

## Why Bother with the Apostolic Fathers?<sup>1</sup>

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Though they lie beyond the attention of most contemporary Christians, there is much to be learned about our religious heritage from the authors of the Apostolic Fathers. Here one sees the development of the so-called "Pauline school," what it meant to be a disciple of Christ, how early Christians viewed their traditions, and the struggle of the post-apostolic church to establish ethical norms outside the cultural boundaries of Judaism. The material is rich and complex, offering a special significance for today's life of faith.

Perhaps the most immediate answer to the question of why we should bother with the Apostolic Fathers is "because they are there!" I do not say this flippantly. A high value must be placed upon the presence of ancient texts that have survived down to our day and thus offer us some glimpse into the early Christian mindset.

As one who does research in early Christian literature, I have often wanted to read texts that are now lost, texts like Paul's letter to the Laodiceans or the five-volume *Expositions of the Oracles of the Lord* by Papias of Hierapolis. I have desired to glance through the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, the *Gospel to the Hebrews*, and the *Book of Eldad and Modat*.<sup>2</sup> Admittedly, none of these writings is essential to faith, but they would provide fascinating contributions to our understanding of the early Christian experience. And so, to have texts like the Apostolic Fathers available begs for us to look at them in a responsible manner.

Of course, our question demands additional answers, particularly in light of the fact that most of us have little insight into where the early church went in the immediate post-apostolic age. As a young seminarian, I myself looked beyond the New

Testament with a certain feeling of dread and confusion, hoping that my research did not require me to explore second-century literature. I had little idea of what was available there, neither the players nor their writings, and naively assumed that, beyond scripture, the Church simply "sprang into existence," fully formed from the vision of God. With time and the patient assistance of a kind and long-suffering mentor, the late John Steely of blessed memory, I learned to feel quite the opposite about the second century, having come to make it something of a personal mission to encourage my own students to step into the early patristic period with an eye toward learning and exploration. I can only hope that my own writings have helped others to walk into this literature with some ease.<sup>3</sup>

But first, I recognize that many readers may yet need some help with the identification of the writings in question. The Apostolic Fathers are not an official collection, but only a grouping of texts that scholars do not quite know where to place literarily. They are too early to be included in later Christian literature such as the works of Origen of Alexandria, Eusebius of Caesarea, or Augustine of Hippo. Some of them actually overlap with the production of many New Testament texts. They were widely used by Christians throughout the Mediterranean world, just like scripture. They were revered as tools of inspiration and teaching, just like scripture. They came from the mindset of dedicated ecclesiastical leaders who sought to reflect their Messiah in what they said and believed, just like scripture. Yet, while important among patristic authors, they never gained the final status of scripture. In truth, various texts from the corpus had similar authority in certain ancient circles. But the fourth-century framers of the Bible decided to place them outside in the cold, dark recesses of good books to read but not to buy.<sup>4</sup> Students know this list as "recommended reading." The Apostolic Fathers thus became the also-rans of the ancient Christian, literary tradition. Yet, these "literary leftovers" have much to tell us about early churches, what they thought, how they felt about issues of faith, and which views were important enough to become the foundation of what we believe today.

Contemporary Christians would do well to know these works: letters by Ignatius of Antioch and Polycarp of Smyrna, *Epistle of Barnabas*, *1-2 Clement*, *Martyrdom of Polycarp*,

*Shepherd of Hermas*, *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* (or *Didache*), fragments of Papias, and the *Epistle to Diognetus*. Most of these texts are letters from one church leader to another, like the writings of the bishops Ignatius and Polycarp, and *1 Clement*. The *Epistle of Barnabas* is actually an ancient Christian tractate, wrapped in the form of theological instruction and sealed in a letter's envelope. Similarly, *2 Clement* is no letter at all, but probably our oldest Christian sermon. So too, the *Epistle to Diognetus* is more like later apologies than a letter, explaining the nature of Christian faith to anyone willing to listen. The *Martyrdom of Polycarp* recalls the death of the second-century bishop Polycarp at the hands of the Romans. The *Didache* is a sort of handbook, a guide for training Christians or those who performed that task. Scholars are not in agreement here. And the *Shepherd of Hermas* is a compilation of themes, including a context of apocalyptic visions peppered with unique parables and ethical teachings.<sup>5</sup>

One thing that makes the Apostolic Fathers worth our time is what they offer with respect to the apostle Paul. They provide us with a rationale for speaking of a so-called "Pauline school." Indeed, in many respects they represent much of what a Pauline school may have been, that is, a loosely connected group of Christian leaders and authors who admired the witness of Paul and envisioned his image as the ultimate guide to Christian discipleship.

There are three reasons to think of a Pauline school within the writings of the Apostolic Fathers. Firstly, authors who are now counted within the corpus used Paul's language and imagery as tools by which to revere early Christian tradition. So, for example, the author of *1 Clement*, while writing to the church at Corinth in an attempt to influence the leadership there, makes specific reference both to Peter and Paul:

There was Peter who, because of unrighteous jealousy, endured many struggles, thereby providing testimony as he went to his appointed place of glory. And Paul, through his own resistance to jealousy and strife, by his example pointed out the prize of patient endurance. (*1 Clement* 5.4-5)

Writing from Rome, in which tradition places the deaths of these apostles, we hear the author of *1 Clement* refer to such honored figures as witnesses to fortitude and endurance. They seemingly were already for many in the late first-century church what they have become for us today, the primary leaders of the tradition. We may point elsewhere for additional illustrations of this point, especially among the letters of Ignatius and Polycarp.

Polycarp, who was bishop of Smyrna in what is now Turkey, adapts Pauline language in numerous ways. For one thing, his letter to the church in Philippi offers a short list of virtues that represent the example "of the Lord." He instructs his audience to be immovable in faith, to love fellowship, to cherish one another, to be united in truth, to yield to others in gentleness, and to despise no one. This list is drawn from Paul's own letters to Rome, Corinth, and Colossae. The bishop also picks up quite specific Pauline themes on righteousness, endurance, charity, and idolatry. In fact, Polycarp's close link to Pauline theology has led no less a scholar than Hans von Campenhausen to argue that it was actually Polycarp, not Paul, who produced our so-called Pastoral Epistles—1-2 Timothy and Titus.<sup>6</sup> This proposal is intriguing, particularly in light of the difficulty of efforts to distinguish between the writings of Paul and Polycarp based on grammar and terminology alone.

Ignatius, who was either the second or third bishop of second-century Antioch in what is now Syria,<sup>7</sup> likewise opts to reflect Pauline themes, including allusions to the games of the great Greek religious festivals, the need for unity and order within households of faith, and a warning against those who insist that converts from paganism must first be recognized as Jews before they can be accepted as Christians. This last concern was natural to Ignatius, since he likely did not come from Jewish stock himself.

Yet Ignatius adds a new element apart from what we have already seen in Polycarp. Among his seven authentic letters we find a conscious effort to follow Pauline literary style. This is evident when we compare the Ignatian letter to Ephesus with the New Testament letter to the Ephesians generally attributed to Paul. Both the themes and structure of each compare favorably, as though each has come from the same hand. There is little question that Ignatius, in an attempt to recall

Paul's own approach to the Ephesian church, models his letter in the same form. On the one hand, this is how he emulates his hero, Paul; on the other, this is his way to have his message heard by the Ephesians, who themselves revered Paul. But then, as with Polycarp, this raises a question of whether Ignatius might not be responsible for both letters—one now associated with the bishop and the other ultimately attributed to Paul. The issue is vexing.

A second example of this modeling technique appears in the Ignatian letter to Rome. When Paul himself writes, he typically uses a simple "x to y" greeting (e.g., "Paul, an apostle of Christ to the saints in Philippi, Galatia, or Corinth..."), together with a blessing such as "grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." But only in his letter to Rome does he add a long introduction of what he believes.<sup>8</sup> He does this in order for the Romans to recognize that, though they have not met him, he shares their faith:

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among the nations for the sake of his name, including yourselves who are called to belong to Jesus Christ... (NRSV)

If someone whom we did not know wrote to us like this, what would we think? Undoubtedly, s/he would be leading with their credentials in an effort to gain a favorable response from us. This is most un-Pauline in form; it is most creedal in perspective.

Ignatius, being disposed to creeds himself, typically writes with a rather brief "x to y" formula much like Paul. But once more, only in his letter to Rome does he include a confession of what he believes:

Ignatius, image bearer of God, to the church that has found mercy in the majesty of the Father Most High and Jesus Christ his only Son, the church beloved and enlightened through the will of the one who willed all things that exist, in accordance with faith in and love for Jesus Christ our God, which also precedes in the place of the district of the Romans, worthy of God, worthy of honor, worthy of blessing, worthy of praise, worthy of success, worthy of sanctification, and presiding over love, observing the law of Christ, bearing the name of the Father, which I also greet in the name of Jesus Christ, son of the Father... (*Rom. proem*)

This Ignatian creed is more ecclesiological than the Pauline confession, but the point remains—the bishop has found Paul to be his model and envisions that Christ will be his salvation.

We turn next to the second of our reasons to speak of a Pauline school, that is, the issue of "mimēsis" ("imitation"). Elizabeth A. Castelli of Barnard College revived the significance of this issue in her doctoral dissertation written at The Claremont Graduate School in 1988.<sup>9</sup> As she observes, Paul is careful to note that he is only a follower of the Messiah, not equal to Christ Jesus. Indeed, he is a slave of Christ, offered with the understanding that we all must serve someone. It is true that Paul speaks of being free in faith. But for him, to be free means to be free to choose whom one will serve as a slave. Thus Paul insists that either we choose to be slaves to Christ or we choose to be slaves to sin, to the elemental spirits of the universe, to death, etc. What is curious about Paul's message is that he does not typically call those around him to imitate Christ as he already has done but, instead, exhorts them to imitate himself as a good slave. Thus Paul proclaims that the Thessalonians have "become imitators of us" (1 Thess. 1:6) and he encourages the Philippians to "join in being imitators of me" (Phil. 3:17). In his correspondence with Corinth, Paul takes special opportunity to instruct his readers as their spiritual father. He first proclaims, "I urge you then to be imitators of me" (1 Cor. 4:14-21), and again, "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1). As Castelli so eloquently argues, in many ways this call for imitation crystallizes the relationship of authority and power that Paul

envisions for himself as the link between the risen Messiah whom he has seen and those who are only now finding faith through Paul's own preaching.

Turning to Ignatius, we observe that our bishop has received this Pauline message completely. Indeed, while Ignatius calls his readers to accept the message of the "risen Christ gospel," his model for being a slave to Christ is the apostle Paul himself. It is clear that he considers the chains in which he finds himself, applied by Roman soldiers who are taking him to Rome for torture and execution, to be a reflection of Paul's own imprisonment while being hauled to Rome in the 60s. The Ignatian motto in some sense is: "To be true to the image of Paul is to be true to the figure of Christ."

This is particularly curious in light of Ignatius' progression toward his anticipated death. While depictions of later martyrdoms, such as those of Polycarp, Justin Martyr, Perpetua and Felicitas, Cyprian of Carthage, and the church in Lyons, find themselves portrayed in light of the cross of Jesus as preserved in the gospels, Ignatius makes no such comparison for himself. He is simply the good and humble slave—the ultimate follower. He seeks only to be faithful unto death.

Yet this translates into an expectation for the believing church in general. For in the same way that Ignatius sees himself as a slave of Christ in imitation of Paul, he writes to the bishops of various churches along his route—to Smyrna, Ephesus, Tralles, Magnesia, and Philadelphia—to imitate his own personal devotion. He expects Christians in these places to imitate the faithful devotion of their bishops. He calls for unity within fellowship. He calls the faithful to place themselves under the care and authority of the bishop, who presumably is also a good slave to Christ in the guise of Paul's vision. He proclaims any observance of the Lord's Supper to be invalid unless conducted under the authority of the bishop. Indeed, apostolic power and authority beget episcopal power and authority in the Ignatian vision and, subsequently, in the vision of the universal church that follows. To imitate the ancient pedigree texts of Genesis: Jesus Christ begat the apostle Paul, and the apostle Paul begat the bishop Ignatius, and the bishop Ignatius begat many other bishops, and many other bishops begat those who followed!

While it is not as easy to find such an explicit imitation of Paul elsewhere in the Apostolic Fathers as in Ignatius, the Pauline vision is evident nonetheless. We have already noted both Polycarp and the author of *1 Clement*, for example. So too, the author of the *Epistle of Barnabas* employs scriptural imagery reminiscent of Paul's style.

*Barnabas* writes to an unnamed Christian community, perhaps in Egypt, about the way in which the Jews have forfeited their election through an abuse of God's prophets and promises. Most noteworthy here are texts that focus on covenant and the shift of revelation from one chosen people to another—Jews to Christians. But *Barnabas* engages in a different enterprise, following a pathway that Paul himself refuses to employ, one that uses scripture to distance the growing traditions of the early church from its Jewish heritage. The prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah, once offered for the benefit of the Jews, are now turned to the exclusive benefit of Christians. And in this process Judaism develops into a scurrilous threat to what Christians came to consider the "true faith." This is an interpretation of Paul that has run amok and that later Christians have worked to harness with varying degrees of effort and success.

Our final reason to think of a Pauline school comes in what might be called "collective memory." The call to consider religio-cultural consciousness among early Christian movements was recently raised by Samuel Byrskog. He bases his concept of "sociobiographical memory" on Eviatar Zerubavel's analysis of the Gospel of Mark and Jesus traditions.<sup>10</sup> In his conclusions and in quotation of Zerubavel, Byrskog notes that "*Origins* help articulate identities, and where communities locate their beginnings tells us quite a lot about how they perceive themselves."<sup>11</sup> We are indeed what our roots are! But then, what does this say about us and our traditions?

In this light, we must ask both about Paul and those who laid claim to him as their spiritual forefather. As to the latter, we must question their nature. We might say that they were people of an early Christian faith who found their spiritual roots in the image of someone whose language and themes guided their literary production. If Christ was the target of their devotion, Paul was the agent by which they completed it. It was his writing that came to serve as the backbone of their thinking. Of course, not

all authors of the Apostolic Fathers were so enamored of Paul. The author of the *Didache*, for example, seems to care little for Pauline language or theology, and the preacher of *2 Clement* does not follow any particular Pauline course, while the editor of the *Shepherd of Hermas* seems oblivious to the very existence of Paul. This is a particularly intriguing insight since, supposedly, the *Shepherd* comes from the same Roman community as *1 Clement*, whose author holds Paul (together with Peter) to be heroes of the faith.

Now on the one hand, this is as we might expect. Not everyone in the late first and second centuries revered Paul, and those who did so, often only used his imagery and ideas without quoting from his texts. We might question why this is true, of course. Does it not make sense that those students who revere their teachers would quote constantly from them? Perhaps this is proper. But students do not always remember the specific things that their teachers say, and the glory of the image of the teacher her or himself oftentimes steps beyond the actual value of the teacher's own instruction. In the case of Paul, however, the situation is much more complex, for Paul talked a lot about the work of the spirit, which was a highly sensitive and dangerous subject for second-century Christians. They did not know how to define God's spirit without finding themselves running around outside the boundaries of the pre-Chalcedonian Church, the setting in which the roles of God the Father, Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit finally began to be settled.

An even bigger problem was someone like Marcion of Sinope, who claimed Paul as his hero while applauding Gnostic interpretations of Christianity as valid theology. The problem was not that everyone hated Marcion, though such is suggested by Polycarp, Irenaeus, Hippolytus, and others. Instead, it was that Marcion's views held a great appeal for many believers who did not know better. And it seems that those views remain attractive for many people today.

Having offered all this as itself a worthy enough reason to bother with the Apostolic Fathers, let me offer yet another motivation. On the one hand, we have within our corpus quite specific evidence of what the early churches went through as they came to recognize that they no longer were privileged with the guidance of the apostles of Jesus of Nazareth for their

leadership on matters of faith, liturgy, and community. By the end of the first century they had all passed away. So too, James the Lord's brother, leader of the home church in Jerusalem was gone, according to Flavius Josephus,<sup>12</sup> as was the founding community itself, due to the Jewish wars with Rome during the years 66-73 CE.

And so, we find that the Apostolic Fathers offer us a laundry list of what ultimately and practically became of most importance to early second-century Christians, that is, an answer to the question of "how shall we live as Christians?" The earliest post-apostolic Christians were largely *not* interested in what we ourselves are, that is, questions of theology and implications of what that means for human salvation. These issues only became central to Christian thinking at the close of the second century and beyond. Instead, the first generation of post-apostolic Christians was largely interested in questions of ethics and their implications for what a faithful believer should do each day as a follower of the Messiah. Now the issue of ethics only took central place within the early church community because of its split with the synagogue, an institution whose religious faith provided the foundation for ethical and moral decisions for those who trusted the God of Judaism. But with Christianity's break with Judaism, the question of "so how shall we live now" brought Christians into another world of thought, a world that both turned its back on the synagogue and is broadly reflected in the Apostolic Fathers.

Thus, one of the more prickly issues of the early second century was the struggle of early Christians to define themselves over against the Jewish moorings that they soon abandoned. The perspectives of the Apostolic Fathers run the full spectrum here, from a close association with Jewish ideals and teachings to a virtual break with them.

In many respects, the most Jewish of our writings is the *Didache*. In the first part of this text, the author endorses an ethic that finds its basis in the traditional teachings of the Ten Commandments. The reader is instructed in prohibitions against murder, adultery, false witness, and so forth, but also in those practices that lead to such sins—sorcery, being double-minded and arrogant, lying, and the like. In this way, the *Didache* espouses an oral teaching that serves as a fence to protect written scripture, much like the oral and written Torah of

developing rabbinic Judaism. Likewise, the liturgical teachings of the *Didache* reflect a certain Jewish sensitivity, endorsing a traditional rabbinic approach toward baptism and prayer, and perhaps incorporating Jewish meal prayers into the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Perhaps most telling here is that the *Didache* never overtly equates the figure of Jesus Christ with God, preferring instead to refer to the "Lord" throughout and leaving the reader with the choice of a strict monotheistic perspective. In all of these ways, the author of the *Didache* appears to endorse a very Jewish approach to Christianity, undoubtedly assuming the same for its audience. Most importantly, the ethic that stood for centuries among the Jews remains as the ethic for correct living within the early Christian community.

Apart from the *Didache*, only *1 Clement* seems to offer any particularly Jewish view of early Christian faith. The author encourages the church at Corinth to avoid jealousy and to embrace obedience, faith, piety, hospitality, humility, and peace as aspects of a virtuous lifestyle. A variety of scriptural passages surfaces as the basis for such teaching, including texts from the Pentateuch, as well as passages from the Prophets and Writings. Most interesting in *1 Clement*, though, is the author's appeal to Moses as a prototype of what a true Christian leader should be. It was through Moses that the tribe of Levi became priests. So too, it was Moses who plead for God's people when they strayed from the divine will in the wilderness. An appeal to the figure of Moses is especially important, since our author makes no similar claim for any specific apostle as a model for faithful leadership. This is especially intriguing in light of the Roman origin of the letter, a community that is well familiar with the figures of Peter and Paul, as noted above.<sup>13</sup>

In clear contrast to the *Didache* and *1 Clement* are the writings of *Barnabas* and the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, two texts that speak poorly of Judaism. The letter of *Barnabas* is adamant in its insistence that, because of their infidelity to the divine covenant, the Jews have forfeited their claim to be God's people in favor of the church. This perspective appears to be a clear extension of the claims by early Christians who came to define themselves as the "new Israel." Indeed, Christianity's fresh reading of scripture in light of the coming of Christ led the church

to supersede those rituals that Jews have traditionally observed as part of their devotion to God. For this perspective, a new people of faith now receive Israel's divine promise.

The *Martyrdom of Polycarp* takes an even harder stance toward the Jews. In portraying the death of the bishop Polycarp, the reader finds that the local Jews of Smyrna, through the inspiration of the "evil one," ultimately act to encourage the trial and persecution of the bishop. As in a well-choreographed, theatrical production, they push the crowds and Roman authorities to kill Polycarp in a stark rehearsal of the death of Jesus of Nazareth in the gospels. Abundant parallels are evident. The resulting anti-Semitic rhetoric of the author is indeed typical of numerous regions of Asia Minor. In such locations, the synagogue comes to stand as an adversary to the very existence of the church, and complete alienation of Christians from their Jewish heritage is both assumed and encouraged.

The perspective of Ignatius stands firmly between these polar opposites. On the one hand there is the *Didache* and *1 Clement*, while on the other, we have *Barnabas* and the *Martyrdom*. Ignatius is in every sense the referee between these opposing forces. He very much represents what subsequent Christian tradition ultimately came to accept as a suitable understanding for its Jewish heritage. For Ignatius, there is no need for Christianity to cling to its Jewish roots. He follows the apostle Paul quite strenuously in denouncing so-called "Judaizers" who seek to return to the restrictions of a Jewish perspective. While Paul found those who endorsed such a return among the apostles of the Jerusalem church, Ignatius undoubtedly finds them among the "God fearers" of his day, that is, non-Jews who come to their newfound faith during contact with messianic Jews while worshipping in synagogues. Ignatius offers precious little to suggest that he himself holds any particular inclination toward Jewish practices. He bases neither his teachings nor his theology upon Jewish principles and, within his seven letters, only quotes from the Old Testament on three occasions. Jewish traditions clearly do not shape his faith world.

This much now said, however, Ignatius does not launch vindictive rhetoric against Judaism itself, but only against those who would have Christianity return to its Jewish roots. He freely

admits that the Jews persecuted the prophets of old, who lived in accordance with Christ, and yet they themselves lived in disobedience to the spirit of God that came into the world as the divine Word. So too, he insists that it is senseless to profess Jesus Christ while at the same time practicing Judaism, for the latter is actually “bad yeast” that has soured and gone stale, while Christ himself provides the “new yeast” that causes every tongue to confess. To mix the two is absurd. As Ignatius observes, “it is better to hear about Christianity from a circumcised man than about Judaism from an uncircumcised man” (*Philadelphians* 6.1). For him, there is no necessary connection between the old faith of Judaism and the new faith of the church.

Ultimately, Judaism stands as something of a failed enterprise of faith for Ignatius. Those Jews whose confidence in God is truly righteous and pure find the option of the church to be the only logical solution. It is clear that, as bishop of Antioch in Syria, Ignatius works within a large, cosmopolitan city that features a vibrant Jewish community and, as such, necessarily encounters the sway of Judaism that influences many within his own church community. The dialogue between synagogue and church in Antioch continues well into the third century with the bishops Serapion and Theophilus and into the fourth century under the guidance of John Chrysostom. So too, these are the days when Jewish leaders regularly identify messianic believers within their midst and usher them from the safety of the synagogue and its legal protection under Roman law. Nevertheless, at no point do we hear Ignatius attack the Jews themselves. Instead, his concern, like that of many Christians early in the second century, is to rally believers in Christ around a new faith, not to call them back to an old “failed” allegiance. As the bishop readily notes, “Christianity did not believe in Judaism, but Judaism in Christianity” (*Magnesians* 10.3).

And so, for Ignatius, the ethic by which Christians were to live then and are to live today is an ethic that steps beyond its Jewish boundaries. It is an ethic that demands a vision of what it means to be guided by the hand of the risen Christ. It is an ethic that demands total devotion, even to death. And ultimately, both for Ignatius and for the remaining authors of the Apostolic Fathers, it is this single unifying factor that comes to dominate

what it means to live as a Christian within the community of the body of Christ.

In conclusion, may we come to recognize the truth of the words of Byrskog, whom I have mentioned above: “...recollective memory may reflect past experience *and* have an orientational function in the present. A significant part of identity formation has to do with mnemonic identification and narrativity.”<sup>14</sup> In other words, we know who we are and we know why we do what we do because of the traditions that we choose to revere. The followers of the apostles, that is, the authors of the Apostolic Fathers, became a primary influence upon subsequent Christian thinking and the later patristic vision, primarily because they chose the witness of the apostles as their orientation for faith. They saw the lives of the earliest followers of Jesus of Nazareth as the conduit through which the memory of the Christian experience was best seen and experienced, and they wrote both in his name and within his vision. May we too become careful students of the traditions that we choose to hold dear and of the leaders that we decide to idolize. May we too be seen as a worthy school of faith and learning.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> An earlier version of this paper was presented at Chapman Seminary, Oakland City University on 17 April 2008.

<sup>2</sup> Though patristic authors occasionally reference the former two texts, the latter is mentioned only in the *Shepherd of Hermas*, *Visions* 2.3.4.

<sup>3</sup> My own introductions to the Apostolic Fathers include (with Kenneth J. Harder and Louis D. Amezaga, Jr.) *Reading the Apostolic Fathers: An Introduction* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996) and *The Apostolic Fathers: An Essential Guide* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2005). The reader might also see similar introductions by Simon Tugwell, *The Apostolic Fathers* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1989) and Paul Foster, ed., *The Writings of the Apostolic Fathers* (London and New York: T. & T. Clark, 2007).

<sup>4</sup> As demonstrated by *Festal Epistle* 39 of the bishop Athanasius in CE 367.

<sup>5</sup> The entire corpus of the Apostolic Fathers may be found in either of two very fine, contemporary translations: Bart D. Ehrman, *The Apostolic Fathers*, The Loeb Classical Library 24-25 (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2003) and Michael W. Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers (Greek Texts and English Translations)*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2007).

<sup>6</sup> Hans von Campenhausen, *Aus der Frühzeit des Christentums: Studien zur Kirchengeschichte des ersten und zweiten Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1963), 197-252.

<sup>7</sup> Depending upon how one reads the testimony of Eusebius of Caesarea *Ecclesiastical History* 3.22.1 and 3.36.2.

<sup>8</sup> Rom. 1:1-6.

<sup>9</sup> Published now as *Imitating Paul: A Discourse in Power* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1991).

<sup>10</sup> Samuel Byrskog, "A New Quest for the *Sitz im Leben*: Social Memory, the Jesus Tradition and the Gospel of Matthew," *New Testament Studies* 52, no. 3 (2006): 319-36.

<sup>11</sup> Byrskog, 336.

<sup>12</sup> Josephus *Antiquities of the Jews* 20.9.1.

<sup>13</sup> See my "The Wilderness Narrative in the Apostolic Fathers," in *Israel in the Wilderness: Interpretations of the Biblical Narratives in Jewish and Christian Traditions*, ed. Kenneth E. Pomykala, Themes in Biblical Narrative, Jewish and Christian Traditions 10 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2008), 57-72.

<sup>14</sup> Byrskog, 326.