

The Memory of the Christian People

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Liberation & Theology 5. (Burns & Oates 1989)

1 Christianity and Memory

Jews first to conceive of history as goal-oriented. Church too 'remembers' its story. Papias (disciple with Polycarp of John) compiled logia and Justin tells us Apostolic writings were read liturgically. Irenaeus promoted written memoirs vs. Marcion.

Eusebius of Caesarea (c300) compiles Ecclesiastical History with strong bias, praising Constantine as kind of new Moses & martyrdoms as Egyptian plagues. Heavily supported institutional power around bishops and emperor, extolling Hellenistic rationalism and learning.

4. Self-awareness

I Peter shows eg isolated little Christian cells. Cf Hbws 13:14 'no lasting city'. Gospel Jesus history of marginalisation. Anti-Christian texts eg Celsus 170. Confused with Jews. Roman system marginalised many, condensing them into *insulae*, slums, offering Bread and Circuses – women and children exempted from distribution.

5 Theology of Marginalised as Chosen.

This develops on back of Jesus' example. Paul tries 'wisdom' on Athenians but then 'the cross'. I Cor 1 – 'not many well-born...chose those of no account.' But no Xn circumcision to weld koinonia. Fisherman Peter and Tentmaker Paul are transformed into Keys and Sword by later imperium. The Xn community expelled from Jerusalem through civil war and destruction 70AD but Peter's fears lead him to present Xnity as extension of Judaism. Paul starts using popular religion motifs. Later leaders' theology of margin: 'nameless' (Justin), 'unlearned' (Irenaeus), 'simple' (Tertullian). **Justin** 160. A philosopher who shared life of simple Xns. Foolishness of Cross.

Irenaeus of Lyon 170. The Knowledge of the poor vs arrogant knowledge of heretics. Action not sterile theorising. Sees Rome not as head of Xdom but defender of poor's knowledge of God.

Tertullian 200. Africa. Nothing in common between Jm & Athens. False claims of learned.

6 A Popular Movement.

EXnC marginal folk, some rich converted to marginality (shown by martyrology data) (cf Gramsci's 'organic intellectuals') Imaginary 'great church' read back into gospel texts. All were missionaries, Elders had special role. Won over because open to all, Empire allowed communication, Jewish diaspora formed base, adopted autonomous synagogue principle, Roman toleration, Inspiring Message – Reign of God

7 Mission Cycles.

Expansive text follows. I extract here only particular items.

Marcion: 150 no writings intact. Sold everything. Jesus need not appeal to OT but is truth himself. Extreme Pauline: evil OT God. Torah error, Gospel truth. Women liberated.

Montanism Deep roots in marginality, seeing Rome as Devil (Revelation?)

7 Theology of Marginalisation itself Marginalised

Alexandria wealth. Discrimination against non-Greeks more extreme in Egypt than rest of Empire

Clement of Alexandria. 200

Conservative ignorer of Copts. Spurn politics, dress in white for truth. Spoke to bourgeois class to protect them from gnosites.

Origen 200 Created Biblical Theology (allegorical method) and Christian Philosophy as stand-alone discipline of metaphysics. Very clerical. 'Christ debased on Cross, exalted in glory'.

9 The Synagogical Model

Created after Babylonian Captivity. Alexandria 38BC Jews repressed. Synagogues subsequently anti-Roman, holding to Torah. Autonomy even against Temple since its officials rebuked synagogues. It is not a local but group phenomenon, with ties to Family and lay-led Passover meal. Xnity takes this form over: Communion, dedication, no frontiers, but open not like synagogues.

But

Xn congregations interested in local communities – won an appeal for locals – and Roman organisation appealed to – slowly organised by locality not group (parish style) and not so autonomous.