Ignatius of Antioch and Polycarp of Smyrna; Macedonia and Crete

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Ignatius, the martyr of Antioch, is regarded as the most important and most successful ecclesiastical representative in the second-century struggle against heresy prior to Justin. He is an organization man whose significance H. Lietzmann recently characterized thus: "In Ignatius we already find that the monarchial episcopate is an accomplished fact and is applicable to both Syria and western Asia Minor."[1] I think that with a man like Ignatius who, in his exuberance, time and again loses all sense of proportion, one must be especially careful in evaluating the accuracy of his statements. Indeed, he even speaks of communities such as Magnesia and Tralles, whose situation he knows primarily from the descriptions of their "bishops," who had no reason to place themselves and their influence in an unfavourable light. That Ignatius is less concerned with depicting the actual situation than with portraying the ideal is already suggested by the fact that, for the most part, his approach takes the form of admonition rather than of description.

What is it that makes the monarchial episcopacy seem so attractive to a man like Ignatius? First of all, he does not begin from a position in which he sees a plurality of ecclesiastical bodies of officials who for practical reasons may be governed by one particular office which, nevertheless, is not necessarily superior. No, for him the first and foremost figure is the bishop, who is like God or Christ in whose place he stands.[2] And [66] just as there can be no second, even [[ET 62]] approximately similar position beside them, neither can there be such beside the bishop.

At a suitably respectable distance behind him come the presbyters and deacons, attentive to his beck and call and obliged to render him due reverence. The administration of the particular community should rest completely in the hands of this one bishop who sets in motion and supervises all its activities, without whom no ecclesiastical function has validity and who, by virtue of his office, is immune to any criticism no matter how young in years or deficient in character he might be. At what point has the historical development become ripe for such extremely high

esteem for a single official? It would hardly arise in peaceful times when there is no need for such an approach. As long as a harmonious spirit pervades the community, a council of those with similar status can take care of it without difficulty -- one does this and another does something else, according to the abilities of each. Only when opposition arises and conflicting interests confront one another does the picture change.

Even then there is little danger for the one who sides with the majority, since the majority opinion is, as a rule, reflected in the composition of the governing board. But the situation would become precarious for the one who identifies himself with the minority and who now finds that his wishes no longer, or only seldom, gain a hearing with the governing powers. Such a man easily arrives at the conclusion that his legitimate claims are being neglected by the circle of leaders and then the desire stirs in him for a dictatorship that would establish the supremacy of his own party.

Demands like these are typical of minorities which, through their own strong man who is clothed with a special aura and equipped with unusual power, endeavour to obtain that overriding importance which they are unable to gain by virtue of the number of their members. But if they can supply one who is in absolute control of the whole group, then the possibility emerges either of bringing those who differ to heel within the community, or else, if there is no alternative, of crowding them out.

So long as a council is in control of the church, it is unavoidable that it will be composed of Christians of various sorts and that -- to move from generalities back to the specific case of Ignatius -- alongside members holding views like those of Ignatius there would also be representatives of the gnostics and [[ET 63]] of acknowledged Jewish Christians in it. [67] If, however, the leadership of the community responds to the command of the one bishop, then orthodoxy can hope to take the helm even where it constitutes only a minority of the whole group -- provided that the others are disunited. Of course, there is the possibility that Ignatius' group actually represented the majority in certain cities. However, in view of Ignatius' frantic concern, it hardly seems likely that this was the general rule. Any conclusion of a more comprehensive sort must be preceded by a more detailed investigation into this subject.

What is the situation with reference to the monarchial bishop in those churches with which we are acquainted through the story of Ignatius? First, what about Antioch itself? Was Ignatius really "bishop" there, or even in Syria (Rom. 2.2), in his own sense of a monarchial ruler over all the baptized of that region? For him, orthodoxy and heresy are not yet so neatly divided that it would be sufficient to rule over the "church" people because the heretics, however numerous they might be, are "outside" the church. What was the complexion of Christianity in Antioch at the time of Ignatius? The last thing that the sources had reported concerning it prior to Ignatius was the awkward scene which centred around Peter and Paul (Gal. 2.11 ff.), and which, it appears, led to a division within the community -- most certainly it greatly disturbed its life. In no other context did Paul ever speak of Antioch. And the book of Acts limits itself to noting that later, Paul once again stayed in Antioch "for some time" (18.22 f.), without recording anything in particular about that visit -- not even that he "strengthened all the disciples," as is related with reference to his trip through the "region of Galatia and Phrygia" that is mentioned next. Quite in harmony with this is the fact, noticed above (17-20), that during the second part of the second century, and even long afterward, Antioch played no significant role in the history of the church. The "ecclesiastical" tradition here is so scanty that Eusebius, and before him Julius Africanus,[3] were unable to produce a credible list of bishops from the apostles to the end of the second century -- credible at least because of its uninterrupted comprehensiveness.[4] Eusebius can only make Theophilus, his sixth [[ET 64]] Antiochian bishop, [68] contemporary with the eleventh Roman and the ninth Alexandrian bishop,[5] in spite of dating him inadmissibly early.[6] If one realizes that the actual floruit of Theophilus was around 180, then in Antioch six bishops must cover the same span of time that is covered by twelve in Rome and ten in Alexandria (cf. EH 5.pref.1 and 5.9).

This lack of ecclesiastical tradition does not encourage the view that there was already a bishop worthy of the name in Antioch at the beginning of the second century. Alexandria and Rome, with their much richer stock of episcopal personnel, have such a figure only at a much later time.[7] What is concealed behind this title for Ignatius is, corresponding to the situation of Palût in Edessa, the leadership of a group that is engaged in

a life and death struggle against an almost overwhelming adversary. Certainly this title itself implies the claim to be the authoritative interpreter of the faith for all Christians of Syria, or at least of Antioch. But the question remains to what extent this self-evaluation was acknowledged by others. It appears to me that large segments of Antiochian Christianity flatly rejected it, in view of the almost frantic efforts of Ignatius to push his home church in the direction he desired by dispatching to Antioch delegations of eminent coreligionists from every congregation accessible to him (cf. Philad. 10 -- bishops, presbyters, deacons) or at least by sending written messages.[8] The apparently quite local and rather brief persecution in the Syrian capital can hardly be the real reason for his efforts. After all, the news that the church in Antioch had regained its peace in no way prompted Ignatius to discontinue his efforts (Philad. 10; Smyr. 11; Polyc. 7). Polycarp is to exert influence upon those Asian churches which Ignatius himself had been unable to reach.[9] And the necessity of such a task was impressed upon Polycarp to such an extent that, regardless of the precarious position of orthodoxy in Smyrna itself (see below, 69 f.), he would have preferred [69] to undertake the journey to Antioch in person (Polycarp Phil. 13.1). In fact, there is even concern to draw the community [[ET 65]] at Philippi in far off Macedonia into the circle of those who send their good wishes to Syria (Polycarp Phil. 13.1). This display, which deprived a number of churches that were themselves experiencing a difficult situation of their leading figures even to the rank of "bishop" -- and which, as far as I know, is unparalleled in the history of the ancient church -- is only explicable to me if there is a great deal at stake; that is to say, if orthodoxy in Antioch, deprived of its champion Ignatius, was in danger of being driven back, if not routed from the field, by heresy. Indeed, all his letters to the Asiatic Christians bear eloquent testimony to this acute danger of heresy. In his homeland, Ignatius learned to know, to hate, and to fear the "mad dogs," the "beasts in human form," as he calls them (cf. Eph. 7.1, Smyr. 4.1).

It is not necessary to investigate in great detail the religious situation of non-Christian Antioch in order to discover the soil into which Christianity was planted there.[10] Libanius, in his Antiochikos [11] extols the religious richness of his native city: The foreign gods aspire to be represented there -- thus, during the reign of Seleucius II (246-226 BCE)

Isis forced her image to be transferred from Memphis to Antioch (# 114) -- and the native daimones do not wish to roam in foreign lands (# 117). The impression of a pronounced syncretism is further deepened when we observe the presence of magic and star worship, mysteries and alchemy, combined with gross superstition and a tendency toward Indian gymnosophistry, which makes Ignatius' fanatical desire for martyrdom somewhat more explicable to us.[12] The observation that in Antioch, Jewish Christianity existed side by side with gentile Christianity contributes little to an understanding of the early form of Christianity in that city. We also found that in Christian [70] Alexandria both groups coexisted at the outset. But if our impression is accurate, both the gentile and the Jewish were conditioned by the syncretistic-gnostic setting (above, 53). [[ET 66]]

In Antioch, no doubt, the situation was different as long as genuine apostolic influence prevailed. But had not such influence cancelled itself out to a large extent?[13] And must that situation which probably existed in the period until 70 also hold good for a subsequent time? At any rate, already prior to Ignatius, gnosticism made itself felt in Antioch in a serious way. Menander, a countryman and pupil of Simon Magus (Irenaeus AH 1.23.5 [= 1.17], 3.4.3) already was teaching there in the first century,[14] and, according to Justin (who was also a Samaritan and was informed about conditions in the East), was winning many followers (Apol. 26.4). One of those, who worked successfully after him in the same areas, was Saturninus.[15] His contemporary and coreligionist in these regions was the Syrian gnostic Cerdo,[16] whom we later encounter in Rome as a man of such importance that he was even able to exercise some influence over the already mature Marcion. Another pupil of Menander, Basilides, is the first of whom we hear that he brought gnostic ideas from Antioch to Alexandria,[17] and thereby took up, from the Christian side, the religious interchange between Egypt and Syria that we were able to observe already in the migration of Isis to Antioch. This exchange of religious ideas was then continued in a manner that concerns us through those Antiochian heretics who still played such an important role in the leading city of Egypt at the time of Origen (see above, 58f.). We may leave aside at this point the very clear traces of heresy that can be found in Antioch during the period between Basilides and Origen. But it should be recalled in this

connection that Syrian-Antiochian heretics also had access to a gospel which suited their own approach and for which they claimed the authority of Peter,[18] [71] just as Basilides asserted that he had received revelations through Glaukias, an interpreter of Peter (Clement of Alexandria Strom. 7.[17.] 106.4). [[ET 67]]

It should not be objected that gnosticism is much too scantily attested at the beginning of the second century as an influential factor in the development of Antiochian Christianity. After all, who is it that actually bears witness to the presence of the ecclesiastical faith in that region during the same period? Almost exclusively Ignatius;[19] and he does so in a way that, not simply because of the type of defense, proves the strength of his opponents. It seems to me that H. Schlier is correct in his judgment that "in terms of their value for this history of religions, the seven Ignatian letters display a type of Christianity localized in Syria and closely related in concepts and ideas to Syrian gnosticism."[20] In spite of Ignatius' conscious polemic against this abominable heresy, he was no more able to free himself from gnosticism than was Clement of Alexandria in a similar situation. Even to a greater degree than for Alexandria, we gain insight at Antioch into a process of painstaking disengagement from a religiosity that in important points can no longer be shared. By no means, however, do we gain the impression that Ignatius felt he had already won the victory. His episcopate, to which each baptized person must submit, is still seed sown in hope. It is also highly significant that precisely his gnostic contemporaries and countrymen can without hindrance call themselves "Christians," as Eusebius twice complains in utter disgust (EH 3.26.3 f. 4.7.2 f.; cf. below 109 f. and above, 22-24).

And the situation is not any different with respect to those "bishops" of the communities in Asia Minor whom we encounter through Ignatius. To be sure, he designates as episkopos each of the leaders of those groups in sympathy with him in the particular Christian communities: Onesimus of Ephesus (Eph. 1.3), Damas of Magnesia (Magn. 2), Polybius of Tralles (Trall. 1.1), Polycarp of Smyrna (Magn. 15; Polyc. salutation) -- and he also knows the bishop of Philadelphia (Philad., salutation, 1.1, 3.2, 4). But this does not prove that these men exercised unlimited power over the shaping of Christian faith and life in those cities. The inherent

contradiction [72] of a monarchial bishop with only partial recognition is no greater than [[ET 68]] the contradiction of a community which is praised for having rejected the false teachers (Eph. 9.1) and yet still receives most explicit warnings against heresy (Eph. 7-9, 13-19) and has to be told that whoever corrupts the faith with false teaching is on the path to unquenchable fire together with anyone who listens to such a person (Eph. 16.2). In both instances the ideal and the actual are far removed from each other.

An even clearer indication of the existence of at least a minority that does not care about the bishop and his teaching is given when Ignatius charges the Ephesians: "Do not let yourselves be anointed with the evil odor of the teaching of the prince of this age, lest he lead you captive from the life that is set before you. Why are we not all prudent, since we have received the knowledge of God -- that is, Jesus Christ? Why are we perishing in foolishness, ignoring the gracious gift that the Lord has truly sent?" (Eph. 17). In his letter to the Magnesians, Ignatius rejoices that he has beheld the whole community in the person of the officers delegated to meet him, with the bishop at the head (6.1; cf. 2.1 and Trall. 1.1). But immediately thereafter, he utters a warning to maintain the unity and to avoid false teaching (Magn. 6-11). He knows "certain people" who pay lip service to the bishop, yet never work in cooperation with him but hold their own meetings (Magn. 4). And the danger is all the more pressing in Magnesia since its bishop is still young, and because of his inexperience is able neither to enforce obedience nor to see through hypocrisy (Magn. 3).

Also with regard to the community at Tralles, praise of her blamelessness (Trall. I) immediately is cancelled by a summons to submit to the bishop and to the other church officials (Trall. 2-3) as well as by reference to all sorts of imperfections, which make her seem to be particularly susceptible to false teaching (Trall. 6). Notice how Ignatius exhorts the believers: "Continue in your harmony and in prayer with one another. For it is fitting for every single one of you, and particularly for the presbyters, to refresh the bishop, to the honour of the Father, of Jesus Christ, and of the Apostles. I beseech you to listen to me in love that I by my writing may not become a witness against you" (12.2-3). Clearly the closing words of this admonition stand in tension with its beginning and indicate that actually

it is not at all a matter of "continuing" but rather of [[ET 69]] eliminating a situation in which even presbyters are neglecting to "refresh" the bishop. [73]

The situation appears to be even more critical in Philadelphia where many wolves lie in wait for the sheep (Philad. 2). The assertion that everything is in good order (2.2, 3.1) alternates in this letter in an almost embarrassing fashion with the summons to make it better. Ignatius himself must have been convinced that the power of the bishop there was decidedly limited. On his trip through Philadelphia he had a discussion with dissenters in the community gathering, without succeeding to persuade them (Philad. 7 f.); on the contrary, he had experiences that caused him to complain anxiously that there were people who consciously avoid the leadership of the bishop (3.2 f., 8.1). His own co-workers Philo and Rheus Agathopus had been treated with disrespect in Philadelphia, and the bishop had been unable to protect them against it (11.1).

In Ephesus, Magnesia, Tralles, and Philadelphia (only those four cities come under consideration at this point, not Asia Minor nor even its western part as a whole, concerning which see below, 77 ff.), those persons whom Ignatius addresses as bishops and treats as monarchs, who thus were the leaders of the ecclesiastically oriented people, may have gathered larger or smaller majorities of the local Christians around them. Undoubtedly Ignatius himself did not have as secure a position in Antioch. And it seems to me that the same can be said of his friend Polycarp, who also provides us with relevant material for ascertaining more precisely what the concept of "monarchial bishop" involved in that epoch.

His situation was burdened with difficulties resulting from the fact that heretics occupied high offices within Christianity. Ignatius, in his letter to the church at Smyrna and in the centre of a detailed and vehement attack on those who dismiss the life and work of the Lord as mere appearance (Smyr. 4-7), also turns against a particular person who, by virtue of his high position (topos), is puffed up (Smyr. 6.1). Topos is the same word used by Ignatius in his letter to Polycarp to denote the latter's rank as bishop (Polyc. 1.2). Evidently this is the same person who in Smyrna performs "behind the bishop's back" cultic acts which are of the devil (

Smyr. 9.1). Thus we have here, I believe, something like a gnostic anti-bishop in Smyrna. Of course, the title itself is unimportant; what matters is the phenomenon. [[ET 70]]

In his letter to the Philippians, Polycarp himself confirms this situation [74] insofar as he can be expected to do so. He begins: Polykarpos kai hoi syn autou presbyteroi th ekklhsia, etc. This does not mean, as I had inaccurately translated it in the Handbüch, "Polycarp and the presbyters with him" -- as though it included all presbyters[21] -- but rather, "Polycarp and those presbyters who are with him" -- that is, who are on his side.[22] Here the fervour of the demand that there be but one bishop becomes especially evident to us. But again, doubts arise as to whether the situation is correctly described in words such as those of R. Knopf: "The monarchial episcopate is firmly established in the communities of Asia to which Ignatius writes."[23] Not at all! In this respect, his letters bear witness to his fervent desire, but not to existing reality. At best they attest reality insofar as the desire to organize themselves along monarchial lines may have arisen in orthodox circles of particular Christian groups in Asia. Still, a community-wide separation of the orthodox under their bishop from the false believers under their leaders has by no means taken place as yet, but is envisioned at best as a last resort, a final expedient if the efforts to unite all of the baptized under the one orthodox bishop should fail.

On the basis of this understanding of the situation, I must disagree with Harnack's statement that "Phrygia and Asia were closed to Marcion" because Papias and Polycarp would have nothing to do with him.[24] I find here only an impossible exaggeration of the influence of both men upon the formation of Christianity in their provinces. Polycarp, who previously had not even been able to rise to a monarchial position in Smyrna, certainly does not hold the key to Asia in his hand.

And even if in his home town he really had reviled Marcion as the "firstborn of Satan" (Irenaeus AH 3.3.4; Eusebius EH 4.14.7), this deterred Marcion just as little there as the same phrase, which this foe of heretics apparently used quite freely, obstructed those people in Philippi to whom it was applied (Polycarp [[ET 71]] Phil. 7.1). Surely as soon as Marcion

[75] really wanted to, he could find in Smyrna a suitable point of contact for his teaching among the docetics.

The reason why Marcion departed from Asia and pressed on to Rome is not that there was an impregnable wall of defense erected by the orthodox bishops of Asia for the protection of believers, but rather, it lies solely in the fact that Marcion's farsighted, world-encompassing plans called him, like so many others, to the capital of the world. Only from that place could he hope to realize his plans. And if, even there, he could hold his own for years within the church, then certainly he could have done so even more easily at an earlier time in Smyrna. In spite of his long life, Polycarp evidently did not see the day in which heresy ceased in Smyrna, or in which the separation between ecclesiastical Christianity and heresy took place. How little he was able to restrain the heretics can probably be inferred from the letter of Irenaeus to Florinus (EH 5.20.4-8). For even though Irenaeus need not have seen or heard that Polycarp vacated his place and fled with his ears stopped upon the appearance of heretics at community gatherings (EH 5.20.6-7), he still hands down the customary sigh of Polycarp on such an occasion: "Good God, to what sort of times have you kept me that I must endure such things?" (EH 5.20.7). The powerful self-understanding of a monarchial bishop hardly confronts us in such words.

It is therefore not surprising to notice that shortly after Polycarp's death, Noëtus developed his patripassian doctrine here, causing unrest in the community.[25] Even a century later, after the "ecclesiastical" position should have become considerably consolidated, heresy still is flourishing in Smyrna -- especially the spirit of Marcion. The martyrdom of Pionius,[26] a presbyter of the church of Smyrna at the time of Decius (249-251), is clearly catholic and pays careful attention to the fact that after an accused person confessed that he was a Christian, the presiding official Polemon would confirm that he was dealing with a catholic Christian by asking the question "To which church do you belong?" (9.2, 6, 8; 19.4 f.). This makes it all the more significant that none of the like-minded companions of Pionius, [[ET 72]] not even Limnus, "a presbyter of the catholic [76] church" (2.1, 11.2), go to their death at the very side of this great champion of the faith and in such a distinguished

manner as he; rather, this place is filled by Metrodorus, "a presbyter of the heresy of the Marcionites" who appears quite unexpectedly (21.5 f.). Evidently, as far as the pagan authorities are concerned, Metrodorus stands together with Pionius in the foreground of the Christian movement. Euctemon, on the other hand, the catholic bishop of Smyrna, has committed disgraceful apostasy and has ensnared most of the community in his downfall.[27] But among the few fellow-sufferers in prison we also find Eutychianus, "an adherent of the heresy of the Phrygians" (11.2).

In the reference to the "Phrygians" the key word occurs that must suffice at this point to substantiate my doubts also with respect to the other ecclesiastical authority mentioned by Harnack (above, 70 n.24). Of course, Papias could reject Marcion for himself and for those like him.[28] But this represents neither the view of Christian Hierapolis, nor that of the whole of Phrygia. Papias was as unable to stop uncatholic trends and movements in this region, which was inundated by Montanism immediately after his death, at the latest, as was Polycarp in Asia.

But to return to Polycarp, it would seem to me that his letter to the Philippians, a writing contemporaneous with the Ignatian epistles, is instructive for understanding the situation with respect to the Christianity of that city, for it suggests that the ecclesiastical influence is even more restricted there, as compared with Asia. In 7.1, Polycarp fights against a docetic gnosticism: "Everyone who does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is an antichrist . . . and whoever perverts the words of the Lord . . . and says that there is neither a resurrection nor a judgment, that man is the firstborn of Satan." Immediately after this he adds: "Therefore let us abandon the foolishness of the great majority (mataioths thn pollhn) and the false teachings, and let us return to the word which was transmitted to us from the beginning" (7.2). Apart from the conviction, which is also expressed here, that a heretic must return since he has [[ET 73]] forsaken the true teaching that was present from the beginning, there still remains the admission which certainly can be trusted that the majority [77] rejects the ecclesiastical faith. Already in 2.1, Polycarp had repudiated "the error of the great masses (h thn pollhn planh)." lt is not enough to gather from this, as does Knopf, that "twice he expressly mentions 'many' (polloi) who are the preservers and adherents" of heresy.[29] The text does

not read merely polai, but both times has hoi polloi; and this does not signify simply an indefinitely large quantity,[30] but with the definite article it means "the overwhelming majority," "the great mass" -- usually with the distinct connotation of contempt for "the many," to whom intelligence normally is denied.[31]

It has often been noted that in his letter to the Philippians, Polycarp does not make any reference to a bishop of that community, although he is a "bishop" himself and he knows Paul's letter to the Philippians with its reference to Philippian episcopoi (1.1). In this he also is in sharp contrast to Ignatius, whom he regarded most highly along with his letters (Polycarp Phil. 13.2). Neither does Polycarp prescribe the office of bishop as a remedy to the problems at Philippi, nor does he advise them to organize along monarchial lines. And yet it is precisely in this city that such an overseer would have been appropriate for more reasons than one. There was a presbyter by the name of Valens, who apparently was unassailable doctrinally, but who, with his wife, had gone astray in a serious ethical matter and because of their conduct had severely damaged the cause of [[ET 74]] their party (11.1-4). Might not Polycarp's peculiar approach stem from the fact that there was, indeed, a "bishop" in Philippi, but in accord with the majority situation in the community, he was a heretic? Because of his aversion to heresy, Polycarp cannot turn to such a bishop for support of his own interests, which coincide with those of orthodoxy, [78] and thus is restricted to making contact with those presbyters and deacons (5.3) whom he regards as his allies, so that through them he can approach the main body of Christianity there. He challenges them to "bring back those who have erred" (6.1).

Were I not fearful of misusing the argument from silence, I would now have to raise the question as to why we hear nothing at all about the community in neighbouring Thessalonica in this connection? One would suppose that this community found itself in a very similar situation to that of Philippi. It also had been established by Paul, in a Macedonian city through which Ignatius had passed on his triumphal procession of suffering. It also had received instructions from the Apostle to the Gentiles, not only orally, but also by letter. Nevertheless, as far as we know, Polycarp never wrote to Thessalonica in spite of the fact that in addition

to his letter to the Philippians he seems also to have sent letters containing instructions to other communities (EH 5.20.8). This contrasting treatment is not satisfactorily explained even by pointing out that believers from Philippi had appealed to Polycarp for help (Polycarp Phil. 3.1 and 13.1-2), while apparently those of Thessalonica had not. For even in the case of Philippi, the actual impetus for writing cannot be attributed to the Christian group there or to its orthodox portion, but to Ignatius (13.1- 2), who came through the city (1.1, 9.1) and invited the Philippians to participate in the demonstration of support for Antioch. We must therefore raise the question as to why Ignatius did not personally or by letter, or through a messenger, also approach the community at Thessalonica with the same request? The suggestion that, subsequent to the time of Paul, Christianity had disappeared once again from Thessalonica, although not intrinsically impossible, is in this instance excluded on the basis of the testimony of Melito of Sardis.[32]

Could it be that what we suspected in Philippi obtained to an even greater degree in Thessalonica and thus explains this reticence of [[ET 75]] Ignatius and silence of Polycarp?[33] "Demas has left me, being in love with this present world, and has gone to Thessalonica" (2 Tim. 4.10), says the ecclesiastically oriented "Paul" of the pastoral epistles. [79] To be sure, this is only a conjecture and nothing more! But 2 Thessalonians already shows, whether it is genuinely Pauline or not,[34] that prior to Ignatius the impression arises that certain people were operating in Thessalonica who, by various means, sought to alienate the Thessalonian Christians from the Apostle to the Gentiles and from his teaching (2.2, 3.17). And Dionysius of Corinth, who around the year 170 sent letters for the orthodox cause as far as Bithynia and Pontus (EH 4.23.4, 6) did not expend effort on any Macedonian community. Was his reason for not writing the fact that everything was in the best of order in Macedonia, in contrast to Lacedaemonia, Athens, and Crete -- those neighboring regions in which he attempted to intervene by writing letters (EH 4.23.2, 5, 7)? Or was it that there was simply no possibility of gaining a hearing there? I am inclined to suspect the latter.[35] Accordingly, I would also include post-Pauline Macedonia among those districts reached by Christianity in which "heresy" predominated, along with Edessa and Egypt from their very earliest Christian beginnings, and Syria-Antioch from almost the

outset. Is it accidental that all these regions were unaffected by the Passover controversy[36] and saw no reason to express any opinion in this matter? Or is not their silence an indication, rather, of their lack of interest in questions which were of vital concern to "the church"?

Dionysius of Corinth views with apprehension another area, not [[ET 76]] discussed above, in which Chistianity had spread to various places, namely the island of Crete. He writes to the church in Gortyna together with the other communities in Crete, commends their bishop Philip, but at the same time he warns against the seductions of the heretics (EH 4.23.5). In another letter, to the Cretan Christians of Cnossus, Dionysius exhorts their bishop, Pinytus, to consider the weakness of "the great mass" (above, 73 n.31, to EH 4.23.7 f.). To be sure, this "majority" is characterized here as being deficient only [80] with respect to the demands of chastity. But in the letter to the church in Amastris in Pontus, which is summarized in the immediately preceding section of EH (4.23.6), Dionysius recommends that the same sort of welcome be extended to those who return after erring in the realm of chastity (hagneia) as to those who had been involved in heresy (hairetikh planh). At all events, Eusebius takes advantage of the opportunity expressly to confirm the orthodoxia of Pinytus, the bishop of Cnossos (EH 4.23.8).

As we move back in time from Dionysius to the letter to Titus, let us remember that it is only for those who regard the latter as genuine that it is necessary to associate the establishment of Christianity in Crete with Paul. If that is not the case, it may be that here also there existed in the beginning a type of Christianity that completely lacked the "ecclesiastical" brand, despite all its other varieties. The letter to Titus would then be regarded as an attempt initially to open the path for ecclesiastical Christianity with the help of the authority of Paul (who was connected with Crete through a recollection that is still reflected in Acts 27.7 ff.), as well as through ecclesiastical organization in general. Even by the time of Dionysius of Corinth, this undertaking had succeeded only to a very limited extent. The "many" (polloi) whom the epistle of Titus reproaches for combining false teaching with unruliness (1.10) correspond to hoi polloi for whom Pinytus is urged to leave the way open for reconciliation.
//end of ch 3// **The End**

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