

What the Apostolic Fathers Said about the Apostles

AUTHORITY

1 Clement. Chapter 42. The apostles have preached the Gospel to us from the Lord Jesus Christ; Jesus Christ [has done so] from1 God. Christ therefore was sent forth by God, and the apostles by Christ. Both these appointments, then, were made in an orderly way, according to the will of God. Having therefore received their orders and being fully assured by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, and established in the word of God, with full assurance of the Holy Ghost, they went forth proclaiming that the kingdom of God was at hand. (Compare with Matthew 10:40; Luke 10:16; John 13:20.)

POLYCARP, Epistle of Polycarp. Chapter 6. Let us then serve Him in fear, and with all reverence, even as He Himself has commanded us, and as the apostles who preached the Gospel unto us, and the prophets who proclaimed beforehand the coming of the Lord. [Note that Jesus, the apostles and the prophets (Old Testament) are all equal in authority.]

IGNATIUS' Epistle to the Romans, Chapter 4. I do not, as Peter and Paul, issue commandments unto you. They were apostles; I am but a condemned man....I do not, as Peter and Paul, issue commandments unto you. They were apostles of Jesus Christ, but I am the very least.

IGNATIUS' Epistle to the Philadelphians, Chapter 4. I do not ordain these things as an apostle: for "who am I, or what is my father's house," that I should pretend to be equal in honour to them? But as your "fellow-soldier," I hold the position of one who [simply] admonishes you.

IGNATIUS' Epistle to the Philadelphians, Chapter 5. I do also love the prophets as those who announced Christ, and as being partakers of the same Spirit with the apostles. For as the false prophets and the false apostles drew [to themselves] one and the same wicked, deceitful, and seducing spirit; so also did the prophets and the apostles receive from God, through Jesus Christ, one and the same Holy Spirit, who is good, and sovereign, and true, and the Author of [saving] knowledge. For there is one God of the Old and New Testament, "one Mediator between God and men....

MARTYRDOM

1 Clement. Chapter 5. But not to dwell upon ancient examples [OT examples in previous section], let us come to the most recent spiritual heroes. Let us take the noble examples furnished in our own generation. Through envy and jealousy, the greatest and most righteous pillars [of the Church] have been persecuted and put to death. Let us set before our eyes the illustrious apostles. **Peter**, through unrighteous envy, endured not one or two, but numerous labours and when he had at length suffered martyrdom, departed to the place of glory due to him. Owing to envy, **Paul** also obtained the reward of patient endurance, after being seven times thrown into captivity, compelled to flee, and stoned. After preaching both in the east and west, he gained the illustrious reputation due to his faith, having taught righteousness to the whole world, and come to the extreme limit of the west, and suffered martyrdom under the prefects. Thus was he removed from the world, and went into the holy place, having proved himself a striking example of patience. **Chapter 6.** To these men who spent their lives in the practice of holiness, there is to be added a great multitude of the elect, who, having through envy endured many indignities and tortures, furnished us with a most excellent example. Through envy, those women, the Danaids and Dircae, being persecuted, after they had suffered terrible and unspeakable torments, finished the course of their faith with steadfastness, and though weak in body, received a noble reward.

Polycarp's Epistle to the Philippians. Chapter 9. I exhort you all, therefore, to yield obedience to the word of righteousness, and to exercise all patience, such as ye have seen [set] before your eyes, not only in the case of the blessed Ignatius, and Zosimus, and Rufus, but also in others among yourselves, **and in Paul himself, and the rest of the apostles.** [This do] in the assurance that all these have not run in vain, but in faith and righteousness, and that they are [now] in their due place in the presence of the Lord, with whom also they suffered. For they loved not this present world, but Him who died for us, and for our sakes was raised again by God from the dead.

Fragments of Papias. In Fragment 5, Philip of Side's Church History (5th Century) tells us that the account of John's

martyrdom was recorded in the second volume of Papias' Exposition of the Sayings of the Lord.

And from Fragment 6, which is preserved in The Chronicle of George the Sinner (9th Century):

"After Domitian [fl. 81-96], Nerva ruled for a year, who, having recalled John from the island, released him to dwell in Ephesus. At the time he was the sole survivor of the twelve apostles and composed the gospel according to himself: he was held worthy of martyrdom. For Papias, bishop of Hierapolis, who was his eyewitness, in the second volume of the Lord's Reports alleged that he was killed by Jews. Having clearly fulfilled, with his brother, the prediction of Christ about them and their own agreement about this and submission: for the Lord said to them, 'Can you drink the cup I will drink?' [Mark 10:38f.] and they gave their assent willingly and agreed: You shall drink, I say, my cup and you shall be baptized with the baptism I am baptized. And reasonably: for God cannot lie. Thus, the erudite Origen also affirmed in his commentary of Matthew, that John was martyred, having intimated that he learned this from the successors of the apostles. And indeed the well-read Eusebius in the Hist. Eccl. [3.1] says: 'Thomas was allotted Parthia; but John Asia, where he resided and died in Ephesus.'"

WITNESS TO JESUS' MIRACLES

Quadratus of Athens in his apology before the Emperor Hadrian (wrote c. 125 AD):

"But the works of our Saviour were always present, for they were genuine: those that were healed, and those that were raised from the dead, who were seen not only when they were healed and when they were raised, but were also always present; and not merely while the Saviour was on earth, but also after his death, they were alive for quite a while, so that some of them lived even to our day." [Eusebius (lived c.260-339) quoted this from Quadratus' Apology in his Church History 4.2.1-3 (c. 325 AD).]

Irenaeus, a disciple of Polycarp (died 155 AD) **who was a disciple of the Apostle John** (died 100 AD):

"For I have a more vivid recollection of what occurred at that time than of recent events (inasmuch as the experiences of childhood, keeping pace with the growth of the soul, become incorporated with it); so that I can even describe the place where the blessed Polycarp used to sit and discourse — his going out, too, and his coming in — his general mode of life and personal appearance, together with the discourses which he delivered to the people; also how he would speak of his familiar intercourse with John, and with the rest of those who had seen the Lord; and how he would call their words to remembrance. Whatsoever things he had heard from them respecting the Lord, both with regard to His miracles and His teaching, Polycarp having thus received [information] from the eye-witnesses of the Word of life, would recount them all in harmony with the Scriptures. These things, through, God's mercy which was upon me, I then listened to attentively, and treasured them up not on paper, but in my heart; and I am continually, by God's grace, revolving these things accurately in my mind." (written c. 175-185 AD; see Fragment 3 of the lost works of Irenaeus as found in The Ante-Nicene Fathers by Roberts and Donaldson)