

Introduction

- Every church tradition can find themselves in the AF.
- This is as close to an “original view” of theology as we can find.
- These writings are grouped together but are not a collection.
- Their writings overlap with the New Testament and they quote it.
- Orthodox theology was established early without enforcement or use of force.

Connection to Apostles

- Several of these writer’s lives overlapped with the apostles and lived in similar areas.
- The 2nd generation of Christians would have had to actively avoid the 12 the 500 apostles, or the countless eyewitnesses of Jesus, in order to not see them.
- We know several of them were discipled or impacted by the disciples.

Ignatius

- While under arrest and heading towards execution, he wrote 7 letters (Ephesians, Magnesia’s, Trillions, Romans, Philadelphians, Smyraeans, Polycarp).
- His name possibly comes from being held by Christ as a child.
- He was the bishop in Antioch after Peter, appears to have been disciples by him.
- He was eaten by wild beasts.
- Polycarp thought highly of him and they knew each other.

Polycarp

- Polycarp was a disciple of John primarily, but was taught by other disciples.
- He was ordained by John as the bishop of Smyrna.
- He wrote a letter to the Philippian church
- He was martyred in his old age. His death was recorded by eyewitnesses and was the first extra-biblical account of martyrdom.
- He was responsible for widely spreading Ignatius’ letter throughout the churches.

Clement

- He is either considered the 2nd or 4th bishop in Rome after Peter.
- Possibly the Clement mentioned by Paul as a fellow worker in Phil 4:3.
- He wrote the earliest letter 1 Clement. This is a letter rebuking and correction the church in Corinth.
- 2nd Clement is sometimes attributed to him, but most believe it is not his.
- 2nd Clement is a transcript of a sermon.

Papias

- He was another disciple of John and bishop in Hierapolis.
- He wrote five books called “the Exposition of the Saying’s of Lord.”

- He interviewed John and others who heard Jesus speak.
- We only have quotes of his book from later fathers.
- He became unpopular by the 4th century because of his eschatological views.

Didache

- This is an early handbook for churches.
- It appears to be meant for new church leaders.
- It describes core Christian doctrine and then instructions for how to do church.

Shepherd of Hermas

- This is the strangest of the apostolic writings and was one of the most revered and highly respected.
- It is a series of visions, commandments, and parables recorded by a prophet.
- The author could be the Hermas Paul greets in Romans 16:14.
- It is like an early church version of Pilgrim's Progress.
- It is easily the longest of the apostolic father's writings.

Epistle of Barnabas

- Early on was attributed to the disciple Barnabas, but we are unsure today.
- It has some of the most extreme allegorical interpretations.
- It is possible this was a record of a sermon explaining the Old Testament.
- One of the weirder writings, but still affirms essential Christian writings.

Epistle to Diognetus

- It is one of the first apologetic works defending the truth of Christianity.
- The author of this letter is unknown, but they claim to be a disciple of the apostles.
- The letter is written to a non-Christian explaining Christianity.

Application

- Apostolic father's help prove trustworthiness of the New Testament.
- Apostolic father's show the widespread universalness of Christianity.
- We should take their writings seriously because of their close connection to the apostles and Christ.