A Bibliographical Guide to the Study of Church History

1 The Early Church to the Middle of the Fifth Century

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The compiler writes: 'This guide to the three periods of church history that most frequently feature in the theological curriculum has been prepared in response to student requests. It is designed to assist the type of student for whom a course in one of these periods constitutes only one of several courses to be taken in a particular year, so that students specializing or "majoring" or taking honours in the subject should not expect to find it adequate for their needs. It is restricted to works in English (books translated from other languages are not identified as such). Publishers' names have been included for those books believed to be still in print, but the date of the latest edition is provided only in cases of particular importance.'

Any guide of this nature is bound to reflect to some extent the compilers' own libraries and prejudices, and can scarcely hope to achieve a satisfactory balance and wholeness. We can but say that we are not averse to suggestions and criticisms, and, if these are forthcoming, promise to do better next time — if such should be granted us.'

SECTION I: FROM THE BEGINNINGS TO CONSTANTINE

(N.B. Works which belong more properly to New Testament history, such as the influence of Qumran and its documents, are not listed in this guide.)

1. Source material

J. Stevenson, A New Eusebius (London, SPCK, 1957, paperback) is a superb collection of documents in translation with all the necessary accessories, quite invaluable. The Early Christian Fathers by H. Bettenson (OUP, 1969, paperback) is more systematically theological in scope. Note also R. M. Grant, Second-Century Christianity: A Collection of Fragments (London, SPCK, 1957, paperback), 'a little corpus of these odds and ends which link the New Testament period with the developed catholicism of the end of the second century'; fuller than Stevenson.


2. Reference works


3. General histories

The student will require more than he can get from H. Chadwick, The Early Church (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1967, paperback), or W. H. C. Frend, The Early Church (London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1965, paperback) or J. G. Davies, The Early Christian Church (London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1965). Of these the first possesses greater balance and accuracy, combined with a masterly thoroughness, the second is a rather livelier and more personal presentation and the third is strong on fringe topics like architecture and social life but somewhat jejune (and expensive!). The First Six Hundred Years by J. Daniélou and H. Marrou (The Christian Centuries, vol. 1; London, Darton, Longman and Todd, 1964) is marred by frequent mistakes and ill-proportioned in its coverage in the first half, largely through Daniélou’s fond interest in 'Jewish Christianity'. Marrou's part is more satisfactory, and contains some excellent summary accounts and generous treatment of some topics not normally well covered.
in one-volume histories, such as impact on society, church expansion and the early Christian life-style.

Of the large-scale histories L. Duchesne, The Early History of the Christian Church (3 vols., London, John Murray, 1909-24) is still one of the best available, by an old-style liberal RC who was supreme in his field. B. J. Kidd, A History of the Church to A.D. 461 (3 vols., Oxford, 1922) contains far more information so solidly packed as to be excellent for reference purposes but otherwise digestible only in small helpings. Of the two, Kidd is more strictly 'ecclesiastical' in emphasis, Duchesne more impressionistic in tone. J. Lebreton and J. Zeller, A History of the Early Church (4 vols, under separate titles, New York, Collier Books, 1962, paperback) is a very comprehensive, well organized, conservative treatment written in the 1930s and hence somewhat out-dated with regard to the period up to AD 150. Though thin on the social side and presenting too tidy a view of the developing church, it is well documented and probably the most complete history yet available. A History of the Early Church by H. Lietzmann (4 vols., London, Lutterworth, 1937-51, paperback (4 vols. in 2)) is scholarly, strong on the 'history of ideas', but in general requires some prior knowledge of the subject in order to be understood in its true depth. The latest full-size history is K. Baus, From the Apostolic Community to Constantine (Handbook of Church History, vol. 1; London, Burns and Oates, 1965), a thoroughly reliable and up-to-date volume, again with a particular concentration on theological developments. But the fullest and most recent account of the earliest centuries is L. Goppelt, Apostolic and Post-Apostolic Times (London, A. & C. Black, 1970), one of the first parts to appear in a multi-volume history of the church which promises to be of outstanding importance. Goppelt's book is significant for its analysis of the transition to 'early Catholicism' (Frühkatholizismus). P. Carrington, The Early Christian Church. (2 vols., CUP, 1957) covers the first two centuries at great length. Though a good survey of the literary sources, it is deficient in synthesis. Impressionistic studies of the leading figures in the story are given by H. von Campenhausen, Fathers of the Greek Church and Fathers of the Latin Church (London A. & C. Black, 1963 and 1964, paperback) — fuller and much more satisfying in the latter volume. Finally, of the general histories of the period The Cambridge Ancient History, vol. 12 (CUP, 1929), deserves sole mention, for some excellent chapters by noted historians of the church.

4. History of doctrine


5. Background: intellectual, cultural, religious

of Anxiety (CUP, 1965), E. R. Dodds discusses 'some aspects of religious experience from Marcus Aurelius to Constantine'. Finally, A. Toynbee has edited The Crucible of Christianity (London, Thames and Hudson, 1969), a magnificent verbal and visual portrayal of 'Judaism, Hellenism and the Historical Background to the Christian Faith'.

6. Specialized studies

a. The Apostolic Fathers and the development of the ministry: Montanism. B. F. Streeter, The Primitive Church (London, 1929), is a rumbustious entry to the subject but not to be slavishly followed. R. M. Grant, Introduction to the Apostolic Fathers (New York, Nelson, 1964), is not only a fine up-to-date guide but also the preliminary volume to the best of recent English translations, with full annotation the discovery of the Bishop of the first three centuries. A. Jalland, Apostolic Succession (London, 1953), is a learned attempt to trace the doctrine mainly to the idea of succession to the Jewish high priesthood. It also looks at other types of succession, such as prophetic and catechetical. A good modern discussion of early episcopacy is provided by W. Telfer, Ecclesiastical Authority and the Ministry; Montanism. A. B. Swete, ed., Essays on the Early History of the Church and the Ministry (London, 1918), which also contains a fundamental study of apostolic succession by C. H. Turner. A. A. T. Ehrhardt, The Apostolic Succession (London, 1953), is a learned attempt to trace the doctrine mainly to the idea of succession to the Jewish high priesthood. It also looks at other types of succession, such as prophetic and catechetical. A good modern discussion of early episcopacy is provided by W. Telfer, The Office of a Bishop (London, Darton, Longman and Todd, 1962), while the major modern study of the whole area is H. von Campenhausen, Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power in the Church of the First Three Centuries (London, A. & C. Black, 1969), which no ambitious student should bypass. On Montanism there is little in English apart from chapters in more general works and the still useful article in The Dictionary of Christian Biography.

b. The papacy. An excellent sketch is available in B. J. Kidd, The Roman Primacy to A.D. 461 (London, 1936), and a more expansive discussion in T. G. Jalland, The Church and the Papacy (London, 1944). More than adequate documentation, well annotated, is to be found in E. Giles, Documents Illustrating Papal Authority A.D. 96-454 (London, SPCK, 1952). There is an important article by G. La Piana on 'The Roman Church at the end of the Second Century' in HTR 18 (1925), pp. 201-277.


Marcion stands somewhat apart from mainstream Gnostic currents, but may suitably be mentioned here. E. C. Blackman, Marcion and His Influence (London, SPCK, 1948), is a careful account and a necessary corrective to both Harnack's over-enthusiastic yet quite fundamental study (still untranslated) and John Knox's speculative Marcion and the New Testament (Chicago, 1942). There is a fine chapter on Marcion in Jonas.


On credal developments R. P. C. Hanson and J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds* (London, Longmans, 1960), will probably suffice. The latter is thorough and original, if also rather technical at times.


