



Patrology

**Lectures
in
Patrology**

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***LECTURES
IN
PATROLOGY***

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HIS HOLINESS POPE SHENOUDA III

The importance of *Patrology* is of a growing interest, for it researches in the lives of the Church Fathers, their literature, and thoughts. Contemporary Christians are eager to discover the faith of the early Church and acknowledge her spirit. In fact, the story of the Church Fathers is the story of the early church in all its aspects of worship, pastorship, church education, 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.

My abundantly love for the living word of God encouraged me to write about some of the Church Fathers, their writings and their thoughts, such as St. John Chrysostom, St. Clement of Rome, St. Aphrahat – the Persian Sage, St. Gregory of Nyssa, and St. Philoxinius of Mobbag etc. Also I wrote about the School of Alexandria and many of its deans. Beside that I started the series of “The Patristic Commentary.”

Now I hope that I can write a “Handbook of Patrology, for the teachers of Sunday School and the ordinary reader.

I hope that my Lord grant me to complete these series, and the new generation rewrite them in a contemporary style after revising them.

Book 1

INTRODUCTION TO PATROLOGY

1. THE CONCEPT OF PATROLOGY.
2. THE HISTORY OF PATROLOGY.
3. THE LANGUAGES AND TEXTS OF THE FATHERS.
4. THE CLASSIFICATION OF THE PATRISTIC WRITINGS.
5. THE OUTLINE OF THE PATRISTIC LITERATURE.

1

THE CONCEPT OF PATROLOGY

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 TITLE “FATHER”

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 Christians¹.” When **St. Athanasius** referred to St. Dionysius of Alexandria, St. Dionysius of Rome and others, he used the term “**Fathers**”².

❖ *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*³.

St. Irenaeus

❖ *The speech is the son of the soul, therefore we call those who teach us our fathers*⁴.

St. Clement of Alexandria

THE TITLE “FATHER” IN PATROLOGY

In *Patrology* the term “**Fathers**” is not confined to bishops, priests and deacons, but included all those who supported us with 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 practiced 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, apologies, advises and (or) commentaries on some books of the Scripture.

b. **Orthodoxy of doctrine:** The “Father” examines the Church life without deviation from

¹ *Marty. Polyc. 12:3.*

² *Ep. ad Afros 6.*

³ *Adv. Haer 4:41:2.*

⁴ *Stromata 1:1:2.*

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.

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

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, practiced what they had learned and what they had received from the Fathers*¹.] [*He who despises the holy Fathers, must know that he despises the whole Church*².]

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 believe 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

¹ *Contra Julian* 11.9.

² *Contra Julian* 37.

heretic terms of that time, especially when they wrote to certain groups. They wrote to them, using their (pagan or philosophical) 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 works¹. **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 century². As an example, **St. Cyril of Alexandria** in his writings to the Egyptian monks³, to defend the use of the term “*Theotokos*,” referred to the writings of the saints. Also in assuring the Trinitarian faith, he used the wisdom of the holy Fathers. Again in his writings against Nestorius⁴, he declared that the Holy Spirit spoke in the holy Fathers. In his speech about Christ he used many patristic quotations in his writings⁵, presenting them in the Council of Ephesus⁶.

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.

¹ *Ep. Ad Afros* 6.

² *Kelly: Early Christian Doctrines*, p. 48-49.

³ *Ad. Monach* PG. 77: 12, 13.

⁴ *Ad Nest.* 4:2.

⁵ *De recta Fide ad regin; apol. Contra Orient.* PG 76:1212:316.

⁶ *E. Schwartz: acta concilioium oecumnicorum* 1:1, 7:89 F.

THE HISTORY OF PATROLOGY

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

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 practiced 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 Fathers¹.*

St. Cyril of Alexandria

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 monasticism 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. Didymous 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. Didymous 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.

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

¹ Fr. T. Malaty: *The Church and Tradition*, p. 9 (in Arabic).

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 Fathers¹. 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 called².”

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).

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, Prophecy, 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.

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 it³, 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.

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 Serville (died 636 A.D.), who

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

² *Eccl. Hist. 1:1:1.*

³ *Ep. 40:9 written in 397.*

gave special interest to the Spanish writers¹; 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 Augustodinum 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 authors².

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 lost³.”

¹ F. Arvalo: *S. Isidore ...*, Rome 1797 to 1803, vol. 5, p. 138–178, PL 83:1018–1106: 96:195–206.

² Quasten, vol 1, p. 5.

³ Quasten, vol 1, p. 5.

3

THE LANGUAGES AND TEXTS OF THE FATHERS

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 Church¹.

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 following³:

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 terms².

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. 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.

¹Quasten, p. 20-21; Yassa Abdel Messieh: *The Coptic dialects and their effects - Page from the History of the Copts, p. 36 (in Arabic).*

²Warrell: *A Short Account of the Copts, Michigan, 1955.*

4

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, and the Syrians.

c. The Cappadocian 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.

5

THE OUTLINE OF THE PATRISTIC LITERATURE

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

I. THE BEGINNINGS OF THE CHRISTIAN PATRISTIC LITERATURE

1. The beginnings of **Canonical Legislation**, and **Liturgical formulas**.
2. The writings of the **Apostolic Fathers**.
3. The beginnings of **The Apologetic Literature**.
4. **Other writings**, such as:
 - The **Apocryphal Literature** of the New Testament.
 - The beginning of **Christian Poetry** and early hymns.
 - The first **Acts of the Martyrs**.
 - The beginnings of **Heretical and Anti-Heretical Literature**.

II. THE ANTE-NICENE LITERATURE AFTER ST. IRENAEUS

- * 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.

III. 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, Athanasius, Serapion Bishop of Thmuis, Didymous the Blind, Theophilus, Synesius of Cyrene, Nonnus of Panopolis, Cyril the Great.
- * The Founders of **the monastic movement** in Egypt, and the writings of those who visited Egypt to practice 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**: SS. 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 Seleucia etc.
- * **Church Historians of Constantinople**: Philip Sidetes, Philostorgius, Socrates, Sozomen, Theodoret of Cyrus.

IV. THE WESTERN FATHERS IN THE FOURTH AND FIFTH CENTURIES

- * St. Hilary of Pitiers,

- * Anti-Arian Writers: Hosuis, Eusebius of Vercelli, Lucifer, Maruis Victorinus etc.
 - * 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.]*

V. 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.

I
THE BEGINNINGS
OF THE

CHRISTIAN PATRISTIC LITERATURE

5. **The beginnings of Canonical Legislation, and Liturgical formulas.**
6. **The writings of the Apostolic Fathers.**
7. **The beginnings of The Apologetic Literature.**
8. **Other early writings, such as:**
 - **The Apocryphal Literature of the New Testament.**
 - **The beginning of Christian Poetry and early hymns.**
 - **The first Acts of the Martyrs.**
 - **The beginnings of Heretical and Anti-Heretical Literature.**

1
***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 practiced 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.

I

THE APOSTLES' CREED

Symbolum Creed

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 expressions¹.

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." 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 favourite 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. 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**² 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. 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

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.

compound of the faith of the church were used by **candidates for baptism**.

2. When heresies appeared, especially “Gnosticism, “who denied the reality of incarnation 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 over¹.”

PRIMITIVE CREEDS

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 prayers².

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.” Creed³ 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...⁴’, each of the Apostles

¹ *Sermon 5:11. PL 38:399f.*

² . *Schaff, vol. II, p. 533.*

³ *PL. 21:337.*

⁴ *PL 39: 2189-2190.*

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.

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 not¹.

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 evil².]

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.

¹ Hamell: *A Handbook of Patrology*, p. 22.

² Kenneth Scott Latourette: *A History of Christianity*, vol. 1, 1975, p.135, 136.

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 Church¹.

¹ *Ibid* 135.

II

THE DIDACHE

THE LORD'S INSTRUCTION TO THE GENTILES THROUGH THE TWELVE APOSTLES¹

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 Alexandria², Origen and St. Athanasius³.

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 years⁴.

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 title⁵.

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 character⁶.

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 90⁷.

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

² *Stromata* 1:20:100.

³ Hamell: *A Handbook of Patrology*, p. 24.

⁴ F. L. Cross *The Early Christian Fathers*, London 1960, p. 8.

⁵ J. Quasten: *Patrology*, vol. 1, p. 30.

⁶ J. Quasten: *Patrology*, vol. 1, p. 30.

⁷ Edgar T. Goodspeed: *A History of Early Christian Literature*, Chicago 1966, p. 12.

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 Alexandria¹. 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 mountains².”

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 began³.

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)

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 source⁴.

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*

¹Edgar T. Goodspeed: *A History of Early Christian Literature*, Chicago 1966, p. 13.

²J. B. Lightfoot: *The Apostolic Fathers*, Michigan 1956, 122.

³J. Quasten: *Patrology*, vol. 1, p. 30.

⁴Hamell: *A Handbook of Patrology*, p, 24.

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 practiced 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 diaconate, 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 president¹. 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 waist be not girded, 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.] (16:1-7)

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 Alexandria², Eusebius³ and Rufinus⁴.

¹ *Penguin Classics: Early Christian Writings, 1968, p. 197-8.*

² *Ep. Fest. 39.*

³ *H. E. 3:25:4.*

⁴ *Comm. in Symb. 38.*

2

THE APOSTOLIC FATHERS

- I. Two letters: one by **St. Clement of Rome** and the other was attributed to him.
- II. The seven letters of **St. Ignatius**.
- III. A letter by **St. Polycarp**.
- IV. The epistle attributed to **Barnabas**.
- V. The book “The Shepherd” by **Hermas**.
- VI. A letter to **Diognetus** (author unknown).
- VII. Excerpts by **Papias** of Hieropolis.
- VIII. *Epistle to Quadratus*.
- IX. The “**Didache**” or “*The Lord’s teachings to the Gentiles as conveyed by the 12 Apostles.*”

THE APOSTOLIC FATHERS¹

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 generations². 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 era³.

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 disciples⁴.

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

¹ 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.
5. Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty, *The Apostolic Fathers*, Sydney NSW, Australia, 1996.

English text is revised by: Yuvone Tadros Sydney- Australia.

² Cf. *Chrétien 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.

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 total, 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. 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.

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.

ST. CLEMENT OF ROME¹

The letter of St. Clement of Rome had a special position among the writings, life and worship of the Early Church. According to **St. Irenaeus**, it is a considerable epistle². In 170 A.D **Dionysius of Corinth**³ 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

He was a disciple of the Apostles Paul and Peter, to whom he referred to as the chief examples of imitation⁴. There are however many opinions concerning his person:

1. **Eusebius**⁵, **St. Jerome**⁶ and others followed **Origen**⁷ 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 **St. Irenaeus**⁸ he was the fourth bishop of Rome. **Eusebius**, relying on St. Irenaeus and Hegisippus, places Linus 68-80; Anaclyus 80-92; and St. Clement 92-101⁹.

3. Later legends 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. He died the glorious death of a martyr in the waves of the sea¹⁰.

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 exiled¹¹. 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

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. Many scholars state that it was written after 96 A.D.

ITS FEATURES

1. **A biblical letter**, contains many quotations from the Holy Bible. St. Clement exhorted us to

¹ Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty: *The Apostolic Fathers*, p. 56 ff (in Arabic).

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 *Eusebius: H. E. 3:15..*

⁶ *Jerome: De Vir. Illust., ch. 15.*

⁷ *Comm. in Joan. 1:29, 9:36.*

⁸ *Adv. Haer. 3:3.*

⁹ *Hamell: A Handbook of Patrology, p .26.*

¹⁰ *Schaff: History of the Christian Church, vol. 2, p. 638-9.*

¹¹ *Butler's lives of the Saints, vol. 4, p., 406.*

study the Bible. [*Look carefully into the Scriptures, which are the true utterances of the Holy Spirit.*] (45:2).

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. Believing in **the Holy Trinity**.

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 pleases 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) (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.

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:**
- 5. Supplication to God [59-61].**
- 6. Conclusion [62-65].**

THE ATTRIBUTED WORKS OF ST. CLEMENT OF ROME

As St. Clement was famous and respected everywhere, many orthodox and heretic works were falsely ascribed to him, in order to give them great esteem, so that the documents would gain a world-wide spread.

1. THE SO-CALLED SECOND EPISTLE OF CLEMENT

In fact it is more homily than an epistle. It is the first Christian homily after the Apostolic age we have received. Its origin is almost Alexandrine and not Corinthian nor Roman; written before the middle of the second century.

1. It concentrates on **repentance** as the way of the kingdom. [*As long as we are upon earth, let us practice 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.
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 (14).
4. **Baptism** is called the “*Seal*” (*Sphragis*), must be preserved [7:6].

2. TWO LETTERS ON VIRGINITY

Many Catholic scholars attempted to prove their attribute to St. Clement, 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 divided¹.
2. Virginité 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*

¹ *Quasten: Patrology, vol. 1, p. 58.*

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...** 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).

2. Virginity is **a divine and supernatural work**. It lifts us up to the angelic and heavenly life, through the sanctification of the Holy Spirit (1:2, 4).

4. Virginity 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. [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. (1:13).

b. Avoiding stumbling-blocks, especially the friendship among both sexes of the virgins. (2:5).

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

6. 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 INSTITUTIONS¹

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.

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

4. THE PSEUDO-CLEMENTINES²

Pseudo-Clementines is the title of a comprehensive novel with a didactic purpose whose protagonist is St. Clement of Rome.

This work was written by some Ebionites [from a Hebrew origin means “poor men.” A sect of Jewish Christians which flourished in the early centuries of the Christian era. They are said to have rejected the Pauline epistles and have used only 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.

3. The two Greek *Epitomes*, are evidently later.

4. They omit most of the theological discussion of the earlier works and introduce an account of St. Clement’s martyrdom.

¹For more details see our books “Christ in the Eucharist,” Alexandria 1986, p. 213-214; *The Apostolic Fathers*, 199, p. 75-76.

²J. Quasten: *Patrology*, vol. 1. p. 59ff.; F. L. Cross: *The Oxford Dict. of the Christian Church*, p. 304, 438.

THEOLOGY AND THOUGHTS

1. 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.*] (Homily 11:4).

2. 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.*] (Recognitions 5:5).

2. 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).

3. 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).

4. 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).

5. The fear of the Lord: [*On every account it is advantageous to fear Him alone, not as an unjust, but a righteous God.*] (Homily 10:5).

6. 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).

7. 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.*] (Homily 3:66).

8. 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.*] (Recogn. 6:3)

9. The purity of heart: [*God is seen by the mind, not by the body; by the spirit, not by the flesh.*] (Recogn. 3:30).

10. 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).

11. 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).

12. 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.] (Homily 3:68).

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

14. 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).*

15. 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).*

II

ST. IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH¹

BISHOP OF ANTIOCH

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 Bibliothecarius², 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 Lord³.

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. Anyhow, he was known for his zeal for the salvation of souls and won many Gentiles for Christ the Lord.

HIS ESTABLISHMENT OF THE HYMN “TRISAGION”

It was said that he saw in a vision the angles 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 Smyrna⁴, where he was met by its bishop, Polycarp, also the bishop of Magnesia⁵, Ephesus⁶ and Tralles⁷. 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

¹ Fr. Tadros Malaty: *The Apostolic Fathers*, p. 88f; *The Two Martyrs Ignatius and Polycarp*, 1964; *The Dictionary of the Church Fathers and Saints*, vol. 1, 1985, p. 341 - 343. (in Arabic)

² *Anastase le Bibliothécaire*, 2:42. PG 5:404.

³ *In Sanct. Mart. Ignatium*. PG 49:594.

⁴ *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.*

⁵ *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)*

⁶ *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.*

⁷ *Tralle or Tralles: a town in the district of Phrygia - now it is the village of Sultan Hassa (The Vine Magazine).*

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. [*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.*] (Ep. to Rom. 2:4)

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 loose 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 Rome¹.

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 martyr² in his commemoration. The church celebrates his Day on the 7th Abib.

HIS LETTERS

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 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.

The short version was kept in an ancient Greek manuscript³ 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 century⁴.

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 outpouring of a *pastoral heart*, flamed with a consuming love for Jesus Christ and His Church. 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.

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*

¹ *The 10th years of the reign of Trajan (Eusebius: 3:36).*

² *Dr. Asad Rustom: The church Fathers - the first three centuries 1983 - pp. 30 – 3(in Arabic)1. Eragiws: His. Ecc 1:16.*

³ *Codex Mediceus Laurentianus, 57:7.*

⁴ *Codex Paris, Graec, 1457 (Quasten: Patrology, vol. 1, p. 74).*

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.

1. Christ the Savior:

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... seeing that even the prophets, being His disciples, were expecting Him as their teacher through the Spirit.*] (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 (agenetos); 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)

3. 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.*] (Polyc 3).

4. 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.

2. Salvation: 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. [*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.*] (Ephes. 19) [*...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. [*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.*] (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. [*For I know and believe that He was in the flesh even after the resurrection...They straightway 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).

3. 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) 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.*”

4. The church:

a. The place of sacrifice (Thysiasterion), for the Church offers the Eucharist as her sacrifice, the source of her joy. She is the bride of the Sacrificed Heavenly Groom.

b. Community of love. 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.

c. Community of Singers of Hymns: Through the Eucharist, the mystery of “Thanksgiving,” the church attains the medicine of immortality (Eph. 20:2), which has two effects: The positive effect: Attaining love, purity, unity, and participation in immortality, together with joy and giving hymns. And 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. 13). [*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).

d. 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: *καθ* means “together in unity” and *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)

e. 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, Polycarp. 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’ 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: 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.

5. 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 companions in the way, carrying your God and your shrine, your Christ and your holy things.*] (Ephes. 9)

6. Being in Christ: [*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.*] (Magn. 1). [*...only that we be found in Christ Jesus unto true life.*] (Ephes. 11).

7. Imitations 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).

8. Eucharist: The Eucharist is a spiritual food for the soul (Ephes. 20:2), grants it immortality. It is a medicine for the soul, which cures her from all diseases, weakness and death (Ephes. 20:2). It is the 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).

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).

9. 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. Our Lord was baptized for two reasons: to purify the water (Ephes. 18). And to fulfill every righteousness (Smy. 1). Concerning our baptism he explained that it cannot be fulfilled without the knowledge of the bishop (Smyr. 8).

10. Martyrdom: [*...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) His great desire to be martyred created in him an openness of heart, to witness to Christ and to demand the salvation of men.

11. Witnesses to Christ

a. **Praying for 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).

b. **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 done. It is a fine thing to teach, if the speaker practices (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).

12. Clergymen:

1. Clergymen with the three ranks episcopate, presbyterate and diaconate 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 unending; 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.]* (Smyrn. 8)

[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)

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. *[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)

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.*] (Polyc. 1).

13. 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).

[*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.*] (Polycarp 5:1).

14. 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)

III

ST. POLYCARP OF SMYRNA¹

(70?-156)

He seems to have been the leading Christian figure in Roman Asia in the middle of the second century². He was worthy to be called “*the teacher of Asia, the father of the Christians, and the destroyer of gods*”³.”

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**⁴ 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 teaching⁵.”

ST. POLYCARP AND THE HERETICS

He devoted much of his energy to preserve the orthodox faith, combating such heretics as the Marcionites⁶ and Valentinians⁷. It is said that he had converted some of them to the true faith.

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 and 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

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 firstborn of Satan!”¹

WITH ST. IGNATIUS

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 others².

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*³.]

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.

MARYTRIUM S. POLYCARP⁴

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.

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).

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

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 effected 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.]

¹ Irenaeus: *Adv. Haer.* 3:3:4.

² Jack N. Sparks: *The Apostolic Fathers*, Nashville TN 1978, p. 123.

³ Polycarp 1:1.

⁴ J. Quasten: *Patrology*, vol. 1, p. 77.; Lightfoot: *The Apostolic Fathers*, p. 103 ff.; Penguin Classics: *The Early Christian Literature*, p. 117 ff.

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.

[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).

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

St. Irenaeus¹ 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.

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.

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 incarnation 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.”

[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.

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.

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 presbyters².

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.

¹ *Adv. Haer* 3:3.

² *Quasten: Patrology, vol. 1, p. 80.*

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.

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.

4

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 AUTHOR

St. Clement of Alexandria¹ attributed it to the Apostle Barnabas and used many quotations from it in his writings. **Origen**² numbered it among the books of the Scripture. **St. Jerome** and **Eusebius** considered it as an apocryphal work, although they attributed it to the Apostle Barnabas.

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 unmistakable³. 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 conflict⁴.]

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.*] 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.

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.

ITS THEOLOGY AND DOCTRINES

CHRIST

[*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 11:47 ff.). He also submitted for this reason.*] (5:11.)

¹ *Stromata* 2:6:20.

² *Against Celsus* 1:63.

³ *J. Quasten: Patrology, vol. 1, p. 89.*

⁴ *J. B. Lightfoot: The Apostolic Fathers, 1983, p. 134.*

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...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 letter 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.] (9-9)

2. The Cross

a. 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).

3. The Temple

[*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!]* (16)

4. The sacrifices and offerings

[*"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 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!” (10)

BAPTISM

[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.”] (6:11-120

THE LORD’S DAY

[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)... 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 (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.*

V

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**¹. The first (Eusebius) states that Papias is the disciple of St. John the Beloved, 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 exegeteis*)

St. Irenaeus, who was his contemporary, stated that he wrote five books². **St. Irenaeus** praised his works in this field as a connection to the Apostolic era³. This work was discovered only during the Fourteenth century if not later, but so far a full copy was never found⁴.

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. Eusebius⁵ informs us that, “he was a man of very little intelligence, as is clear from his books.”

THE MILLENNIUM

[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 anyone 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:

¹ Irenaeus: *Adv. Haer.* 5:33:4; Eusebius 3:39:1,2.

² Irenaeus: *Adv. Haer.* 5:33:4; Eusebius 3:39:1,2.

³ Jean Daniélou: *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.

“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 voice¹.”

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.

¹ J. Quasten: *Patrology*, vol. 1, p. 82-3.

VI

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.

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**¹ 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 Pius².

THE EARLY CHURCH’S VIEW OF THE “SHEPHERD”³

Evidences for it existed since the second century. **St. Irenaeus**⁴, **St. Clement of Alexandria**⁵ and **Origen**⁶ 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).

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.*

Origen admitted that during his time, some undermined this book. Eusebius considered it as one of the anti-Bible publications¹. As to **St. Athanasius**, although he considered it a useful book, yet, he made it one of the non-canonical books².

In respect to the West, **Tertullian** considered it a book which encouraged adulterers³. **St. Jerome** stated that this book was forgotten in the West during the fourth century⁴.

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. The early Church Fathers admired him, not for his theological thought, but for his moral behavioral teaching and understanding of the Christian life⁵.
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.

BROAD LINES OF "THE SHEPHERD"

"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

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 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

¹ Eusebius: H.E. 3:25.

² Letter on the Acto of the Nicene Council, 18.

³ De Pudicitia 10.

⁴ De vir. illustr. 10.

⁵ Jules Leberton: The History of the Primitive Church, London 1944, vol. 2, 69, 370.

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 you¹.”]

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.

5) Some¹ 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: 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.

¹ Jules Leberton: *The History of the Primitive Church*, London 1944, vol. 2, 372.

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.] (vis. 4:2,5)

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

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.] (Command 4:4)

5) **Patience:**

[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 discomfited immediately, and seeks to leave the place for it is choked by the evil spirit... 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... 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.] (Command 6:1, 5, 6)

7) **Have fear for the Lord, not for Satan:** *[Do not fear the devil, for if you fear the Lord you will overcome the devil, for there is no power in him.]* (Command 7:2).

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...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:** *["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 (Command 11:8).

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...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)

THE SIMILITUDES

The first five Similitudes came along the lines of the commands.

The first similitude: The estrangement *[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 Third similitude: The bare tree in winter *[These trees which you see are the ones who dwell in this world... "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.]* (simil. 3:1-3)

The Fourth similitude: The distinction of trees in summer *[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 *["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)

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 Seventh similitude: Hermas suffers for his family's sins.

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.

HIS THOUGHTS

1. 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...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 4:30

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.

2. 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.

3. The Church:

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.

4. 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, “... 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.

5. 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 (Command 4:4:1-2).

VII

THE EPISTLE TO DIOGNETUS

THE AUTHOR

Nothing is known of the author. The epistle is frequently ascribed to St. Justin the Martyr¹. 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 Diognetus².

WHO IS DIOGNETUS?

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. 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"³.

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. Irenaeus⁴.

2. Although it is true that the only sentence quoted by Eusebius⁵ 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 well⁶.

a- 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.

b- In his defense, the writer explains the following two points:

I- How can a man worship an idol made by a human hand, made of a corruptible material, which can be stolen?!

II- The soul is discomforted by the sacrifices of animals blood.

3- He reveals the **superiority of the Christian life** and conduct in his days, as it appears in the following points:

¹ Patrick J. Hamell: *Handbook of Patrology*, p. 43.

² J. Quasten: *Patrology*, vol. 1, p. 248.

³ *Zeitschrift für kirchengeschichte*, t. XLIII, 1924, p. 350.

⁴ J. Quasten: *Patrology*, vol. 1, p. 248.

⁵ Eusebius: *H. E.* 4:3:2.

⁶ J. Quasten: *Patrology*, vol. 1, p. 248.

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.

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 practices 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 endowed 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 their dishonor.*] (5)

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.

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)

8

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 Quadratus¹.]

Quadratus presented his apology to the emperor while he was a resident in Asia Minor, about 123-124 A.D, or in 129 A.D². Perhaps he was in Athens when he visited the emperor in 125 A.D or lately in 129 A.D³.

St. Jerome was not correct when he stated that Quadratus was the bishop of Athens, who lived in the days of Marcus Aurillius⁴.

¹ H.E. 4:3:1,2.

² Edjar J. Goodspeed :A History of Early Christian Literature, 1966, p. 96.

³ Edjar J. Goodspeed :A History of Early Christian Literature, 1966, p. 97.

⁴ De vir. illustribiis 9, Ep. 70:4.

CONTENT

INTRODUCTION TO PATROLOGY

The concept of Patrology

Methods of patristic studies, Patrology, The Fathers of the Church, What do we mean by the term "Father" in Patrology?, The authority of the Fathers, How do we use the writings of the Fathers?, Using the writings of the Fathers, The Copts' interest in the writings of the Fathers.

The history of Patrology

*1. The beginning of the spread of Christianity, How the patristic literature was preserved at that epoch?
2. The Church Historians' epoch,
3. The setting of "De viris illustribus." Remarks on "De viris illustribus," Remarks on Gennadius' work. 4. A new scientific epoch, Our concern.*

Importance of Patrology

*1. Patrology and biblical studies,
2. Patrology and dogmatic life,
3. Patrology and comparative theology,
4. Patrology and ecclesiastical theology,
5. Patrology and sacramental theology,
6. Patrology and church history,
7. Patrology and Mariology,
8. Patrology and ascetic writings,
9. Patrology and the spiritual theology,
10. Patrology and theology of evangelism and pastorship,
11. Patrology and ecumenism,
12. Patrology and development.*

The languages and texts of the Fathers

The language of the Egyptian Fathers, The texts of the Fathers, Migne, Collections and translations, English translation, French translation, Translations in other languages, Patristic Conferences, Coptic manuscripts.

The classification of the Patristic writings

1. time, 2. languages, 3. place, 4. the material.

The outline of the patristic literature

*1. The beginnings of the Christian patristic literature,
2. the Ante-Nicene literature after St. Irenaeus,
3. The golden age and the Eastern Fathers,
4. The Western Fathers in the fourth and fifth centuries,
5. The writings after the Council of Chalcedon.*



THE BEGINNINGS OF THE CHRISTIAN PATRISTIC LITERATURE

THE BEGINNINGS OF LITURGICAL FORMULAS AND CANONICAL LEGISLATION

1. The apostles' creed

Creed in the New Testament, The history of creeds, Primitive creeds, The Apostles' creed, Its contents, The text.

2. The Didache: [The Lord's instruction to the Gentiles through the twelve Apostles]

Its importance, The author, Date, Place, Its history, Contents,

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 (16).



THE APOSTOLIC FATHERS

The Apostolic Fathers, Characteristics of the Apostolic Fathers.

1. St. Clement of Rome

St. Clement of Rome, Concerning his death.

The first letter to the Corinthians: The purpose of the letter, Its features, Its date, Its division.

The attributed works of St. Clement of Rome:

1. The so-called second epistle of Clement, Its features and contents.

2. Two letters on virginity, Their features and contents.

3. The Apostolic Institutions, Its contents.

4. The Pseudo-Clementines, Theology and thoughts: Man as an image of God, Free-will, The necessity of baptism, The truth and man's own abilities, Knowledge, The need of true instructions, The fear of God, Righteousness, Obedience, The holy anger, The purity of heart, Studying the Bible, Peace and spiritual battle, Sanctity of marriage, The guardian angel, Our authority on demons through Christ, The sixth sense.

2. St. Ignatius of Antioch

Bishop of Antioch, Establishment of the hymn "Trisagion," His meeting with the prefect of Syria, To Rome, In Troas, His letters, Concepts and theology, Christ the Savior, Salvation, Death,

The Church:

1. The place of sacrifice (Thysiasterion),

2. Community of love,

3. Community of Singers of hymns,

4. Community on Christ, 5. The catholicity or universality of the Church, The unity of the Church, The holy temple, Being in Christ, Imitation of Christ, Eucharist, Baptism, Martyrdom, Witnesses to Christ, Clergymen, Primacy of Rome, Marriage and virginity, Silence.

3. St. Polycarp of Samyrna

St. Polycarp of Samyrna, Polycarp Bishop of Samyrna, St. Polycarp and the heretics, With St. Ignatius, In Rome, Martyrium S. Polycarpi, St. Polycarp's widened-heart, St. Polycarp's bravery, The relics of St. Polycarp, Eucharistic prayer, The epistle to Philipppians.

Dogma and doctrines: Christology, The practical faith, Organisation, Imitating Christ, Taking care of the salvation of others, charity, Church and state.

4. The Epistle of Barnabas

The Epistle of Barnabas, The author, Content, Christ,

Moses' Law:

1. The Circumcision,

2. The Cross,

3. The temple,

4. The sacrifices and offerings,

5. Restriction on some kinds of food,

Baptism, The Lord's Day, The chiliasm, Time of composition

5. Papias of Hierapolis

Explanations of the Sayings of the Lord, The Millennium, Papias and the Church Tradition.

6. The "Shepherd" of Hermas

Hermas, The Periods of His Writings, The Early Church's View of the "Shepherd", Its Characteristics.

The broad lines of the book "The Shepherd"

Its Sections, The Five Visions, The Twelve Commands.

His Thoughts

Repentance, The Trinitarian Faith, Baptism, Morals, Marriage, Texts.

7. The Epistle to Diognetus

The Author, Who is Diognetus