FIRST PERIOD

BEGINNING AND GROWTH OF EARLY CHRISTIAN LITERATURE - THE FATHERS OF THE FIRST THREE CENTURIES

SECTION I

THE APOSTOLIC FATHERS

"Apostolic Fathers" is the name given to a certain number of writers or writings (several of which are anonymous) dating from the end of the first or from the first half of the second century. The name has been selected because the authors are supposed to have known the Apostles and also because their works represent a teaching derived immediately, or almost immediately, from the Apostles. These writings are, indeed, a continuation of the Gospels and of Apostolic literature.

On the other hand, these works have neither the intense vividness of the canonical books nor the fullness of theological thought found in the literature of a later period. With the exception of St. Ignatius, their authors do not show much intellectual power or ability, which goes to prove that, in the beginning, the Church recruited her members chiefly from among the illiterate. Nevertheless, the writings of these men are of great value to us, both on account of their antiquity and because they show how the Christians of the second and third generations understood the work of Christ and of his Apostles.

There are about ten Apostolic Fathers. One-half of their writings is made up of epistles (Clement, Ignatius, Polycarp, Pseudo-Barnabas) ; the other half comprises doctrinal, parenetic or disciplinary treatises (The *Didache*, the "Secunda Clementis," the *Shepherd of Hermas*, Papias, *The Apostles' Creed*).[1]

[1] The edition of the Apostolic Fathers by Migne (P. G., I, II, V) is insufficient. The student must use that of F. X. Funk, *Patres Apostolici*, Tubingae, 1901, in 2 vols., with Latin translation and notes (the second vol. revised and reedited by F. Diekamp, 1913), or separate editions of the collection of Hemmes and Lejay indicated below. Cf. also the minor editions (without translation or notes) of Funk and Harnack, Gebhardt and Zahn. See Freppel, *Les Peres Apostoliques et leur Epoque*, Paris, 4th ed., 1885.

I. St. Clement[2]

According to the most trustworthy tradition, St. Clement was the third successor of St. Peter and the fourth bishop of Rome. Nothing warrants our identifying him with the Clement of whom St. Paul speaks when writing to the Philippians[3] and still less with Flavius Clemens, a consul, cousin of the Emperor Domitian, who was beheaded in 95 or 96. St. Clement probably knew the Apostles. He was presumably a freedman, or the son of a freedman, of the *gens* Flavia, whence he derived his name. Be this as it may, Clement was certainly in some respects a remarkable pontiff, since he made a profound impression on the early Church. Two "Letters to Virgins," two "Letters to James," the brother of the Lord, and a collection of Homilies are ascribed to him, besides the so-called "Second Letter to the Corinthians"; he is also given a prominent part in the romance of the "*Recognitions*."

At the end of the IVth century Rome honored him as a martyr; the alleged acts of his martyrdom, however, are not authentic, but belong to another Clement, a Greek martyr buried at Cherson.

Of Pope St. Clement we possess only one authentic writing, the *Epistle to the Corinthians* (*Epistola Prima Clementis*). It is contained in two Greek MS., the "*Alexandrinus*," probably belonging to the IVth century (now in the British Museum), and the

"*Constantinopolitanus*" or, better, "*Hierosolymitanus*," dating from 1056 (kept in Jerusalem). In the former manuscript chapters Ivii, 6-lxiii, 4 are missing; the latter is complete. There exist, furthermore, a very literal Latin version, which seems to go back

[2] Editions apart from his epistle by H. Hemmer, *Les Peres Apostoliques*, II, Paris, 1909; J. B. Lightfoot, *Clement of Rome*, 2nd Ed., 1890 (the richest in information of all kinds) ; R. Knopf, *Der erste Clemensbrief*, Leipzig, 1899. Good doctrinal commentary by W. Scherer, *Der erste Clemensbrief an die Korinther*, Regensburg, 1903.

[3] Phil. iv, 3.

to the IInd century,[4] a Syriac version,[5] and two incomplete Coptic versions.[6]

This epistle is anonymous. It introduces itself as a letter from "the Church of God which is in Rome to the Church of God which is in Corinth." Although the letter is written in the name of a community, it is undoubtedly the work of an individual and this individual is Clement. Denis of Corinth (170-175?) gives us decisive proof of this, and it would be difficult to find anyone in a position to be better informed than he was.[7] To his testimony we may add those of Hegesippus,[8] of Clement of Alexandria, and of St. Irenaeus.[9] St. Polycarp was certainly acquainted with this epistle, since he made it the pattern of his own to the Philippians, and this circumstance alone is sufficient proof that the letter dates back approximately to the time of St. Clement.

Clement's pontificate is to be placed between the years 92 and 101. His letter was written after a persecution which appears to be that of Domitian. As this persecution ended in 95 or 96, Clement must have written to the Corinthians between the years 95 and 98.

The occasion was a schism which had broken out in the Church of Corinth. One or two ringleaders[10] had stirred up the faithful against the presbyters, of whom several, of irreproachable life, had driven them from office. We are ignorant of the nature of the accusation raised against them. The Church of Rome learned of these troubles through public rumor, for notwithstanding what is

said in ch. I, 1, it does not seem probable that the Church of Rome was informed and asked to intervene by the Church of Corinth. Clement, as pope, intervened for the purpose of restoring peace and pointing out means of remedying the trouble.

The Epistle is divided into two main parts. The first is general (iv-xxxviii) and contains a series of exhortations to

[4] Discovered and edited by D. G. Morin, *S. Clementis Romani ad Corinthios Epistulae Versio Latina Antiquissima*, Maredsoli, 1894 (*Analecta Maredsolana*, II).

[5] Edited by R. L. Ben Sly and R. H. Kennett, London, 1899.

[6] Edited by C. Schmidt, *T. U.*, xxxii, i, Leipzig, 1908 and Fr. Roesch, Strasbourg, 1910.

[7] Eusebius, *H. E.*, iv, 23, II.

[8] *Ibid.*, iv, 22, 1.

[9] *Adv. Haer.*, iii, 3, 3.

[10] xlvii, 5, 6.

the practice of charity, penance, obedience, humility, faith, etc., calculated to insure a spirit of concord among the faithful. The train of thought is interrupted (xxiii-xxx) by a lengthy parenthesis on the certainty of the future resurrection. The second part (xxxix-lix) deals more directly with the troubles at Corinth. God, says Clement, established the ecclesiastical hierarchy and sent Christ. Christ appointed the Apostles, who appointed bishops and deacons, who in turn, as the necessity arose, chose other men to succeed them. To these men the faithful owe submission and obedience, and this is why they who drove the presbyters from office have sinned. They must do penance and withdraw for a time from Corinth, in order that peace may be re-established. Then follows a long prayer (lix, -3 lxi), in which praises to God and supplications for the Christians and for the authorities succeed one another. The letter concludes with fresh exhortations to unity and with spiritual good wishes (lxii-lxv).

In the early Church the Epistle of St. Clement was held in the

greatest esteem. Some authors even went so far as to rank it with the inspired writings. St. Irenaeus calls it "very powerful"; Eusebius pronounces it "grand and admirable" and testifies to the fact that in several churches it was read publicly at the meetings of the faithful.[11] The letter is worthy of such esteem because of the happy blending of firmness and kindness which characterizes it, and the shrewdness of observation, delicacy of touch and lofty sentiments which the author manifests throughout. The great prayer at the conclusion has a majestic swing. Unfortunately, the abuse of Old Testament quotations, especially in the first part, often interferes with the development of the author's thought and prevents it from attaining its highest flight.

From a theological point of view the Epistle of St. Clement is of great importance. It marks the "epiphany of the Roman primacy," being the first manifestation of the consciousness of this prerogative in Rome. It also contains the first patristic affirmation of the divine right of the hierarchy.[12]

[11] *H. E.*, iii, 16.

[12] xlii, 1, 2, 4; xliv, 2.

2. ST. IGNATIUS[1]

St. Ignatius, also callel Theophorus, according to tradition succeeded Evodius, the first bishop of Antioch after St. Peter.[2] Nothing is known for certain of his youth or even of his episcopate. It is surmised that he was born a pagan and became converted to the faith later in life.

He was bishop of Antioch[3] when a persecution, the cause of which is unknown to us, broke out. St. Ignatius was its noblest and perhaps only victim. Condemned to be exposed to wild beasts, he was led to Rome to undergo martyrdom.

He travelled by land and sea. Passing through Philadelphia, in Lydia, he arrived by land at Smyrna, where he was greeted by its bishop, Polycarp, and recived delegations from the neighboring churches of Ephesus, Magnesia, and Tralles, with their respective bishops, Onesimus, Damasus, and Polybius. It was at Smyrna that he wrote

his letters to the Ephesians, to the Magnesians, to the Trallians and to the Romans. From Smyrna he came to Troas, whence he wrote his letters to the Churches of Philadelphia and Smyrna and his letter to Polycarp. From there he took ship to Neapolis, where he resumed the land route, passing through Philippi and Thessalonica to Dyrrachium (Durazzo) on the Adriatic Sea. The Philippians received Ignatius with veneration and after his departure wrote to Polycarp, begging him to send by his own courier the letter they de- spatched to the Christians of Antioch and asking him at the same time to forward to them (the Philippians) what- ever letters of Ignatius he had in his possession. This is the last information we have of the Bishop of Antioch. At Rome he suffered the death he had so earnestly longed for; but the two accounts of his martyrdom which we possess (*Martyrium Romanum* and *Martyrium Antiochenum*) are legendary.

[1] Special edit. by A. Lelong, in *Textes et Documents: Les Peres Aposfoliques*, III, *Ignace d'Antioche*, Paris, 1910; by J. B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, part II, 2nd ed., 1889-1890. See H. de Genouillac, *L'Eglise Chretienne au Temps d'lgnace d'Antioche*, Paris, 1907. P. Batiffol, *L'Eglise Naissante et Ie Catholicisme*, Paris, 1909. Good catholic commentary by M. Rackl, *Die Christologie des hi. Ignatius von Ant.*, Freiburg, 1914.

[2] Eusebius, *H. E.*, iii, 22.

[3] The opinion of E. Bruston, that Ignatius was a deacon of Antioch, does not seem to have found many adherents.

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The letters of St. Ignatius have reached us in three different recensions:

1. The longer recension, besides the seven letters mentioned, more or less enlarged, contains six others: a letter by a certain Maria of Cassobola to Ignatius and five letters of Ignatius to Maria of Cassobola, the people of Tarsus, Antioch and Philippi, and Hero, a deacon of Antioch, - in all, thirteen letters.[4]

2. The shorter recension, in Syriac, which contains in an abbreviated form the three letters to Polycarp, to the Ephesians, and to the Romans.[5]

3. The mixed recension, comprising the seven letters to the Ephesians, the Magnesians, the Trallians, the Romans, the Philadelphians, the people of Smyrna, and Bishop Polycarp. The text of this recension is not so developed as that of the longer recension, but more developed than that of the shorter.

Scholars are unanimous now in affirming that neither the longer nor the shorter recension represents the authentic work of Ignatius. If, therefore, his work has been preserved anywhere, it is in the mixed recension. But the question arises: Are the seven letters of this recension entirely authentic? This question, which has been the subject of many violent discussions, must be answered in the affirmative. Arguments based upon internal criticism are about the only ones that can be brought against such a solution, but they are really without force and must vanish before the evidence of Eusebius,[6] Origen,[7] St. Irenaeus,[8] and St. Polycarp.[9] Outside of a few obstinate writers, all Protestant and rationalist critics now side with Catholics on this question.[10] We may therefore say that the authenticity of the Ignatian epistles is an established fact.

[4] The text may be found in the second vol. of Funk's *Patres Apostolici*.

[5] Edited by W. Cureton. *The Ancient Syriac Version of the Epistles of S. Ignatius*, London, 1845; *Corpus Ignatianum*, 1849; A. Hilgenfeld, *Ignatii Antioch. . . . Epistulae et Martyria*, Berolini, 1902.

[6] *H. E.*, iii, 22; 36 and 38.

[7] In *Cantic. Canticorum.*, prolog.; *In Lucam*, Homil. vi

[8] *Adv. Haer.*, v, 28, 4.

[9] *Ad Philip.*, xiii.

[10] Hilgenfeld, Lipsius, and Voelter still continue to hold aloof. Renan admitted the authenticity of but one Epistle, that to the Romans, the only one rejected by E. Bruston. Th. Zahn, A. Harnack, 0. Pfleiderer, J. Reville and Catholics generally claim authenticity for all seven epistles. The thesis has been completely established by J. B. Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, part II, vol. 1, 1885.

When were these letters written? Evidently at a date which coincides closely with that of the death of St. Ignatius, although it is difficult to fix this date exactly. One thing alone seems certain, vis., that Ignatius suffered martyrdom under Trajan (98-117). The acts of his martyrdom indicate the ninth year of Trajan (107); St. Jerome[11] says the eleventh year (109). We shall hardly err, therefore, if we place the date of his martyrdom, and consequently also that of the composition of his letters, about the year 110.

The main purpose of Ignatius in all his letters, except that to the Romans, is to warn the faithful against the errors and divisions which certain agents of heresy and schism endeavored to sow among them. The doctrine these men were trying to spread was a certain kind of Judaizing Gnosticism: on the one hand, they urged the preservation of Jewish practices; on the other they were Docetists, i. e., they saw in the humanity of Jesus only an unreal appearance. Furthermore, they separated from the bulk of the Christian community and conducted their liturgical conventicles apart from them. St. Ignatius fought against their pretensions by affirming that Judaism had been abrogated, and by strongly insisting on the reality of the body and the mysteries of Jesus. What he seeks above all, though, is to defeat the propaganda of these heretics in principle by exhorting the faithful, as the first of their duties, never to separate from their bishop and clergy. Under the bishop in each church Ignatius clearly distinguishes a body of priests and deacons who are subject to him, and who, together with the bishop, constitute the authority which the faithful must obey if they wish to maintain unity and purity of doctrine in the Church of God.

The Epistle to the Romans was written for a special purpose. Ignatius feared lest the Romans, moved by a false compassion for him, should attempt to prevent the execution of his death-sentence and therefore begs them to abandon their efforts.

The style of the Ignatian Epistles is "rude, obscure, enigmatic, and full of repetitions and entreaties, but it is

[11] *De Vir. ill.*, 16.

always very energetic and here and there strikingly magnificent." [12] No author, unless it be St. Paul, whom Ignatius resembles in

more than one respect, has succeeded better than he in infusing his whole personality into his writings. His style, though incorrect and disjointed, is animated by an irresistible life. An ardent flame burns in these sentences, from which terse expressions spring forth like flashes of lightning. Instead of classical equilibrium, we find here beauty of a higher kind, sometimes, strange, no doubt, but always emanating from intensity of feeling and from the very depths of the martyr's piety. From this point of view nothing can compare with the letter to the Romans, which Renan has called "one of the jewels of primitive Christian literature."

3. ST. POLYCARP AND THE ACTS OF HIS MARTYDOM [1]

The memory of St. Polycarp is closely connected with that of St. Ignatius. He was born very probably in the year 69 or 70, of well-to-do parents, and was a disciple of St. John the Evangelist.[2] He conversed with those who had seen the Lord and was made bishop of Smyrna at a relatively young age, since he was holding that office when he received St. Ignatius on his way to Rome. St. Irenaeus extols his great love of tradition and of sound doctrine.[3] Towards the end of his life, Polycarp visited Pope Anicetus in Rome to discuss with him the question of the celebration of Easter and to defend the custom which prevailed in his own church. The two were unable to come to an understanding; but parted in peace.[4] One or two years after this incident, in 155 or 156, Polycarp died a martyr.

The circumstances of his martyrdom have been preserved in a letter written by a certain Marcion in the name of the Church of Smyrna. This letter was addressed, in the year following the martyrdom of the holy bishop,[5] to the Church of Philomelium "and to all the Christians of the

[12] Batiffol.

[1] Special edition by A Lelong, same volume as that of St. Ignatius; and by J. B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, part II, London, 1885, 1889.

[2] Eusebius, *H. E.*, v, 20, 6.

[3] *De Vir. Ill.*, 7.

[4] *H.E.*, v, 24, 16, 17.

[5] xviii, 3.

world belonging to the universal Church."[6] Polycarp was sentenced to be burned alive, but he was stabbed with a dagger and his body afterwards burnt at the stake. The Christians were able "to gather his bones, of more value to them than precious stones and gold, and placed them in a becoming place," where they could assemble to celebrate the anniversary of his martyrdom.[7]

St. Irenaeus speaks of a certain number of letters written by Polycarp,[8] but we have only his letter to the Philipplans, written on the occasion of Ignatius' sojourn among them. Ignatius had induced the Christians of Philippi to write to the faithful of Antioch and congratulate them upon the fact that the persecution, which had carried away their bishop, was now at an end. The Philippians had requested Polycarp to send their letter to the brethren at Antioch by the same messenger he was about to despatch to that city; they also asked him for copies of the letters of Ignatius which might be in his possession. We have Polycarp's reply, written probably soon after the death of St. Ignatius,[9] but the entire text is extant only in a mediocre Latin translation. All the Greek manuscripts which have reached us stop towards the end of ch. ix. Fortunately Eusebius has transcribed the whole of ch. ix as well as ch. xiii, - the two most important chapters.[10]

The authenticity of these letters, bound up as it is with that of the Ignatian epistles, has been disputed, but they are certainly genuine.

There is very little originality in the writings of St. Polycarp. Both the matter and the style are destitute of genius. Wishing to exhort the Christians of Philippi, with whom he was but slightly acquainted, the Bishop of Smyrna filled his letter with counsels borrowed from the New Testament, and more especially from St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians. He adds that he is sending them, together with this letter, all the letters of St. Ignatius in his possession.

[6] In this account, chapters xxi and xxii, 1 may be contemporaneous additions to the writing; parts xxii, 2, 3 and the other appendix taken from the Moscow Ms. were written at a much later date.

[7] XVIII, 2.

[8] Eusebius, *H. E.*, v, 20, 8.

[9] Cf. ix with xiii.

[10] *H. E.*, iii, 36, 13-15.

4. PSEUDO-BARNABAS [1]

Under the name of St. Barnabas we have a letter preserved in two principal codices, the Sinaiticus (IVth century) and the Hierosolymitanus (1056). With one voice Christian antiquity indicated as the author of this letter Barnabas, the companion of St. Paul, although it placed it among the antilegomenai grafai, that is to say, contested its canonicity. Modern critics unanimously deny the genuineness of the letter. When the Epistle was written, St. Barnabas was certainly no longer alive and, even if he had been, he would not have adopted the violent and severe attitude evinced throughout this document.

The letter was intended for certain converts from paganism, whom a few Judaic Christians - more Jewish than Christian - were trying to persuade that the Old Law was still in force. To refute this claim the author devotes the greater part of his letter (i-xvii) to showing that the Mosaic observances have been abrogated and that the ancient covenant of God with the Jewish people ceased with the death of Christ and the promulgation of the Christian law. He goes farther and asserts that these traditional observances in reality never existed in the sense in which the Jews understood them. The precepts relating to fasting, circumcision, the Sabbath, the temple, etc., which they had interpreted in a gross material sense, were to be understood spiritually of the mortification of the passions and the sanctification of the interior temple, which is the soul.

In the second part, passing abruptly to a new set of ideas, the author reproduces the contents of the chapters of the Didache which describe the "*Two Ways*." It is probable that he borrowed this description from some other writing, or from the Didache itself. There are two "Ways of Life": the way of darkness and vice and the way of light and virtue; we must follow the latter and turn away from

the former.

Alexandria and Egypt are commonly designated as the birthplace of the Letter of Barnabas. It is there we find it first quoted (by Clement of Alexandria) and there it was

[1] Special edition by G. Oger and A. Laukent, *Textes et Documents*, *Les Peres Apostoliques*, I, Paris, 1907. See P. Ladeuze, *L'Epitre de Barnabe*, Louvain, 1900. Catholic commentary by Ph. Hauser, *Der Barnabasbrief neu untersucht und/neu erklart*, Paderborn, 1912.

held in great veneration. We could suspect this also from the strong allegorism displayed throughout the work. The author sees, for instance, in the 318 slaves of Abraham the figure of Christ and of His cross (T = 300, *ih* = 18). He believes in the millennium.

It is difficult to determine the date of this composition. All depends on the interpretation we give to chapters iv and xvi. Funk and Bardenhewer place it under Nerva's reign (96-98); Veil, Harnack, and Oger, under the Emperior Hadrian (117-131).

5. THE DOCTRINE OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES[1]

The Doctrine of the Twelve Apostles (Didach twu dwdeka apostolwn), frequently called also by the shorter name of Didache, was not entirely unknown when the complete text was first discovered. The Epistle of Pseudo-Barnabas, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, the author of the Apostolic Constitutions, and others had quoted it or embodied fragments of it in their works. St. Athanasius had even mentioned it expressly by its title, the "*Doctrine of the Apostles*." The treatise was very popular in the early Church; some looked upon it even as an inspired book.[2] But the complete original text was discovered only in 1873, by Philotheos Bryennios in the *Codex Hierosolymitanus*, which dates from 1056. The editio princeps appeared in 1883. It has since been followed by many others. Besides the original Greek, there exist also a Latin version of the first six chapters[3] and a few fragments from an Arabic translation.[4] Quotations in the *Adversus Aleatores* and by St. Optatus prove that there must have existed, as early as the IInd century, a Latin version, dif- ferent from the one we possess now,

which contained the whole work.

[1] Special edition by H. Hemmek and A. Laukent in *Textes et Documents: Les Peres Apostoliques*, I, Paris, 1907. See E. Jacquier, *La Doctrine des Douze Apotres* (text, version, and commentaries), Paris, 1891.

[2] Eusebius places it among the noqa, or non-canonical apocrypha (*H. E.*, III, 25, 4).

[3] Edited by J. Schlecht, *Doctrina xii Apostolorum*, Freiburg i. B., 1900.

[4] In the life of the monk Schnoudi, d. in 451. J. Iiselin, *Eine bisher unbekannte Version des ersten Teiles der Apostellehre*; *T. U.*, xiii, 1b, 1895.

The Didache may be divided into four clearly distinct parts: a moral catechesis (i-vi), a liturgical instruction (vii-x); a disciplinary instruction (xi-xv), and a conclusion of an eschatological nature (xvi).

1. The moral catechesis teaches us what we must do (The Way of Life, i-iv) and what we must not do (The Way of Death, v, vi).

2. The liturgical instruction treats of Baptism, how to administer it and how to prepare oneself for its reception (vii); fasting (viii, 1); prayer (viii, 2, 3), and the celebration of the Holy Eucharist (ix, x).

3. The disciplinary instruction is concerned with the manner of dealing with preachers, and especially with itinerant apostles (xi, 3-6), prophets (xi, 7-12; xiii, I, 3-7), travelling brethren (xii), and teachers who settle in the com- munity (xiii, 2) ; then passing on to the interior life of the Church, it prescribes the divine service for Sundays and lays down the line of conduct to be followed with regard to bishops, deacons, and the brethren of the community (xiv-xv).

4. The conclusion is a warning to be vigilant because the coming of the Savior is at hand. It contains also a description of the signs which will precede and accompany the parousia (xvi).

The Didache is an anonymous writing and its author is unknown.

Whoever he was, he fused the different parts of the work into a harmonious whole. The problem is to ascertain whether he made use of works already in existence and, more especially, whether the first six chapters (the moral catechesis) constituted an independent treatise, which the author appropriated and incorporated with his work. A few indications here and there seem to favor this view. Under the title of *The Two Ways* a short moral treatise seems to have been in circulation. The author of the Didache and several other writers who have cited him. may have merely performed a work of transcription. This conclusion, however, is not certain. As to the hypothesis that *The Two Ways* was a Jewish work, Christianized by the addition of passages I, 3 to II, 1, we must say that it is not substantiated by the facts.

The dates fixed upon by critics for the composition of the Didache fall between the years 50 and 160. The work was probably composed between 80 and 110. The basis for

such a conclusion is the fact that the liturgy and hierarchy which the author describes, are quite primitive; there is no trace in the work of a creed or a canon of the Scriptures, and no allusion is made to pagan persecution or Gnosticism. On the other hand, the writer is acquainted with the gospels of St. Matthew and St. Luke and entertains an obvious mistrust towards wandering Christian teachers who visit the communities. This state of affairs is characteristic of the end of the first century.

It is impossible to determine precisely the place where this work was composed. It was certainly written in the East, but nothing warrants our saying with certainty whether its birthplace was Syria, Palestine, or Egypt.

The *Didache* is a work of considerable importance. Apart from its dogmatic content, it gives us a pretty accurate picture of what was, in those early times, the interior life of the Christian communities from the point of view of moral teaching, the practices they observed, and the form of government under which they lived. Some authors have seen in this work the most ancient of Christian rituals; it is perhaps more exact to characterize it as a kind of "*Vade Mecum*" for the faithful and a directory for the use of the Church

officials.

6. THE HOMILY CALLED SECOND EPISTLE OF ST. CLEMENT[1]

The so-called Second Epistle of St. Clement is found in two Greek manuscripts and in the Syriac manuscript of the authentic letter of St. Clement. However, Eusebius, who is the first to mention it, is careful to remark[2] that "it was not as well known as the first Epistle, since ancient writers have made no use of it." In fact, it is neither a letter nor a formal epistle, but a homily or discourse which was read in the meetings of the faithful. "Brothers and Sisters, after [the word of] the God of truth, I read to you this exhortation, that listening to the things which have been written, you may save yourselves and your lector with you."[3] The hypothesis that this epistle is identical with

[1] Special edition by H. Hemmer in the *Textes et Documents: Les Peres Apostoliques*, II, Paris, 1909. The introduction discusses certain questions raised by the letter.

[2] *H. E.*, iii, 38, 4.

[3] xix, 1.

the Letter of Pope Soter to the Corinthians,[4] spoken of by Denis of Corinth, is therefore untenable. Neither can this homily be attributed to Pope St. Clement. The silence of ancient writers militates strongly against such an hypothesis, and "style, tone, and thought are in such complete contrast with the (authentic) Letter to the Corinthians that from internal criteria alone we should be justified in refusing to attribute this second composition to the author of the first Letter."[5]

It is, therefore, an anonymous sermon by an unknown author. As the work is not an orderly treatise on a particular subject, its contents are difficult to analyze. After affirming the divinity of Christ, the author dwells at length on the value of the salvation He has brought us and on the care with which we should observe the commandments (i-iv). We can work out our salvation only by waging

a continual warfare against the world. Let us then embark for this heavenly battle (v-vii) and strive to practice the Christian virtues of penance, purity, mutual love, trust in God, and devotion to the Church (viii-xvii). Conclusion: Let us work for our salvation, come what may: Glory be to God! (xviii-xx).

It is plain that this discourse is not a homily, properly so called, upon a specific text of S. Scripture, but a stirring exhortation to live a Christian life and thereby to merit heaven. "The thought is often very commonplace, expressed awkwardly and not always definitely. The composition is loose and devoid of orderly plan, but there are a few striking sentences scattered here and there." It is the work of a writer who is inexperienced, yet full of what he has to say and who, at times, expressed himself with unction.

A number of critics, struck by the resemblance existing between this work and the Shepherd of Hermas, have concluded that it was written in Rome. The analogy, however, is not very pronounced. Others have perceived in vii, 1, 3, where mention is made of wrestlers who hasten to the combat under full sail and of Christians embarking for battle, an allusion to the Isthmian games, and think that the ex- hortation was read at Corinth. This would explain how, in the manuscripts, it came to be placed alongside of the Letter of St. Clement to the Corinthians. The hypothesis does not lack probability.

[4] Eusebius, *H. E.*, iv, 23, II.

[5] Hemmer.

As to the date of composition, critics agree in placing it in the first half of the second century, more precisely between 120 and 140, before the rise of the great Gnostic systems of which the writer does not seem to be aware.

7. THE SHEPHERD OF HERMAS[1]

We possess under the name of Hermas a longish composition entitled *The Shepherd*, of which there are extant two Greek manuscripts, both incomplete,[2] two Latin versions (one very ancient, called *Vulgata*), an Ethiopic version, and a few fragments of

a Coptic version. The title of the work is borrowed from the personage who plays the principal part in the second division of the work, the Angel of Penance to whose care Hermas has been entrusted, and who appears to him in the guise of a shepherd (Vision v).

Who was the author of this book? Origen saw in him the Hermas whom St. Paul greets at the end of his Epistle to the Romans (xvi, 14). Others have made him a contemporary of St. Clement of Rome, according to vision ii, 4, 3. By far the most probable opinion is that based upon the authority of the Canon of Muratori, and that of the Liberian Catalogue, which makes Hermas a brother of Pope Pius I (c. 140-155). "As to the *Shepherd*" says the Muratorian Fragment, "it has been written quite recently, in our own time, in the city of Rome, by Hermas, while Pius, his brother, occupied, as bishop, the see of the Church of the city of Rome."

This evidence seems conclusive. It does not, however, give us any details concerning the life of Hermas. The author, in his book, furnishes us with these. According to his autobiography, Hermas was a slave and a Christian. He was sold at Rome to a Christian lady, named Rhode, who soon set him free. He then applied himself to agriculture and commerce and rapidly acquired great wealth. In consequence, he began to neglect the moral

[1] Special edition by A. Lelong in the *Textes et Documents: Les Peres Apostoliques*, IV, *Le Pasteur d'Hermas*, Paris, 1912. Cf. A Bruell, *Der Hirt des Hermas*. Freiburg, 1882. P. Batiffol, *Eludes d'Histoire et de Theologie Positive*. Paris, 1904. A. Baumeister, *Die Ethik des Pastor Hermae*, Freiburg, 1912. A. d'Ales, *L'Edit de Calliste*, Paris, 1914.

[2] The codex of Mt. Athos (xivth century) contains almost the entire text down to similitude ix, 30, 2.

guidance of his family and, more especially, failed to correct his wife and children, who led vicious lives. Then came the persecution. Hermas and his wife confessed the faith, but their children apostatized, denounced their parents, and indulged in all kinds of debauchery. The result was that Hermas lost his fortune and was reduced to the possession of a small farm, situated on the road

leading to the Roman Campagna; this was enough to support him. The trial he had undergone proved very salutary. Hermas had been an indifferent Christian; he now became fervent. It was while he was endeavoring to make amends for the past that the events occurred which he now relates.

It is difficult to disentangle what is true from what is pure fiction in these details. Hermas is surely a historical personage, and probably certain features of his life are not without historical foundation. Others may have been invented for the purposes of the book. Since Hermas has invented many things, as we shall prove, he may well have invented also his supposed autobiography.

The end he had in view was to call sinners to penance. Hermas is conscious of grave disorders which have crept into the Roman Church (Simil., viii, 6-10; ix, 19-31), not only among the laity, but even among the clergy. Ought not these sinners to do penance? Certain imposters denied it (Simil., viii, 6, 5). Hermas affirms that they should. Will this penance, which is necessary, be useful to those who perform it, and will it merit pardon for them? Some rigorist teachers thought it would not, and asserted that the only salutary penance was that performed before baptism (Mandat, iv, 3, l); Hermas announces in the name of God that, at least at the moment when he is writing, one penance after baptism is both possible and efficacious, and affirms that his express mission is to invite sinners to take advantage of such a favor. Lastly, how should penance be performed? Hermas describes the process in the course of his book. These three ideas,— the necessity of penance, its efficacy, and its requisite conditions,— form the ground- work of *The Shepherd*.

Hermas does not present these ideas as his own. In order that they may be the more readily accepted by his readers, he presents them as moral instructions which he has received through the special agency of supernatural manifestations. He assumes the attitude of a seer and a prophet,

like those who existed in the first days of the Church, and his entire book is nothing more than an account of the visions and revelations which have been made to him.

From this point of view, *viz.*, that of the *form*, *The Shepherd* is

divided into three parts, which comprise, respectively, five *Visions*, twelve *Commandments*, and ten *Similitudes* (or parables). This distinction is made by the author himself, but it must not be taken in a strict sense, "because the *commandments* and the *similitudes* contain nearly as many visions as the *visions* properly so called, and the *visions* and *similitudes* in their turn are crammed with commandments."[3] In reality, Hermas divides his book into two distinct sections, according to the personage who appears and speaks to him. In the first four visions that personage is the Church. She appears to him first in the guise of an aged and feeble woman; in the following visions she grows constantly younger and more graceful. From the fifth vision on, a new personage appears and remains upon the scene until the close of the volume. This is the Shepherd or Angel of Penance to whose care Hermas has been entrusted. The Shepherd first dictates to him the twelve *Commandments* and next bids him write out the *Similitudes* or parables.

The twelve *Commandments* form a small code of practical morals. They insist upon the virtues and good works which a penitent must practice if his penance is to be efficacious,— faith, fear of God, simplicity, truthfulness, chastity in marriage, patience, temperance, trust in God, Christian joy, the discernment of true and false prophets.

The *Similitudes*, or symbolical visions, are ten in number. They resume the theme of the visions and further develop the necessity and efficacy of penance and the conditions requisite for it. Three of these similitudes are particularly important: the fifth (the parable of the vineyard and the faithful servant), the eighth (the parable of the willow tree), and the ninth (which returns to the third vision and relates the construction of the tower of the Church).

Link and Baumgartner[4] have established beyond a doubt that the Shepherd is the work of one author. But it does not necessarily follow that Hermas wrote successively and

[3] Lelong.

[4] A. Link, *Die Einheit des Pastor Hermae*. Marburg, 1888; P. Baumgartner, *Die Einheit des Hermas-Buches*. Freiburg i B., 1889.

at one sitting all the parts of his work. On the contrary, there were certainly interruptions of time between the composition of the first four visions and that of the fifth, between the composition of Similitude ix and that of Similitude ix. But it is difficult to determine the duration of these intervals: nothing proves that they lasted, at the most, more than four or five years.

The Shepherd was evidently written at Rome. The Mu- ratorian Fragment affirms that it was composed during the pontificate of Pius I, between 140 and 155, or thereabouts. The best we can do is to accept this date, which is supported by what Hermas says about the persecutions, the state of the Roman Church, and the errors which were beginning to circulate in his time.

From the moment of its appearance *The Shepherd* was received with high esteem in both the East and the West. Several Fathers (St. Irenaeus, Tertullian—whilst still a Catholic,— Clement of Alexandria, and Origen) considered it an inspired work, athough they did not place it on the same footing as the canonical books. *The Shepherd* was esteemed as the work of a true prophet and was appended to the New Testament in manuscripts of the Bible. The Muratorian Fragment, Eusebius, and St. Athanasius are more exact when they state that The Shepherd of Hermas is assuredly an excellent book, but cannot be compared to the books recognized by the Church as canonical. Its repu- tation did not last beyond the IVth century, and in 392, St. Jerome could say that *The Shepherd* was almost unknown among the Latin churches. The interest it had created dwindled away in the Greek churches also. In the decree of Pope Gelasius (496) it is named among the apocryphal books.

Considered in itself, the book is very interesting and, in spots, affords agreeable reading. However, this is not owing to the literary gifts and genius of the writer. Hermas was an uneducated man and seems not to have read or known anything outside of the Bible and a few Jewish or Christian apocrypha. He was entirely unacquainted with philosophy. He lacks imagination. "His grammar is faulty, his style clumsy and diffuse, and filled with long sentences and wearisome repetitions ... his logic is extremely defective; he does not even know the art of writing correctly."[5]

[5] Lelong.

Speculations on Christian dogma are clearly beyond the comprehension of such a poor writer and indifferent theologian. But, although not a learned man, he is a shrewd observer and has a sane and just mind, a tender heart, and good practical judgment —qualities which unite in making him an excellent moralist. He is very considerate and moderate: he exacts of human frailty only what is possible and, in consequence of the deep sense he has of divine mercy, shows himself very lenient and optimistic. His book must certainly have done a great deal of good.

8. PAPIAS AND THE PRESBYTERS

Papius[1] is known to us through St. Irenaeus and Eusebius. He was bishop of Hierapolis in Phrygia, a friend of St. Polycarp, and, having conversed with the immediate disciples of the Apostles, belonged, at the latest, to the third generation of Christians.[2] Critics are still debating whether the John, whose disciple he was, was St. John the Apostle, or a presbyter of that name. Eusebius speaks of Papias as a feeble man of limited mental power.

Papias composed only one work, the "Explanation of the Sayings of the Lord" (Dogiwg kuriakwn ezhghseiV), in five books. This treatise not only explains the words of Christ but also deals with His life. The author does not take the sayings of Christ from the Gospel text alone but relates parables from oral tradition, which Eusebius thought queer, reports a number of special utterances of the Redeemer, and a few stories which are pure fables.[3] Among the latter are to be classed certain realistic descriptions of the millennium, in which Papias was a fervent believer.

According as they see in John the presbyter, with whom Papias conversed, the Apostle John, or another personage of the same name, critics assign the composition of the Explanation to an earlier or a later date. Zahn places this

[1] Edition by Funk, *Patres Apostolici*, I, 346 ff. Doubtful fragments in C. de Boor, *Texts und Unters.*, V, 2, 1888. Cf. Th. Zahn, *Geschichte des neutestam. Kanons*, I, 2, 1889; *Forschungen sur Gesch. des neutest. Kanons*, VI, Leipzig, 1900. J. Chapman, *Le Temoignage de Jean le Presbytre*, in the *Revue Benedictine*, XXII (1905), pp.

357-376.

[2] Eusebius, *H. E.*, iii, 39, 2-4.

[3] *Ibid.*, II.

composition in A. D. 125-130; Bardenhewer, 117-138; Harnack, 140-160; Batiffol, c. 150.

Of the work of Papias we possess only a few short fragments given by St. Irenaeus, Eusebius, and Apollinaris. The two most important relate to the gospels of St. Mark and St. Matthew.

Ancient writers (Origen, Clement of Alexandria, Papias himself, and especially St. Irenaeus) often mention the presbyters or one presbyter in particular as having said certain things or taught certain doctrines. Papias gives this name to the Apostles,[4] but it applies more generally to the disciples of the Apostles, or to the disciples of these disciples, the word presbyter (ancient) being used relatively to the speaker. Thus Papias is a presbyter for St. Irenaeus and Aristion a presbyter for Papias. The presbyters are men who lived between A. D. 70-150 and who may have conversed either with the Apostles or with their immediate disciples. A few among them seem to have been writers, Aristion for example. Their accounts and teachings are, however, quoted as oral traditions and in the form of brief sentences. There is no complete collection of the words of the presbyters. Funk has gathered together those found in St. Irenaeus.[5]

9. THE APOSTLES' CREED[1]

The oldest Greek text we possess of the Apostles' Creed is found in Marcellus of Ancyra's letter to Pope Julius I, c. 340. The Latin text in its oldest form is given by Rufinus (c. 400) in his *Commentary on the Symbol of the Apostles*2 and in an *Explanation of the Symbol* attributed to St. Ambrose.[3] This text differs from the one we now have by

[4] Eusebius, H. E., iii, 39, 4.

[5] *Patres apostol.*, I, 378-389.

[1] Texts in Denzinger-Bannwart, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, Freiburg i. B., 1908, and more completely in Hahn, *Bibliothek der Symbole*, 3rd edit., Breslau, 1897. The fundamental works on the question are those of C. P. Caspari, *Ungedruckte. . . . Quellen zur Geschichte des Taufsymbols*, Christiania, 1866-1875; *Alte und Neue Quellen sur Gesch. des Taufsymbols*, Christiania, 1879; and of F. Kattenbusch, *Das apostolische Symbol*, Leipzig, 1894-1900; A. E. Burn, *Apostles' Creed*, London, 1906; E. Vacandard, *Etudes de Critique et d'Histoire Religieuse*, Paris, 1905.

[2] Hahn, §19.

[3] Hahn, §34.

the omission of the words *creatorem caeli et terrae . . . conceptus est . . . passus . . . mortuus . . . descendit ad inferos . . . omnipotentis . . . Credo . . . catholicam, sanctorum communionem . . . vifam aeternam*. These words are nothing more than additions made by the different churches[4] and finally adopted by the Roman Church after it had ignored them for a long time.

This symbol is the one which the Roman Church required the catechumens to learn and recite before receiving Baptism. In course of time it was adopted by all the churches of the West. It is not so sure that the Eastern churches adopted it before the Council of Nicaea or that the formulas of faith we find in these churches during the first three centuries are derived from it.

To what period may we trace the origin of this symbol and is it the work of the Apostles themselves? There is no doubt that the symbol embodies the doctrine of the Apostles and therefore may be attributed to them at least in substance. All its elements are found in the New Testament.

Rufinus goes a step further. He narrates, as a tradition current in his time, that the Apostles, before separating, composed this symbol that it might be the common theme of their preaching and the rule of faith for their followers. In this hypothesis the symbol would literally be the work of the Apostles.[5] It is strange, however, if this tradition has a real foundation, that so venerable a formula was not preserved and amplifications were allowed to creep into it in the

West. More probably the Apostles' Creed was composed in Rome towards the end of the first or the beginning of the second century. This conclusion is based upon the fact that we find traces of it and very probably quotations from it in Tertullian, St. Irenaeus, and St. Justin. The necessity of a formula of this kind for the liturgy of Baptism must have been felt at an early date and met promptly. The text, as we now have it, its lapidary style

[4] The formula of the symbol of Niceta of Remesiana (beginning of Vth century) contains all these additions, except *conceptus . . . descendit ad inferos . . . omnipotentis . . . Credo* (Burn, *Niceta of Remesiana*, Introduction, p. Ixxiv).

[5] The theory that each of the Twelve Apostles formulated one of the twelve articles of the symbol can be traced back to the VIth century and is found in sermons falsely attributed to St. Augustine (*P. L.*, xxxix, Serm. ccxl and ccxii).

and its complete absence of allusions to heresies of the second century, is well suited to the Roman genius and characteristic of the period immediately following the death of the Apostles. Rome alone possessed sufficient influence to impose a symbol upon the churches of both the East and the West. The Apostles' Creed cannot, therefore, have been composed by the Church in the middle of the second century as a weapon against Gnosticism, as Ehrhard and Harnack surmise, but must be anterior to these controversies.

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