

## *Chapter 1*

# *Finding a Time and Place for the Texts*



Those who read secondary literature on the apostolic fathers encounter a variety of perspectives and arguments with respect to the provenance and date for many of the texts. A typical introduction to any commentary on the literature will provide some survey of opinions for the text in question. A traditional patrology, most often within its section on the Christian literature of the second century, will provide a similar review of positions on the collected corpus. With more general investigations on the apostolic fathers, however, writers rarely offer much information by which to orient the reader toward his or her pre-suppositions. On the one hand, this approach gives the author a certain freedom to move between texts without the need to engage in the technical difficulties that arise with the critical issues behind the foundation of individual texts, or to address those scholars who debate such issues. On the other hand, the reader is less apt to discern any inconsistencies of logic that arise when an author holds certain views about one text that are not clearly compatible with views about another.

The present chapter is offered as a means by which to differentiate where and when the texts of the apostolic fathers were penned, at least as I understand the situation. I am fully aware that a variety of views may be found within the secondary literature. Speculation on these issues sometimes seems endless, though in most cases it may actually be culled into several dominant schools of thought. Some of these approaches are well reasoned and researched, while others are primarily speculative and intuitive. For certain texts the

questions of time and place are relatively assured, and for others no answer seems possible.

I freely acknowledge that my own research into the fathers is not balanced. My personal interests and research needs have often found me at labor among the longer and better-known works within the collection rather than among the lesser-known pieces. At the same time, however, I have tried to pay attention to the total corpus of materials on a regular basis in order to gain a more rounded feel for the assumptions that lie behind the writings as a whole. In certain cases my judgments concerning place and date are motivated by the findings of patristic scholars and historians who are far more experienced with a particular writing. In other instances I find that I am comfortable working from my own personal intuition and private guesses.

As those who work in the field are fully aware, to some extent the determination of place and date may be argued according to the known authority behind the writings, as with the cases of Ignatius of Antioch or Polycarp of Smyrna. But in most instances the authors behind our texts are either assumed through the culmination of oral tradition or are lost to the annals of history. Historians generally acknowledge that the final form of the entire corpus of the apostolic fathers falls within roughly one hundred years, oriented primarily around the end of the first century until the latter half of the second century. At the same time, the location of the texts may span as wide a geographical range as from Rome to Egypt, incorporating important centers of early Christian faith and culture that arose within Palestine, Syria, Asia Minor, and Greece.

If students of second-century literature were honestly to confront the paucity of evidence concerning the origins of the apostolic fathers, there would be precious little that could be said with certainty. The difficulty with this reality, of course, is that it makes it particularly difficult to talk about these texts without the working framework of time and history. This becomes especially important when we discuss the apostolic fathers with respect to the collected literature of the New Testament, much of which itself is only assumed with respect to its specific historical circumstances. In other words, we know little more about the composition of New Testament texts such as the Gospel of Mark and the letters of Colossians, Hebrews, James, or Titus than we do about noncanonical works such as *2 Clement*, the *Shepherd of Hermas*, the *Didache*, the *Epistle of Barnabas*, and the *Epistle to Diognetus*. The pri-

mary difference is that scholars have researched and discussed the New Testament literature in a continuous stream of inquiry since its inception. No such history lies behind the apostolic fathers, however. These writings were composed early and, for the most part, were rediscovered by scholars only within more recent days.

The following pages are thus designed to provide the reader with my own position on the individual roots of the apostolic fathers, especially in the light of my understanding of New Testament texts. I am fully aware that many readers will not be in agreement with certain views that I hold either for the fathers or for Scripture. I am also painfully aware that my perspectives may ultimately be incorrect, either in small part or to some greater extent. Furthermore, I hold the inalienable human right endowed by ignorance to advise the reader that I am entirely likely to change my mind on specific texts as I become aware of new information and ideas, or simply because I acquire a different feeling for certain literary situations. In any case, the following is a brief presentation of my current views on the origins of the apostolic fathers. The writings are reviewed in order of my own certainty about specific texts, a certainty that wanes quickly as we move through the collection.

## THE LETTERS OF IGNATIUS

As stated above, there are two individuals with whom certain of our texts may be clearly associated: the famous Ignatius, bishop of Antioch in Syria, and Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna in Asia Minor. I begin my review with Ignatius because what remains of his writings is more easily restricted in terms of a historical framework and timeline.

Ignatius was the second bishop of Syrian Antioch (or perhaps third, depending upon how one reads the evidence of the episcopal succession of that city)<sup>1</sup> until shortly after the beginning of the second century. At that time he was arrested by governmental authorities and taken to Rome for trial and, presumably, execution. The last indication

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<sup>1</sup>Eusebius says that Ignatius was the second bishop after Evodius in one reference (*Hist. eccl.* 3.22.1), but second after Peter (presumably the apostle) in another (*Hist. eccl.* 3.36.2). One might thus infer that if Peter may be counted as the first bishop of Antioch, then the actual sequence may have been Peter, Evodius, Ignatius.

of the bishop's anticipated travel plans as known from his own hand appears in his comment that he would soon travel from Troas to Neapolis as he progressed toward Rome (Ign. *Pol.* 8.1). Not much beyond this is known. The bishop Polycarp, who clearly had close ties to Ignatius, indicated in later correspondence that he himself remained confused as to the fate of his friend (*Pol. Phil.* 13.2). No specific reliable record of the ultimate fate of Ignatius remains, with the exception of the ancient *Martyrium Ignatii*, which purportedly is an eyewitness record of the trial and execution of the bishop as reported by Philo, a deacon at Tarsus, and the Syrian Rheus Agathopus.<sup>2</sup> This text seeks to confirm the common tradition that Ignatius was martyred in Rome, but its authenticity has been questioned. Ultimately, the historical record preserves no reliable information for the modern researcher.

What remains from the pen of Ignatius comes to us only in the form of letters that he wrote during his forced march westward. From these texts we gain some knowledge of his personal concerns and ecclesiastical anxieties. It is indeed unfortunate that we have nothing from the bishop that was written prior to the time of his arrest, since what remains is primarily a testament to his thoughts while under duress. All the same, those letters that are preserved for us offer some feel for his place and time of writing.

There were two primary routes from eastern Syria across Asia Minor to Greece, the so-called northern and southern routes.<sup>3</sup> If one can accept the authenticity of the middle recension of the Ignatian correspondence,<sup>4</sup> which remains the most widely endorsed collection of letters attributed to the bishop, then it is possible to gain a reasonable reconstruction of his journey, at least across Asia Minor. It is unknown whether he traveled first from Antioch to Asia Minor by land

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<sup>2</sup>The final, most reliable form of this document, the so-called *Martyrium Colbertinum*, is preserved in a heavily interpolated form within the tenth-century manuscript Codex Colbertinum in Paris. It derives from several recensions and surely was written after the second century, perhaps as recently as the fifth. Eusebius does not seem to have known the text himself.

<sup>3</sup>The description of these routes as a primer for the discussion of Paul's letter to the Galatians was admirably described over a century ago by W. M. Ramsay in *The Church in the Roman Empire before A.D. 170* (London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1893) and *A Historical Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians* (London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1889).

<sup>4</sup>Namely, the letters to Ephesus, Magnesia, Tralles, Rome, Philadelphia, Smyrna, and Polycarp.

or sea.<sup>5</sup> From that point forward, in either instance, it seems that he was taken to Smyrna by an avenue that did not include the cities of Magnesia, Tralles, or Ephesus. His letters to these churches were written from Smyrna and clearly acknowledge that he was in contact with them through their own messengers. Presumably, these delegates were sent to the bishop precisely because he had been unable to visit the congregations himself while en route. The letters to the churches at Smyrna and Philadelphia were penned in Troas before Ignatius crossed the Aegean Sea to Neapolis in Macedonia. The letter to Polycarp appears to have been written in Neapolis, or at least it indicates that Ignatius had reached that port. Polycarp's own letter to the church at Philippi sometime later offers the strong suggestion that Ignatius had passed through that city along his way. From this point further the journey of Ignatius is unknown.<sup>6</sup> Thus, the authentic letters of Ignatius ultimately may be localized to the settings of only a few cities: Smyrna, Troas, and probably Neapolis. His letter to Rome gives no clue as to its place of origin, though clearly it was written along this same route.

Our second concern is the date of composition that is to be associated with the Ignatian correspondence. The letters undoubtedly were written within a short span of time, but those specific years are not quite clear. Three possibilities come to mind. The first is that Ignatius was arrested as an individual either for civil or religious reasons, and that considerations of widespread harassment of Christians remain irrelevant for consideration. Though this is possible, there is no evidence

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<sup>5</sup>Several letters that are generally considered to be spurious must be taken into consideration here, including the letters to Tarsus, Antioch, the deacon Hero in Antioch (who followed Ignatius as bishop there), Philippi, the proselyte Mary of Cassobelae (location uncertain), and two to the presbyter John, as well as a letter sent to Ignatius by the same Mary. The first three letters (to Tarsus, Antioch, and Hero) claim to have been written in Philippi in Macedonia, a natural point along the bishop's route. These include greetings to the church of Tarsus and Laodicea, but they do not indicate whether Ignatius passed through those cities. Laodicea undoubtedly would have lay on his way regardless of which route he followed, while Tarsus would have been known to him simply because it lay within the relative proximity of his home at Antioch. The letter to the church at Philippi indicates that Ignatius employed an acquaintance, Euphanis, whom he met at Rhegium in southern Italy, to serve as his courier.

<sup>6</sup>See the reconstruction in William R. Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch: A Commentary on the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch* (ed. H. Koester; Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 11–12.

to suggest its merit. Scholars traditionally have pointed instead to some period of more general Christian persecution for the arrest of the bishop, as has been suggested by ancient authors such as Eusebius.

Two successive imperial reigns have been the focus of the debate: the reign of Trajan (98–117) and the reign of Hadrian (117–138). The later reign of Hadrian has received some limited endorsement,<sup>7</sup> but the majority of scholars have supported the Trajan persecution as the most likely time of arrest. The early church historian Eusebius listed the presence of Ignatius within the Antiochean church during the reign of Trajan, yet he understood the arrest of the bishop to have occurred prior to Trajan's arrival in the city in the tenth year of his reign, around 108.<sup>8</sup> Otherwise, the specific years of the arrest and subsequent trip to Rome are not so clear. There does not seem to be any particularly good reason to focus on any specific year, and the span of a mere twenty years does not seem to be such a significant period of time that it ultimately makes much difference for the modern researcher. Though numerous scholars have argued for a date late in the reign of Trajan, I am content to support the traditional view that the arrest occurred sometime during the years 107–109.

This brings us to the question of which New Testament texts were known to Ignatius. It is clear that the bishop falls well within the influence of the letters of Paul, particularly since his letters to Ephesus and Rome are so closely modeled upon those of the apostle. Ignatius indicates only a slight awareness of the Gospels of Mark and Luke, and he seems familiar with Johannine themes, if not John's Gospel itself. It is clear, however, that the Gospel of Matthew is his preferred text, a gospel upon which he is dependent for many of his arguments. Though Matthew was the most widely preferred gospel text throughout the early Christian world, I am compelled to place its origin, or at least its earliest usage, within the Antiochean community. The use of Matthew's Gospel by Ignatius is only one of several components that lead me to this conclusion, some of which will arise in the discussion about the *Didache* below.

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<sup>7</sup>To some extent this is based upon the variant reading of *Martyrium Colbertinum* that the arrest of Ignatius was in the nineteenth (not ninth) year after the start of Trajan's reign, thus the year 117.

<sup>8</sup>Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.21–22. The *Martyrium Colbertinum* supports this view with the added note that Trajan himself arrested Ignatius in the ninth year of the emperor's reign. This would place the arrest, and possibly the execution, sometime around the years 107–108. Jerome places the date as 109.

## THE LETTER OF POLYCARP TO THE PHILIPPIANS

The next writing for consideration is easily attributed to the author Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna.<sup>9</sup> To my knowledge, the authenticity of this text has never been questioned. The text represents the only communication that we have from the venerable Polycarp, and it reveals some important insight into his view of the nascent Christian situation.

Polycarp is widely known to have served the church as an important leader over numerous decades. The age at which he came into a position of prominence in the church is uncertain, but early authorities observed that he lived a full life, dying at the age of eighty-six.<sup>10</sup> The year of his death by martyrdom is likewise uncertain, but typically it is placed around one of two dates. The primary witness to the death of Polycarp is the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, a text that is poorly preserved and much edited. The meager evidence that the *Martyrdom* offers includes the following single reference:

Now the blessed Polycarp was martyred on the second day of the first part of the month Xanthicus, seven days before the kalends of March, on a great Sabbath, about two o'clock P.M. He was arrested by Herod, when Philip of Tralles was high priest during the proconsulship of Statius Quadratus, but while Jesus Christ was reigning as King forever. (*Mart. Pol.* 21.1)

It appears that most patristic scholars work with this testimony as evidence that the bishop's death occurred sometime during the years 155–160 (most often given as 156). If one follows the testimony of the early church historian Eusebius, the martyrdom took place a decade later at the time of Marcus Aurelius, who reigned during the years 161–180 (most often given as 167). If we accept the later date of death, it would place Polycarp in the important ecclesiastical role of bishop at a very young age, since, as argued above, he corresponded with Ignatius “bishop to bishop” shortly before or around the year 108, thus making Polycarp roughly twenty-seven years of age. This is not impossible, of course, and it has been accepted by some as sufficient reason to date the martyrdom of Ignatius to the latter days of Trajan's reign.<sup>11</sup> If one were

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<sup>9</sup>Early on, the letter is attributed to the bishop by Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.3.4; see also Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 4.14.8.

<sup>10</sup>So *Mart. Pol.* 9.3; Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 4.15.20.

<sup>11</sup>See, for example, Helmut Koester, *History and Literature of Early Christianity* (vol. 2 of *Introduction to the New Testament*; 2d ed.; FF; Philadelphia: Fortress; New York: de Gruyter, 1982), 281.

to accept the earlier date of death, however, then Polycarp would have been roughly thirty-eight years of age at the time of his correspondence with Ignatius. This, to me, seems a more likely scenario and is the assumption that I hold throughout the following pages.<sup>12</sup>

In the final analysis, of course, none of this information provides us with a specific date for the writing of Polycarp's letter to the church at Philippi. Instead, we are dependent upon the internal data of the text for clues. Specific references to Ignatius within the letter (*Pol. Phil.* 1.1; 9.1; 13.2) often are cited as evidence that the bishop of Antioch most likely had already reached his end at Rome. Polycarp seems to have heard this news yet eagerly sought to gain further details concerning the event and its aftermath. The resulting date of the text might thus be attributed to a time of several weeks to several months after the death of Ignatius around the year 108. Indeed, this is the assumption of many scholars.

This solution naturally assumes that our letter was composed as a single piece. The challenge to textual unity, and thus to such an early date, offers an argument that would place a portion of the letter (chapters 1–12) several years later than the original text (chapters 13–14). The proposed date for the later letter would be 135–137, according to this argument, based upon perceived anti-Marcionite aspects that come through, especially in chapter 7.<sup>13</sup> This hypothesis has received detailed consideration and offers some intriguing possibilities with respect to our understanding of the date for the correspondence, but it has not been universally accepted among scholars. Subsequently, I, too,

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<sup>12</sup>Others who support an earlier date for Polycarp's death include Johannes Quasten, *The Beginnings of Patristic Literature* (vol. 1 of *Patrology*; Utrecht: Spectrum, 1950; repr., Westminster, Md.: Christian Classics, 1990), 77; Paul Hartog, *Polycarp and the New Testament: The Occasion, Rhetoric, Theme, and Unity of the Epistle to the Philippians and Its Allusions to New Testament Literature* (WUNT 2/134; Tübingen: Mohr, 2002), 31; Kenneth Berding, *Polycarp and Paul: An Analysis of Their Literary and Theological Relationship in Light of Polycarp's Use of Biblical and Extra-Biblical Literature* (VCSup 62; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 11 n. 32. For further discussion about the issues involved with the history of interpretation of Polycarp's death see Boudewijn Dehandschutter, "The Martyrium Polycarpi: A Century of Research," in ANRW (ed. Hildegard Temporini and Wolfgang Haase; Part 2: *Principat*, 27.1; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1993), 485–522.

<sup>13</sup>This view was first proposed by P. N. Harrison, *Polycarp's Two Epistles to the Philippians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1936).

follow the traditional understanding for the unity of the letter and thus assign the writing of the text to the years 108–109.<sup>14</sup>

The next question is that of provenance. There is no particular reason to argue that Polycarp's letter was written from any place other than his home community at Smyrna. This is the general assumption of those who have worked with the letter, and it is mine as well.

Of more curious consideration is the matter of which of the early Christian literary resources were available to Polycarp. Comparisons of language and style would seem to indicate a close association between Polycarp and the Pastoral Epistles of the New Testament.<sup>15</sup> To this end, Polycarp is very much in the Pauline tradition that Ignatius likewise endorsed. One discovers in Polycarp's letter a similar consideration for church order that dominated the time of ecclesiastical leaders throughout the second century. With respect to other scriptural sources behind Polycarp's work, his single correspondence provides precious few clues. It appears that he was aware of 1 Peter and 1 John, and made some limited use of the Gospel of Matthew. Otherwise, he has left us no further evidence of gospel traditions and their usage among the churches of second-century Asia Minor. We must assume from his status as a prominent bishop for a prestigious Christian community such as that at Smyrna, that he had access to various early traditions. Unfortunately, the textual evidence to support further speculation is meager.<sup>16</sup>

## THE LETTER OF THE ROMANS TO THE CORINTHIANS (1 CLEMENT)

The letter that we know as *1 Clement* purportedly was written by the church at Rome to the church at Corinth in response to problems that had arisen among the Corinthian Christians. As the letter states,

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<sup>14</sup>However, a strong case may be made for the later date of 115; see Hartog, *Polycarp and the New Testament*, 169.

<sup>15</sup>See Clayton N. Jefford, "Household Codes and Conflict in the Early Church," *StPatr* 31 (1997): 121–27. Though I find von Campenhausen's suggestion that Polycarp may actually have edited the Pastoral Epistles intriguing, I do not find it ultimately conclusive; see Hans von Campenhausen, *Aus der Frühzeit des Christentums: Studien zur Kirchengeschichte des ersten und zweiten Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1963), 197–252.

<sup>16</sup>Most helpful here is the survey of New Testament sources offered in Hartog, *Polycarp and the New Testament*, 170–71.

the issue in question revolved around certain Corinthian presbyters who had been expelled from their positions of leadership. The ultimate concern of our author was for community harmony and the need to re-establish order and peace within the divided church.

No specific author is named for the text; merely the context of the church at Rome (proem) is given. In a certain sense this is both helpful and distracting. On the one hand, we can feel reasonably certain that the text was written in Rome. On the other hand, this insight combines the answer of location with the less clear question of authorship, which itself ultimately raises the more provocative issue of date.

No real effort has ever been undertaken to deny a Roman locale for the origin of the text. The issues of church hierarchy and apostolic succession seem well suited to the concerns of a context such as that at Rome (though other domains need not be excluded). As many authors have argued, it seems appropriate that the church at Corinth would appeal to Rome for leadership and guidance on the question of displaced presbyters. The capital of the empire would be a natural direction for citizens within the Mediterranean world to look, the appeal of a provincial community to the central government. Here, we can imagine the truism that "all roads lead to Rome."

At the same time, we should not be misled by more modern constructions of ecclesiastical power, since the Christian situation in antiquity was not as clearly defined with respect to avenues of influence as were the economic and political states of affairs. For example, one might easily argue that the Corinthians may well have asked for help from the Roman church because of collegial ties, not because of Rome's perceived dominance.<sup>17</sup> This perspective is supported by the observation that *1 Clement* makes no reference to the authority of any local bishop.<sup>18</sup> Presumably, if a single authority such as a bishop had pre-

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<sup>17</sup> So James S. Jeffers, *Conflict at Rome: Social Order and Hierarchy in Early Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 95. As W. H. C. Frend indicates, the tradition that a single monarchical bishop "had always been the form of church government cannot be traced beyond Hegesippus (c. 175)" (*The Rise of Christianity* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984], 130).

<sup>18</sup> Ignatius himself may have penned his letter to Rome because he anticipated it as a site where he held little actual influence, not because he considered it a superior center of faith. This is the foundation of my suggestion elsewhere that the bishop's letter was more of a subtle plea for assistance than, as is traditionally assumed, a bald declaration on behalf of a desire for martyrdom; see Clayton N. Jefford, "Ignatius of Antioch and the Rhetoric of Christian Free-

sided over the Roman church, the power of his authority would have been readily accessed for the author's argument. It would appear, instead, that the correspondence of *1 Clement* involved advice from a college of ruling presbyters to yet another group of presbyters. The advice given throughout is pastoral and pleading, never authoritative.

This leads us to the question of authorship behind the letter. The situation of *1 Clement* strongly suggests the collective voice of many persons, as is suggested by the consistent use of "we" throughout the text. Undoubtedly, this multiple voice was expressed through the hand of a single individual, perhaps the secretary of church rulers or a leader among leaders. The letter gives no indication as to the specific identity of this person, but later authorities have made clear suggestions that should be given serious consideration.

It was not until the late second century that Christian writers began to connect the name of Clement with our text. The *Shepherd of Hermas* (early second century) already had mentioned a certain Clement as a Christian of Rome, a person who may have served some secretarial or administrative function within the church there.<sup>19</sup> Yet the author of the *Shepherd of Hermas* never made any specific association between this person and the writer of *1 Clement*. Indeed, the *Shepherd* made no use of the text of *1 Clement* at all, which is a curious omission because the two writings presumably came from the same locale. Various other Christian authorities, writing later in the century, made a more exact association of the letter with the name of Clement. In a letter to the bishop Soter of Rome (ca. 166–ca. 174), the bishop Dionysius of Corinth referred to two previous letters that had been sent to the Corinthian church from Rome. Soter had written the first one; the second, earlier text was from the hand of Clement, an individual who received no further description.<sup>20</sup> Irenaeus made a more specific connection between the text of *1 Clement* and the third bishop of Roman succession named Clement. The details of the letter that is ascribed to the bishop are clearly those of our *1 Clement*.<sup>21</sup> Finally, Clement of Alexandria

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dom," in *Christian Freedom: Essays by the Faculty of the Saint Meinrad School of Theology* (ed. C. N. Jefford; AUS 7/144; New York: Lang, 1993), 25–39.

<sup>19</sup> So *Herm.* 8.3: "Therefore you will write two little books, and you will send one to Clement and one to Grapte. Then Clement will send it to the cities abroad, because that is his job."

<sup>20</sup> As preserved by Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 4.23.11.

<sup>21</sup> Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.3.3; see also Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.15.1.

attributed the text of *1 Clement* to the “apostle Clement” and quoted freely from scattered portions of the letter.<sup>22</sup>

The quantity of ancient testimony for someone named Clement as the author of our text seems convincing, but the uncertainty of who this individual may have been—apostle, bishop, administrator—is not comforting. Such titles and roles are not mutually exclusive, of course, but they yield little specific idea as to the author’s exact identity. The question of authorship thus leads us into the issue of the date of the writing. I am convinced that a decision on the time of composition is inextricably interwoven with some decision about the author.

A standard school of thought has come into existence among scholars that the text belongs sometime toward the end of the reign of the emperor Domitian (81–96) or perhaps at the beginning of the reign of the emperor Nerva (96–98).<sup>23</sup> As argued, this would explain the persecution that faced the church in Rome according to the author (*1 Clem.* 1.1), the reference to the Christians who had lived blamelessly within the community “from youth to old age” (*1 Clem.* 63.3), and the suggested reference to the deaths of Peter and Paul (*1 Clem.* 5.3–6.1) in past days, presumably during the reign of the emperor Nero (54–68). This would also be in accord with the rule of Clement as the bishop of Rome from 92–101, as indicated by Eusebius.

Of course, not everyone agrees with this dating, and I myself am not completely satisfied. Some have argued for a later time, but many prefer something earlier. Clearly, the best arguments for an earlier date include the following:<sup>24</sup> (1) Even if Clement is considered the author of the text, the suggestion that he was some type of secretary might argue that he was not yet bishop. (2) The discussion of the temple in chapters 40–41 seems to assume that the temple is still standing and liturgically active. (3) An argument based upon any reference to the temple would have been seen as counterproductive among the anti-Jewish tendencies of the church at the end of the first century. (4) The reference to chaos

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<sup>22</sup> Clement, *Strom.* 4.17.

<sup>23</sup> See Frend, *Rise of Christianity*, 97, 120; Quasten, *Beginnings of Patristic Literature*, 42–43; John Dominic Crossan, *The Birth of Christianity: Discovering What Happened in the Years Immediately after the Execution of Jesus* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998), 511.

<sup>24</sup>I am dependent here upon the brilliant analysis by Thomas J. Herron, “The Most Probable Date of the First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians,” *StPatr* 21 (1989): 106–21.

and problems in *1 Clem.* 1.1 may be less a reference to an imperial persecution than a reference to troubles throughout the empire in general, or even within the local church community in specific. (5) The recognition of Peter and Paul as those who “belong to our own generation” (chapter 5) may mean more specifically in recent years, rather than simply “of our time.” (6) The author uses the motifs of the suffering servant of Isa 53 and Ps 22 that were likewise employed by the New Testament gospels but does not cite the gospels themselves. (7) The single-bishop system that Ignatius envisioned after the beginning of the second century does not seem evident in *1 Clement*, thus suggesting an earlier date than the end of the century. Indeed, we perhaps should assume that the rise of an established bishop in Rome took more than the decade of time often suggested between the writing of *1 Clement* and Ignatius. I am ultimately content, therefore, to place *1 Clement* in Rome, written by the hand of someone named Clement (perhaps eventually to become Pope Clement) after the deaths of Paul and Peter (by tradition during the reign of Nero) but before the fall of the temple in the year 70.

## THE TEACHING OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES (THE *DIDACHE*)

Those who know my work are well aware that the *Didache* is the text to which I have devoted the majority of my research interests. It is an ancient Christian source that has provoked considerable debate and controversy over the roughly 125 years since its rediscovery. Discussion about the time and place of the *Didache* tends to fall into either of two vaguely defined approaches: that of students who believe that the text was written after the composition of the New Testament gospels, and that of students who are committed to the belief that the materials within the *Didache* are preserved from earlier traditions. There are numerous variations on these themes, of course, some of which perhaps may be classified into schools of thought. As I read through secondary literature on the subject, I discover that even I seem to have been classified into a certain school,<sup>25</sup> though this may be a school of only a

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<sup>25</sup>Thus, I am defined as a “fourth opinion” by Crossan, *Birth of Christianity*, 384 (see the entire helpful survey on pp. 383–87). Though I have refined my

single student! In any case, literature on the *Didache* is extensive, as are the views concerning its origins and development within early Christianity.<sup>26</sup>

The reader should thus be aware that the views I offer here, while in partial agreement with a wide array of scholars, are primarily of my own device. Though I am happy with my own position on issues related to the *Didache*, I remain fully conscious of the reality that my conclusions are based in part upon a mass of confusing evidence and in part upon the “feeling” that I have gleaned from the text itself.

Unlike the literature discussed thus far, the *Didache* clearly is the product of several writings and revisions. This suggests to me that portions of the text may be quite old (perhaps among the earliest traditions of early Christian literature), while others probably benefit from the experiences of a later editor (or editors) who saw the Christian tradition as it came together into a more uniform understanding of the faith. A parallel situation undoubtedly existed with the formation of the New Testament gospels, especially in the case of the Gospel of John, and many of the materials within the *Didache* are comparable to those gospel traditions either in form or application.

With this understanding of an “evolved literature” in mind, I consider a date of composition for the *Didache* to be a complex issue. In the first instance, I believe that the traditions that are found within the *Didache* are precisely of a “remaining” nature; that is, they are preserved materials. They probably are every bit as old as the traditions with which the apostle Paul worked as he visited early Christian communities around the Mediterranean and encountered their idiosyncratic beliefs and liturgies. I am not sure how to put a date on such texts except to say that they precede the work of Paul in their origin.

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views over the years, I still hold to the basic outline of the origins of the *Didache* that I offered in my published dissertation; see Clayton N. Jefford, *The Sayings of Jesus in the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* (VCSup 11; Leiden: Brill, 1989), 142–45.

<sup>26</sup>For an excellent review of arguments and issues see Jonathan A. Draper, “The *Didache* in Modern Research: An Overview,” in *The Didache in Modern Research* (ed. J. A. Draper; AGJU 37; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 1–42; see also the bibliography available in Kenneth J. Harder and Clayton N. Jefford, “A Bibliography of Literature on the *Didache*,” in *The Didache in Context: Essays on Its Text, History, and Transmission* (ed. C. N. Jefford; NovTSup 77; Leiden: Brill, 1995), 368–82.

At the other end of the time line, it is extremely difficult to know at what point the final editor of the *Didache* last contributed to the text. Even those scholars who treat the *Didache* with a conservative eye tend to place the composition of the writing no later than around the year 120. There does not seem to be any particular reason for this date except that it permits time for the prior development of all or most of the New Testament literature and explains why other Christian authors from the early part of the second century do not use the text. I, too, find no reason to reject this time as the probable terminal date.

The real issue remains to explain how the basic elements of the *Didache* came together as an editorial process between the middle of the first century and the early decades of the second century. This brings me to the question of location. Scholars have offered numerous sites over the years, mostly based upon a paucity of evidence and limited hunches. I personally favor the city of Antioch in Syria as the home of the *Didache* for several reasons: (1) Antioch supported a large Jewish community that found itself in continuing turmoil and struggle during the first century. This is admittedly true for numerous cities around the empire, including Alexandria and Rome itself. The issues that arise in the *Didache*, however, have secondary testimony from the New Testament book of Acts, which places them squarely in Antioch. They are to some large extent concerned with the same type of struggles between Judaism and Christianity, especially the debate about the need to employ Jewish perspectives within a Christian faith that was expanding rapidly through non-Jewish converts. (2) There is a strong Matthean angle to the *Didache*. I believe that the author of our text not only knew much of the specifically Matthean materials that now appear in the gospel before they were actually part of the gospel, but also was aware of the Gospel of Matthew as it was being composed.<sup>27</sup> As mentioned above, I would place the writing of Matthew in Antioch, and thus I am comfortable placing the *Didache* there as well. (3) Though scholars have occasionally objected to Antioch because Ignatius, who lived there early in the second century, did not use the *Didache* in his letters, it does in fact seem that he was aware of the traditions that were used by the

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<sup>27</sup>I, therefore, am willing to accept the Didachist's references to "the gospel" (*Did.* 8.2; 11.3; 15.3, 4) as actual references to a written gospel, the Gospel of Matthew, and not to the gospel as some general understanding of faith and principles.

Didachist (i.e., either the collector of the materials or editor of that collection).<sup>28</sup> Of course, the approaches to community and doctrinal issues that Ignatius and the *Didache* assume would appear to be diametrically opposed, which may explain why the bishop never chose to employ the text in his arguments. Ultimately, I believe that the city of Antioch is as likely a context for the development of the *Didache* as any site that may be suggested. Arguments that seek to place the *Didache* within some isolated area because of the relatively cryptic or unique elements that appear in the text do not quite address what I see to be a very important issue. The issue, as I see it, is the clear tension of an active Christian community that is caught in a transitional moment between its Jewish roots and its developing Hellenistic consciousness, a concern that we find in the *Didache* and that perhaps was better reflected in a busy urban area than in an isolated town or rural setting.

This raises the issue of which New Testament materials were known by the author and editors of the *Didache*. I am convinced that the author knew materials that were often incorporated into the Gospel of Matthew (now commonly known as “special M” texts), though the extent of that collection is now lost to us.<sup>29</sup> There is clearly a Pauline consciousness in the text as well, as is seen in comments about prophets being worthy of their food (*Did.* 13.1; cf. 2 Thess 3:7–9) and warnings about the end times (*Did.* 16.5–6; cf. Gal 3:13; 1 Thess 4:16), though the Jewish concerns of the author are not those of Paul. Finally, the editor of the text, whether the same as the previous author (collector of traditions) or perhaps more than one person, had come to know at least the Gospel of Luke or some version of its materials (see *Did.* 1.3b–2.1).

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<sup>28</sup> See the argument in Clayton N. Jefford, “Did Ignatius of Antioch Know the *Didache*?” in Jefford, *The Didache in Context*, 330–51. To some extent, this seems a natural conclusion to be drawn from the observations of Streeter that both Ignatius and the *Didache* are deeply steeped in the text of Matthew; see Burnett Hillman Streeter, *The Four Gospels: A Study of Origins* (London: Macmillan, 1936), 504–11.

<sup>29</sup> See the intriguing analysis by Stephenson H. Brooks, *Matthew’s Community: The Evidence of His Special Sayings Material* (JSNTSup 16; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987). The question of whether the *Didache* and Matthew have actually used common sources or, instead, whether Matthew has used the *Didache* itself, has been admirably addressed in recent research by Alan J. P. Garrow, *The Gospel of Matthew’s Dependence on the Didache* (JSNTSup 254; London: T&T Clark, 2004).

## THE MARTYRDOM OF POLYCARP

The writing that purports to be an eyewitness account of the death of Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, contains characteristics that are paralleled both in the letters of Ignatius and Polycarp and in the text of the *Didache*. By this I mean to say that we have a text that is framed as a letter, and presumably was circulated in Christian antiquity in that very format, yet that originally may have been a simple, early account of Polycarp's martyrdom that eventually was handed forward through the agency of several Christian editors.

As mentioned earlier in the section on Polycarp's letter to Philippi, textual sources indicate that Polycarp was martyred either in the year 167<sup>30</sup> or, as I and many others believe, a decade earlier during the years 155–160. The church at Smyrna presumably was a well-established and thriving community. The loss of its bishop does not appear to have been an isolated event, at least as noted by the church historian Eusebius, who places the martyrdoms of Carpus, Papyllas, and Agathonice, all from nearby Pergamum, during this same period.<sup>31</sup> It seems reasonable that those members of the church at Smyrna who witnessed the bishop's death would have recorded the event as a means by which to glorify Polycarp. The distribution of the account of the martyrdom by means of a letter to the church at Philomelium, and perhaps elsewhere throughout Asia Minor, may well have been a secondary adaptation of the martyrdom story.

What this tells us is that the text of the *Martyrdom* was written in Smyrna by the faithful followers of Polycarp who lived as a part of his church community. The date of the writing is unknown, but most likely it should be placed within a short period of time after the bishop's death during the years 155–160. We cannot be certain whether the record of the event was made within a few weeks or a few years after the event, but clearly it derived during the living memory of those who were witnesses.

According to chapter 20 of the *Martyrdom*, someone named Evaristus is identified as the author of the text—that is, the person who

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<sup>30</sup>So Eusebius (*Hist. eccl.* 4.14.10), who places the death of Polycarp within the reign of the emperor Marcus Aurelius (ruled 161–180).

<sup>31</sup>Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 4.15.48.

penned the work in response to the queries of the church at Philomelium. There is some question concerning whether this is the author of the original account or, instead, a later hand in the transmission of the report of the bishop's death. My assumption is that Evarestus is the author of the letter format of the text, not necessarily the person who recorded the actual event. I hold this belief in the light of the numerous parallels to the passion narratives of the New Testament gospels that baldly shine throughout the *Martyrdom*. These are parallels to the trial and death of Jesus that I take to be later reflections upon the death of Polycarp, elements that were designed to bring his martyrdom into favorable comparison with the death of Jesus. Clearly they are secondary to the account, and it seems as plausible to attribute them to the person named Evarestus as to any other unknown editor.

The other names that appear at the end of the text—Gaius, Irenaeus, Socrates, Pionius—tell us nothing about the origins of the text specifically. The name of Pionius traditionally has been associated with a later presbyter of the church of Smyrna who himself was eventually martyred in the year 250. It is unknown whether this is the same person who penned the later *A Life of Polycarp*, but in all probability this text comes from an even later hand.

Apart from these general considerations, little else can be known about the origins of the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*. Smyrna would seem to be a logical location for the composition of the text. One can easily imagine that it derives from a member of the church at Smyrna who lived during the life of Polycarp and witnessed the martyr's horrifying death. The otherwise unknown Evarestus may indeed have been the author of the original account of the martyrdom, but it seems more likely to me that he should be associated with the letter form of the text and the secondary embellishment of the account along the lines of the New Testament gospel passion narratives. In either case, nothing certain is known about this person other than his association with the text as briefly stated in chapter 20.

## THE SHEPHERD OF HERMAS

The *Shepherd of Hermas*, somewhat like the *Didache*, is, in my opinion, very much the product of the compilation of sources. This is immediately evident (if perhaps unintentionally) from the traditional

way in which the text has been divided: the *Visions*, the *Mandates* (or *Commandments*), and the *Similitudes* (or *Parables*). The only hint to authorship and location that is offered by the *Shepherd* appears in the first section, the *Visions*. In these opening chapters various elements are offered with respect to the narrator of the story. The hero of the tale is a slave named Hermas (*Herm.* 1.5), the property of a wealthy woman named Rhoda, who was a citizen in Rome (*Herm.* 1.1). In due course the reader discovers that Hermas has received his freedom, raised a family, and lives as a Christian, presumably in Rome or its environs. Questions naturally arise as to whether we are to understand Hermas, the narrator, actually to be the name of the author of the text as well. Further, if it is fair to make this assumption (as most scholars do), must we assume as well that the entire work of the *Shepherd*, the lengthiest writing among the apostolic fathers, is also to be attributed to this author of the *Visions*? Or, instead, should the remaining materials, the *Mandates* and *Similitudes*, be understood as the contribution of a later editor? Speculation among researchers naturally divides on this very question: single authorship or multiple authorship.

My impression concerning the *Shepherd* is that it surely must be placed within Rome or the surrounding community. The story line claims the vicinity of Rome for the plot, and there is no particular reason to think that the composition of the text does not belong there as well. As best as we can determine, it seems that all early Christian authors made the same assumption about this location, and the text of the *Shepherd* was widely known and used by variously scattered church authors.

With respect to authorship, I am not convinced that a single hand is responsible for the composition of the text in its entirety.<sup>32</sup> The nature of the *Mandates* and *Similitudes* argues for an entirely different authorial concern than that of the *Visions*. The *Mandates* and the *Similitudes* focus upon traditional teachings and moral instruction, while the *Visions* primarily provides the plot that holds the work together. Admittedly, the three units have been tied together admirably, as is evidenced by the return of characters within the story and by the

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<sup>32</sup>My own view probably falls somewhere into this general observation on authorship offered by Carolyn Osiek: "Most scholars today have returned to the single author hypothesis, though not without some hedging about 'multiple sources' or 'multiple redactions'" (*Shepherd of Hermas: A Commentary* [ed. H. Koester; Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999], 10).

revisiting of themes and ideas. This, however, merely suggests the hand of a practiced editor. Thus, my position concerning authorship reveals my preference to combine several suggestions that have received consideration over the course of the last century.

Numerous suggestions have been made concerning the identity of the original author of the *Shepherd*. Some scholars have suggested that the author was the apostle Paul, based upon the New Testament allusion to the Christians of Lystra who had dubbed him with the name "Hermes" (so Acts 14:12). Origen of Alexandria believed that the author of the text was none other than the first-century Roman Christian to whom Paul himself made reference in his letter to the Romans (Rom 16:14).<sup>33</sup> The agreement with this opinion that was expressed both by Eusebius and Jerome suggests either that Origen had a marked influence on subsequent interpreters of the *Shepherd* or that the idea already was in general circulation in Christian antiquity.<sup>34</sup> Finally, the Muratorian Canon lists the author as the brother of the bishop Pius of Rome during the years 140–154.

The difficulty for any attempt to assign a date to the *Shepherd* is the determination both of its earliest components and of its earliest author. As is argued by many scholars, the text appears to represent the work of multiple redactions, perhaps by several hands. We can be certain that its final composition occurred prior to the date of Irenaeus's *Against Heresies* (written during the 180s), since scattered portions of the *Shepherd* are cited and used throughout that particular work. At the same time, however, it is perhaps impossible to know the antiquity of the earliest forms of the text and its sources. I have argued elsewhere that the composition of the *Shepherd*, from its original form through its ultimate editions, perhaps occurred during the years 90–150.<sup>35</sup> I continue to remain in agreement with this view, though, admittedly, it is vague with respect to details and does little to clarify either the date of the first form of the text or the various stages that scholars often identify throughout the work. Though the seemingly apocalyptic imagery of the *Visions* and

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<sup>33</sup>Origen, *Princ.* 1.3.3; 4.1.11. Interestingly, Origen does not offer any argument to justify the claim that this Hermas is the same person to whom Paul wrote. Instead, Origen simply works with this assumption as fact.

<sup>34</sup>Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.3.6; Jerome, *Vir. ill.* 10.

<sup>35</sup>See Clayton N. Jefford, with Kenneth J. Harder and Louis D. Amezaga Jr., *Reading the Apostolic Fathers: An Introduction* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1996), 139–41.

the brief allusion to coming persecutions (*Herm.* 6.7) are seen by some to reflect a setting of trouble as the background for the earliest form of the text, it is virtually impossible to be more precise concerning the date of such an event. Are we to envision the rule of the emperor Nero (54–68) or, instead, a period of travail under the emperor Domitian (81–96)? Or, could such a reference indicate some other limited external event that has since been forgotten by history? Or, indeed, must the persecution have even been external to the church community at all and not, instead, some internal ecclesiastical matter? I find it impossible to decide on a more specific date with the limited evidence at hand.

With respect to sources, I remain likewise puzzled. The materials of the *Mandates* clearly have parallels elsewhere in ancient literature, including the *Didache* and the *Epistle of Barnabas*. One could hardly argue that the *Shepherd* has been influenced by either of these sources, or vice versa. At the same time, with respect to the *Similitudes*, one hardly finds materials here that even remotely parallel those of the teachings of Jesus in the New Testament gospels. In other words, these are not materials that are dependent upon the writings of the New Testament gospels or even upon their sources, at least to the extent that we can know them. The images are much more detailed in form and function, more along the lines of the well-known fables of Greek antiquity. The elements involved perhaps have been drawn from an oral storehouse of common images that early storytellers used to explain morality and faith. They are inherently allegorical. And to that end, it is difficult to distinguish the antiquity of the story from the antiquity of its inclusion into the *Shepherd*. So for these materials—that is, those that have been incorporated into both the *Mandates* and the *Similitudes*—I can only guess that in some instances they predate the first composition of the *Shepherd*, and in others they are the work of a contemporary hand.

In the final analysis, then, I take the position that the elements of the *Shepherd*'s story line are indeed to be assumed as reflective of the original author's situation. I place the text in or around Rome. The original author, who remains unknown, recorded *Visions* 1–4 sometime at the end of the first century, presumably during the reign of Domitian, which, as noted above, is somewhat after the composition of *1 Clement*. The remaining materials of the work—*Vision* 5, the *Mandates*, the *Similitudes*—were assembled subsequent to these opening materials, either by the original author, a different editor, or a combination of both. The distinction cannot be made. These materials

probably predate the opening materials in origin or are drawn from some specific source in part. The final editing of the work must fall sometime during the first half of the second century, though speculation on a more precise date seems unjustified.

## AN ANCIENT CHRISTIAN SERMON (2 CLEMENT)

As with the *Shepherd*, the date and location of *2 Clement* are uncertain. The few manuscripts that preserve this text place it immediately after *1 Clement*, thus justifying in part the early tradition that named the text and sought to link the two documents. In fact, the essence of *2 Clement* provides no reflection of *1 Clement* in any true sense. It is not offered as a letter, nor does it address the particular concerns of a community, unlike the interests stated by the author of *1 Clement*. No location is provided, either for the author or for the intended audience. The text is essentially an early homily or sermon whose occasion has since been forgotten and whose context was never preserved.

Suggestions for the location of the text invariably are tied to the question of authorship. Presumably, some aspect of ancient convention understood the two texts of *1 Clement* and *2 Clement* to be related in a certain sense. If this association may be assumed as the product of an original setting that was shared by the texts, then one might speculate that the works were preserved together at Corinth, the ultimate destination for *1 Clement*, of course. Either *2 Clement* was a homily that likewise was sent by the Roman church to Corinth, or it was preached in Corinth some short time after the arrival of *1 Clement* at the city.<sup>36</sup>

Of course, it is entirely possible that both texts were written in Rome and were preserved together because of their Roman connection, not because of any particular Corinthian association.<sup>37</sup> This leads us to the early suggestion that *2 Clement* was the work of the bishop Soter of Rome (ca. 166–ca. 174). As was observed above, Eusebius recorded that the bishop Dionysius of Corinth had made explicit reference to a letter

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<sup>36</sup> For the latter option see Karl Paul Donfried, *The Setting of Second Clement in Early Christianity* (NovTSup 38; Leiden: Brill, 1974), 1.

<sup>37</sup> Frend, *Rise of Christianity*, 146–47. Frend places these texts together with the *Shepherd* in Rome as evidence of the diverse nature of the church there. Jeffers (*Conflict at Rome*) offers a more developed view of the Roman church, though without any inclusion of *2 Clement* within his considerations.

that he had received from Soter.<sup>38</sup> Eusebius himself held little regard for the authenticity of the letter that we now call *2 Clement*, however, having noted that it was not known among the ancient Christians.<sup>39</sup> What he meant by “authenticity” is not certain, of course. Presumably he simply did not consider it to be a text that should be associated with the name of Clement.

A noteworthy third option is that of Alexandria, Egypt.<sup>40</sup> Arguments for an Egyptian setting are based primarily on the observation that the text contains words and phrases that have a certain gnostic tone (or, perhaps, anti-gnostic), on the one hand, and that the author apparently had knowledge of the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, on the other hand.<sup>41</sup> Such arguments are perhaps slippery at best, naturally, since Gnosticism was hardly restricted to Egypt, and ancient texts often circulated widely apart from their site of origin. All the same, the possibility of Egypt should be given serious consideration.

As for my own perspective on the issues of place and date, I remain uncertain. I am greatly troubled that *2 Clement* does not seem to be known among the ancient writers of Christian literature. It is true that Eusebius mentioned the text, but whatever evidence may have once existed that the writing circulated in antiquity is now lost to us. If *2 Clement* had been written in Alexandria or elsewhere in Egypt, one might expect to find some reference to the materials in the writings of Clement of Alexandria or Origen, two scholars who made wide use of available materials. If *2 Clement* was produced in or around Rome, much as seems certain for *1 Clement* and highly probable for the *Shepherd*, one might also expect some wider circulation of the text, at least among western church communities.

In addition to the question of use and distribution of the text in antiquity, one must also consider the nature of the text itself. The author of *2 Clement* seems primarily concerned with speculating upon the nature of the church’s view of Christ with respect to God: “Brothers, we ought to think of Jesus Christ, as we do of God, as ‘Judge of the living and the dead’” (*2 Clem.* 1.1). This observation does not require a late

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<sup>38</sup> Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 4.23.11.

<sup>39</sup> Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.38.4.

<sup>40</sup> For examples of the argument see Cyril C. Richardson, trans. and ed., *Early Christian Fathers* (LCC 1; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1953), 186–87; Koester, *History and Literature*, 233–36.

<sup>41</sup> See *1 Clem.* 4.5; 5.4; 8.5; 12.2.

date for the text, especially since such themes are abundant throughout the New Testament and early Christian literature, but I find it significant that this topic is the primary focus of the homily from beginning to end. Such sustained christological speculation seems more representative of mid- to late-second-century Christian theology than of earlier writings.

At the same time, it seems somewhat telling that the author of *2 Clement* makes significant use of specific New Testament sources. This suggests to some extent that the writing is somewhat later than the text of the *Didache* and the letters of Ignatius and *1 Clement*. It also suggests that our author is in a location that has access to numerous writings and is not restricted by an isolated setting.

It is true, of course, that a majority of the scriptural focus is on the Old Testament, much like the concerns of the late-first-century church. So too, the question of christological speculation is tightly interwoven with themes and language that traditionally are associated with a somewhat monotheistic understanding of God. To some scholars this has suggested the presence of a community that is primarily Jewish in its understanding of what it means to be Christian. It would be difficult to identify such a setting in the second century, especially since the late first century saw the rise of a competitive and often violent separation of Christian theology from its Jewish roots.<sup>42</sup>

In the final analysis, I place the text within a Corinthian setting. Whatever the connection that early Christians understood this writing to have had with *1 Clement*, it seems that the options for that explanation are more plentiful in the location of Corinth than elsewhere. This does not dismiss the possibility of other settings, naturally, but there seems no particularly strong reason to reject Corinth. Further, because of the author's knowledge of numerous New Testament writings and the focus upon christological speculation, I choose not to place the text either in the first century or early in the second. Instead, though the range of years is wide, I can imagine the composition of the work somewhere during the years 120–150.<sup>43</sup> Perhaps the most difficult question

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<sup>42</sup>Having stated this widely recognized generalization, I am not convinced that it held true everywhere within the church, of course.

<sup>43</sup>With respect to Corinth as the location and the years 120–150, I find myself in basic agreement with the arguments of J. B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers* (5 vols.; New York: Macmillan, 1889–1890; repr., Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1989), 1.1:201–4.

in this explanation is the strong sense of monotheism that shines throughout the text. Christology is not so clearly distinguished from the dominance of God as a father image here. I imagine that this focus, whether a reflection of any particular concern for the Jewish roots of Christian theology or otherwise, is designed to thwart the threat of gnostic inclinations. As is well known, such concerns existed in Corinth from the foundation of the church there.<sup>44</sup> There is some sense, therefore, in which the author of *2 Clement* has confronted a threat that the bishop Ignatius already had encountered at Antioch and that, as indicated by the limited evidence that remains from that city in the second century, continued into the fourth century.

### THE EPISTLE OF BARNABAS

Though I tend to work with a very specific understanding of how the *Epistle of Barnabas* came into existence, I have left it toward the end of this review as an admission of the fact that my understanding is based primarily upon hearsay and the lack of irrefutable evidence in any particular direction. Furthermore, though my perspective is specific to a certain setting and date, it is hardly certain. The arguments for possible dates and locations are limited and narrow, and in my review of positions on the text I have not found the weight of any one approach to be ultimately conclusive.<sup>45</sup>

Let us first consider the issue of location. Perhaps the most widely espoused view for the provenance of *Barnabas* is that of Egypt, specifically Alexandria. Several observations traditionally are raised in support of this location. The text was known and used by Clement of Alexandria in the early third century, as well as by Origen and Didymus the Blind in subsequent years. Further, there is a strong association between Alexandria and the tradition of the first-century Christian

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<sup>44</sup>As is noted by Theissen, Gnosticism often seemed to be a concern of Christians with an elevated social status, a sizable faction within the Corinthian church; see Gerd Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth* (trans. J. H. Schütz; SNTW; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 132–37.

<sup>45</sup>There is perhaps no better and more easily grasped review of perspectives to date than that provided in James Carleton Paget, *The Epistle of Barnabas: Outlook and Background* (WUNT 2/64; Tübingen: Mohr, 1994), 9–42.

Barnabas in early church history.<sup>46</sup> Finally, the allegorical style that the author of *Barnabas* employs was a well-used approach to scriptural interpretation in Alexandrian Christianity, and is broadly acknowledged as a virtual truism by scholars of early church history. These three categories of evidence are general and hardly conclusive to be certain, but together they offer a healthy argument.

There are foils to these suggestions, of course. First, the scholars of Alexandria had a wealth of literary sources available to them by virtue of the famous catechetical school of the city and the famous library that resided there. The simple fact that they knew the text does not comprise a compelling argument that it was written in their midst. Second, the traditional connection between Barnabas and Alexandria provides no worthy comment on the historical reliability of that connection. Furthermore, few scholars would make the argument that the apostle Barnabas of the New Testament book of Acts actually was the author of our work. Instead, the name of our current text may have been provided to the work at any time under any set of circumstances. Third, the allegorical method was used far and wide in the Mediterranean world and can hardly be restricted to the region of Egypt.<sup>47</sup> Though Alexandria was a noteworthy center of this method, it hardly had a lock on such interpretation. In addition to these arguments scholars occasionally raise the objection that the author of *Barnabas* did not utilize the “Logos Christology” that was so famous within Alexandrian theology and appears so typically among Christian authors of the locale.

Alternative locations have been proposed. As is usual for such discussions, the region of Syria or Palestine has been suggested, primarily based upon the argument that the author clearly was familiar with

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<sup>46</sup>Indeed, it is perhaps not accidental that the New Testament book of Acts does not treat Egyptian Christianity and offers precious little about the character of Barnabas other than his association with the apostolic hero Paul. Perhaps the author either knew little about the church in this region or preferred not to pursue the form of Christian faith that arose there.

<sup>47</sup>This observation, which I believe to be both fair and correct, was raised against my position on Alexandria as the provenance of *Barnabas* in a review of one of my recent books. This was perhaps the single worthy critique in a review that otherwise showed little indication that the reviewer had bothered to read the book much beyond the introduction; see Roger S. Evans, review of Clayton N. Jefford, with Kenneth J. Harder and Louis D. Amezaga Jr., *Reading the Apostolic Fathers*, *J ECS* 5 (1997): 607–8.

and employed rabbinic approaches to scriptural interpretation.<sup>48</sup> This theory is heavily dependent upon the assumption that rabbinic approaches were predominant in this particular region, of course, and stand as testimony to a particular locality.<sup>49</sup> Though the first point undoubtedly was true and the second is possible, it gives little credit to the existence of a large Jewish community and well-known cluster of rabbinic scholars who lived in ancient Alexandria.

A second option for consideration is the region of Asia Minor, with particular reference to the area of Philadelphia. This proposal has been offered primarily with the recognition that *Barnabas* appears to be a typical example of the approach to faith that was represented by those whom the bishop Ignatius opposed in his letter to the church at Philadelphia (see specifically Ign. *Phld.* 8.2). These Christians were highly devoted to the witness of Scripture alone, and they accepted no admission to faith that was not based on scriptural evidence.<sup>50</sup> It would be truly unique to have such a text preserved for us by a specific group that had received the witness of yet another ancient witness. Yet, though possible, the evidence is not sufficiently strong to be convincing to me in the face of other possible alternatives.

With regard to the issue of date, two primary arguments traditionally are raised: conflict and temple. The issue of conflict is a reflection of the fact that the author of *Barnabas* seems predisposed toward a specific understanding of persecution and violence, somewhat in the eschatological framework that exists in the book of Revelation. In chapter 4 references to present “works of lawlessness” (τὰ ἔργα τῆς ἀνομίας), “ten kingdoms” (βασιλείαι δέκα) that are to rule the earth, and life in “the last days” (ταῖς ἐσχάταις ἡμέραις) suggest the existence, threat, or potential threat of persecution for Christians. The issue of the temple is oriented toward the author’s understanding of the temple in Jerusalem, which had been destroyed by the time of the composition of the text (see chapter 16). The question has been raised as to whether our author intends this discussion as a reference to the actual physical

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<sup>48</sup> So M. B. Shukster and P. Richardson, “Barnabas, Nerva and the Yavnean Rabbis,” *JTS N.S.* 33 (1983): 31–55.

<sup>49</sup> Much like the argument concerning allegorical interpretation, I suppose.

<sup>50</sup> So Klaus Wengst, trans. and ed., *Didache (Apostellehre); Barnabasbrief; Zweiter Klemensbrief; Schrift an Diognet* (Schriften des Urchristentums 2; Munich: Kösel, 1984), 114–18.

temple or, instead, to some metaphorical spiritual temple. I am convinced that it is to the physical structure that our author refers.

Thus, with conflict seen as imminent and the destruction of the temple as complete, we are left with three options: (1) the years 70–79, a time when Rome was seen as the tenth kingdom and the destruction of the temple was fresh in the mind of Jews and Christians; (2) the years 96–117, the reign of the emperor Nerva (96–98) or the emperor Trajan (98–117), a time when Christianity had grown particularly hostile to its Jewish roots; (3) the years 132–135, the time of the Jewish call to rebuild the temple and the resulting hostility of Rome’s response (see *Barn.* 16.3–4). The majority of scholarship tends to favor the middle choice, with a preference for the years 96–100, and I am in agreement. This does not mean that the other options can be ruled out, but the tone of anti-Jewish hostility that pervades the work seems appropriate for a date at the turn of the century.

In conclusion, I hold to an Alexandrian provenance and a date around the turn of the century. Though I have espoused elsewhere that the author of *Barnabas* was not Jewish,<sup>51</sup> I now believe the opposite to be true. In my opinion, the work seems to be too steeped in Jewish tradition and exegesis to be the work of someone outside of the tradition. The author may in fact have been a Christian convert from a Jewish background who had written the work in the enthusiasm of conversion. This holds no specific comment on the date or provenance of the text, of course, but likewise it offers no argument against Alexandria at the turn of the century.<sup>52</sup>

## THE EPISTLE TO DIOGNETUS

There is little question that the *Epistle to Diognetus* is a text that only barely qualifies to be included within the apostolic fathers, though the parameters of that artificial collection are broad and relatively undefined. Its inclusion into the corpus was made under the assumption that it could have been a text that was more ancient than most scholars

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<sup>51</sup> Jefford, *Reading the Apostolic Fathers*, 11, 14–16.

<sup>52</sup> At the same time, if someone could demonstrate conclusively that the author was a non-Jewish Christian from Greece in the middle of the second century, I would not be particularly surprised either!

now believe. This, of course, defines the very problem of modern attempts to date and place the writing. The work is less of a letter than an apology, and in that sense it parallels admirably with writings such as *2 Clement* and *Barnabas*, neither of which appears to have actually been a letter in its original form.

An interesting difficulty in any attempt to determine the time and place of the text comes with the recognition that the work bears no testimony to authorship. Even the secondary title that the work now bears suggests only an audience—the unknown Diognetus—not an author. Given the nature of apologies in the second century, the writing theoretically could be located anywhere within the Mediterranean world and could be attributed to any time from the late first century through the third century.

This reality notwithstanding, scholars have offered numerous suggestions with regard to authorship. Names that are commonly suggested include Pantaenus of Alexandria (founder of the famous catechetical school), Hippolytus of Rome, Theophilus of Antioch, Quadratus,<sup>53</sup> or some unknown instructor to the emperor Marcus Aurelius. Most of these suggestions require that the text be placed either in the latter half of the second century or in the early part of the third. Most scholars, some of whom would like to assign the text to an earlier period within the second century, are hard-pressed to identify any specific author.<sup>54</sup>

An important issue in this discussion, of course, is the question of whether the name “Diognetus” should be taken as a reference to a specific historical figure or simply to any official of the Roman Empire to whom an early Christian apology might be deemed necessary. If the latter case is to be maintained, then most likely we can turn to an earlier example known from both the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts, texts that are directed toward an otherwise unknown figure with the

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<sup>53</sup>This author is known to us only from the so-called lost apology of Quadratus as mentioned by Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 4.3.1–2.

<sup>54</sup>So, for example, the date of ca. 150 offered by Frend (*Rise of Christianity*, 236) as an early compromise within the range of 130–190. Frend here follows the now classic study of the text by H. G. Meecham, *The Epistle to Diognetus: The Greet Text with Introduction, Translation and Notes* (Publications of the University of Manchester 305, Theological Series 7; Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1949). In contrast, we might consider the work of Johannes Quasten, who presents an admirable survey of possibilities. Ultimately, Quasten (*Beginnings of Patristic Literature*, 248–53) defers, but clearly he is attracted to the possibility that the work should be attributed to Quadratus.

name “Theophilus” (“Lover of God”). As with the *Epistle to Diognetus*, the identification of this individual remains uncertain among New Testament scholars. I personally am persuaded by the very nature of the name that we have only an imaginary figure in Luke and Acts. The name undoubtedly is a moniker that any early Christian reader could have used in self-identification. This may hold true with the name “Diognetus” as well, though the meaning of the name in Greek remains unclear, apart from the possibility that it served as a form of “Diogenēs” (“Ordained by God”). The conscious application of such a title, which would have held a natural appeal to those in authority, may have been the intent of the author. But if this is indeed a nonspecific label or is intended simply to indicate a certain stock figure for the common reader, then it does little to help place the text.

The other possibility, of course, is that the name actually represents a historical figure. This line of approach leads us to the one person whom scholars occasionally have suggested, Claudius Diogenes, a procurator of Alexandria at the end of the second century. Known from papyri that date from this period,<sup>55</sup> this figure is referred to within the papyri both as “procurator of Augustus and interim high priest” and “the most excellent Diognetus.” The possibility that this person is the same as that to whom the title of our text refers is intriguing. On the one hand, the late date would explain why the *Epistle to Diognetus* does not seem to be known among second-century Christian authors. On the other hand, the location would explain why Clement of Alexandria was passing familiar with the text.

This is the assumption that I hold throughout the present volume, that the text of our epistle is directed toward Claudius Diogenes of Alexandria. At the same time, I am not entirely comfortable with this easy solution to a slippery text that otherwise reveals little specific evidence for either date or place. A skeptical element in my personality finds the quick-and-easy answer to such a vexing question to be rather suspicious. But what is more, this resolution to the problem of where and when still does not address the issue of who wrote the apology, an issue that may never be resolved to the satisfaction of those who research the history of early Christianity.

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<sup>55</sup> See Robert M. Grant, *Greek Apologists of the Second Century* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1988), 179.

## THE FRAGMENTS OF PAPIAS

One last collection of material has been reserved for final discussion, the so-called Fragments of Papias. This assemblage of materials has been placed at the conclusion of this review because of the nature of the texts, not because I have some uncertainty either about the date of the author or his works or about the place where he wrote. Unlike our other writings, what remain in this particular category are simply fragments of the works of Papias or reports about him. None of these texts have been preserved within the context of any single document from him, but rather they survive as segments that have been embedded in the works of others.

The author of our fragments was the well-respected presbyter Papias of Asia Minor, who ultimately acquired the post of bishop of Hierapolis. Because there are various collections of the fragments of the writings and traditions of Papias, it is impossible to assign any particular date to the materials. It must be sufficient to note only that the bishop was active during the early second century, and that it was during these years that he penned his famous, though now lost, *Expositions of the Oracles of the Lord* (ca. 130). A well-known voice among early Christians, Papias led a Christian community that undoubtedly rose to some prominence within the early church because of the close proximity of Hierapolis to the important cities of Laodicea and Colossae. There is no particular reason to think that those materials preserved from Papias derive from any location other than the region of Asia Minor itself. Subsequently, I follow most scholars in the assumption that our materials, at least those traditions authentic to Papias, come from second-century Asia Minor.

## FOR FURTHER READING

For modern authors who address the issues of setting, date, author, and audience with respect to the majority of texts in the apostolic fathers, see the following:

- Grant, Robert M., ed. *The Apostolic Fathers: A New Translation and Commentary*. 6 vols. New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1965.

- Jefford, Clayton N., with Kenneth J. Harder and Louis D. Amezaga Jr. *Reading the Apostolic Fathers: An Introduction*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1996.
- Tugwell, Simon. *The Apostolic Fathers*. Outstanding Christian Thinkers. London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1989.

Other helpful introductory materials may be found in these volumes:

- Ehrman, Bart D., trans. and ed. *The Apostolic Fathers*. 2 vols. Loeb Classical Library 24–25. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003.
- Holmes, Michael W., ed. *The Apostolic Fathers*. 2d ed. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999.
- Quasten, Johannes. *The Beginnings of Patristic Literature*. Vol. 1 of *Patrology*. Utrecht: Spectrum, 1950. Repr., Westminster, Md.: Christian Classics, 1990.
- Staniforth, Maxwell. *Early Christian Writings: The Apostolic Fathers*. London: Penguin, 1968.