertile for the good seed of the word of God.*

*And I think that you have sufficiently worthy causes of anger, from which that most righteous fire may be kindled, if you consider into what errors the evil of ignorance has drawn you, and how it has caused you to fall and rush headlong into sin, from what good things it has withdrawn you, and into what evils it has driven you,*

*and, what is of more importance than all the rest, how it has made you liable to eternal punishment in the world to come.]* Recogn. 6:3.

## **THE PURITY OF HEART**

*[God is seen by the mind, not by the body;  
by the spirit, not by the flesh.*

*Also angels who are spirits, see God;*

*and therefore, as long as they are men, cannot see Him.*

*But after the resurrection of the dead, when they shall have been made like the angels, they shall be able to see God.*

*And thus, my statement not contrary to the law (Exod. 33:20); neither is that which our Master said, “blessed are they of a pure heart, for they shall see God” Matt. 5:8.*

*For He showed that a time shall come in which of men shall be made angels, who in the spirit of their mind shall see God.]* Recogn. 3:30.

### **STUDYING THE BIBLE**

*[For it is necessary to give heed intently and unceasingly to the study of doctrine, that our mind may be filled with the thought of God only; because in the mind which is filled with the thought of God, no place will be given to the wicked one.]* Recogn. 3:31.

### **PEACE AND SPIRITUAL BATTLE:**

*[He who has sent us, when He had come, and had seen that all the world had fallen into wickedness, did not forthwith give peace to him who is in error, lest He should confirm him in evil; but set the knowledge of truth in opposition to the ruins of ignorance of it, that, if haply men would repent and look upon the light of truth, they might rightly grieve that they had been deceived and drawn away into the precipices of error, and might kindle the fire of salutary anger against the ignorance that had deceived them. On this account, therefore, He said, “I have come to send fire on the earth; and how I wish that it were kindled!” Luke 12:49]* Recogn. 6:4.

### **SANCTITY OF MARRIAGE:**

*[And let them inculcate marriage not only upon the young, but also upon those advanced in years,  
lest burning lust bring a plague upon the Church by reason of whoredom or adultery.*

*For, above every other sin, the wickedness of adultery is hated by God, because it not only destroys the person himself who sins, but those also who eat & associate with him.*

*For it is like the madness of a dog, because it has the nature of communicating its own madness.] Homily 3:68.*

### **THE GUARDIAN ANGEL**

*[For every nation has an angel, to whom God has committed the government of that nation.] Recogn. 2:42.*

### **OUR AUTHORITY ON DEMONS THROUGH CHRIST**

*[For when a soul has come to the faith of God, it obtains the virtue of Heavenly water, by which it extinguishes the demon like a spark of fire.] Recogn. 4:17.*

*[Hence, in order to put demons to flight, the most useful help is abstinence, and fasting, and suffering of affliction.*

*For if they enter the men's bodies for the sake of sharing pleasures, it is manifest that they are put to flight by suffering.] Homily 9:9.*

*[Every faithful one commands the demons, although they seem to be much stronger than men, and that not by means of his own power, but by means of the power of God, who has put them into subjection.] Recogn. 4:33.*

### **THE SIXTH SENSE**

*[There is also a sixth sense, namely that of foreknowledge: for those five senses are capable of knowledge, but the sixth is that of foreknowledge; and this the prophets possessed.] Recogn. 2:51.*

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1. Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty: The Apostolic Fathers, p. 56 ff.
  2. Irenaeus: Adv. Haer. 3:3:3.
  3. Eusebius: H. E. 4:23.
  4. Schaff: History of the Christian Church, vol. 2. p. 637.
  5. H.E. 3:15.
  6. De Vir. Illustr., ch. 15.
  7. Comm. in Joan. 1:29, 9:36.
  8. His Rom. 67:4.
  9. Many Christians of Gentile origin were familiar with the Old Testament, such as St. Justine who was a Gentile by birth and education.
  10. Bishop Lightfoot: The Apostolic Fathers, (Clement of Rome, vol. 2).

11. Adv. Haer. 3:3.
12. Hamell: A Handbook of Patrology, p .26.
13. Schaff: History of the Christian Church, vol. 2, p. 638-9.
14. De Vir. Illustr., ch. 15.
15. H. E. 3:34.
16. Rufinus: Epilogue to Pamphilus.
17. Butler's lives of the Saints, vol. 4, p., 406.
18. Mostly I quoted the texts from the Ante-Nicene Fathers, together with other English translations
19. Adv. Haer. 30:15.
20. Adv. Jovin. 1:12.
21. Quasten: Patrology, vol. 1, p. 58.
22. Fr. T. Y. Malaty: Christ in the Eucharist, Alexandria 1986, p. 213-214.
23. Deiss: The Early Sources of the Liturgy.
24. Jungmann: The Early Liturgy, p. 5.
25. Cresswell: The Liturgy of the Apostolic Constitution.
26. Drews: Zur Entstehungsgeschichte des Kanons (Tubingen 1902).
27. J. Quasten: Patrology, vol. 1. p. 59ff. F. L. Cross: The Oxford Dict. of the Christian Church, p. 304, 438.

## ST. IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH<sup>1</sup>

### BISHOP OF ANTIOCH

St. Ignatius describes himself as being called “Theophoros,” meaning “bearer of God,” or perhaps “borne by God.”

He was born between the years 30 and 35 A.D, most probably of a Syrian origin, of Hellenic culture, and a pagan. In the opinion of Anastasius Bibliothecarius<sup>2</sup>, who lived in the ninth century, he was the child whom the Lord Christ carried and offered as an example of humility (Matt. 18:2-4). St. John Chrysostom, who was born in Antioch at the end of the fourth century, was of the opinion that St. Ignatius did not see Christ the Lord<sup>3</sup>.

J. B. Lightfoot, basing himself on a passage from his Epistle *ad Romanos*, believed that he was a pagan and a persecutor of Christians before his conversion.

When the Apostles saw in him a burning zeal, they ordained him a bishop for Antioch. There was a controversy as to who ordained him, some said that Apostle Peter ordained Evodius for the converted Jews, and the Apostle Paul ordained him for the converted Gentiles. When the first passed away, Ignatius received both sectors of the church. Anyway, he was known for his zeal for the salvation of souls and won many Gentiles for Christ the Lord.

According to Origen he was the second Bishop of Antioch, the successor of St. Peter; according to Eusebius he was the third, following St. Peter’s successor, Evodius. Nothing is known of his life beyond his journey to martyrdom from Antioch to Rome<sup>4</sup>.

## **HIS ESTABLISHMENT OF THE HYMN “TRISAGION”**

It was said that he saw in a vision the angels praising and glorifying God, singing the “Trisagion,” he then conveyed what he saw to the church of Antioch. Later this spread to the rest of the churches.

## **HIS MEETING WITH THE PREFECT OF SYRIA**

When the prefect heard about his zeal for spreading Christianity, he summoned him and entered into a dialogue with him regarding the “Crucified Jesus.” This ended by the order of chaining St. Ignatius (who claimed that in his heart he carried the Crucified), and sending him to Great Rome to be given as food to savage beasts to please the people. When the bishop heard this, he rejoiced as he had been waiting for this chance for a long time. He considered this as a great gift. He knelt and shouted in joy: “Lord, I thank You because You granted to honor me with the abundance of Your love; You allowed that I be chained with metal chains like Your Apostle Paul.” When he said his prayers, he kissed his chains, and pleaded God to protect the church which He entrusted him to serve for about 40 years.

## **TO ROME**

The saint left, under a heavy guardianship of ten soldiers. He was accompanied by two members of his church: Rufus and Zosimus, who were also included in the death sentence.

When the soldiers saw how the people surrounded him at his departure, and the way they expressed their love, they resorted to treat him with cruelty and violence. He nicknamed them the leopards, though he was gentle with them. The people paid the guards to be kind to him.

They arrived at Smyrna<sup>5</sup>, where he was met by its bishop, Polycarp, also the bishop of Magnesia<sup>6</sup>, Ephesus<sup>7</sup> and Tralles<sup>8</sup>. They all came to his reception with representatives from several churches of Asia Minor. They sought his blessings and the pearls of his teachings. He took this opportunity and sent letters to these churches, telling them to beware of heretics and to submit to church authority.

He also wrote an epistle to Rome when he heard that some of the believers tried their best to save him from martyrdom. [I shall never have a better chance than this of getting to God... This favor only I beg of you: suffer me to be a libation poured to God, while there is still an altar ready for me. Then you may form a loving choir around it and sing hymns of praise in Jesus Christ to the Father, for permitting Syria's bishop, summoned from the realms of the morning, to have reach the land of the setting sun<sup>9</sup>.]

## **IN TROAS**

He sailed by ship from Smyrna to Troas where the saint also wrote, three letters "to Philadelphia, Smyrna and to St. Polycarp." From Troas he sailed to Neopolis to Philippi then to Epirus and Tyrhene and finally to the district of Portus, where he met the brethren whose joy for seeing him was mixed with their sorrow for his departure. He met them with all love and asked them to show true love and have courage. He knelt and prayed asking God to stop the wave of persecution against the church and allow love to grow among brethren.

Finally, the guards rushed him to the arena, the wild beasts were let lose and he faced them cheerfully like a person hurrying to the eternal heavenly city to live with his Master in the eternal glory. Two lions sprang upon him and left only a few bones of him. He was martyred in 108 A.D in Rome<sup>10</sup>.

The believers collected his relics and sent them to his church in Antioch. They were buried outside the fence close to the door of the burial place. They remained there until Jerome's time. The temple of Fortune at the center of Antioch was converted into a Christian church. Emperor Theodosius The Young (408-450 A.D) transferred the relics of the saint to this church and named it after the righteous martyr<sup>11</sup> in his commemoration. The church celebrates his Day on the 7th Abib.



## HIS LETTERS

Although history testified to the excellence of the letters which St. Ignatius wrote, they nevertheless, were a source of controversy more than any other writings by the early church Fathers.

There were numerous collections of these letters - the greatest containing seven genuine and six spurious letters. The authentic letters were addressed to the churches of Ephesus, Magnesia, Tralles, Rome, Philadelphia, Smyrna (Ezmir) and to Polycarp the martyr. The spurious were addressed to Virgin Lady, Mary of Cassabola, John the Apostle (two letters), Heron (a deacon of Antioch), the churches of Antioch, Philippi and Tarsus.

The authenticity of the seven genuine letters is guaranteed by Polycarp and Eusebius, who gave the contents of the letters. In the fourth century an Apollinarist (or Arian?) forger inserted interpolations into the genuine letters and added the spurious letters, making the collection thirteen letters, and this was the version that became known first. It was printed in Latin in 1489 and in Greek in 1557. This was the only work attributed to Ignatius and doubts were held about its authenticity.

In 1646 Archbishop Ussher (Armagh) discovered and published the primitive text of six of Ignatius' Letters and in 1689 Dom Ruinart discovered and published the primitive text of the *Letter to the Romans* (the missing seventh). The discoveries raised a storm of controversy in Catholic and Protestant circles. Some Protestants viewed them with doubt. In their opinion, it was not comprehensible that the church was so systematic in the manner contained in the letters during the era of Trajan. However, Lightfoot, Harnak, Zan and others proved by internal and external evidences the genuineness of their authenticity. In fact, St. Polycarp himself, in his letters to the Philippians, referred to those letters and sent copies to them, also.

The authentic letters reached us in three groups: Short (Greek) and long and precise (Syriac). The *short recession* properly is

the original seven without interpolation and without the six spurious letters, and it exists in Greek only. It came as an explanation of the original according to Lardner, in his book *Credibility of the Gospel History* in the year 1743. This was also the opinion of Gorten (1751), Mosheim (1755), Griesbach (1768), Rosenmiller (1795), Neander (1826) ... etc.

The short version was kept in an ancient Greek manuscript<sup>12</sup> which dated back to the second century. However, it did not include the version addressed to the peoples of Rome. The oldest copies, which included the version of the letter to Rome, did not date prior to the tenth century<sup>13</sup>.

The problem re-arose when three of these letters in the Syriac language were discovered among the manuscripts, which were taken from the monastery of the Virgin Lady (Deipara) in the desert of Nertia, in Egypt. These were deposited in the British Museum; William Cureton published them in 1845 A.D. These letters were to Polycarp, Rome and Ephesus, and were a brief version. Some are still comparing them with the Greek short version; although Lightfoot thinks that the Syriac version is an ancient translation of the brief Greek version.

## **CONCEPTS AND THEOLOGY**

1. Had not St. Ignatius been sent to Rome to be condemned, he would not have written these letters. In fact these letters were an out-pouring of a *pastoral heart*, aflamed with a consuming love for Jesus Christ and His Church. Their style reminds us of a certain epistle of the Apostle of the Gentiles.

He wrote them in a very short and critical time, while he was guarded by violent soldiers. He did not write them as a theologian, but as a pastor. His concepts and theology appeared in a very simple way, which revealed him as a man passionately devoted to Christ. His consuming desire for martyrdom came out, especially in the Epistle to the Romans.

He warned the recipients against a *Judaizing heresy with Docetic elements*, which considered the humanity and sufferings of Christ as apparent rather than real. He insisted on the reality both of the Divinity and the Humanity of the Lord. His Birth, Passion, and Death were not appearances but realities.

The real life of Christ is continued in the *Eucharist*, which he called “The medicine of immortality, the antidote against death, and everlasting life in Jesus Christ” (Ephes. 20:2), and the bread that is the Body of Jesus Christ, this Body which has suffered for our sins.”

The best safeguard of *the unity of the Christian faith* is the bishop, who is pre-eminent because he is “as the Lord,” and without whose authority neither the Eucharist, nor marriage, may be celebrated. The *bishop* is one and in supreme authority. He is first, the priests are second, deacons third. The bishop has duties as well as rights.

The *Spiritual life* is based on the feeling of the presence of Christ. Christians are *God-bearers, and Christ-bearers*. It is an expression of self-denial with a profound knowledge of Christ.

2. Dogma and Christian doctrines, as they appeared in St. Ignatius epistles, are not a philosophy, but a practical life which believers examine in their church life, in their own private rooms, and in their relationship with others.

3. He felt he devoted all his life for realizing the Church unity.

[ *As for me, I did my part as one dedicated to the cause of unity.*] Philad. 8:1.

4. He differs from St. Clement of Rome, for he did not quote from the Old Testament.

5. He wrote in openness of heart and firmness to be cautious from the heretics, but in humbleness.

*[I could well write more forcibly on his behalf, if it were not that as a condemned prisoner I have not thought myself entitled to use the peremptory tone of an Apostle.]* Trall. 3.

6. While he wrote his letters, his eyes were not focused on Rome, where he would face his end, but rather he was looking towards the Heavenly Groom, who was preparing for him a glorious place, among the heavenly creatures. Therefore, his letters had a very strong eschatological attitude.

He raised his inner sight towards eternity to attain the true discipleship of Christ, and to be considered as a true believer.

## **CHRIST THE SAVIOR**

“Christ the Savior” is the center of all St. Ignatius’ teachings and theology, which he received from St. Paul the Apostle, and was affected by the richness of St. John’s theology.

1. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the Teacher, who teaches even the prophets before his advent, by the work of the Holy Spirit, who directed their sight towards the Teacher. Their prophecies and desires had been realized by His advent in this world through His incarnation.

*[Jesus Christ our only Master - if this be so, how shall we be able to live apart from Him? seeing that even the prophets, being His disciples, were expecting Him as their teacher through the Spirit. And for this cause He, whom they rightly awaited, when He came, raised them from the dead.]* Magn. 9.

2. He clarified the Divinity and humanity of Christ:

*[There is only one Physician, who is of flesh and spirit (Man and God at the same time); both made (gennetos) and not made (agennetos); God existed in flesh; true life in death; both of Mary and of God; first subject to suffering and then impassible, even Jesus Christ our Lord.]* Ephes 7:2

*[He was truly of the seed of David according to the flesh,(Rom. 1:3) and the Son of God according to the will and power of God; that He was truly born of a virgin, was baptized by John, in order that all righteousness might be fulfilled (Matt. 3:15).] Smyr. 1*

He is above all time, and Invisible:

*[Look for Him, who is above all time, eternal and invisible, yet Who became visible for our sake; impalpable and impassible, yet who became passible on our account; and who in every kind of way suffered for our sake.] Polycarp 3.*

Our new life in Jesus Christ is the source of life, as we will notice when we write about the salvation and the fellowship with Christ.

## **SALVATION**

St. Ignatius concentrated on the redeeming work of Christ, explaining God's purpose, that is the salvation of men, which is realized through the divine incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection. By these doctrines he attacks the Docetists, who denied the reality of incarnation, and consequentially the reality of the crucifixion.

According to St. Ignatius there are two kingdoms: the kingdom of God, the only source of life, and immortality; and the kingdom of Satan which is temporal and ruled by corruption and death. Man's soul is not immortal by its own power, but man should be united with Christ the source of life and immortality. He states:

*[Let us not, be insensible to His kindness. For were He to reward us according to our works, we should be lost.] Magn. 10.*

### **How can salvation be realized?**

1. By fellowship with Christ, the only source of life, who is able to purify us from the dominion of corruption and death, saying:

*[He was born and baptized, that by His passion He might purify the water.] Ephes. 18*

*[For this end did the Lord suffer the ointment to be poured upon His head, that he might breathe immortality into His Church.] Ibid.*

[ .....*apart from whom we live not true life*] ad Trall. 9:2.

2. Our Lord Jesus Christ truly had been crucified (Tralles 9:1), to grant us life by His Cross. He called the cross “the Tree of Life” (Smyrna 1:2); its branches are the believers, who abide in Him, carrying incorruptible fruits (Tralles 11:2).

The Cross is the base of martyrdom, it is a call to accept death with the Crucified One.

[*Permit me to be an imitator of the passion of my God.*] Rom. 6

[*I exhort you, not to show unseasonable kindness to me. Let me be given to the wild beasts, for through them I can attain unto God. I am God’s wheat, and I am grounded by the teeth of wild beasts that I may be found as a pure bread of Christ. Rather entice the wild beasts, that they may come at my tomb and may leave no part of my body behind, so that I may not, when I am fallen asleep, be burdensome to anyone. Then I shall truly be a disciple of Jesus Christ, when the world shall not so much as see my body. Supplicate the Lord for me, that through these instruments I may be found a sacrifice to God.*] Rom. 4

3. By the death of our Lord, Satan has been destroyed and we were delivered from death.

[... *It is evident to me that you are living not after men but after Jesus Christ, who died for us, that believing on His death you might escape death.*] Trall. 2.

4. By our unity with the risen Body of Christ, we despise death and conquer it, for we attain the new risen life. Our Lord is the Immortal Life, who grants us life and divine love.

[*For I know and believe that He was in the flesh even after the resurrection; and when He came to Peter and his company, He said to them: “Lay hold, handle me, and see that I am not an incorporeal spirit.” And straightway they touched Him, and they believed, being joined unto His flesh and His blood. Therefore, they also despised*

*death; for they were superior to death. And after His resurrection He ate and drank with them as one in the flesh, although spiritually He was united with the Father.]Smyr. 3*

He stated that the Logos really incarnated, was born, crucified, and died before the heavenly hosts, human beings and those who were under the earth. He also assured that His resurrection was a fact to grant us His risen body so that we may rise in Him and with Him.

*[He was truly raised from the dead, His Father having raised Him, who in the like fashion will so raise us also who believe in Him by Christ Jesus, apart from whom we have not true life.] Trall. 9.*

5. We cannot attain the risen life unless we believe in the risen Christ, be united with Him, and abide in Him. This faith and fellowship with Him must be realized practically through love and unity, and thus we attain immortality.

## **DEATH**

Fear of death is a bondage to Satan. He who is united with Christ and becomes His disciple never fears death, but enjoys unity with life, immortality and incorruption.

*[Seeing then that all things have an end, and these two - life and death - are set before us together, and each man shall go to his own place; for just as there are two coinages, the one of God and the other of the world, and each of them has its proper stamp impressed upon it, the unbelievers the stamp of this world, but the faithful in love the stamp of God the Father through Jesus Christ, through whom unless we accept willingly to die unto His passion, His life is not in us.] Magn. 5*

*[The prince of this world would fain tear me carry me away and corrupt my mind to Godward. Let not any of you therefore who are near abet him. Rather be you on my side, that is on God's side.] Rom. 7.*

In his dialogue with Trajan he said, *"I am a priest for my Lord Jesus Christ, and to Him I offer a daily sacrifice. I desire to offer my*

*life as a sacrifice as He offered His life a Sacrifice because of His love to me.”*

## **THE CHURCH**

### **1. The place of sacrifice (Thysiasterion)**

As St. Ignatius was exceedingly pleased to be martyred, he expressed that by calling the Church “the place of sacrifice (Thysiasterion) (Ephes. 5:2; Tralles 7:2; Philip. 4), for she offers the Eucharist as her sacrifice, the source of her joy. She is the bride of the Sacrificed Heavenly Groom.”

### **2. Community of love**

Through the victory of Christ, on death and Satan, the believer has the power to attain the divine life and love, and to be united with his neighbor. To St. Ignatius, faith and love to our neighbors are inseparable; for [*...faith is the beginning, and love is the end (of our life in Christ), and the union of the two together is God.*] Ephes. 14.

Christ is the Immortal life; as He grants us life he gives us also love.

[*...for my drink I crave that blood of His, which is imperishable love.*] Rom. 7.

Salvation is a return to immortality for those whose lives are as one community of infinite love. It is also a justification of the believer, and destroying death and Satan’s authority, so that the believer may attain the infinite love towards God and man.

### **3. Community of Singers of Hymns**

As we are gathered together in Christ through love, Satan cannot rule upon us, and our life will be changed into singing hymns to Christ and giving thanks to Him.

Through the Eucharist, the mystery of “Thanksgiving,” the church attains the medicine of immortality (Eph. 20:2), which has two effects:



a. The positive effect: Attaining love, purity, unity, and participation in immortality, together with joy and giving hymns. These are the characteristics of the Church, who is gathered together around the altar to participate in the Eucharist.

b. The negative affect: She has victory over Satan.

*[Do your diligence therefore to meet together more frequently for thanksgiving to God and for His glory. For, when you meet together frequently, the powers of Satan are cast down; and his mischief comes to naught in the concord of your faith.]* Ephes. 11.

*[Let no man be deceived. If any one be not within the altar, he is deprived of the bread of God . For, if the prayer of one and another has so great force, how much more that of the bishop and of the whole Church?! Whosoever therefore does not assemble with the church, he thereby shows his pride and has separated himself; for it is written, God resists the proud.]* Ephes. 5.

*[He who is within the sanctuary is pure; but he that is without the sanctuary is not pure, that is, he that does aught without the bishop and presbytery and deacons, this man is not pure in his conscience.]* Trall. 7.

#### **4. Community in Christ**

The church who gathered in love and unity in Christ is the Church of Christ. Wherever Christ may be there is the catholic Church. *[Where Jesus may be, there is the catholic Church.]* Smyrn. 8.

#### **5. The catholicity or universality of the Church**

He is the first writer who calls the church “catholic.” In fact he recorded what was known traditionally.

The word “*catholic*” is derived from the two Greek words:

1. καθ means “together in unity.”
2. ολο means “people” or “all.”

Thus, this word is from an eastern origin. It has no relation with the concept which the Church of Rome uses. It was used in the eastern liturgies not to mean universality in the world, or in place, but the spiritual existence and its relation with the one altar and one Sacrifice.

*[Let there be one prayer in common, one supplication, one mind, one hope, in love and in joy unblameable, which is Jesus Christ, than whom there is nothing better. Hasten to come together all of you, as to one temple, of God; as to one altar, as to one Jesus Christ, who came forth from One Father and is with One and has gone to One.] Magn. 7*

As catholicity is realized by the Eucharist, the following words are repeated in those letters: “one body,” “one altar,” “one sanctuary” etc.”

## **THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH**

St. Ignatius who devoted his life for the unity of the church, saw this unity as a living icon of the unity of the Father with the Son. He refers to four kinds of unity:

1. The oneness of God, or the unique unity among the Holy Trinity (in one essence) ( Tral. 2:1-2).

*[There is one God who manifested Himself through Jesus Christ His Son, Who is His Word that proceeded from silence, who in all things pleased Him that sent Him.] Magn. 8*

2. Unity between the Father and the Son... He repeated the expression. “God the Father and Christ” (Philad. inscr.; 1:1; 3:2, Philcarp. inscr.; 21:2; Magn. inscr.; Trall. 1:1; 12:2; Smyrn. inscr.)

The Father and Christ are our mutual hope (Ephes. 21:2); the source of love, mercy and success (Philad. 1; Trall. 1), the source of priests’ authority (Philad. 1).

Our life is “in Christ” (Ephes. 3:1; 8:2; 10:3; 11:1,2; 20:2; 21:2), and also in God the Father (Ephes. 6:2; Magnes. 3:3,14; Trall. 4:1; 8:2; Polycarp 1:1). The end of our life is to attain God the Father (Ephes. 12: 2; Magnes. 14: 21; Trall. 12: 2; 13: 3; Rom. 1: 1; 2: 2; 4: 1; 9: 2; Smyrn. 12: 1; Polycarp 2: 3; 7:1), and Jesus Christ (Rom 5: 3; 6: 1).

Christians are the temples of God the Father and Jesus Christ ( Philad. 7: 2; Ephes. 9: 2; Magnes. 12).

3. The unity of Christ’s divinity and humanity: He called the sufferings which imposed on His humanity as the Passion of God ( Ephes. 20; Rom. 1.), and Jesus’s blood as God’s blood (Ephes. 1: 1).

*[There is only one Physician who is of flesh and spirit (Man and God at the same time).] Ephes. 7.*

4. The unity of the Church: All the church is gathered around the altar of Christ.

In the local church, unity is realized through the bishop as a representative of Christ (Magnes. 3). His authority descends from the Apostles. He is the icon of the Invisible God (Ephes. 6; Magnes. 6; Tral. 3), and the guard of unity.

### **THE HOLY TEMPLE**

We are the Temple of God, we attained Him within us ( 1 Cor. 6 : 19, 20), and he bought us by His precious blood.

*[Whatever we do, then, let it be done as if He Himself is dwelling within us, we being, His temples and He being our God.] Ephes 15: 3.*

*[Forasmuch as you are stones of a temple, which were prepared beforehand for a building of God the Father, being hoisted up to the heights through the engine of Jesus Christ, which is the Cross, and using for a rope the Holy Spirit; while your faith is your windlass, and love is the way that leads up to God. So then you are all compan-*

*ions in the way, carrying your God and your shrine, your Christ and your holy things.] Ephes. 9*

## **BEING IN CHRIST**

Christ is not only in us, we are also one with Christ. St. Ignatius again and again repeats the Pauline expression, “being in Christ.” He desires “to be found in Christ.” “Union with Christ is the bond which encircles all Christians.” And therefore he beseeches the Ephesians to be imitators of the Lord.

*[In all purity and temperance abide you in Christ Jesus, with your flesh and with your spirit.] Ephes. 10.*

*[I pray that there may be in them union of the flesh and of the spirit which are Jesus Christ's, the constant source of our life, and of our faith and of love which is preferred before all things, and - what is more than all - a union with Jesus and with the Father.] Magn. 1.*

*[...only that we be found in Christ Jesus unto true life.] Ephes. 11.*

St. Ignatius stressed repeatedly that Christians are united only when they are one with their bishop through faith, obedience and particularly through participation in divine liturgical worship.

## **IMITATIONS OF CHRIST<sup>16</sup>**

Perhaps no author of early Christian times is as eloquent on the “imitation of Christ” as St. Ignatius. If we wish to live the life of Christ and of God, then we must adopt the principles and virtues of God and of Christ.

*[They that are of the flesh cannot do the things of the Spirit, neither can they that are of the Spirit do the things of the flesh; even as faith cannot do the things of unfaithfulness, neither unfaithfulness the things of faith. Nay, even those things which you do after the flesh are spiritual; for you do all things in Jesus Christ.] Ephes. 8*

*[Be imitators of Jesus Christ.] Philad. 7.*

[*Permit me to be an imitator of the passion of my God.*] Rom. 7.

## **EUCCHARIST**

He spoke about the Eucharist repeatedly, because the Docetists, who denied the reality of the Logos' incarnation, refused to participate in the Eucharist.

[*They even absent themselves from the Eucharist and the public prayers.*] Smyrna 7:1.

His concepts of the Eucharist can be summarized in the following points.

1. The Eucharist is a spiritual food for the soul (Ephes. 20:2), grants it immortality.

2. It is a medicine for the soul, which cures her from all diseases, weakness and death (Ephes. 20:2).

3. Source of unity with God in the Church, as all believers are gathered together around the altar, Christ has one body and one cup, which unites us with His blood (Philad. 4).

4. The Eucharist is a true sacrifice (*thysia*) (Magnes. 7:1; Tral. 8:1; Rom. 7:1; Philad. 4:1; Smyrn. 7:1).

[*Let there be one prayer in common, one supplication, one mind, one hope, in love and in joy unblameable, which is Jesus Christ, than whom there is nothing better.*

[*Hasten to come together all of you, as to one temple, of God; as to one altar, as to one Jesus Christ, who came forth from One Father and is with One and has gone to One.*] Magn.7

5. The essential of the Eucharistic rite is the practical fellowship with God in our lives.

## **BAPTISM**

He referred to baptism four times, twice he mentioned the baptism of Christ in the Jordan River, and in the other two the mystery of the Church.

Christ's baptism was mentioned among Christ's events, such as the conception of Jesus Christ, His sufferings, resurrection etc. Therefore some scholars believed that the "Baptism of Jesus Christ" was one of the articles of the Antiochene creed.

Our Lord was baptized for two reasons:

1. To purify the water (Ephes. 18). According to the Jewish tradition Satan has his own dominion in three areas: water, desert and air. Our Lord conquered him in his dominion, in the water by His baptism, in the desert through His temptation, and in the air through His Cross.

2. To fulfill every righteousness (Smyrn. 1).

Concerning our baptism he explained that it cannot be fulfilled without the knowledge of the bishop (Smyrn. 8). He also declared the power of baptism, saying: [*For a shield take your baptism, for a helmet your faith, for a spear your love, and for body-armor your patient endurance..*] Polycarp 6.

## **MARTYRDOM**

1. In St. Ignatius' mind martyrdom is the perfect imitation of Christ. Our participation in Christ's death and resurrection cannot be fulfilled perfectly except by martyrdom.

In his conception, martyrdom is the sign of true discipleship to our Savior, Who sacrificed His life on our behalf. Therefore, the Church is called the place of sacrifice.

*[While I welcomed in God your much-beloved name, which you bear by natural right, (in an upright and virtuous mind), by faith and love in Christ Jesus our Savior - being imitators of God, and having your hearts kindled in the blood of God, you have perfectly fulfilled*

*your congenial work - for when you heard that I was on my way from Syria, in bonds for the sake of the common Name and hope, and was trusting through your prayers to succeed in fighting, with wild beasts in Rome, that by so succeeding I might have power to be a disciple, you were eager to visit me.] Ephes. 1*

*[I exhort you, not to show unseasonable kindness to me. Let me be given to the wild beasts, for through them I can attain unto God. I am God's wheat, and I am ground by the teeth of wild beasts that I may be found pure bread of Christ. Rather entice the wild beasts, that they may become my tomb and may leave no part of my body behind, so that I may not, when I am fallen asleep, be burdensome to anyone. Then shall I be truly a disciple of Jesus Christ, when the world shall not so much as see my body. Supplicate the Lord for me, that through these instruments I may be found a sacrifice to God.] Rom. 4*

His great desire to be martyred created in him an openness of heart, to witness to Christ and to demand the salvation of men.

## **WITNESSES TO CHRIST**

As an experienced bishop he explained two important elements for witnessing to Christ our Savior:

**1. Praying for others:** His letters explained him as a man of prayer, who asked every believer not to cease from praying for repentance of others:

*[And pray you also without ceasing on behalf of the rest of mankind, for there is in them a hope of repentance, that they may attain to God.] ad Ephes. 10.*

### **2. The good example:**

*[Therefore permit them to be instructed at least by your works. Against their outbursts of wrath be you meek; against their proud words be you humble; against their railings set you your prayers; against their errors be you steadfast in faith; against their fierceness be you gentle.] Ephes. 10.*

*[It is better to keep silence and to be (a Christian) than to talk and not to be one. It is a fine thing to teach, if the speaker practises (what he teaches). Now there is one Teacher, who spoke and it came to pass: yea and even the things which He did in silence are worthy of the Father.]* Ephes. 15.

## CLERGYMEN

1. We obtain from St. Ignatius' letters a vivid picture of the church as a people who surrounded the clergymen in love, unity and obedience in Christ. Clergymen with the three ranks episcopate, presbyterate and deaconate together with the people must work **according to the will of the Father, and the mind of Christ, by the Holy Spirit.**

*[I salute you in the blood of Jesus Christ, wherein is joy eternal and unfailling; all the more so when men are at one with their bishop - and with their presbyters and deacons too, whose appointment with him is approved by Jesus Christ, and confirmed and ratified, according to His will, by His Holy Spirit.]* Philad. insert.

*[There is one bishop, together with the presbytery and the deacons my fellow-servants, that whatsoever you do, you may do it after God.]* Philad. 4

The Church as a liturgical community worshipping God around the altar, cannot exist without the clergymen in its three ranks: *[Apart from these there is not even the name of a Church]* Trall.3.

2. All that concern the Church must be done in agreement with the bishop, the presbyters and deacons.

*[Obey your bishop, as Jesus Christ followed the Father, and the presbytery as the Apostles; and to the deacons pay respect, as to God's commandment. Let no man do anything pertaining to the Church without the bishop. Let that be held a valid Eucharist which is under the bishop or one to whom he shall have committed it. Wherever the bishop shall appear, there let the people be.]* Smyrn. 8



This idea is to be safeguard against the heretics, who used to assemble apart of the Church under Christ's name, its hidden aim is to divide the church, especially they do not believe in the Eucharist as the sacrifice and true body of Christ who grants us the risen life.

*[Some persons have the bishop's name on their lips, but in everything act apart from him. Such men appear to me not to keep a good conscience, forasmuch as they do not assemble themselves together lawfully according to the commandment.]* Magnes. 4

*[Let there be one prayer in common, one supplication, one mind, one hope, in love and in joy unblameable, which is Jesus Christ, than whom there is nothing better. Hasten to come together all of you, as to one temple, of God; as to one altar, as to one Jesus Christ, who came forth from One Father and is with One and has gone to One.]* Magn.7

3. Through submission to the clergymen, unity in Christ and attaining the saintly life in the Lord can be recognized.

*[For if I, in a short time had such converse with your bishop, which was not after the manner of men but in the Spirit, how much more do I congratulate you who are closely joined with him as the Church is with Jesus Christ and as Jesus Christ is with the Father, that all things may be harmonious in unity.]* Ephes. 5

*[He that does aught without the bishop and presbytery and deacons, this man is not pure in his conscience.]* Trall. 7.

4. Unity with bishop and obedience to him mark our unity and submission to God, the Father of our Lord and Bishop of all Jesus Christ. The people see Christ wording in the bishop not the bishop in his own person.

*[Now it becomes you also not to presume upon the youth of your bishop, but according to the power of God the Father to render unto him all reverence, even as I have learned that the holy presbyters also have not taken advantage of his outwardly youthful estate, but give*

*place to him as to one prudent in God; yet not to him, but to the Father of Jesus Christ, even to the Bishop of all.] Magn. 3.*

*[Now the more anyone sees that his bishop is silent, let him fear him the more. For every one whom the Master of the household sends to be steward over His own house, we ought so to receive as Him that sent him. Plainly therefore we ought to regard the bishop as the Lord Himself.] Ephes. 6*

*[For when you are obedient to the bishop as to Jesus Christ, it is evident to me that you are living not after men but after Jesus Christ, who died for us, that believing on His death you might escape death.] Trall. 2*

5. Submission to the clergymen is not a sign of weakness of personality, but a participation in Christ's obedience to His Father.

*[Be obedient to the bishop and to one another, as Jesus Christ was to the Father according to the flesh, and as the Apostles were to Christ and to the Father, that there may be union both of flesh and of spirit.] Magnes. 13*

By saying: "*Be obedient... to one another*" perhaps he meant that it is a characteristic of all Christians - laymen and clergymen - to be obedient, imitating Christ Himself.

6. He clarified that this close relationship with the bishop and submission to him is not for his own person but for Christ Himself, by asking people to respect the deacon "as Jesus Christ."

*[In like manner let all men respect the deacons as Jesus Christ, even as they should respect the bishop as being a type of the Father and the presbyters as the council of God and as the college of Apostles.] Trall.3*

7. The bishop has his own responsibilities, must do his duties faithfully.

*[Vindicate your office in all diligence of flesh and of spirit. Have a care to preserve unity, than which there is nothing better. Bear all men, even as the Lord also bears you. Suffer all men in love, as also you do. Give yourself to unceasing prayers. Ask for larger wisdom than you have. Be watchful, and keep your spirit from slumbering.] Polycarp. 1.*

8. St. Ignatius concentrated on the liturgical role of the bishop, for his work is to guide people to worship in spirit more than to be administrator. This idea is very clear in the “Didache” and the letter of St. Clement of Rome.

*[Be you careful therefore to observe one Eucharist. For there is one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ and one cup unto union in His blood; there is one altar, as there is one bishop, together with the presbytery and the deacons my fellow-servants, that whatsoever you do, you may do it after God.] Philad. 4.*

9. The bishop is the high priest of the liturgy. Neither Eucharist, baptism, marriage, nor agape may be celebrated without him (Smyrn. 8).

## **PRIMACY OF ROME**

Some Catholic scholars believe that St. Ignatius’ letter to Rome assures the Primacy of Rome. They state the following points:

1. In all other letters he did not give orders but just advises as a beloved bishop who was in chains for Christ’s sake, this assures their independency .

2. In his letter to Rome he did not even give an advice, for the primacy of Rome and its bishop.

3. J. Quasten says: [When one compares the opening words of the various epistles addressed to the Church of Rome, there is no doubt that Ignatius holds the Church of Rome in far higher regard. The significance of this salutation cannot be overestimated; it is the

earliest avowal of the Primacy of Rome that we possess from the pen of a non-Roman ecclesiastic:

*“Ignatius also called Theophorus, to the Church that has found mercy in the transcendent Majesty of the Most High Father and of Jesus Christ, His only Son; the Church by the will of Him who willed all things that exist, beloved and illuminated through the faith and love of Jesus Christ our God; which also presides in the chief place of honor, worthy of felicitation, worthy of praise, worthy of success, worthy of sanctification, and presiding in love, maintaining the law of Christ, and bearer of the Father’s name: here do I therefore salute in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father. Heartiest good wishes for unimpaired joy in Jesus Christ our God, to those who are united in flesh and spirit by every commandment of His; who imperturbably enjoy the full measure of God’s grace and have every foreign stain filtered out of them (ACW).*

Among these titles of encomium lavished upon the Church of Rome by Ignatius, one in particular, namely, “presiding in love,” has attracted the attention of scholars. But they are very much divided as to the meaning of this phrase. A. Harnack saw in the phrase merely a grateful acknowledgment of the pre-eminent charity displayed by the Roman Christians. According to him, the Roman Church is called “presiding in love” because she is the most charitable, generous and helpful of all the Churches and therefore the protectress and patroness of charity<sup>16.</sup>]

In fact this letter does not support the primacy of Rome for following reasons:

1. St. Ignatius was well-known to all the Churches of Asia Minor, clergymen and people, and he knew these Churches and their problems. He praised them and advised them in openness of heart, especially while he was in chains for the sake of Christ.

Through love, and not authority, St. Ignatius gave orders to St. Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna.

2. The aim of the letter to the Romans was totally different to that of the other churches. He wrote to Rome, who tried to prevent his martyrdom through their love. He refused this concern, beseeching them to leave him to be sacrificed on behalf of Christ. While for other churches, he wrote concerning their problems, which he heard about from their representatives who met him.

3. In his letter to the Romans he wrote warning them not to show love unwisely. He wrote that by this conduct they were siding with Satan, and helping him and that they lacked the true spiritual love. This mode of writing was not fit to be written to a church who had a primacy.

4. St. Ignatius stated that he devoted all his life to the church unity. Therefore he again and again repeated the speech concerning unity through submission to the bishop. Why did he not refer to the Church of Rome or to the bishop of Rome as a safeguard of church unity?

5. If Rome had primacy why would he not ask the bishops of other churches to return to Rome in their problems, or to its bishop?

6. Dr. Asad Rustom in his book “We, Rome and Vatican” states that every church at that time had a kind of special primacy. For Jerusalem, our Lord Jesus Christ had lived and worked there, and there the council of the Apostles was held. Until today all Christian long for visiting it. Antioch, was the church of the capital of the East at that time, and it was a very important center of culture. For Alexandria, it was the largest city in all the East and the greatest city of science and culture. The Church of Alexandria preceded all the Churches in the world in studying the Bible, taking advantage of science and philosophy and in defending Christian dogma and doctrines. Dr. Rustom says that she became the first teacher in the world. Rome, at that time was the capital of all the Roman Empire, and her bishop was in a critical position, for any conduct from his side had its affect in the sight of the emperor and his men. It did not mean that he had a primacy or author-

ity on other churches, but the rulers considered his conduct as if it were the conduct of all Christians. The same as any bishop living alone among atheists or non-Christians, they look to him as a representative of all Christians.

After the division of the Roman Empire the bishop of Constantinople had the same critical position. At the end of the Roman Empire the whole world was in contact with many Archbishops and bishops etc.

7. If there was a primacy given to Rome, St. Ignatius should have addressed his letter to the bishop of Rome.

8. St. Ignatius asked Bishop Polycarp and not bishop of Rome to take care of the church of Antioch.

## **MARRIAGE AND VIRGINITY**

St. Ignatius asked that marriage must be held through the approval of the bishop (as the father of the couple), so that it may be in the Lord. He also stated that marriage is a symbol of love between Christ and His bride (Polycarp 6:1; 5:2).

In praising virginity, St. Ignatius assures the sanctity of marriage.

*[Charge my brothers in the name of Jesus Christ to love their wives as the Lord loves the Church.*

*If somebody is able to abide in chastity, in honor of the Lord's body,*

*let him do so without any boasting;  
for if he boasts of it, he is lost...*

*When men and women marry, it is desirable to have the bishop's consent to their union,  
so that the marriage may be after the Lord and not after their own carnal desire.*

*The honor of God should be the aim in everything.] Polycarp 5:1.*

## SILENCE

St. Ignatius presents our Lord Jesus Christ as the Living Teacher, who teaches by His words as well as by His silence. We also should witness to Him in our worship, conduct and preaching by both our words and silence.

*[He that truly possesses the word of Jesus is able also to hear even His very silence, that He may be perfect; that through his speech he may act and through his silence He may be known.] Ephes. 15*

1. Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty: The Apostolic Fathers, p. 88f; Fr. Malaty: The Two Martyrs Ignatius and Polycarp, 1964; Also: The Dictionary of the Church Fathers and Saints, vol. 1, 1985, p. 341 - 343.
2. Anastase le Bibliothécaire, 2:42. PG 5:404.
3. In Sanct. Mart. Ignatium. PG 49:594.
4. F. L. Cross: Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, 1990, p. 688.
5. Smyrna: A city of Asia Minor, situated on the Aegean Sea, 40 miles north of Ephesus. Allusion is made to it in Rev. 2:8-11..
6. Magnesia: A small town in Asia Minor, south west of Ephesus nearby the River Moynder in the state of Lydia, It is now called Giselle Husar ( The Vine Magazine)
7. Ephesus: The capital of the Roman province of Asia Minor, and an illustrious city in the district of Iona, nearly opposite the island of Samon.
8. Tralle or Tralles: a town in the district of Phrygia - now it is the village of Sultan Hassa ( The Vine Magazine).
9. Italy, the "Far West" to a bishop from Syria. [See Penguin Classics: Early Christian Writings, 1987, p. 89.
10. The 10th years of the reign of Trajan ( Eusebius: 3:36).
11. Dr. Asad Rustom: The church Fathers - the first three centuries 1983 - pp. 30 - 31. Eragiws: His. Ecc 1:16.
12. Codex Mediceus Laurentianus, 57:7.
13. Codex Paris, Graec, 1457 (Quasten: Patrology, vol. 1, p. 74)..
14. Ep. of Polycarp 13:2.
15. J. Quasten: Patrology, vol. 1, p. 72.
16. Ibid 70-71.

## ST. POLYCARP OF SMYRNA<sup>1</sup>

### *ST. POLYCARP OF SMYRNA (70?-156)*

He seems to have been the leading Christian figure in Roman Asia in the middle of the second century<sup>2</sup>. His long life (about which unfortunately little is known) is thus an important link between the Apostolic age and the Christian writers (e.g. St. Irenaeus), who flourished at the end of the second century. He was worthy to be called "*the teacher of Asia, the father of the Christians, and the destroyer of gods*"<sup>3</sup>."

According to C.P.S. Clarke, a pious lady, called Callisto, bought him as a slave, as revealed to her in a vision. When he grew up he became the manager of her house. For a certain reason she had to travel and left all her possessions in his charge. He gave the needy, orphans and widows generously of what he was left with. Upon the lady's return one of his fellow-slaves reported him saying that he distributed almost all what she had. When she looked into the matter she found the stores were full. Therefore, she decided to punish the slave for being a liar. Polycarp interceded for him, and told her the truth, that he actually did distribute a great deal of what was stored. She was extremely pleased at that and bequeathed Polycarp with all her wealth. However Polycarp had no interest in wealth.

### **POLYCARP BISHOP OF SMYRNA**

It is said that Bucolus, Bishop of Smyrna, ordained Polycarp as a deacon. He witnessed for Christ, throughout his life and preached among the Gentiles, Jews and heretics. Therefore the bishop ordained him as a priest, and declared that he was well-suited to be his counselor, and his partner in teaching.

According to a tradition held by Tertullian<sup>4</sup> Polycarp was appointed a bishop of Smyrna by St. John the Apostle, before he was exiled to Patmus.



We learn from St. Irenaeus, who was bishop of Lyons in the latter half of the second century, that he had listened as a boy to St. Polycarp and had “heard him tell of his relationship with John (the Apostle) and with others who had seen the Lord, and how he quoted from their language and how much he had learned from them concerning the Lord and His miracles and His teaching<sup>5</sup>.”

### **ST. POLYCARP AND THE HERETICS**

He devoted much of his energy to preserve the orthodox faith, combating such heretics as the Marcionites<sup>6</sup> and Valentinians<sup>7</sup>. It is said that he had converted some of them to the true faith.

*“O good God! For what times have You kept me that I should endure such things!”* he would cry out as he heard the teaching of the Gnostics<sup>8</sup>, and he would tell how once at Ephesus the Apostle John went to the baths and, finding the early Gnostic Cerinthus there, rushed out, saying, *“Let us run away, lest even the baths-house fall in, for within us is Cerinthus, the enemy of truth.”*

St. Irenaeus reported one incident that demonstrated the severity of St. Polycarp’s attitude towards heresies and heretics. St. Polycarp once met the heretic Marcion on the streets. “Do you recognize me?” asked Marcion. *“Of course,”* replied Polycarp, *“I recognize you as the first-born of Satan<sup>9</sup>!”*

### **WITH ST. IGNATIUS**

We first meet him as the relatively young bishop of Smyrna, when the aging St. Ignatius of Antioch was on his way to martyrdom. It was in Smyrna that St. Ignatius made that memorial stop on his final journey, and St. Polycarp was the only person recorded to whom the great martyr ever addressed a personal letter. In the years that followed, St. Polycarp gathered St. Ignatius’ letters and passed them on to others<sup>10</sup>.

The letter of St. Ignatius to St. Polycarp reveals the personality of the latter.

[Welcoming your godly mind which is fixed as on an immovable rock [cf. Matt. 7:24,25], I exceedingly proud that I was worthy of seeing your blameless face, by means of which I would have pleasure in God<sup>11</sup>.]

## **IN ROME**

At the end of his life, in 154 or early 155 A.D, St. Polycarp paid a visit to Rome to see the bishop Anicetus, and to discuss, among other things, the date of keeping the Easter festival. It was agreed that each Church should maintain its own custom and that Asia should carry on preserving the Quartodeciman (the exact day of Jewish Passover). Although the two bishops differed, nevertheless, they parted on the best terms, and they participated together in celebrating the liturgy of Eucharist.

Soon after his return to Smyrna, St. Polycarp was arrested, during a public pagan festival, and was burnt to death because he refused to deny his faith.

The traditionally accepted date of his martyrdom is 155 or 156 A.D but as Eusebius placed it during the reign of Marcus Aurelius (161-80). Some scholars argued for a later period and thus recorded out the date of his birth correspondingly later.

## ***MARYTRIUM S. POLYCARPI***<sup>12</sup>

Through a letter from the Church of Smyrna to the Christian community of Philomelium in Greater Phrygia, we possess a detailed account of Polycarp's heroic martyrdom. From it we gain an excellent impression of the noble personality of the Bishop of Smyrna. The letter seems to have been written shortly after the martyrdom (A.D 155 or 156) . It consists of two parts:

- 1- The main body of the letter ending with the twentieth chapter.
- 2- Some notes with additional information were later appended to this document. In fact these supplementary paragraphs are separable from the rest of the letter.

For the genuineness of the main document there is abundant evidence. A quarter of a century after the occurrence, Irenaeus, and a little later Polycrates, bore testimony to the truth of Polycarp's martyrdom. Furthermore, the Letter of the Gallican Churches, (c. A.D. 177) presents striking coincidences with the language of the Letter of the Smyrnaeans, and unless several points of resemblance are accidental, Lucian in his account of Peregrinus Proteus (c. A.D. 156) must have been acquainted with the document.

The supplementary paragraphs present a more difficult problem. They fall into three parts, separate in form from one to the other, and thus were probably written by different hands:

I. The Chronological Appendix ( 21:1).

II. The Commendatory Postscript ( 22:1 ).

III. The History of the Transmission ( 22:2,3 ).

These "Acts" relate his martyrdom in great detail, in a letter written by Maricon the year after his death, he wrote that St. Polycarp was burned alive. The Christians gathered his ashes and celebrated his memory on his anniversary. The "Acts" are genuine, beyond doubt, and one of the oldest accounts of martyrdom, which is often regarded as the first "Acts of the Martyrs." It is an eyewitness account of his martyrdom.

### **ST. POLYCARP'S WIDENED-HEART**

When St. Polycarp heard the news of persecution he was not disturbed, and he wanted to stay in the city. Under the pressure of his people he withdrew to a farm not far away from the city, and stayed there, together with a few friends, praying night and day for the churches throughout the world as was his custom (5:1). His heart was widened and inflamed with love towards all the churches, even in the critical moments of sufferings. He was not busy with himself or even with his own local church, but with all the churches throughout the world.

### **ST. POLYCARP'S BRAVERY**

As he saw a vision, his pillow burning up with fire, he returned and said to his friends, "*I must be burned alive.*"

When the soldiers saw him, *“they marveled at his age and composure and were surprised that eagerness to apprehend an old man like him was so great”* (6:1).

When the proconsul threatened him, he replied, *“You threaten fire which burns for an hour and is soon quenched; for you are ignorant of the fire of the coming judgment and eternal punishment reserved for the wicked. But why do you wait? Come, do what you will!”* (11).

When the pyre was prepared, he readily took off his clothes and loosened his belt, and also made an effort to take off his shoes to hurry to offer himself as a sacrifice (13).

As the soldiers were about to nail him so that he might not escape from the fire, because of its unbearable pains, he said, *“Let me be as I am, for He who makes it possible for me to endure the fire will also make it possible for me to remain on the pyre unmoved without the security of nails”* (13).

### **THE RELICS OF ST. POLYCARP**

The martyrdom of Polycarp was not merely of local significance, for the letter was read and his memory celebrated throughout Asia Minor and beyond. We have here one of the earliest evidences for the preservation of the relics of the martyrs and for the celebration of the anniversary of the martyrdom, the “heavenly birthday” of the saint.

Somebody asked Nicetes, the father of the police, Captain Herod, to beg the magistrate not to give the Christians the relics of Polycarp, saying, “Lest they abandon the Crucified and begin to worship this man.” The writers commented: *[And this they said at the instigation and urging of the Jews who were also watching when we were about to take him from the fire; they did not know that we shall never find it possible either to abandon Christ, who suffered for the salvation of whole the world, the blameless for the sinners (cf. 1 Pet. 3:18); or to worship any other. For Him we worship as the Son of God; but the martyrs we love as disciples and imitators of the Lord, as they deserve, because of their*

*incomparable loyalty to their own King and Teacher. May it also be granted us to become their partners and fellow disciples.] (17:2,3).*

*[We afterwards took up his bones, more precious than costly stones, and finer than gold, and saved them in a suitable place. There, the Lord will permit us, as far as possible, to assemble in rapturous joy and celebrate his martyrdom - the day of his birth!] (18:2,3).*

### **EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER**

The prayer of the martyr before the pyre was ignited is of great value for the history of early Christian prayer. Not only in the precise Trinitarian doxology, but also it seems, an echo of the Eucharistic prayer St. Polycarp used to recite every Sunday.

*[O Lord, Almighty God,  
Father of Your beloved and blessed Son,  
Jesus Christ,  
through whom we have received the perfect knowledge of You,  
God of angels and powers and of all creation,  
and of the whole race of saints  
who live under Your eyes!*

*I bless you,  
because you have considered me worthy of this day and hour  
to receive a portion among the number of the martyrs,  
in the cup of your Christ,  
unto the resurrection of the eternal life,  
both of soul and body,  
in the incorruption of the Holy Spirit,  
among whom may I be received today as a rich and acceptable sacrifice,  
just as you have prepared beforehand,  
and revealed beforehand,  
and fulfilled,  
O undeceiving and true God.*

*For this reason and for all these things I praise you,  
I bless you,  
I glorify you,  
through the eternal and heavenly high priest Jesus Christ your beloved  
Son,  
through whom to you with Him and the Holy Spirit be glory now and  
forever. Amen.](14)*

This document reveals St. Polycarp as a man of prayer and worship. He spent his time when he withdrew from the city praying day and night; and he asked the soldiers to give him a chance to pray before he was seized, and the same thing happened before he was burnt.

### **THE EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS**

The Epistle of Polycarp was an answer to the letter which the Philip-pians had addressed to him after St. Ignatius's visit. St. Irenaeus tells us of "a very excellent letter of Polycarp to the Philippians..." They had invited him to address words of exhortation to them. They had requested him to forward, by his own messenger the letter which they had addressed to the Syrian Church; and they had asked him to send them any of St. Ignatius epistles which he might have in his possession.

We have fragments of the original Greek and the entire text of an old Latin translation.

It is full of imitations of St. Clement's letter to Corinth, and as late as the end of the fourth century, it was read in some places in Asia Minor at the divine service<sup>4</sup>.

It encourages this community to constancy (at Philippi, in Macedonia) and stresses certain duties of married people, widows, deacons, youths, virgins, clergy. It is pastoral in tone. St. Polycarp warns in general terms of the dangers of heresy; he commends patient endurance of Jesus in his passion; he warns frequently and insistently of the dangers of avarice (perhaps because of a recent scandal in the church of Philippi involving one of the presbyters). His, is a simple presentation of

Christianity, combining moral earnestness with faithfulness to the example of Jesus.

The language of which is a veritable patchwork of allusions to and quotations from various writings of the New Testament which are not, however, “quoted” in words. There are very few allusions to the Old Testament, but in the New Testament Matthew, (perhaps Luke), Acts, I and II Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, I and II Thessalonians, I and II Timothy, Hebrews, I Peter and I John are drawn on. The echoes of the Pastoral Epistles, not just in allusion but in structure, have convinced the great German Church historian, Hans von Campenhausen, though few others, that Polycarp was himself their author<sup>13</sup>.

St. Polycarp refers to St. Paul’s communications with the Philippians, both written and oral. He mentions the fame of the Philippian Church in the primitive days of the Gospel, and he congratulates them on sustaining their early reputation. Incidentally, he stated that the Philippians were converted to the Gospel before the Smyrnaeans - a statement which entirely accords with the notices of the two churches in the New Testament.

The fair fame of the Philippian Church however had been sullied by the sin of one unworthy couple. Valens and his wife- the Ananias and Sapphira of the Philippian community- had been guilty of some act of greed, perhaps of fraud and dishonesty. Valens was one of their presbyters, and thus the church was more directly responsible for his crime. Polycarp expresses himself much grieved. Though the incident itself is only mentioned in one passage, it had plainly made a deep impression on him. The sin of avarice was denounced again and again in the body of the letter<sup>14</sup>.

## **DOGMA AND DOCTRINES**

These documents, which return back to the second century, reveal some articles of the Christian faith before the appearance of the heresies, against the divinity of Christ. It declares the Trinitarian faith, the incar-

nation of the Logos, His crucifixion, death, resurrection according to His humanity, and the last judgment.

## **CHRISTOLOGY**

The epistle defends the christological doctrine of the Incarnation and of Christ's death upon the Cross against "false teaching" with the following words:

*[For everyone who shall not confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is Antichrist: and whosoever shall not confess the testimony of the Cross, is of the devil; and whosoever shall prevent the oracles of the Lord to his own lusts and say that there is neither resurrection nor judgment, that man is the first - born of Satan.] 7.*

*[Let us therefore without ceasing hold fast by our hope and by the earnest of our righteousness, which is Jesus Christ who took up our sins in His own body upon the tree, who did no sin, neither was guilt found in His mouth, but for our sakes He endured all things, that we might live in Him.] 8.*

## **THE PRACTICAL FAITH**

This epistle is a practical one. Besides the need of the orthodoxy of faith, we have to translate it into practice in the lives of clergymen and laity.

1. Concerning the clergymen, the epistle refers to the duties of the deacons (5) and the presbyters (6).

2. Concerning the laity, St. Polycarp exhorts them to attain virtues (2), to preserve (8), and to stand firm in doing good (10).

*[Therefore gird up your loins and serve God in fear and truth, forsaking the vain and empty talking and the error of many, for that you have believed in Him that raised our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead and gave unto Him glory and a throne on His right hand; unto whom all things were made subject that are in heaven and that are on earth.]*

2.



## **ORGANIZATION**

St. Polycarp made no mention of a bishop of Philippi but he spoke of the obedience, due to presbyters and deacons. For a reason or other there was no bishop there and the church was spiritually governed by a committee of presbyters<sup>15</sup>.

The letter portrays the ideal deacons and presbyter in the following terms:

*[In like manner deacons should be blameless in the presence of His righteousness, as deacons of God and Christ and not of men; not calumniators, not double-tongued, not lovers of money, temperate in all things, compassionate, diligent, walking according to the truth of the Lord who became a Minister ( deacon) of all.] 5.*

*[And the presbyters also must be compassionate, merciful towards all men, turning back the sheep that are gone astray, visiting all the infirm, not neglecting a widow or an orphan or a poor man: but providing always for that which is honorable in the sight of God and of men, abstaining from anger, respect of persons, unrighteous judgment, being far from all love of money, not quick to believe anything against any man, not hasty in judgment, knowing that we all are debtors of sin.] 6.*

## **IMITATING CHRIST**

*[Let us therefore become imitators of His endurance; and if we should suffer for His name's sake, let us glorify Him. For He gave this example to us in His own person, and we believed this.] 8.*

*[Stead fast therefore in these things and follow the example of the Lord, being firm in faith and immovable, in love of the brotherhood kindly affectionate one to another.] 10.*

## **TAKING CARE OF THE SALVATION OF OTHERS**

He speaks about a priest called Valens and his wife who inclined from the faith because of their covetousness:

[I am very unhappy on account of Valens, who was formerly made an elder among you, that he should so misunderstand the office given to him.

I exhort you, then, to abstain from love of money, and to be pure and trustworthy...

I am exceedingly unhappy, then on account of that man and his wife; to whom may the Lord give true repentance!

Therefore, you too be sober in this matter;

and don't consider such people as enemies;

but bring them back as weak and erring members that you may preserve your body in its entirety.

For by doing this you build one another.] 11.

## **CHARITY**

Almsgiving is earnestly recommended.

*[When you are able to do good, defer it not, for Pitifulness delivers from death. Be you all subjected one to another, having your conversation unblameable among the Gentiles, that from your good works both you may receive praise and the Lord may not be blasphemed in you.]* 10.

*[Therefore I am exceedingly grieved for him and for his wife, unto whom may the Lord grant true repentance. Be you therefore yourselves also sober herein, and hold not such as enemies, but restore them as frail and errant members, that you may save the whole body of you. For so doing, you do edify one another.]*11.

## **CHURCH AND STATE**

Worthy to notice is the attitude of the persecuted Church towards the State. Prayer for the civil authorities is expressly enjoined.

*[Pray also for kings and powers and princes, and for them that persecute and hate you, and for the enemies of the cross, that your fruit may be manifest among all men, that you may be perfect in Him.]* 12.

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1. Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty: The Apostolic Church, p. 125 ff.

2. Eusebius: H. E. 5:20; Irenaeus: Adv. Haer. 3:3.
3. The Origins of the Eastern Christianity, Pastoral letters (1), p. 155 (in Arabic).
4. De Praescriptione 32.
5. Eusebius: Hist. Ecc.. 20:64.
6. Marcion was a native of Sinope in Pontus and a wealthy ship owner. According to SS. Hippolytus an Epiphanius, he was the son of a bishop who excommunicated him on grounds of immorality. Making his way to Rome, c. 140, he attached himself to the local orthodox church. In the next few years he worked out his system and began to organize his followers as a separate community, and in 144 he was formally excommunicated. Here we summarize his doctrines:
  - a. The Christian Gospel was wholly a Gospel of Love to the absolute exclusion of Law. The Creator God or Demiurge, revealed in Old Testament as a wholly God of Law, had nothing with the God Jesus Christ, or with the Supreme God of Love, whose purpose was to overthrow the cruel Demiurge.
  - b. He rejected all allegorical methods of exegesis.
 

{See: Cross: Dict. of Christian Church, article: Marcion.}
7. The sect of Valentinians were found by Valentus, a Gnostic theologian in the second century. According to St. Irenaeus he was a native of Egypt. He lived at Rome from c. 136 to c. 165 and had hopes of being elected Bishop on account of his intellectual force and eloquence, but was passed over, seceded from the Church and later perhaps went to Cyprus. His beliefs were based on the Ophite system and to incorporate Platonic and Pythagorean elements. The spiritual world or “pleroma” comprise thirty aeons forming a successions of pairs (syzygies); these are said to have been originally conceived as aspects of the divinity, but in the later systems appear like distinct deities. The visible world owes its origin to the fall of Sophia, the youngest of these, her ultimate offspring being the Demiurge, identified with the God of the Old Testament. Redemption was affected by the aeon Christ, who united Himself with the man Jesus to bring man the saving knowledge of his origin and destiny. This knowledge (gnosis) is given only to the spiritual men or “pneumatics,” i.e the Valentinians, who through it enter the pleroma, whereas other Christians (called psychics) by faith and good works attain only to the middle realm of the Demiurge; the rest of mankind (called hylics) are given over to eternal perdition. {Ibid, p. 1423.}
8. Eusebius: H. E. 5:20:7.
9. Irenaeus: Adv. Haer. 3:3:4.
10. Jack N. Sparks: The Apostolic Fathers, Nashville TN 1978, p. 123.
11. Polycarp 1:1.
12. J. Quasten: Patrology, vol. 1, p. 77.; Lightfoot: The Apostolic Fathers, p. 103 ff.; Penguin Classics: The Early Christian Literature, p. 117 ff.
13. Penguin Classics, p. 116.
14. Lightfoot p. 92.
15. Quasten: Patrology, vol. 1, p. 80.

## 4

### THE EPISTLE OF BARNABAS

In the previous studies of the writings of the Apostolic Fathers, we acknowledge great fathers, such as St. Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch and Polycarp of Smyrna, who were disciples of the Apostles themselves. Through their lives and writings the early church, its worship and concepts were revealed. Other documents of the Apostolic Fathers have another type, for although these documents were written by unknown persons, these writings uncover the life of the people, their spiritual struggling, their worship and their aim at that era<sup>1</sup>.

#### THE EPISTLE OF BARNABAS

This document which is in a form of a letter is actually theological, contains nothing personal, and lacks the ordinary introduction and conclusion. The author, whose name is not mentioned, aims to teach the perfect knowledge (*gnosis*) and faith.

The epistle declares the author's purpose: [*I have hastened to send this brief communication so that along with your faith you must have perfect knowledge (gnosis).*] 1:5<sup>2</sup>. It portrays his religious zeal, explaining the role of faith in the renewal of our nature.

*[Learn! Before we believed in God, the abode of our heart was corrupt and infirm, truly a temple built by human hands. For it was full of idolatry, and was a house of demons, because we did what was contrary to God, but "it will be built in the Lord's Name" - pay attention - so that the temple of the Lord may be built gloriously.*

*How?*

*Learn! When we receive the remission of sins and place our hope on the Lord, we become new, created again from the beginning. Wherefore God truly dwells in our "dwelling place" - in us.*

*In what way?*

*The word of His faith, the calling of His promise, the wisdom of His righteous ordinances, the commandments of His teaching; He Himself*

*prophesying in us, He Himself dwelling in us, by opening for us the door of the temple..., and giving us repentance, He leads those who had been in bondage to death into the incorruptible temple.*

*For he who desires to be saved looks not to the (external) man, but to Him who dwells in him and speaks in him, and he is amazed at the fact that he never either had heard Him speak such words from his mouth nor had himself ever desired to hear (them)!*

*This is a pneumatic (spiritual) temple built up to the Lord!] 16:7-10.*

### **THE AUTHOR**

According to an ancient tradition it is attributed to St. Barnabas, the co-worker of St. Paul. But there is no evidence in the text that it belongs to St. Barnabas or any of the apostles.

The letter has been in circulation since early in the second century; indeed, it may have been written in the first century<sup>3</sup>. St. Clement of Alexandria<sup>4</sup> attributed it to the Apostle Barnabas and used many quotations from it in his writings. Yet, elsewhere, he does not hesitate to criticize the work, and clearly, therefore, did not regard it as final and authoritative<sup>5</sup>. Origen<sup>6</sup> numbered it among the books of the Scripture. Its popularity declined with the passing of the years to the extent that St. Athanasius did not refer to it when he gave his list of the canonical Scriptures, and that of the church books read in Alexandria in the fourth century. St. Jerome and Eusebius considered it as an apocryphal work, although they attributed it to the Apostle Barnabas. Nevertheless, in the famous "*Codex Sinaiticus*" (The Sinai manuscript of the Scriptures) of the fourth century, now in London, this document seemed to be included among the books of the New Testament. It occurs in a complete form, immediately after the book of Revelation, as a sort of appendix to the sacred volume. The Constantinopolitan manuscript of Bryennios ["*Codex Vaticanus graec.*" 859] of the eleventh century contains, among others, the Epistles of St. Ignatius, St. Polycarp, and the Epistle of Barnabas.

Later, it was not used often, but was preserved only in a few isolated manuscripts. It was not published again in the West until the

seventeenth century.

Many scholars state that it is written by an Alexandrine author, because he uses the allegorical mode of interpretation of the Scripture, which was regarded so highly among the early Alexandrine theologians. The influence of the Alexandrine Jew Philo is unmistakable<sup>7</sup>. Lightfoot states: [That Alexandria, the place of its earliest reception, was also the place of its birth, is shown out by the internal evidence of style and interpretation. The picture too, which it presents, of feuds between Jews and Christians, is in keeping with the state of the population of that city, who were in continual conflict<sup>8</sup>.]

They refused the authorship of Barnabas for the following reasons:

1. It is written after the destruction of Jerusalem (16).
2. The writer said: [*But I, not as though I were a teacher, but as one of yourselves, will show forth a few things...*] 1:8.

## **CONTENT**

The letter is divided into two parts:

1. The first section (chapters 1-17) is of a dogmatic character. In chapter 1:5 the author states the purposes of his work in these words: [That your knowledge may be perfected along with your faith.] This knowledge, however, is unique.

The author, first of all, wishes to expound and prove to his readers the value and meaning of the revelation of the Old Testament, which teaches Christ's crucifixion for our sins. He seeks to show that the Jews completely misunderstood the Law because they interpreted it literally. He sees Christianity everywhere in the Lawgiver and the Prophets, and treats them with a degree of respect which would have satisfied the most devout Rabbis. He quotes them profusely as authoritative. Only he accuses the Jews of misunderstanding them from the beginning to end, and intimates that the ordinances of circumcision, of the Sabbath, of the distinctions of meats, clean and unclean, were never intended to be

literally observed, but had a spiritual and mystical significance<sup>9</sup>. After repudiating their literal mode of interpretation he presents, what is in his opinion, the genuinely spiritual meaning. He clarified that the Jews were wrong if they thought the Law in itself had the power to save them.

Some scholars state that the author wrote this letter to face the spread of the movement of Judaism, which was very dangerous, for he wrote: [*Seeing then that the present days are evil and He who is now at work possesses the power, we ought to walk circumspectly and seek out the Lord's righteous requirements.*] 2:1. [*The great last offense is at hand, concerning which it has been written, as Enoch says.*] 4:3.

2. The second section (chapters 18-21) takes up morals and manifests no special bias. It describes, exactly like the Didache, the contrast between the way of life and that of death, but it calls one, that of light and the other that of darkness. To sketch the way of light, it offers a large number of moral precepts which reflect the decalogue, while the passage dealing with the way of darkness consists of a catalogue of various kinds of vices and sins.



## ***ITS THEOLOGY AND DOCTRINES***

### **CHRIST**

Barnabas proclaims the eternity of Christ. He was with God the Father when the world was created and the words, "Let us make man after our image and likeness" were spoken by the Father to His divine Son (5:5).

Barnabas, moreover, employs the parable of the sun, so popular in Alexandrine theology, in order to explain the incarnation:

[*For if He had not come in the flesh how could men be saved by looking at Him, seeing that they have not the power when they look at the sun to gaze straight at its rays?*] 5:10.

Two motives prompted the incarnation:

First: [*Thus the Son of God came in flesh for this reason, that he might fill up the measure of the iniquity of those who had persecuted his prophets to death (cf. Luke 11:47ff.). He also submitted for this reason.*] 5:11.

Second: [*He desired to suffer in such a manner, for it was necessary that He suffers on the wood.*] 5:13.

## **MOSES' LAW**

God does not desire material gifts of bloody sacrifices, but the offering of one's heart in the form of repentance. He does not want the circumcision of the flesh, but the circumcision of our hearing so that our mind may incline to the truth. He does not insist that man abstain from the flesh of unclean animals, but He insists upon his renunciation of the various sins symbolized by the unclean animals.

### **1. The circumcision:**

[*For again, He speaks concerning the ears, that it is our heart which He circumcised...*

*"And circumcise," says the Lord, "your hearts" (cf. Deut. 10:16; Jer. 4:4)...*

*Again He says:*

*"Hear, Israel, for thus says the Lord your God" (cf. Jer. 7:2, 3);*

*"Who is he who desires to live forever?" (cf. Ps. 34:12a)*

*"By hearing, let him hearken to the voice of my servant" (cf. Isa. 50:10a).*

*Again He says:*

*"Hear, O my children, the voice of one crying in the wilderness" (Isa. 40:3).*

*Therefore He circumcised our ears, so that when we hear the word, we might believe...*

*for He said that circumcision was not a matter of the flesh, but they transgressed because an evil angel (18:1) taught them wickedness.*

*He says to them:*



*"Thus says the Lord your God,  
 here I find a commandment.  
 Woe to those who sow among thorns;  
 Be circumcised to your Lord" (Jer. 4:3-4).  
 And what is he saying?  
 "Circumcise the wickedness from your heart" (ch. Rom. 2:25-29).  
 And again He says:  
 "Behold, the Lord says, all the nations have uncircumcised fore-  
 skins,  
 but this people is uncircumcised in heart!" (see Jer. 9:26).  
 But even the Egyptians are in circumcision! (see Jer. 9:25ff.).  
 Learn, then, abundantly concerning everything, children of love ; for  
 when Abraham first gave circumcision, he circumcised while looking in  
 the spirit to Jesus, and he received the teachings of the three letters  
 (318). For it says: And Abraham circumcised the men of his household  
 (Gen. 17:23), 18 males and 300 (in number) (Gen. 14:14). What, then,  
 was the gnosis (Knowledge) given to him? Learn! For a distinction is  
 made in that the 18 comes first, then it says 300. Now the (number) 18  
 (is represented by two letters), I= 10 and H= 8 - thus you have IH (the  
 abbreviation for) IHΣΟΥΣ. And because the cross, represented by the let-  
 ter T (= 300), was destined to convey special significance, it also says  
 300. He makes clear, then, that (JESUS) - IHΣΟΥΣ is symbolized by the  
 two letters (18), while the one letter (T) 300 symbolizes the Cross.]9.*

## **2. The Cross**

This epistle explained that the only aim of the Law is to guide believers towards the Cross of Christ.

a. As we have seen he referred to the cross in his speech of the circumcision of Abraham.

b. He also mentioned it in the scapegoat and the rite of Atonement (Lev. 16). Christ Himself incites us to participate in His Crucifixion, saying: [In such a way, He says, those who desire to see Me and to take hold of My kingdom ought to take Me through affliction and suffering.] 7:11.

c. Moses was a type of a cross when he conquered the enemies by stretching his arms (12:3). And he made a type of a cross by setting up a bronze serpent (12:7).

*[But Moses said to them;  
Whenever anyone is bitten,  
let him come to the serpent which is placed on the wooden pole.  
And let him hope,  
believing that this dead object is able to bestow life,  
and he will be healed immediately.  
And so they did.  
Again, you have also in these things the glory of Jesus,  
for all things take place in Him and for His sake.] 12:7.*

### **3. The Temple**

The Jews were wrong in putting their trust in the house, and not in God himself who made them.

*[And finally, concerning the temple. I will show you how those wretched men, when they went astray, placed their hope on the building and not on their God who created them, to be a house of God (cf. Jer. 7:4ff.).*

*For, roughly speaking, they worshipped Him in the temple, as pagans do!*

*But how does the Lord speak when He sets it aside? Learn!  
"Who measured the heaven with a span, or the earth with a hand?*

*Was it not I, says the Lord?" (Isa. 40:12.)  
The heaven is My throne, and the earth is the stool for My feet.  
What sort of house will you erect for me,  
or what place for me to rest? (Isa. 66:1; see Acts 7:49.).  
You knew that their hope was vain!*

*Furthermore, He says again:*

*Behold, those who destroyed this temple will themselves build it (Isa. 49:12).*

*This is happening now.*

*For because of their fighting it was destroyed by the enemies.*

*And now the very servants of the enemies will themselves rebuild it. Again, it was made clear that the city, the temple and the people of Israel were destined to be abandoned.*

*For the Scripture says:*

*And it shall be at the end of days that the Lord will abandon the sheep of the pasture, the sheepfold, and their watch-tower to destruction!*

*And it happened just as the Lord announced!*

*But let us inquire whether there is a temple of God?*

*There is, which He himself says, He makes and prepares (it) !*

*For it is written:*

*And it shall come to pass when the "hebdomad" is finished,*

*God's temple will be built gloriously in the Lord's Name.*

*Thus I find that there is a Temple]16.*

#### **4. The sacrifices and offerings**

*[He made it clear to us through all the prophets that he needs neither sacrifices, nor whole burnt offerings, nor offerings in general (cf. Acts 17:25)...*

*"Did I command your fathers, when they were coming out of the land of Egypt, to offer burnt offerings and sacrifices to me?" But, rather, this is what I commanded them (see Jer. 7:22ff),*

*"Let none of you hold a grudge in his heart against his neighbor, and love not a a false oath...*

*To us, then, he speaks thus:*

*A sacrifice to God is a broken heart (see Ps. 51:17);*

*An odor well pleasing to the Lord is a heart which glorifies its Creator.] 2.*

#### **5. Restriction on some kinds of food**

*[Therefore, it is not God's commandment that they (literally) should not eat, but Moses spoke in spirit.*

*Accordingly he mentions the pig with this intent:*

*Do not associate, he is saying, with such men who are like pigs. That is, men who forget their Lord when they are in luxury, but when they are in need, they acknowledge the Lord; just as when the pig is feeding*

*it ignores its lord, but when it is hungry it cries out, and after it is fed, again it is silent.*

*“Neither eat the eagle nor the hawk nor the kite nor the crow (Lev. 11:13-16). “Do not, he is saying, associate with, nor be like such men who do not know how to provide food for themselves by honest labor and sweat, but in their lawlessness they plunder the possessions of others, and they keep sharp watch as they walk around in apparent innocence, and spy out whom they might despoil by plundering; just as those birds are unique in not procuring their own food, but as they perch idly by, they seek how they might devour the flesh of others, being pestilent in their wickedness!*

*“And do not eat,” he says, “sea eel nor octopus nor cuttlefish.” Do not, he is saying, be like such men who are completely impious and have already been condemned to death; just as those fish are uniquely cursed and loiter in the murky region beneath the deep water.] 10.*

## **BAPTISM**

Chapters 6 and 11 describe beautifully how baptism confers upon man's adoption to the Father, and stamps upon how his soul is in God's image and likeness. Baptism makes God's creatures temples of the Holy Ghost (16):

*[He has renewed us by the remission of our sins and has made us another type that we should have the soul of children as though He were creating us afresh. For thus the Scripture says concerning us, where it introduces the Father speaking to the Son, "Let us make man after our likeness and image."] 6:11-12.*

## THE LORD'S DAY

The celebration of the eighth day of the week, i.e., Sunday, because it is the day of the resurrection, instead of the Sabbath of the Jews is particularly stressed in chapter 15:8.

*[And furthermore, concerning the Sabbath. It is written in the "Ten Words" by which (the Lord) spoke to Moses face to face (see Exod. 33:11; Deut. 5:4; 34:10) on Mount Sinai:*

*And you shall keep the Lord's Sabbath holy (see Exod. 20:8; Deut. 5:12; Jer. 17:22) with clean hands and a clean heart (see Ps. 24:4; 51:10).*

*And elsewhere he says:*

*If my sons guard the Sabbath (see Isa, 56:1-8)...*

*"And He rested on the seventh day." He is saying this: When his Son comes He will put an end to the time of the Lawless One, and judge the impious [cf. 10:5; 11:7], and change the sun, moon and stars. Then he will truly rest "on the seventh day...."*

*See how he is saying that it is not your present Sabbaths that are acceptable to me, but that (Sabbath) which I have made, in which, when I have rested from everything. I will make the beginning of an eighth day-that is, the beginning of another world.*

*Wherefore, we also must observe the eighth day as a time of rejoicing, for on it Jesus both arose from the dead and, after He appeared, ascended into the heavens.] 9.*

## THE CHILIASM

The author is a follower of chiliasm. The six days of creation mean a period of six thousand years because a thousand years are like one day in the eyes of God. In six days, that is in six thousand years, everything will be completed, after which the present evil time will be destroyed and the Son of God will come again and judge the godless and change the sun, moon, and stars, and He will truly rest on the seventh day.

*["He is saying this, that in six thousand years the Lord will finish everything. For with Him the "day" signifies a thousand years.*

*And he bears me witness (on this point) saying:*

*Behold, a day of the Lord shall be as a thousand years (cf. Ps. 90. 90:4; 2 Pet. 3:8).*

*Therefore, children, “in six days” - in six thousand years - “everything” will be “finished.”] 15:4.*

## **THE LIFE OF THE INFANT**

The life of the infant, unborn or born, is protected by law: [*You shall not procure abortion nor kill the child after it has been born*] 19:5.

## **TIME OF COMPOSITION<sup>10</sup>**

The wording of chapter 16:3-4, is as follows:

*[Furthermore, He says again:*

*Behold, those who destroyed this temple will themselves build it (Isa. 49:12).*

*This is happening now.*

*For because of their fighting it was destroyed by the enemies.*

*And now the very servants of the enemies will themselves rebuild it.]*

1. In reference to the contemplated rebuilding of the Temple, Harnack sees an allusion to the construction of the temple of Jupiter in Jerusalem during Hadrian's reign (117-138). Relying on this he dates the composition of the Epistle to 130 or 131.

2. Funk's assertion that the passage has to do with the erection of the supernatural temple of God's Church is far from convincing. Even less satisfactory is the conclusion he draws concerning the date from chapter 4:4-5. At this point the Epistle cites Daniel 7, 24 and 7,7-8. The citation reads: And the prophet also says thus: Ten kingdoms shall reign upon the earth and there shall rise up after them a little king, who shall subdue three of the kings under one. Daniel says likewise concerning the same: And I beheld the fourth Beast, wicked and powerful and fiercer than all the beasts of the sea, and ten horns sprang from it, and out of them a little excrescent horn, and that subdued under one of the three great horns. Funk identifies the Roman Emperor Nerva (96-98) as the eleventh little king of this prophecy. He subdued three kings under one, in the sense that he gained the throne by the assassination of Domitian, in whom was extinguished the dynasty of the Flavians consisting of three members, the Emperors Vespasian, Titus and

Domitian. But it is only through such an arbitrary interpretation that the words of Daniel can be made to apply to Nerva.

3. Lietzmann thinks that the author refers to the second destruction of the Temple in the War of Barcochba. This would lead us to believe that the work originated after the beginning of this insurrection, the end of which coincides with the last year of Hadrian's reign (138). A later date than this can not possibly be defended.

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1. cf. Jules Lebreton: *The History of the Primitive Church*, vol. 2, p., 366-367.

2. cf. Jack N. Sparks: *The Apostolic Fathers*, 1978, p. 269.

3. *Ibid* 263.

4. *Stromata* 2:6:20.

5. J. B. Lightfoot: *The Apostolic Fathers*, 1983, p. 133.

6. *Against Celsus* 1:63.

7. J. Quasten: *Patrology*, vol. 1, p. 89.

8. J. B. Lightfoot: *The Apostolic Fathers*, 1983, p. 134.

9. *Ibid* 133.

10. J. Quasten: *Patrology*, vol. 1, p. 90-91.

## PAPIAS OF HIERAPOLIS

We are introduced to Papias (Born between 60 and 70 A.D), his writings, and thoughts, mainly through the writings of St. Irenaeus and Eusebius<sup>1</sup>. The first (Eusebius) states that Papias is the disciple of St. John the Beloved (the Evangelist), and the colleague of St. Polycarp the bishop of Samyrna. He was bishop of Hierapolis in Phrygia in Asia Minor.

**EXPLANATIONS OF THE SAYINGS OF THE LORD** (*logion kuriakon exegeseis*)

St. Irenaeus, who was his contemporary, stated that he wrote Five books<sup>2</sup>. St. Irenaeus praised his works in this field as a connection to the Apostolic era<sup>3</sup>. This work was discovered only during the Fourteenth century if not later, but so far a full copy was never found<sup>4</sup>.

In them he deals with the origin of the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Mark, and of the witnesses on whom he depends. St. Irenaeus believes Papias to have been a disciple of St. John. Eusebius in his *Chronicle* agrees with St. Irenaeus, but in his *Church History* adopts another opinion, and asserts that he was the disciple of the disciple of the presbyter John, but Eusebius is probably wrong in his conclusion.

Eusebius believed Papias to have been a man of very few talents. He ridiculed him, firstly, because he defended the belief in the millennium (the theory of a thousand years after the general resurrection when Christ will reign on earth), and secondly, because he showed very little critical judgment in the selection and interpretation of his sources. Eusebius<sup>5</sup> informs us that, "he was a man of very little intelligence, as is clear from his books."

The fragments collected by Eusebius, and others quoted by Apollinaris, are all we have of the work of Papias<sup>6</sup>.



## THE MILLENNIUM<sup>7</sup>

*[The elders who saw John the disciple of the Lord, remembered that they had heard from him how the Lord taught in regard to those times, and said:*

*"The days will come in which vines shall grow, having each ten thousand branches, and in each branch ten thousand twigs, and in each true twig ten thousand shoots, and in every one of the shoots ten thousand clusters, and on cluster ten thousand grapes, and every grape when pressed will give five and twenty metretes of wine. And when any one of the saints shall lay hold of a cluster, another shall cry out, "I am a better cluster, take me, bless the Lord through me."*

*In like manner, [He said] that a grain of wheat would produce ten thousand ears, and that every ear would have ten thousand grains, and every grain would yield ten pounds of clear, pure, and fine flour; and that apples, seeds, and grass would be produced in similar proportions. All animals, feeding on the productions of the earth, would become peaceable, and harmonious, and in perfect subjection to man."*

*Testimony is given to these things in writing by Papias, an ancient man, who was a hearer of John and a friend of Polycarp, in the fourth of his five books. He added, saying, "Now these things are credible to believers", and Judas the traitor not believing asked, "How shall such growths be accomplished by the Lord?" the Lord replied, "They shall see who shall come to them." These, then, are the times mentioned by the prophet Isaiah: "And the wolf shall lie down with the lamb," etc. (Isa. 11:6 ff.)."]*

## PAPIAS AND THE CHURCH TRADITION

J. Quasten says: [But the work, as much as we possess of it, is important in spite of these defects, since it contains what is of great value to us, the oral teachings of the Apostles' disciples. Papias in his preface sums up his work as thus:

*"And I shall not hesitate to give you all the interpretations that I have learnt and remember well, for of their truth I am confident. For unlike many, I did not take pleasure in those who have so very much to say, but in those who teach the truth. And again, if anyone ever came*

*who had been a follower of the presbyters, I inquired into the words of the presbyters, whether Andrew, Peter, Philip, Thomas, James, John, Matthew, or any other of the Lord's disciples, and what Aristion and the presbyter John, the disciples of the Lord said. For I did not think that information from books would help me so much as the utterances of a living and surviving voice<sup>8</sup>."*

From this quotation it is clear that the utterances of the Lord, which Papias undertook to explain, were drawn, not only from the written gospels before him, but also from oral tradition. His work therefore was not merely a commentary on the gospels, even though he took the majority of the passages from the gospel narratives<sup>9</sup>.]

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1. *Irenaeus: Adv. Haer. 5:33:4; Eusebius 3:39:1,2.*

2. *bid.*

3. *Jean Danielou: The Theology of Jewish Christianity, p.46.*

4. *F. F. Bruce: Tradition, Old and New, Michigan 1972, p. 108.*

5. *Hist. eccles. 3, 39, 3.*

6. *Patrick J. Hamell: Handbook of Patrology, N.Y. 1968, p. 31.*

7. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. 1, p.*

7. *Eusebius: Hist. Eccles. 3: 39" 3-4.*

8. *J. Quasten: Patrology, vol. 1, p. 82-3.*

## 6

# THE "SHEPHERD" OF HERMAS

"The Shepherd" of Hermas is counted among the writings of the Apostolic Fathers, but in fact it belongs to the Apocryphal visions. It is a book of visions (*Apocalypse*) given to Hermas through two heavenly symbols: the first, of an old lady who revealed to him the first four visions, and the second was of the angel of penitence who appeared in the form of a Shepherd. In the fifth vision, he was given the commands and similitudes.

The Shepherd of Hermas or the Apocalypse, Pastor (*Poimen*), is the longest and most remarkable of the Apostolic writings.

### HERMAS

The "Muratorian Fragmenton Canon," which dated back to the second century, stated that Hermas, author of the "Shepherd" was the brother of Pius I, bishop of Rome (140-150 A. D). Origen<sup>1</sup> was of the opinion that the author of this book was Hermas, the one mentioned in Romans (16:14).

It is hard to differentiate between allegory and what the author of the Shepherd said about himself. He stated that he was a slave, sold in Rome to a Roman lady called Rhoda. At the beginning he had sibling feelings for her, then he looked at her beauty and desired her as a woman for himself (vision 1:1). She freed him; and he worked in agriculture and commerce and became wealthy. He married a talkative wife and neglected his family affairs, his children got immersed in evil (vision 1:3) and he was impoverished because of them (vision 1:2; 2:3; 3:6).

On some occasions he depicts himself as a virtuous man, abstinent from all lustful desires and avoiding evil (vision 1:2), on other occasions, he depicts himself as a liar and a hypocrite (vision 3).

When persecution took place, he and his wife were steadfast in their faith, while his children denied their faith. He was zealous about repentance, hence he wrote his book "The Shepherd" to exhort the sinners to repent, showing the purity of the church being in danger as a result of the prevalence of sin and to remind them that the end was near.

The loss of his children did not destroy him; rather it kindled in him the desire for evangelism and eagerness to see them, and every other human soul, repentant.

### **THE PERIODS OF HIS WRITINGS**

In the second vision (4:3) it was mentioned that the church instructed him to prepare two copies of his visions, one of them to be given to Clement for forwarding to the outer cities.

Here there is some controversy: How could Hermas be a brother of Pius, bishop of Rome, who did not occupy the See of Rome before 140 A.D while Clement, the writer of the epistle to Corinth, was a bishop from 90 A.D to 100 A.D. Some argue regarding this controversy by saying that this work began during the time of Clement and ended during the time of Pius<sup>2</sup>.

### **THE EARLY CHURCH'S VIEW OF THE "SHEPHERD"<sup>3</sup>**

Evidences for it existed since the second century. St. Irenaeus<sup>4</sup>, St. Clement of Alexandria<sup>5</sup> and the scholar Origen<sup>6</sup> made references to it; perhaps they regarded it as a Canonical book. It was found in the Alexandrine manuscript of the Holy Bible together with the epistle of Barnabas, after the holy books (perhaps as significant as an ecclesiastic book).

Origen admitted that during his time, some undermined this book. Eusebius considered it as one of the anti-Bible publications<sup>7</sup>. As to St.

Athanasius, although he considered it a useful book, yet, he made it one of the non-canonical books<sup>8</sup>.

In respect to the West, Tertullian considered it a book which encouraged adulterers<sup>9</sup>. St. Jerome stated that this book was forgotten in the West during the fourth century<sup>10</sup>.

### **ITS CHARACTERISTICS**

1. It is fair to say that Hermas was a pious man, steadfast in his faith and stood firm during the persecution.

2. Hermas was not trained in dogma though he was of goodwill. We see that he was confused between the Son of God and the Holy Spirit (Compare similitude 9:1 with similitude 6:5).

3. The writer was not a man of literature, his language was simple and in the vernacular. However, when we look at his prophetic style we find it difficult, if not, impossible to understand some matters. It is also noted that there is cramming and repetition of some facts.

4. In all the writings of the Apostolic Fathers, there were none which dealt with the instructive aspect of teaching more than "The Shepherd", and none of them was more difficult to explain in respect to history, content, feature and teaching. All these are aspects still under research<sup>11</sup>. Truly, it reveals the simplicity of Christian life, and its deep spirituality. Nevertheless, his thoughts are incomplete and vague - he raises an issue, gives an opinion, but before reaching a conclusion, he comes up with another opinion. The early Church Fathers admired him, not for his theological thought, but for his moral behavioral teaching and understanding of the Christian life<sup>12</sup>.

5. "The Shepherd" is rich in substance. It was of great benefit to church historians during the first half of the second century. In it we encounter all the Christian ranks: the good and the bad. There are honest and righteous bishops, priests, deacons, negligent and greedy priests, as well as deacons who plunder the money of the orphans and widows.

Dazzling light is awaiting the steadfast martyrs, and darkness for blasphemers and apostates. The devout Christian is contrasted with the hypocrite, there is the rich who is indifferent to the poor, and the true believer who gives generously. It also refers to the apathy of some of the Christians, their greed, and their clinging to the illusions of the world.

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1- *Comm. in Rom. 10:31.*

2- *J. Quasten: Patrology, vol. 1, p.92-93.*

3- *Church Fathers series: 1 the Apostolic Fathers, translated into Arabic by Bishop of Aleppo, Elias Moawad , 1970, pp. 167-8.*

4- *Eusebius: H.E. 5:8.*

5- *Stromata 1:29.*

6- *Comm. on Matt. 14:1.*

7- *Eusebius: H.E. 3:25.*

8- *Letter on the Acto of the Niciene Council, 18.*

9- *De Pudicitia 10.*

10 - *De vir. illustr. 10.*

11- *Jules Leberton: The History of the Primitive Church, London 1944, vol. 2, 69, 370.*

12- *Ibid, 370.*

## BROAD LINES OF "THE SHEPHERD"

### ITS SECTIONS:

"The Shepherd" is composed of three groups: Five visions (*horaseis*), 12 commands (*entolia*), and ten similitudes (*parbolai*). However the author divided it otherwise:

1) The first section contains the first four visions revealed to him by the church.

2) The second section begins by the fifth vision where the Shepherd presents the commands and the similitudes. This is the longer and more significant section.

### THE FIVE VISIONS

In these visions the matron (the Church), growing younger, appears in vision four as a bride. In the instructions that she gives, she shows a steady progress of penitential exhortation.

The church appears, **in the first visions**, as a frail old lady sitting on a chair, urging him to repent, for his, and his family's sins.

**In the second vision** the church regains her strength.

**In the third visions** she appears as a beautiful young lady.

*["Why, then, I would like to know, did she sit on a chair, Sir?"]*

*"Because everyone who is weak sits on a chair on account of his weakness, in order that the weakness of his body might find support. You have the meaning of **the first vision**."*

*"**In the second vision** you saw her standing and she had a younger face and was more cheerful than before, but the body and hair were those of an elderly lady."*

*"Listen," he said, "to this parable also. Whenever someone is old and has already given up hope for himself because of his weakness and poverty, and waits for nothing but the last day of his life, then unexpectedly an inheritance is left to him, and when he hears of it he arises, and being very glad he is clothed with strength. And he does not recline, but stands up, and his spirit, which previously was broken by his former concerns, is renewed and he no longer sits down, but acts like a*

*man. So also are you who have heard the revelation which the Lord revealed to you. For He had compassion on you and renewed your spirit, and you put aside your weakness, and strength came to you and you were made powerful in faith; when the Lord saw you were being made strong he rejoiced. For this reason He showed you the building of the tower, and He will show you other things if with all your heart you remain at peace with one another" [cf. 1 Thess. 5:13].*

*"And **in the third vision** you saw her younger, beautiful and cheerful and her form was lovely. So just as, if some good news comes to someone who is grieving, immediately he forgets the former grief and thinks of nothing but the news which he has heard, and from then on is strengthened to do good and his spirit is renewed because of the joy which he received, so also you have received renewal of your spirits because you have seen these good things. And since you saw her sitting on a couch, the position is secure because the couch has four legs and stands secure, for even the world is supported by four elements. So the ones who fully repent will be young and made secure - the ones who repent with all their heart. You have received the relation in full, so do not ask anything else concerning the revelation, but if anything is needed, it will be revealed to you<sup>1</sup>."*]

In this explanation we note the following:

1) There is no separation between the personal and communal life, or between the life of a member and the church life. When a person falls, the church appears like an old woman, incapable of standing; and when the person accepts God's grace and promises her youth gets renewed. Our lives are merged together as one body in Christ, what we do or what we think is for the sake of the whole community.

2) The visions focus on hope or despair: Sin destroys a person's spirit leading him/her to despair, the person's hope and youth end with the wish to die. On the other hand, the grace of God creates hope, and like an eagle, the person becomes rejuvenated.

3) The external appearance does not reveal the actual truth: the old woman is seated on a chair as well as the young girl. The first one sits



like a crippled, while the second one sits like one who rules with authority, having self-confidence.

4) The transfer from the state of old age to youth only means that the Savior re-creates a new birth. The need for a new life and not a partial reform resurrects us new to His image, as Apostle Paul says "that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in righteousness and true holiness" Eph. 4: 24.

5) Some<sup>2</sup> are of the opinion that the swift transfer from old age to youth in a life of a believer means, that the element of evil is not as deep-rooted as we think; this impression is further confirmed in the rest of the book. Through repentance (the second baptism) the Christian's mind becomes renewed daily, and does not become aged.

**The third vision** is the most important. It presents the communion of saints under the image of a great tower rising from the water and built of square and shining blocks. Those who have lost grace are represented by stones lying about, which must be trimmed and polished before being put into the tower. The church (the young lady) shows Hermas the high tower in the process of construction. At a close look the church looks ideal. However, every stone which is unsuitable for the building is rejected. This is the same with each sinner - he/she is precluded from the true communion of the church unless he/she repents - for the time is short.

**In the fourth vision** there appears an ugly and frightening dragon. On his head are four colors: black, fiery red, golden and white, symbolizing the surrounding dangers, but they do not injure the firm believer. Behind the dragon, the church, appears in the form of a beautiful bride symbolizing the beatitude and happiness of the faithful, and the grandeur of their crowned admission into the future eternal church.

He says: *[After I had past the beast and had gone on about thirty feet, behold, a young lady met me, adorned as if coming from a bridal*

*chamber (cf. Ps. 19:5; Rev., 21:2), all in white and with white sandals, veiled up to the forehead, and her head covering was a snood, but she had white hair. I knew from my previous visions that she was the church, and I became more cheerful. She greeted me saying, "How do you do, friend?" And I greeted her in return, "How do you do, Madam?" She answered me and said, "Have you met anything on your way?" I said to her, "Madam, a beast so great as could devour many people, but by the power of the Lord and by his great compassion I escaped it." "It is only right that you escaped, " she said, "because you cast your burden upon God (Ps. 55: 22; 1 Pet. 5:7) and you opened your heart to the Lord (cf. Ps. 62:7), believing that you could not be saved by anything but the great and glorious name (Acts 4:12). Therefore the Lord sent his angel who has authority over the beasts, whose name is Their, and he shut its mouth (cf. Dan. 6:22; Heb. 11:33) so that it might not hurt you. You escaped a great tribulation because of your faith and because when you saw a huge beast, you did not become double minded. Go then and tell the elect of the Lord about His great deeds, and say to them that this beast is a foreshadowing of the great tribulation about to come. If then you prepare yourselves in advance and repent with all your heart before the Lord, and your heart becomes pure and blameless, and you serve the Lord blamelessly the rest of the days of your life, then you will be able to escape it.*

*I asked her about the four colors that the beast had on its head. "Listen," she said "the black is this world in which you live. The color of fire and blood means it is necessary for this world to be destroyed by blood and fire. The golden part is you who have fled from this world (cf. 2 Pet. 2:20). For just as gold is tested by fire (cf. 1 Pet. 1:7; Sir. 2:5) and becomes useful, so also you who live among those people are being tested (cf. Prov. 17:3; Job. 23:10). And the white part is the age which is to come, in which the elect of God will live, because those who have been chosen by God for eternal life will be spotless and pure<sup>3</sup>.]*

**The fifth vision:** The angel of penitence appears in a Shepherd's clothing who prepares the way of penitence, guaranteeing its outcome, and also proclaiming the commands to be kept.

We notice here that the angel of penitence appeared to Hermas, only after he enjoyed the vision of the beautiful young church who conquered the dragon, who lives crowned with the garland of victory, wrapped in holiness (white), wearing white shoes signifying that she walked the royal way in purity, who was modest (covering her head down up to the forehead), who was wise (gray hair) ... this scene burst in him a joy that gave him support to accept the command and battle for it in the Lord.

## THE TWELVE COMMANDS

Hermas received these commands from the angel of penitence, who went before him in the form of a Shepherd, these commands are what the Christian teachings follow, and ought to be applied practically:

1) **Faith in One God** the Creator, and a fear of Him leading to purity.

2) **Simplicity** without gossip nor division with love for giving.

3) **Sincerity or truthfulness:** God who is the Truth dwells within us. *[Again he said to me, "Love truth, and let nothing but truth proceed from your mouth, so that the spirit which God caused to dwell in this flesh will be found truthful by all men [cf. 1 John 2:27]. Thus Lord who dwells in you will be glorified because the Lord is truthful in every word and there is nothing false in Him.]* Command 3:1.

4) **Purity in matrimony:**

*["Sir," I said, "if a man has a wife who is faithful in the Lord and he discovers her in some adultery, does the man then sin if he continues to live with her?"*

*"As long as he knows nothing of it," said he, "he does not sin, but if the husband knows of her sin and the wife does not repent, but persists in her evil, and the husband continues to live with her, he becomes guilty of her sin and a partner in her adultery."*

*"What then, sir," I said, "should the husband do if the wife persists in this passion?"*

*"Let him divorce her," he said, "and let the husband live by himself; but if when he has divorced her he marries another woman, he also commits adultery" [cf. Mark 10:11; Matt. 5:32; 19:9].*

*"So, sir," I said, "after the woman has been divorced, if she repents and wishes to be returned to her own husband, will she not be taken back?"*

*"Yes indeed," he said, "if the husband does not take her back, he sins and brings upon himself a great sin. At least it is necessary to take back the one who has sinned and repented, but not often, for there is one repentance for the servants of God. So in case of repentance, the husband ought not to remarry. This course of action is valid for both wife and husband.] Command 4:4-8.*

*[For the one who has received forgiveness of sins ought never to sin again, but live in purity.] Command 4:2.*

*[But I tell you, "he said, "after that great and holy calling, if anyone sins who has been tempted by the devil, he has one repentance. But if he continually sins and repents, it is of no advantage to such a man, for he will hardly live"] Command 4:6.*

Perhaps this means not to be reckless, especially in sins like adultery, murder and apostasy... After baptism if a person falls, he must repent and not be lax, taking advantage of God's patience and continually falling with the aim of repenting.

### **5) Patience**

*["Be patient," he said, "and understanding, and you will overcome all evil deeds and do great righteousness. For if you are patient, the Holy Spirit that abides in you will be pure, not hindered by another spirit which is evil, but dwelling in a spacious room, will rejoice and be glad with the vessel in which it dwells, and will serve God with much cheerfulness, having peace with itself. But if any ill temper enters, the Holy Spirit, which is delicate, is discomforted immediately, and seeks to leave the place for it is choked by the evil spirit. It does not have room to serve the Lord as it wishes, for it was defiled. The Lord dwells in pa-*

*tience, but the devil in ill temper. So when both spirits dwell in the same place, it is of no advantage and bad for that man in whom they dwell. For if you take a very little bit of wormwood and pour it into a jar of honey, is not all of the honey spoiled, and is not so much honey ruined by the very least amount of wormwood, and does it not destroy the sweetness of the honey, and it no longer has the same flavor with its owner because it has been made bitter and it has lost its usefulness? But if wormwood is not put into the honey, the honey is found sweet and becomes useful to its owner. You see that patience is very sweet, even more than honey.] Command 5:2-6.*

#### **6) Walking the path of justice and not the path of injustice**

*[There are two angels with man, one of righteousness and one of evil...*

*"Whenever ill temper or bitterness comes over you, know that he (the enemy) dwells in you; then comes the desire for many affairs, the extravagance of many kinds of foods and intoxicating drinks, much carousing and various unnecessary indulgences and desires for women, covetousness and great arrogance, pretension and whatever things resemble or are similar to them...*

*So when you recognize his works, shun him and do not trust him, for his works are evil and harmful to the servants of God. Here you have the powers of both angels; understand them and trust the angel of righteousness.] Command 6:1, 5, 6.*

#### **7) Have fear for God, not for Satan**

*["Fear the Lord," he said, "and keep his commandments. So if you keep the commandments of God, you will be powerful in every action and your activity will be incomparable. For when you fear the Lord, you will do everything well. And this is the fear which you must have, and you will be saved. Do not fear the devil, for if you fear the Lord you will overcome the devil, for there is no power in him.] Command 7:1,2.*

#### **8) Do good, and abstain from evil**

*[If you do good and abstain not from it, you shall live unto God.] Command 8: 12.*

### 9) **Abstain from doubt or trust in God**

*[If you hesitate in your heart, you will not receive any of your requests. For those who hesitate before God, they are double-minded, and they do not obtain any of their requests [cf. James 1:7f.].*

*But the ones who are complete in faith ask for everything, since they have trusted the Lord [cf. Ps. 2:12], and they receive it because they ask without hesitating, not being double minded.] Command 9: 5,6.*

### 10) **Depression [ p.160 14, 15, 16]**

*["Cast off grief from yourself," he said, "for she is the sister of double-mindedness and ill temper."] Command 10:1:1.*

*[For the Spirit of God given for this flesh submits to neither grief nor distress.] Command 10:2:6.*

*[Grief does not allow the prayer to go up in purity to the altar.] Command 10:3.*

11) **False Prophets:** Humility distinguishes between the true and false prophet.

### 12) **Abandoning evil desires**

*[Above all is the desire for the wife or husband of someone else, and for the extravagance of wealth, and for much needless food and drink, and many other foolish luxuries. For every luxury is foolish and vain for the servants of God. So these desires are evil, putting to death the servants of God, for this evil desire is a daughter of the devil. It is necessary, then, to refrain from evil desires, so that by refraining you will live to God. But as many as are overcome by them, and do not resist them, will finally perish, for these desires are deadly. So put on the desire for righteousness, and being armed with the fear of the Lord, resist them (Eph. 6:13), for the fear of God dwells in good desire. If the evil desire sees that you are armed with the fear of God and are resisting it, it will flee far from you (cf. James 4:7), and, fearing your weapons, it will no longer be seen by you. So be victorious and triumph over*

*it. For if you serve the good desire and submit to it, you will be able to overcome the evil desire and control it as you please.”]* Command 12:2:1-5.

*[But the devil is hard and dominates them. “He cannot,” he said, “dominate the servants of God who hope in Him with all their hearts. The devil can wrestle, but he cannot pin. If, then, you resist him, he will flee defeated from you (cf. James 4:7) in disgrace.” “But,” he said, “those who are quite empty, fear the devil as though he had power.”]* Command 12:2:

[Do not fear the threat of the devil at all, for he is as powerless as the sinews of a corpse.] Command 12:2:

## **THE SIMILITUDES**

The first five Similitudes came along the lines of the commands.

**The first similitude:** The estrangement

*[He said to me, “You know that you servants of God live in a foreign country, for your city is far from this city (cf. Heb 13:14).” “If then, you know, the city in which you are going to live, why do you prepare lands, and expensive possessions and buildings and useless rooms here? So the one who prepares these things for this city does not expect to return to his own city.”]* simil. 1:1,2.

**The second similitude:** the vine and the elm tree (love of the poor). The vine resemble the wealthy man and the elm tree resembles the poor man. If the vine tree is left on the ground, it does not bear plenty of fruit. However if it climbs the elm tree it gives plenty of fruit. Likewise, the rich must be joined with the poor. The wealth of the rich man may draw his attention away from God's service, but his concern for the poor gives him a chance to please the Lord and be fruitful in his life in Christ.

**The Third similitude:** The bare tree in winter

[These trees which you see are the ones who dwell in this world. “Why, then, sir,“ I said, “are they as if dry and all alike?“ “Because,” he

said, “neither the righteous nor the sinners are apparent in this world, but are all alike. For this world is like winter for the righteous, and they are not apparent even though they are living with sinners. For just as in the winter, the trees, having no leaves, are alike, and it is not apparent which are the dried up, and which are the living, so also in this world neither the righteous nor the sinners are apparent, but all are alike“ (cf. Matt. 13: 24 - 30).] simil. 3:1-3.

**The Fourth similitude:** The distinction of trees in summer

[For just as the fruit of every single tree appears by summer and it is known what kind they are, so also the fruit of the righteous will be apparent and, since they are flourishing, they will all be known in that world. But the heathen and the sinners, the dried-up trees which you saw, such will be found dried up and fruitless in that age, will be burned as dry wood, and will be distinguishable because their conduct was evil in their life. For the sinners will be burned because they sinned and did not repent, while the heathen will be burned because they did not know the One who created them.] simil. 4:3,4.

**The Fifth similitude:** The true concept of fasting [ p.161 24]

[“Listen,“ he said, “God does not wish such a futile fast as this, for by fasting in this way you do nothing for righteousness. But fast to God in this way: Do nothing evil in your life, but serve the Lord with a clean heart, keeping his commandments (see Matt. 19: 17) and following his orders, and let no evil desire arise in your heart. Believe in God, because if you do these things and fear him and abstain from every evil deed, you will be truly living for God. And if you do these things, you will complete a fast that is great and acceptable to the Lord.“] simil. 5:1:4,5.

The Shepherd in his command focuses on the internal life, he gives as an example: A man entrusted his field to his loyal servant and did not ask him for more than fencing it. When the servant fenced the field, he saw that it was full of thorns, he cleared and tilled it. When the vineyard owner returned, he was very pleased with what his servant did. He honored him before his beloved son, his counselors and all his



friends saying, "This servant did with his own free will more than what I demanded of him." For this, he made him an heir with his beloved son. After few days the Master gave a banquet and sent a great deal of food to the loyal servant who shared it with his friends.... when the Master heard about this, he was more determined to make him an heir.

He also spoke about purity:

*[Keep this flesh of yours pure and undefiled, so that the Spirit that dwells in it may bear witness to it and your flesh may be justified.]*  
simil. 5:7:1.

The next four similitudes (6-9) deal somewhat elaborately with the subject of repentance, while in the last similitude (10) the tower re-appears and the angel of penitence lets Hermas know that he must purify his family of all evil and advise everyone to repent.

**The Sixth similitude:** a dialogue between the angel of lust and deceit and the angel of retribution, both dressed like two shepherds.

The angel of penitence took him to the pastures to see the two shepherds:

The first shepherd is the angel of lust and deceit in the form of a young man wearing a yellow garment; his face radiates with joy because a large flock jumps with joy from one place to another to live a life of lust. These are the ones who became finally detached from God and placed their lives in the hands of the world's lust, they unrepentantly insulted God's name - their share is death. In the same flock there were sheep who played without joy, these were the ones immersed in the lust without insulting God.... there still remained in them the hope for repentance. They were in corruption, however through repentance they would be saved from eternal death.

The Second Shepherd: this was the angel of retribution, tall, with a vicious look. He wore a white tunic of goat skin with a satchel on his shoulder, in his hand he held a stick with knots and a big whip.

The Angel of Retribution receives the unhappy sheep and places them in a steep place full of thorns and cactus. The Shepherd beats them with cruelty which arose Hermas' pity for them. The angel of retribution said to him: *[So whenever they suffer any kind of affliction, they turn over to me for good instruction, are strengthened in the faith of the Lord, and serve the Lord with pure hearts the rest of the days of their lives [cf. Ps. 51:10]. Then they repent of the evil deeds which they did, because each one rightly suffers for what he had done [cf. Matt. 16:27; Rev. 2:23], then they glorify God because He is a righteous judge. [cf. Ps. 7:11; 2 Tim. 4:8]. From then on they will serve the Lord with pure hearts, and prosper in all that they do, receiving from the Lord all that they ask [cf. Matt. 21:22; 1 John 3:22]. Hence, they glorify the Lord because they turned over to me and no longer suffer any evil.]* simil. 6:3:6.

**The Seventh similitude:** Hermas suffers for his family's sins.

His family angered the angel of retribution (or the angel of judgment). When they repented with all their hearts, Hermas asked the angel to relieve him of agony, though the angel of retribution asked him to carry the cross by his own free will.

*[I said "But look sir, they have repented with all their hearts." The angel of retribution replied, "I also know that they have repented with all their hearts. Do you think the sins of those who repent are immediately forgiven? By no means! But the one who repents must torment his own soul and be extremely humble in everything he does and be troubled with all kinds of tribulations. If he endures the tribulations that come to him, surely the one who created and enabled all things [cf. Eph. 3:9] will have compassion, and give him some healing if He sees that the heart of the one who repented is clean of every evil deed. But it is beneficial for you and your house to be troubled at this time. For why do I tell you so many things? You must be troubled, just as that angel of the Lord who gave you over to me has ordered. Give thanks to the Lord for this, that He considered you worthy to show you the tribulation beforehand, so that, knowing of it in advance, you may bear it bravely."]* simil. 7:4,5.

**The Eighth similitude:** The willow tree and the act of Grace.

The Shepherd showed him a willow tree which overshadowed plains and mountains. Under it were gathered all those who were called in the name of Christ. The great angel of the Lord stood towering under the tree holding a sickle in his hand; with it he cuts branches which were short, not longer than a span of a hand. When each one received a branch, the angel put the sickle aside and the tree appeared untouched.

The willow tree, as the angel of retribution said, was the law or the Son of God. Perhaps it meant the word of God or the written law or the Logos Incarnate. Everyone who believed in the Incarnate Logos would be like someone privileged with a branch and is committed to remain loyal to his living evangelic life. The great angel of the Lord is the archangel Michael who was entrusted with safeguarding the church's faith.

The time came to receive the branches to be scrupulously examined. What did he find?

1) Each one whose branch was lively and fruitful was given garlands that looked like palm branches, and was admitted to the tower. These were the ones who battled with Satan and overcame him. They endured death for the sake of the commandment, therefore they enjoyed the garland of victory.

2) Those who brought their branches lively but fruitless, were sent to the tower after they were stamped with the seal. There they wore snow-white clothes. Those were the ones who applied the Law, endured persecutions and did not deny Christ's name.

3) The great angel handed the angel of penitence the remaining crowds and left the place. The angel of penitence examined their branches and found them as follows:

- a) some were dry but not rotted by termites;
- b) some were half dry (the reluctant: neither alive nor dead);
- c) some were half dry and cracked (the hesitant and tale-tellers);

- d) some were half green and cracked (Believers who sought false glory);
- e) some were half green and half dry (those who were immersed in seculars);
- f) some were two-third green and one-third dry (those who denounced the faith on occasions and professed it on other occasions);
- g) some were two-third dry and the other third green (those were the ones who returned and joined the gentiles after they accepted the faith);
- h) some were all green except for some dry edges (those were the ones who lapsed out weakness);
- i) some were all dry except for some green edges (those were the faithful who sinned but boasted of God's name and received His servants with joy).

The angel of penitence took the branches from the people and distributed them in the earth hoping that the life may be resorted to them through repentance. He began to water them because the Creator wanted life for each one receiving those branches. The crowds came in rows in the order in which they received the branches. He began re-scanning the branches. Some regained their green color, others were eaten by mites, some had fruit buds and other remained barren. Hermas asked why did everyone not repent ? The angel answered: [*"He gave repentance to those whose hearts he saw would be pure and who would serve him with all their heart. But to those whose deceit and evil he saw, and who would repent in hypocrisy, he did not give repentance, lest they again blaspheme His Name."*] simil. 8:6:2.

**The Ninth similitude:** the church as a wonderful Tower.

The angel of penitence guided Hermas to the mountains of Arcadia, a spiral mountain. He seated him on the summit, and showed him a vast area of plains surrounded by twelve mountains, each mountain had its own shape. These mountains represented the 12 tribes occupying the whole world to whom the apostles evangelized the Son of God. They referred to the local churches spread around the world with their own cultures and rituals. For this reason the mountains appeared different in shape which also may have referred to the believers who had among them the faithful and the unfaithful.

1) a black mountain (the believers who blasphemed against the Lord and betrayed His servants);

2) a bare mountain without any vegetation (the hypocrites and preachers of corruption);

3) a mountain full of thorns and thistles (the wealthy preoccupied with the earthly concerns);

4) a mountain half of which was full of plants. The top of the grass was green and the section close to the roots was dry, where the heat scorched some of the grass (the missionaries who witnessed for the Lord with their mouths but their hearts were far away from him);

5) a pastured but rough mountain: (the rebellious believers, and conceited teachers);

6) a mountain full of large and small holes with wilted grass (the hateful);

7) a mountain full of luscious green pastures, cattle graze in it and it becomes more luscious. (the content and simple who are pleased with God's servants and full of love and mercy);

8) a mountain full of springs from which God's creatures drink (the apostles and preachers);

9) a waterless mountain with deadly reptiles (the deacons plundering what is God's);

10) a mountain with large trees which provide shade for the flocks (honest bishops);

11) a mountain covered with a thick forest of delicious fruitful trees (those who suffer for God);

12) a white mountain which reflects joy and tranquillity upon the soul (the simple believers like innocent children).

He also showed him a white rock which stood high in the center of the plains. This was a rock higher than the mountain, square in shape, and capable of containing the universe. The rock was old and its door was excavated on one of its sides. The door seemed to be recently excavated. The rock was brighter than the sun, and he was taken by its brightness. The old rock is the Son of God, the rock of all ages who contained the whole church as a holy church whom He made by His

own hands. The recent door refers to His incarnation, through which we enter, enjoy His salvation, and live in His kingdom.

Around the door stood twelve maidens: four of them, and the most beautiful of them all, stood at the corners. The rest stood two by two in between these corners. They wore linen robes with beautiful veils. Their shoulders were bare, and they stood joyfully in readiness as if in preparation to carry something.

The scene was emotional, magnificent, and puzzling. He saw the gentle maidens in their softness standing in a masculine way as if in readiness to carry the whole heaven (9:2:5). In the same manner, the soul of the true believer enjoys great gentleness and kindness, thus becoming like a group of beautiful and gentle maidens, who, at the same time, carry strength, behave with firmness and maturity like someone holding heaven itself! It reflects the image of the Son of God with His meek features that attract the sinners to His infinite love, but who is firm against evil, killing Satan and destroying his authority.

He also saw six men coming, they were tall, walked calmly and looked alike. They called a number of people who were tall, strong, with cheerful looks. The six ordered them to build a tower on top of the rock and its door-opening. These men were the angels around the Son of God : three on the left and three on the right, exhorting the believers towards the ecclesiastic work, to build the Church of God on the foundation of the faith in Christ: the Rock and the Door.

The maidens were asking the men to hurry in building the tower, they extended their hands in a manner as if they wanted to hold something.

At the order of six men, the men pulled out ten square, shiny and unchiselled stones. These were received by the maidens who carried them through the door, and handed them to the men who were assigned to build the tower. These stones came out of the depths of the sea. The maidens helped each other in lifting them, stone by stone. These stones

represented the first generation of believers who were carried from the sea like being extracted from the dead nature, and through faith in the Son of God and their behavior in the new holy life (the maidens), they enter the building of the spiritual kingdom of God i.e. the church.

The construction of the tower took place on top of the rock and the door. All the stones were in contact with each other, and with the rock which became the foundation of the tower.... Following the ten stones, twenty-five stones were extracted from the sea. These were included in the building together with the other ten stones. They were followed by thirty-five then forty. Thus the foundation of the tower comprised four tiers. Extraction of the stones from the depth stopped, also the builders stopped building for a short while. The six men ordered the laborers to get the stones for building out of the mountains. They rushed and got stones of different colors, chiseled them, gave them to the maidens who transported them through the door, and then handed them over for the building of the tower. When these stones were placed within the building structure, they all lost their colors and turned into white. They represented the church who became one bright and pure heart in Jesus Christ,

The stones which were not received by the maidens, did not pass through the door and were unsuitable for building. They were dull and their color was not transformed into bright white.

The work stopped for a short while and the maidens remained on guard at the tower until the owner's arrival, they kissed him and went with him around the tower. He inspected the tower meticulously, feeling each stone, he tapped some with a stick which he held in his hand - some turned black, some crumbled, some cracked or broke off, some looked neither white nor black, some looked rough, unsuitable for building, while others were tarnished. The stones that were unsuitable for building were removed from the tower and replaced by others. They brought them not from the mountains but from some neighboring plains. They dug the plains and found shiny stones; some were cubic, while others were round. These were the wealthy who led an easy life,

but did not renounce their faith and uttered no evil word. Once the luxury of wealth was vanished, they became shiny living stones in the House of the Lord.

Some of the global stones needed chiseling to fit the structure of the building. Thus we observe that the tower owner is keen to use every stone for the structure. However, the stones which do not match are rejected and thrown away from the tower.

Two days later, the angel of penitence came to clean the site outside the tower. He threw away every stone unsuitable for the structure, after having made great efforts to give each stone to the maidens, even the crumbled and the cracked, hoping that these stones would be suitable for the structure.

**The Tenth similitude:** The Angel of retribution warns Hermas and his family that they must repent, announcing that the maidens were happy to dwell in his house. He advised them not to leave Hermas, and the maidens accepted the advice joyfully.

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1. *Vision 3:11-13. For the English texts see: Jack N. Sparks: The Apostolic Fathers, Light and Life Publishing Co., Minnesota, 1978.; J. B. Lightfoot: The Apostolic Fathers, Baker Book House, Michigan, 1983.; Ante-Nicene Fathers.*

2. *Lebreton: The History of the Primitive Church, vol. 2, p. 372.*



## HIS THOUGHTS

### REPENTANCE

The fourth command contained a dialogue between Hermas and the angel of penitence regarding the subject of repentance, and the forgiveness of sins after acquiring baptism.

*["Sir," I said, "I would like to question you still further." "Speak," he said. "Sir," I said, "I have heard from certain teachers that there is no other repentance except the one when we went down into water and received forgiveness of our former sins." He said to me, "You have heard correctly, for that is so. For the one who has received forgiveness of sins ought never to sin again, but live in purity. But since you inquire so precisely into everything, I will show this to you also, but not for giving a pretext, either for those who are about to believe, or for those who have just believed in the Lord. For they do not have repentance of sins, but forgiveness of their former sins. So to those who were called before these days, the Lord established repentance; for since the Lord knows the heart and knows everything beforehand, he knew the weakness of men and the cunningness of the devil, that he would do something evil to the servants of God and act wickedly toward them. So being full of compassion, the Lord had mercy on what he had made and established this repentance, and authority over this repentance was given to me. But I tell you, after that great and holy calling, if anyone sins who has been tempted by the devil, he has one repentance. But if he continually sins and repents, it is of no advantage to such a man, for he will hardly live" (cf. 1 John 3:4-10) I said, "I was given new life when I heard these things so precisely from you; for I know that if I no longer continue in my sin, I will be saved." "You will be saved," he said, "and everyone else who does these things."] Command 4:3.*

a) It is noted that the angel of penitence opens the door of repentance before those who lapsed in a great sin after baptism. Perhaps what was meant was the renunciation of faith during tribulation and persecution when there were many arguments in the church about the possibility of the acceptance of their repentance. However, he offered the penitent a

final opportunity so that advantage is not taken of God's patience and mercies as an excuse for repeated falling. In this instance the angel does not talk about falling into the weaknesses from which all suffer, but about specific sins which touch the sanctity of one's life as a whole.

b) Repentance here appears as communal. No sinner is excluded: the unclean, the apostate... the only excluded person is the one who is determined not to repent.

c) There we also notice that repentance is translated into work or to a working life of faith. The penitent is a stone until he is handled by the twelve maidens: faith, chastity, strength, patience, simplicity, love, etc. (Command 9). Its goal is the enjoyment of the spiritual membership of the Church, the eternal building founded on Christ the Lord, the Rock accommodating all the human race, and the Door open for each penitent member. (Ibid).

d) Repentance is a personal private lifestyle and not mere obvious practices. This life is not experienced outside the ecclesiastic communal life. The believer remains a worthless stone, its color does not change to whiteness and brightness unless the maidens take him inside the tower to join his brethren, and become a bright cohesive structure.

The ninth similitude states that there is no place in the tower (i.e. the Church) for a non-repentant believer, and no salvation except by entering the tower. Through repentance we enjoy the true ecclesiastic life, through the true ecclesiastic life we are saved from sin and rejoice in the glorious life of sanctity.

## **THE TRINITARIAN FAITH**

Hermas never mentioned the name "Jesus Christ." He always called Him "Son of God" or "the Lord." In the ninth similitude he confused between the Holy Spirit and "the Son of God."(similitude 9:1:1).

In the similitudes 5:6:5-7 he spoke about the Holy Spirit as the Incarnate Creator.

This is how a confusion took place in his perception of the Trinity, unless the error occurred since an early age in the transcription.

1- If the book of the "Shepherd" was a fervent call for repentance, in actual fact, it was a call to join the ecclesiastic membership of the penitent congregation who enjoyed God's grace and His redeeming act. We saw, especially in the ninth parable, how God (the tower owner) removed from His church the unsuitable stones, and refused their return to become an indivisible part of the structure except by practical repentance supported by the Son of God, the Rock accommodating the whole human race.

2- According to Hermas, the church was the first of all creation. The world was created only for our sake (vision 2:4:1).

3- Hermas did not overlook the church's weaknesses, rather he spoke of it elaborately in the third vision. Even with the presence of these weaknesses, he was full of hope in God who built the church, steadfast, like a tower (Vision 3:8:9).

4- He spoke indirectly about priesthood. He praised the love of the spiritual bishops and explicitly rebuked the clergy (priests) and deacons for their mistakes.

5- Irrespective of the virtues or weaknesses of the clergy, he looked to the church as the mother of Christians. As a mother she advises her children. [*Listen to me, children, by the mercy of the Lord, who fed you righteousness drop by drop, I brought you up in much simplicity, innocence, and reverence in order that you might be righteous and purified from all evil and perversity. But you do not wish to cease from your evil.*] vision 3:9:1.

6- He spoke about the unity of the church within itself and its union with her Christ. He saw her tower as one single stone (Command 9:9:7), and the rock on which she was founded as one block.

## **BAPTISM**

1- No one enjoys membership of the church unless he is baptized:

*[I asked her, "Why is the tower built on water, lady?"*

*"As I told you before," she said, "you are a sly one concerning the Scriptures and you seek diligently. Well, if you seek, you will find the truth. Hear then why the tower is built on water: because your life is saved and shall be saved through water. And the tower has been established by the word of the Almighty and His Glorious Name, and is supported by the unseen power of the Master."]* vision 3:3:5.

2- Baptism is called the seal

[Before a man has borne the name of the Son of God, he is dead, and whenever he receives the seal he sets aside the deadness and receives life. So water is the seal. Therefore they go down into the water dead, and they come up alive. Thus to them this seal was proclaimed, and they used it to enter into the kingdom of God.] simil. 9:16:3,4.

It is noted that baptism is going down inside the water similar to a tomb and coming out of it similar to the resurrection of Christ the Lord. It is done by immersion as a communion in the death of Christ and rejoicing in His resurrection, as St. Paul says "so we are buried with Him in death through baptism in order that, just as Christ rose from the dead through the Father's glorious power, so we too shall conduct ourselves in a new way of living." (Rom. 6:4)

3 Hermas maintained that the apostles and teachers went down to Hades to baptize those who reposed in virtue and faith in the Son of God before the coming of Christ that they may become dead stones in the eternal tower. He viewed baptism as being necessary even for the people of the Old Testament who slept in the hope of salvation... This is an exaggerated view; however, it reveals the extent of significance of baptism during the apostolic time in order to enjoy salvation.

## **MORALS**

1. J. Quasten states that it is worthy to note, and an important fact that Hermas distinguishes between the "counsel" and the "commandment". The "command" orders us to what one is to be committed to. "Counsel," however means that a person does what follows a counsel out of one's own free will.

*[If you do something good beyond the commandment of God, you will gain greater glory for yourself, and you will be honored before God more than you would have been otherwise.]* simil. 5:3:3.

Some of the acts where we practise what is beyond the commandments are: fasting, chastity and martyrdom.

It is like Christianity, it does not stop at a certain limit, nor does it know an end for the commandment, for the believer is eager to deny himself daily by fasting. He becomes sublime with his feelings, offering a pure soul to the heavenly Groom, and the will to die, for the sake of the One who died for his sake.

2 Each person has two angels, the angel of piety who exhorts a person to virtuous life, e.g. righteousness, purity, sanctity...etc. and the angel of evil who provokes him towards evil. Both angels want to dwell in the heart; the first one is gentle, meek and humble, while the second is violent, hateful and foolish (simil. 6:2:1-4).

3 Hermas regards wealth as a deterrent to spiritual life, it can often lead to denying the Lord (vision 3:6:5-7).

## **MARRIAGE**

In his opinion, it is not possible for either spouse to remarry because of the adultery of the other party. However, either may separate, and if the other party shows remorse this is to be well received (Command 4:1:8).

It is possible to remarry after the death of a spouse, though if the person remains unmarried he/she will be awarded a greater honor and glory before the Lord (Ibid 4:4:1-2).

## TEXTS

Elias Moawad, Metropolitan of Aleppo, states [Until 1856 "The Shepherd" was not known except in a Latin translation which probably dated back to the second century. This was first printed in Paris in 1513. In 1857 a second Latin translation was printed from a manuscript of the 14th century, this was probably based on the first translation; it is thought that it dated back to the fourth or fifth century.]

As to the Greek manuscript of "The Shepherd," the first who found it was C. Simonides, in 1855 in the Monastery of St. Gregory on Mount Athos. This manuscript, which was transcribed in bold writing, dated back to the 14th century. It was comprised of ten sheets, the last one was lost. Simonides removed the 5th, 6th and 9th sheets from the pages of the manuscript. He carefully copied the remaining sheets and did not name the monastery in which it was found. He then sold the three original pages together with the copied sheets to Leipzig Library and that was how nine-tenths of the Greek manuscript of "The Shepherd" came to be known. Anger and Dindorf published it in Leipzig in 1856.

Simonides then, little by little, came to the world with new manuscripts for "The Shepherd," until he made it reach ten manuscripts. The oldest of which he claimed that he discovered in Mount Sinai in 1852, dating back to the first century, consequently it was the oldest manuscript in the world. When Simonides promised to bring Hermas' manuscript as it was, the Berlin Police at the instruction of Alexander Licargo (University Professor at that time, who later became the Archbishop of Syrius then Tineus) took hold of his room and the preparatory work on the manuscript. This compelled him to leave Germany and set his eye upon England, where he continued his work as a swindler.

In 1859 he published in London a research titled "The meagre from a plenty about the Apostolic Father Hermas." At the end of the research he published a copy of two old manuscripts of his work based on the Latin translation.

In 1880, by coincidence, Spiridon Lambrose was in the monastery of St. Gregory at Mount Athos and studied the Hermas' manuscript and through his companion he transferred the remaining six sheets and published them at Cambridge in 1888. This publication was presented with a long research about how the manuscript existed. Thus it became clear that all what Simonidis presented was spurious.

Perhaps the oldest original version of the book "The Shepherd" is comprised from the remnants of two Papyrii in Michigan University. They date back to the end of the third century. They include something about the second and fifth Similitudes and the second command.

Also one-quarter of the book "The Shepherd" up to the fourth command was found among the Siniaticus manuscripts. These were found by Codex Tishendorf in 1859 and were printed in Leipzig in 1863. They were part of the Appendices of the New Testament.

Some parts of the book "The Shepherd" were found written on deer skin and Papyrus.

There are Coptic, Ethiopian and Persian translations of "The Shepherd ."

## THE EPISTLE TO DIOGNETUS

### THE AUTHOR

Nothing is known of the author. The epistle is frequently ascribed to St. Justin the Martyr<sup>1</sup>. It is not mentioned by Eusebius, or in any other ancient account of St. Justin's works; and its style is wholly different from that of St. Justin.

Marcion, Apelles, Aristides are mentioned as the authors. N. Bonwetsch and R. H. Connolly thought that Hippolytus of Rome was the author, while P. Andriessen believed that Quadratus composed it. The information we have about Quadratus from Eusebius, Jerome, Photius, and the Apocryphal letter that St. James addressed to him is in agreement with the contents of the Epistles to Diognetus<sup>2</sup>.

Lightfoot states: [The writer was Pantaenus, the master of Clement (c. A.D. 180-120). Clearly it is Alexandrine, as its phraseology and its sentiments show. Moreover he treats the account of the creation and the garden of Eden (ch. 12) spiritually to represent the Church of Christ; and Pantaenus is singled out with two or three other early fathers by Anastasius of Sinai in two passages as exhibiting this mode of treatment.]

### WHO IS DIOGNETUS?

It is hard to acknowledge this person and his social position, for many had this same name in the early centuries. Through this epistle we can say that he was a high-ranked pagan, who asked his Christian friend to explain the Christian faith, the nature of its worship, how it differed from pagan and Jewish worship, the change it brought about in Christian life (especially love of our neighbor), and why Christianity appeared only now, and not earlier.



According to H. Lietzmann he was perhaps the tutor of Marcus Aurelius. Henry I. Marou believed he was a well-known official in the Roman empire, while P. Anderiessen believed him to be the emperor Hadrian, and that the word "Diognetus" was one of his honorable titles, which means "the carrier of heaven<sup>3</sup>."

He introduced the letter, saying:

*[I see, most excellent Diognetus, that you are exceedingly anxious to understand the religion of the Christians, and that your inquiries regarding them are distinctly and carefully made, as to who is God they trust and how they worship Him, that they all disregard the world and despise death, they take no account of those who are regarded as gods by the Greeks, and do not observe the superstition of the Jews, also the nature of the affection which they have for each other, and why this new development or interest has entered into men's lives now and not before.]* 1.

## **ITS FEATURES**

1. The "Epistle to Diognetus" is an apology of Christianity composed in the form of a letter. It has much in common with the writings of the apologist Aristides. But there seems to be no direct dependency. On the other hand the author made use of the works of St. Irenaeus<sup>4</sup>.

2. Although it is true that the only sentence quoted by Eusebius<sup>5</sup> of the apology does not occur in this epistle, there is a gap between verses 6 and 7 of the seventh chapter in which the fragment of the apology would fit very well<sup>6</sup>.

1- This epistle expresses the sweetness of its writer in his defense for the faith, and his faithful witness to the Christian life.

It is very accurate, simple and clear, written as open answers for the questions of his friend, Diognetus.

2- In his defense, the writer explains the following two points:

a- How can a man worship an idol made by a human hand, made of a corruptible material, which can be stolen?!

*[These things you call gods, to whom you are slaves, these you worship; and you end by changing into their image.] 2.*

b- The soul is discomfited by the sacrifices of animals blood.

*[Those who think to perform sacrifices to Him with blood, fat, and whole burnt offerings, and to honor Him with such honors, seem to me in no way different from those who show the same respect towards deaf images; for one class thinks it fit to make offerings to things unable to participate in the honor, while the other class to One Who is in need of nothing.] 3.*

3- He reveals the superiority of the Christian life and conduct in his days, as it appears in the following points:

a- Christians reveal the superiority of their faith through their daily life.

b- Christian faith is a divine gift, that surpasses the mind, but faith is not against the mind.

*[For it is no earthly discovery, as I said, which was committed to them, neither do they care to guard so carefully any mortal invention, nor have they entrusted to them the dispensation of human mysteries. But truly the Almighty Creator of the Universe, the invisible God Himself from heaven planted in men the truth and the holy teaching which surpasses the wit of man, and fixed it firmly in their hearts, not as any man might imagine, by sending (to mankind) a subaltern, or angel, or ruler, or one of those that direct the affairs of earth, or one of those who have been entrusted with the dispensation in heaven, but the very Artificer and Creator of the Universe Himself, by whom He made the heavens, and enclosed the sea in its proper bounds. Whose mysteries all the elements faithfully observe, from Whom (the sun) has received even the measure of the courses of the day to keep them, Whom the moon obeys by shining at night, Whom the stars obey as they follow the course of the moon, by Whom all things are ordered and bounded and placed in subjection, the heavens and the things that are in the*

*heavens, the earth and the things that are in the earth, the sea and all the things that are in the sea, fire, air, abyss, and the things that are between the two. Him He sent unto them. Was He sent, think you, as any man might suppose, to establish a sovereignty, to inspire fear and terror? Not so. But in gentleness and meekness has He sent Him, as a king might send His son who is a king. He sent Him, as sending God; He sent Him, as (a man) unto men; He sent Him, as Savior, using persuasion, not force: for force is not an attribute of God.] 7.*

c- Christians are not a separate nation, who want to set their own kingdom, have their own language and independent customs. Christian faith in fact is an openness of heart to the whole of mankind. In this, Christians differ from the Jews.

*[For Christians are not distinguished from the rest of mankind either in locality or in speech or in customs. For they dwell not somewhere in cities of their own, neither do they use some different language, nor practise an extraordinary kind of life.] 5.*

d- The nature of the church is heavenly, nevertheless she believes in her actual life that she practises on earth.

*[They find themselves in the flesh, and yet they live not after the flesh. Their existence is on earth, but their citizenship is in heaven.] 5.*

e- The Church insists on loving the world faithfully. The evil world attacks the Church but cannot injure her. The world can deprive the church from temporary wealth to live in poverty, nevertheless, the church enriches many through her poverty.

*[They love all men, and they are persecuted by all.*

*They are ignored, and yet they are condemned.*

*They are put to death, and yet are endued with life.*

*They are in beggary, and yet they make many rich.*

*They are in want of all things, and yet they are glorified in*

f- The relation between the church and the world is the same as that between the soul and the body. She is the yeast of the whole human society, and the light that guides them to the right way.

*[In a word, what the soul is in a body, this is what the Christians are in the world. The soul is spread through all members of the body, and the Christians through diverse cities of the world. The soul has its abode in the body, and yet it is not of the body. So Christians have their abode in the world, and yet they are not of the world. The soul which is invisible is guarded in the body which is visible: so Christians are recognized as being in the world, and yet their religion remains invisible. The flesh hates the soul and wages war against it even though it has done no wrong except that it forbids it from indulging in pleasures; so the world hates Christians, though it receives no wrong from them, because they set themselves against its pleasures. The soul loves the flesh which hates it, and the Christians love those that hate them. The soul is enclosed in the body, and yet holds the body together; so Christians are kept in the world as in a prison house, and yet they themselves hold the world together.] 6.*

g- Christians subject to the state's law. They are good citizens, and work hard for the benefit of their country.

*[They obey the established laws, and they surpass the laws in their own lives.] 5.*

h- The church practices communal life in everything except in the conjugal life.

*[They have their meals in common, but not their wives.] 5.*

5. The writer calls his friend Diognetus to accept the Christian faith.

*[This is the faith if you so desire, first apprehend full knowledge of the Father. For God loved men for whose sake He made the world, to whom He subjected all things that are in the earth, to whom he gave reason and mind, whom alone He permitted to look up to heaven, whom He created after His own image, to whom He sent His Only-Begotten Son, to whom He promised the kingdom which is in heaven, and will give it to those that have loved Him. And when you have attained to this full knowledge, with what joy do you think you will be filled, or how will you love Him that so loved you before? And loving*

*Him you will be an imitator of His goodness. And marvel not that a man can be an imitator of God, he can, if God wills it.] 10.*

## **ITS DISCOVERY<sup>7</sup>**

A short but precious document, it was unknown in Christian literature until Henry Stephens, the learned publisher of Paris issued it in Greek and Latin in 1592 under the name of Justin the Martyr. The copy of Stephens is still preserved in the university library at Leiden.

The only codex definitely known is the Strasbourg codex of the thirteenth or possibly the fourteenth century, which had originally belonged to Jann Reuchlin (c.1522), and even this was destroyed in the accidental fire of Strasbourg during the Franco-German war in 1870 together with the other manuscript and treasures contained therein.

The Strasbourg manuscript contained several spurious or doubtful writings of Justin the Martyr, at the close of which was the Epistle to Diognetus, likewise ascribed to him.

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1. Patrick J. Hamell: *Handbook of Patrology*, p. 43.

2. J. Quasten: *Patrology*, vol. 1, p. 248.

3. See *Penguin Classics*, Maxwell Stanifort: *Early Christian Writings*, 1968, p. 171.

4. J. Quasten: *Patrology*, vol. 1, p. 248.

5. Eusebius: *H. E.* 4:3:2.

6. J. Quasten: *Patrology*, vol. 1, p. 248.

7. J. B. Lightfoot: *The Apostolic Fathers*, 1983, p. 247.

## QUADRATUS

It appears that he was an Asian, therefore some called him "*Quadratus the Asiatic*."

Quadratus was the oldest apologist for Christianity. We are indebted to Eusebius for all that we know about him. He says:

[But Trajan having ruled for nineteen years and six month was succeeded in the imperial office by Aelius Hadrian. To him, Quadratus addressed a discourse, as an apology for the religion that we profess; because certain malicious persons attempted to harass our brethren.

The work of Quadratus is still in the hands of some of the brethren, as well as in our own; from which anyone may see evident proof, both of the understanding of the man, and of his apostolic faith.

This writer shows the antiquity of the age in which he lived, in these passages: "The deeds of our Savior" he says, "were always before you, for they were true miracles; those who were healed, those who were raised from the dead, who were seen, not only when healed and when raised, but were also present with us. They remained living a long time, not only while our Lord was on earth, but likewise when He left the earth. So that some of them have also lived to our own times." Such was Quadratus<sup>1</sup>.]

Quadratus presented his apology to the emperor while he was a resident in Asia Minor, about 123-124 A.D, or in 129 A.D<sup>3</sup>. Perhaps he was in Athens when he visited the emperor in 125 A.D or lately in 129 A.D<sup>4</sup>.

St. Jerome was not correct when he stated that Quadratus was the bishop of Athens, who lived in the days of Marcus Aurillius<sup>5</sup>.

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1. *H.E.* 4:3:1,2.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Edjar J. Goodspeed :A History of Early Christian Literature, 1966, p. 96.*
4. *De vir. illustribus 9, Ep. 70:4.*
5. *Goodspeed, p.97.*

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**PATROLOGY**

1. The Apostolic Fathers [English and Arabic].
2. St. Clement of Rome [Arabic].
3. The Didache and the Apostles' Creed [Arabic].
4. St. Peter The Last Martyr [English and Arabic].
5. The Early Fathers of the School of Alexandria [Arabic].