THE APOSTOLIC FATHERS

CLEMENT OF ROME: LETTER TO CORINTH (I CLIMENT), c. 96 A.D.

EARLY TESTIMONY TO THE LETTER:

Dionysius, bishop of Corinth, c. 170 A.D., said "that it had been the custom from the beginning to read it in the church." (Cited by Eusebius: H.E. IV, xxiii.11)

Irenaeus, bishop in Gaul, c. 180 A.D., in his Against Heresies III.i.3 lists the bishops of Rome: Linus, next Anacletus, and "after him, in the third place from the apostles, Clement was allotted the bishopric. This man, as he had seen the blessed apostles, and had been conversant with them, might be said to have the preaching of the apostles still echoing in his ears, and their traditions before his eyes."

Hegesippus who passed through Corinth about 150-160 A.D. said that the epistle of Clement was being read on Sundays in the church in his time.

Eusebius wrote in the early fourth century, "There is extant an Epistle of this Clement, which is acknowledged to be genuine, and is of considerable length and of remarkable merit. He wrote it in the name of the church of Rome to the church of Corinth...We know that this Epistle also has been publicly used in great many churches both in former times and in our own." H.E. III.xvi.

Eusebius also said Clement succeeded Anacletus in the 12th year of Domitian (A.D. 93). H.E. III.xv.

Codex Alexandrinus of the 5th century, one of our three great uncial manuscripts, has I Clement with the New Testament books.

CONTENTS

The setting: end of the Domitian persecution and the peace of Nerva. I
The occasion: problem of unholy sedition in the church in Corinth; the young want to kick the elders out and take over the church. III
The past greatness of the church in Corinth. II
The example of the martyrs: Peter and Paul and others. V-VI
Takes forgranted a rich knowledge of the Old Testament
Old Testament themes bearing on the problem: jealousy, repentance, and obedience.

Theology of Clement: Trinity, the blood of Christ, obedience, rewards and punishment, repentance and forgiveness.

Appeal to the glorious and venerable rule of our tradition. VII.2
The Phoenix and the resurrection. XXIV-XXV

The Exhortation to Unity:
The Roman Army. XXXVII
The order, harmony and beauty of God's work:
The universe: heavens and the seasons
The human body
The Old Covenant. XLIII

The Lord through the apostles organized the church: clergy and laity. XI. Bishops and deacons, XLII.4; Bishop, episcopate, and Presbyters, XLIV; Presbyters, XLVII, LVII.

The problem at Corinth and Clement's solution. LIV
The example of Greek patriots.
Love, Forgiveness, and Self-sacrifice:
"Love admits no schism" XLIX
The example of Judith, LV
Exhortation to read Paul's letter to Corinth (I Corinthians), XLVII
Clement believes he is writing by the Holy Spirit. LXIII
Clement's Prayer, LIX
The Roman messengers bearing the letter: Claudius Ephebus, Falerius Vito, and Fortunatus. (See I Corinthians 16:17)

The subscription in the Coptic version: "The Epistle of the Romans to the Corinthians."

QUESTIONS:
Was Clement the bishop, or, the chairman of the presbyters, or, the corresponding secretary?
Is it a letter of judicial authority or of brotherly advice?
THE APOSTOLIC FATHERS

Scripture: Philippians 4:1-3
Prayer: Clement of Rome: Closing prayer and blessing, I Clement LIX and LXV
Hymn: 400 "How Sweet, How Heavenly, is the Sight."

ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF THE APOSTOLIC FATHERS:
Loeb Classical Library Edition in 2 volumes: Kirsopp Lake, ed.:
The Apostolic Fathers
Robert H. Grant: The Apostolic Fathers, 6 volumes.
The Apostolic Fathers also appear in The Ante-Nicene Fathers,
The Library of Christian Classics, Fathers of the Church,
and Ancient Christian Writers.

SOME SUGGESTED SECONDARY READINGS:
Berthold Altheimer: Patrology, ch. 2

THE PERIOD OF THE APOSTOLIC FATHERS, A.D. 96-156.
Clement of Rome: Letter to Corinth (1 Clement) A.D. 96. Revolt against the elders of the church.
Ignatius of Antioch: Seven Letters, c. A.D. 108. The monarchical bishop; warnings against Docetists and Judaizers.
Didache or The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, c. 112 A.D. The first church manual: The two ways, how to baptize, how to have the Lord's Supper, and how to tell a true prophet from a false prophet.
Epistle of Barnabas, c. A.D. 130. The church as the True Israel, who owns the Scriptures, and the allegorical method the right way to interpret Scripture.
Hermas: The Shepherd, c. 140 A.D. Visions, Commandments and Parables: One repentance after baptism.
Martyrdom of Polycarp, c. A.D. 156.

Fragments from the Age of the Apostolic Fathers:
Papias of Hierapolis: Exposition of the Oracles of the Lord, 5 Books. c. A.D. 125. The oral tradition; how we got the gospels.
The Preaching of Peter, c. 125 A.D.
The Apocalypse of Peter, c. 150 A.D.

Pagan writings mentioning Christians: The correspondence between Pliny the Younger and the Emperor Trajan, c. 112 A.D.

Other martyrs: Simeon, bishop of Jerusalem, c. 105 A.D.; Telesphorus, bishop of Rome, c. 137 A.D.
The Apostolic Fathers (Con.)

Provocative Thoughts:

1. The Apostolic Fathers are our first Christian writers after the New Testament.
2. How close were they to the apostles?
3. What is their importance? Were they preserved because they were the best and most treasured, or, because they represented far out extremes, or, are they "driftwood" that accidentally survived? How representative are they of the main stream of the church?
4. How well did they understand the apostles—especially on grace, faith, the blood?
5. They were simple men who loved greatly, served sacrificially and loyally, and built in a way that those who came after them could build on their work.
6. They witness to the richness and variety in the early church. Every problem that the church faces today was faced by the church in the second century.

*****These notes are loosely connected to the audio file (Apostolic Fathers Part 6)*****