



Doctoral Theology School
Field of Doctoral Study: Theology

PH.D THESIS

The spiritual life of Christians in the light of the Apostolic Constitutions

Summary

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CUPRINS

Argument	5
Introduction	8
I. State of research on the <i>Apostolic Constitutions</i>	12
1. 1. Testimonies of Church Fathers and Writers on the <i>Apostolic Constitutions</i>	12
1. 1. 1. St. Irenaeus of Lugdunum (†202)	12
1. 1. 2. Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea Caesarea Cappadocia (†340)	13
1. 1. 3. St. Athanasius of Alexandria (†373)	14
1. 1. 4. Seventh local Synod of Constantinople (394)	15
1. 1. 5. St. Epiphanius of Cyprus (†403)	16
1. 1. 6. St. John Chrysostom (†407)	17
1. 1. 7. St. Dionysius Exiguus (†540)	18
1. 1. 8. Emperor Justinian (†565)	20
1. 1. 9. John Scholasticus, Patriarch of Constantinople (†565)	21
1. 1. 10. St. Maxim the Confessor (†662)	21
1. 1. 11. Synod of the „Second Trullan” or „Fifth to Sixth Ecumenical” (691-692)	22
1. 1. 12. St. Anastasios the Synaite († after 700)	23
1. 1. 13. Other ecclesiastical authors	24
1. 2. Editions of the <i>Apostolic Constitutions</i> and related studies	25
1. 2. 1. Appearances in the 16th century	25
1. 2. 2. Appearances in the 17th century	27
1. 2. 3. Appearances in the 18th century	29
1. 2. 4. Appearances in the 19th century	30
1. 2. 5. Appearances in the 20th century	33
1. 2. 6. Works compiled by Marcel Metzger	37
1. 2. 7. Appearances in the 21st century	38
1. 3. The authenticity of the <i>Apostolic Constitutions</i> challenged by different situations	40
1. 3. 1. Absurdities and heresies	42
1. 3. 2. Non-contemporary notions of the Apostles	44
1. 3. 3. The complexity of hierarchy	47
1. 3. 4. Anachronisms and inaccuracies	48
1. 3. 5. Relatively modern uses of some terms	50
1. 3. 5. 1. Tithes and leverage	50

1. 3. 5. 2. Celibacy in view of ordination	50
1. 3. 5. 3. Kingdom Feasts and in honor of saints	51
1. 3. 5. 4. Construction and orientation of churches	53
1. 3. 5. 5. The celebration and administration of baptism	53
1. 4. Sources of the <i>Apostolic Constitutions</i>	54
1. 4. 1. Didascalia	54
1. 4. 2. The Didache	59
1. 4. 3. Apostolic Tradition	60
1. 4. 4. Apostolic Canons	63
1. 5. Author, place and time of the <i>Apostolic Constitutions</i>	65
1. 5. 1. The author of the <i>Apostolic Constitutions</i>	65
1. 5. 2. Place of composition of the <i>Apostolic Constitutions</i>	68
1. 5. 3. Time of the composition of the <i>Apostolic Constitutions</i>	70
1. 6. Contents of the <i>Apostolic Constitutions</i>	74
1. 6. 1. Book One	74
1. 6. 2. Book Two	75
1. 6. 3. Book Three	77
1. 6. 4. Book Four	78
1. 6. 5. Book Five	78
1. 6. 6. Book Six	79
1. 6. 7. Book Seven	81
1. 6. 8. Book Eight	82
II. The Theological Basis of the Spiritual Life	84
2. 1. The Church of Antioch at the time of the <i>Apostolic Constitutions</i>	84
2. 1. 1. A Brief Introduction to Antioch	84
2. 1. 2. Theological disputes culminating in the Antiochian crisis	86
2. 1. 3. Rival theological groups in Antioch	89
2. 2. The Theology of the Apostolic Constitutions	91
2. 2. 1. Propaganda for an heterodox milieu?	92
2. 2. 2. Fair appreciation of the theology of the <i>Apostolic Constitutions</i>	94
2. 2. 3. Biblical quotations used in the realization of the <i>Apostolic Constitutions</i>	98
2. 2. 4. Theological expressions used in the <i>Apostolic Constitutions</i>	99
2. 3. Divine attributes and the Christian life	106
2. 3. 1. Pateriological perspective	113
2. 3. 2. Christological perspective	117

2. 3. 3. Pnevmatological perspective	126
2. 3. 4. The heavenly hierarchy as a model for the organization of worship and Christian communities	128
III. Community life reflected in public ministry	130
3. 1. The <i>Apostolic Constitutions</i> , an important source for Church law	130
3. 1. 1. Provisions on the sin of committing adultery	130
3. 1. 2. Prescriptions concerning evening Mass	134
3. 2. Private worship as reflected in the <i>Apostolic Constitutions</i>	135
3. 3. Public prayers inspired by the <i>Apostolic Constitutions</i>	137
3. 3. 1. Vespers	137
3. 3. 1. 1. Explanation of the notion and patristic testimonies	137
3. 3. 1. 2. Description of the rite	140
3. 3. 1. 3. Clarification of the constitutive elements	144
3. 3. 1. 4. The present typology developed from the <i>Apostolic Constitutions</i>	146
3. 3. 2. Mass of the Eucharist	149
3. 3. 2. 1. Explanation of the concept and patristic testimonies	149
3. 3. 2. 2. Description of the rite	153
3. 3. 2. 3. Clarification of the constitutive elements	155
3. 3. 2. 4. The present typology developed from the <i>Apostolic Constitutions</i>	156
3. 3. 3. Divine Liturgy	157
3. 3. 3. 1. Sacrifice and putting before	157
3. 3. 3. 2. Bible Readings and the Word of Instruction	159
3. 3. 3. 3. Ectations and prayers	165
3. 3. 3. 4. Mass of the Faithful or Eucharistic Liturgy	166
3. 3. 3. 4. 1. The Eucharistic anaphora, a goal for the sanctification of the faithful	168
3. 4. The topicality of the <i>Apostolic Constitutions</i> revealed by the ethical aspects of Book I	182
3. 4. 1. Addressees of the First Book of the <i>Apostolic Constitutions</i>	182
3. 4. 2. Guidelines addressed to men	186
3. 4. 3. Guidelines addressed to women	194
Conclusions	197
Bibliographical abbreviations	199
Bibliography	201
Curriculum Vitae	217
Declaration of honesty	222

The undeniable merit that patristic studies have within Theology as an academic-scientific discipline is to make known, as much as possible and as much as the results of the researchers offer, aspects of the lives, writings and teachings of the Holy Fathers and Church writers of the first eight centuries of Christianity.

Thanks to this presentation we can find out and also learn how and in what environments the Christians of this period lived, what kind of works were written on their own initiative or as a result of certain situations that needed clarification, as well as what problems were addressed, the recommendations, the exhortations that were given for the preservation of the cleanest possible teaching offered through the books of Holy Scripture and put into practice by the early Christian communities

Christian prose and poetry tried and succeeded in raising Christian literature to a level accessible to all the social and intellectual classes of the time. Many of them remain for us today works of unquestionable value, ever relevant.

Within Christian literature, pseudo-apostolic literature occupies a special place. Its characteristic feature is the "apostolic" author of its works. This genre of Christian literature spans a longer period of time, from the 2nd-5th centuries, with each of the pseudo-apostolic works inspired by one another or representing different compilations. Chronologically, they are situated between the *Didache* (2nd century), on which some writings certainly depend for certain parts, and the *Apostolic Constitutions* (4th century), the largest and most important work belonging to this kind of literature.

The need to establish rules for the life of the communities and the liturgy of the churches, faithful to tradition, in a way that gradually adapted to new situations and to the times themselves, led in the early Christian centuries to the compilation of canonical-liturgical collections in which older documents were collected and modified.

This was the case with the *Didascalia*, dating from the first decades of the third century, which was the source of inspiration for the first six books of the *Apostolic Constitutions*, with the *Didache* (late first century) which, together with a prayer-form, formed the basis of the seventh book of the *Constitutions*, and with the *Apostolic Tradition of Ipolytus* (215) which, together with the *Apostolic Canons* (third century), forms the source of inspiration for the eighth book of the *Apostolic Constitutions*.

The works included in the compilations, like the writing to which we are referring, have sometimes been defined as a kind of "literary units". One of these so-called "literary units" is a piece of writing to which various titles are attributed. The Vienna manuscript (twelfth century), the only one which gives us the complete text in Greek, entitles it *Propositions given through the intercession of Clement and the ecclesiastical canons of the*

holy apostles; the first part of the title, with reference to Clement, was doubtless added later to associate the work with the artificial framework of the *Apostolic Constitutions*, while the second part probably corresponds to the older title. Modern scholarship, however, has used very different names, especially in the French-speaking world (in German and English the title *Apostolische Kirchenordnung/Apostolic Church Order* has been used instead); there is now a tendency to accept generally the title *Ecclesiastical Constitution of the Apostles*.

A perusal of the text of the compilation reveals its unevenness. It is given by the sources that led to the realization of the *Apostolic Constitutions*, composed in different historical-theological periods: Didascalia, Didache and Apostolic Tradition.

This extensive compilation, compiled towards the end of the fourth century, can be approached from an interdisciplinary perspective: patrology, universal ecclesiastical history, catechetics, moral, liturgical, canonical, dogmatic.

The work "The Spiritual Life of Christians in the Light of the *Apostolic Constitutions*" is divided into three large chapters, roughly equal in length: The State of Research on the Apostolic Constitutions, The Theological Basis of the Spiritual Life and Community Life as Reflected in Public Masses. Patristic-historical, dogmatico-theological and liturgical-moral themes are dealt with.

The first part of the doctoral research is made up of six sub-chapters, each of which contains other sub-divisions. Thus, the following topics are treated: Testimonies of the Fathers and ecclesiastical writers on the *Apostolic Constitutions*, Editions of the *Apostolic Constitutions* and studies on them, The authenticity of the *Apostolic Constitutions* contested by various situations, The Sources of the *Apostolic Constitutions*, The Author, the place and the time of the composition of the *Apostolic Constitutions*, The Contents of the *Apostolic Constitutions*.

It has long been thought that some of the ecclesiastical writers who lived in the first centuries of Christianity would have known this writing, but it has been definitely established that, under the name *Διδαχαί* or *Διδαχή των Αποστόλων*, they did not mean the *Apostolic Constitutions* = *Διαταγαί* or *Διάταξεις των Αποστόλων* or *αποστολικάί*, but "Didache of the Twelve Apostles."

St. Irenaeus (†202) considers the *Apostolic Constitutions* as the second Apostles' writings, of course, counting as their first writings the New Testament writings, and calls them the Apostles' commandments, using the phrase *διατάξεις των αποστόλων*. The ecclesiastical historian Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea Cappadocia (†340) knew only Book VII of the *Apostolic Constitutions*, because it uses, textually or in a textured or processed form, the Didache or Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, composed either in the 1st or 1st I century.

St. Athanasius of Alexandria (†373) considers the *Apostolic Appendices* sacred and useful books to be read (ἀναγινωσκόμενα), or places them among the controversial or disputed writings (ἀντιλεγόμενα) of the New Testament. On the basis of canon 74 Ap. which requires the synod "to decide upon him what he shall reckon, lest (he) think (he) that, fleeing from judgment, he gains," the fathers of the Seventh Local Synod of Constantinople (394), by can. 1, reinforce that the bishop should be judged by a legal tribunal, that the accused should be summoned and heard, and that the judgment should be pronounced by the full synod, made up of the bishops of the dioceses within the metropolis, headed by the metropolitan.

St. Epiphanius of Cyprus (†403) was well acquainted with the whole contents of the *Apostolic Apostles*, and had them at his hand, for he recalls very many pericopae from different parts, calling the words which flow from them apostolic commandments (αποστολικοι διαταξις), commandments comprising the rules or canons of faith and all the apostolic ordinances concerning the administration of the church, and all that the faithful ought to believe, confess, and observe. Fragments of the *Apostolic Constitutions*, together with the canons of the Holy Apostles, are mentioned by St. John Chrysostom (†407) in his commentaries on the Gospel of Matthew.

St. Dionysius Exiguus (†540) did not translate all the 85 canons of the Apostles. He discarded the last 35 apostolic canons because they contained rulings that did not fit the customs of the Apusene Church, such as baptism by entire immersion. The Orthodox Basil Justinian (†565) mentions the Apostolic Canons in his public writings, which have a legislative content. John Scholasticus, Patriarch of Constantinople (†577) speaks with great reverence and pays much praise to the Constitutions and Canons of the Holy Apostles in the preface to his Nomocanon.

St. Maximus Confessor (†662) mentions the *Apostolic Constitutions* many times in his works, and calls them sacred ordinances, decrees and commandments (ιεραὶ διατογαί). The condemnation made by can. 2 V-VI ec. (691-692) was supposed to withdraw from the *Apostolic Constitutions* all the official authority given to them by the Eastern Church. Nevertheless they did not in the least cease to be read, witness the numerous writers mentioned who mention them as well as the manuscripts of which quite a number have survived.

The work in which St. Anastasius the Sinaite († after 700) tackles difficult historical, theological and moral themes in the writings of the Fathers includes long extracts from the *Apostolic Constitutions*. This is the exegetical writing Questions and Answers (ἐρωρωτήσεις καὶ ἀποκρίσεις).

With the advent of the printing press, a serious impetus was observed, especially in the printing of various ancient manuscripts, so that they could be known by those interested and not only. Thus, in this period of rebirth and general impulse, it was also possible to publish the *Apostolic Constitutions*, and to know their contents.

The Editio princeps of the *Apostolic Constitutions* was realized in Venice in 1563, in Greek, through the labors of Franciscus Turrianus (Torres), who started his work from the manuscript Vat. gr. 839, which he completed, when various fragments were missing, with the manuscripts Vat. gr. 2088 and Vat. gr. 2089, (+Vat. gr. 2115), adding marginal remarks. Bishop Giovanni Carlo Bovio of Ostuni prepared and published the first Latin translation of the text of the *Apostolic Constitutions*, which appeared in Venice in 1563 at the same time as the editio princeps of the Greek original.

Since the first edition of the *Apostolic Constitutions*, they have been reprinted and reedited several times, with various annotations and brief explanations of the text. There have also been studies on their authenticity, especially by Protestant and Roman Catholic theologians.

Jean Daillé compiled *De pseudepigraphis apostolicis seu libris octo Constitutionum apostolicarum apocryphis libri III* at Harderwick (Gueldre) in 1653. Then, Jean-Baptiste Cotelier (Cotelerius), published the excellent edition with the title *SS. Patrum qui temporibus apostolicis floruerunt, Barnabæ, Clementis, Hermæ, Ignatii, Polycarpi opera edita et non edita, vera et supposita, grace et latine, cum notis* at Paris in 1672.

The fourth-century compilation is translated by Dosoftei, the metropolitan of Moldavia, with the following title: *Orânduelele sau poruncile sf. Apostoli, tălmăcite din grecește sau elinește dintr-un foarte bun izvor în limba rusă, de mine smeritul Dosoftei, mitropolitul Sucevei în anul 7200, 1693?* at Stryj in the castle near St. Ioan Suceveanul, the great martyr of Christ.

William Whinston compiled *Primitive Christianity Reviv'd*, in four volumes, in London in 1711. Volume I contains the Epistles of St. Ignatius in Greek and English. Vol. II contains the *Apostolic Constitutions*, also in Greek and English. Vol. III contains an Essay on these *Apostolic Constitutions*.

Jean Le Clerc (Johannes Clericus) compiles in Amsterdam in 1724 the second revised edition of the work of Jean-Baptiste Cotelier (Cotelerius).

Since the nineteenth century the *Apostolic Constitutions* together with the Canons of the Apostles have aroused the interest of theologians. Those who have dealt with them have not confined themselves to printing them in print, with translations, brief notes and annotations, but have carried out critical and in-depth studies of their origin, antiquity and

content in comparison with the writings of the New Testament and with the tradition of apostolic teaching preserved in the writings of the early Church Fathers and in other works attributed to the apostles

Otto Krabbe makes an extensive study of the above-mentioned patristic writing: *Ueber den Ursprung und den Inhalt der Apostolischen Konstitutionen des Clemens Romanus. Ein historisch-kritischer Versuch*, Hamburg, 1829.

Dr. Johann Sebastian von Drey, a German Catholic professor at the University of Tübingen, compiled the outstanding writing entitled *Neue Untersuchungen über die Konstitutionen und Kanones der Apostel. Ein historisch-kritischer Beitrag zur Literatur der Kirchengeschichte und des Kirchenrechts*, in 1832 in Tübingen.

Paul Anton de Lagarde edited the *Didascalia apostolorum syriace* in Leipzig in 1854, noting that it corresponds to the text quoted by St. Epiphanius (†403) and that the first six books of the *Apostolic Constitutions* were only a reworking of the above-mentioned writing.

The writings of the Catholic theologian Franz Xaver von Funk, of the University of Tübingen, undoubtedly occupy a prominent place among these studies and research. Among his works is the well-known work *Die Apostolischen Konstitutionen, eine litterar-historische Untersuchung*, which appeared in 1891.

In 1905 the German theologian published in Paderborn *Didascalia et Constitutiones Apostolorum*, in two volumes, Latin and Greek text. For this edition, Funk used the three manuscripts to which Torres had had recourse in sec. XVI, Vaticanus gr. 839, 2088 and 2089.

Professor François-Nicolas Nau of the Institut Catholique in Paris edited, in 1902, *La Didascalie, c'est-a-dire l'enseignement catholique des douze Apôtres et des saints disciples de notre Sauveur, Traduite du Syriaque pour la première fois*.

Profesor al Facultății de Teologie din București, Dragomir Demetrescu realiza un bun material cu privire la Constituții Apostolice intitulat "Așezămintele Sfinților Apostoli și scrierile de origină Apostolică în legătură cu ele". It sees the light of print in BOR, year XXXIII (1909-1910), no. 6 (Sept. 1910), pp. 663-682; no. 7 (Oct. 1910), pp. 802-817; year XXXIV (1910-1911), no. 10 (Jan. 1911), pp. 1049-1060.

In 1928 *Așezămintele și Canoanele Apostolice* is published under the editorship of Prof. Ioan Mihălcescu, Fr. Matei Pâslaru and Fr. N. Nițu. Translated from the original, they are part of the Writings of the Apostolic Fathers together with the Apostolic Apostolic Apostolic Canons and Apostolic Canons, vol. II. They were published in the "Theological Collection", Publishing House of the Faculty of Theology in Chisinau.

Pr. Dumitru Fecioru published a Romanian edition of the Didache in 1979. It is part of the Writings of the Apostolic Fathers (PSB 1), contains 352 p., appears in Bucharest and can be read between pp. 15-35.

The most outstanding person of the 20th century who has taken a particular interest in the work we are dealing with is undoubtedly Prof. Marcel Metzger of the Faculty of Catholic Theology in Strasbourg. He has provided readers with the French translation of the Apostolic Constitutions together with the Greek text, as it has emerged from various manuscript researches. These are: *Les Constitutions apostoliques*, tome I, Livres I et II, Paris, 1985, (SC 320); tome II, Livres III-V, Paris, 1986, (SC 329); tome III, Livres VII et VIII, Paris, 1987, 368 p. (SC 336).

In 2001, *Costituzioni dei Santi Apostoli per mano di Clemente* was published in Rome, translated by Salachas Dimitrios and Spada Domenico.

Pr. Petru Buburuz defends in 1972, in St. Petersburg, his master's thesis in theology on St. Ipolit the Roman and "Apostolic Tradition". The work was published in Chisinau in 2002.

Diac. Ioan I. Ică jr. in *Canon of Orthodoxy, I, Apostolic Canon of the First Three Centuries*, Deisis Publishing House, Sibiu, 2008, 1040 p., offers the recent translation of the *Constitutions* of the Apostles through Clement. The eight books can be read between pp. 597-784. Also in this volume we find two of the sources of the compilation: the Didache of the Twelve Apostles, pp. 565-572, and Ipolytus of Rome, *Apostolic Tradition*, pp. 573-589.

In 2017 Pauliina Pylvänäinen defended her doctoral dissertation in theology entitled *Agents in liturgy, charity and communication : the tasks of female deacons in the Apostolic Constitutions* at Joensuu, University of Eastern Finland. The study was published in 2020.

With time, the theory of the apostolic origin of the Constitutions was abandoned, Catholic and Protestant scholars refusing to admit the origin of these compilations from the Holy Apostles. Historical, doctrinal, liturgical, and linguistic criticism discovered in the contents of this work so many and such strong proofs against the apostolic origin of the Constitutions that in the future any serious attempt to attribute them to the Apostles was ruled out.

One absurd assertion is that the sacrifices and ritual washings, in a word the whole Mosaic Law, were imposed on the Jews only in consequence of the exaltation of the golden calf.

In the contents of the *Apostolic Constitutions* may be found certain recent words which are impossible to date to the time of the Apostles. Let us remember the category of the neophytes or the recently baptized.

It can be seen that the ecclesiastical hierarchy of the *Apostolic Constitutions* is more complete than that of the Apostolic era.

Abbot François Nau argues that the *Apostolic Constitutions* also contain some inconsistencies between the facts and the epoch in which they are set, namely some errors and some statements concerning episcopal succession.

Some relatively modern notions are found in the *Apostolic Constitutions*. Certain feasts are celebrated after the apostolic era. Thus the earliest mention of the feast of the Ascension of the Lord is found in Eusebius of Caesarea. The antiquity of the feast of the Nativity can be proved by documents from the end of the third century. The beginning of the Epiphany feast dates back at least to the 3rd century, when the earliest mention of its existence is recorded, and it was first attested in Alexandria by Clement Alexandrinus (†215).

In the *Apostolic Constitutions* II, 57, 3-4 we find modern notions concerning the construction and orientation of churches. The compilation compiled towards the end of the fourth century also mentions the manner of performing and administering baptism. Instructions on the baptismal ritual are addressed to bishops and priests. Thus, in VII, 22, 1-2. 4. 6, we find modern notions which could not have been used by the Apostles.

The discovery, in the middle of the nineteenth century, of the principal sources of the *Constitutions* was able to provide a definitive solution as to the authenticity of the "apostolic" work with which we are concerned. Researchers have been able to affirm that it represents a compilation, with some reworking, of older writings considered apostolic. It has been found to consist of several works that were the basis for its composition.

The largest part of the *Apostolic Constitutions* is inspired by the Didascalia or Universal Teaching of the Twelve Apostles and Holy Disciples of the Savior (ἡ Διδασκαλία or ἡ Καθολικὴ διδασκαλία τῶν δώδεκα ἀποστόλων καὶ ἁγίων μαθητῶν τοῦ Σωτῆρος ἡμῶν). This constitutes a Church Rite, composed in the first decades of the 1st cent. III.

It was composed for a community of Christian converts from pagan pagan Christianity in northern Syria. In its 26 chapters, the Didascalia recounts Christian life, hierarchy, liturgy, trials, offerings and the reconciliation of sinners.

The most important document of the Apostles' immediate period and the earliest source of church law is another source of inspiration for the *Apostolic Constitutions*. We remember it because the compiler "drew" from it when compiling Book VII of the Apocrypha.

The earliest post-biblical piece of Christian literature bears a double title: "The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles" (Διδαχὴ τῶν δώδεκα ἀποστόλων) and "The Teaching of the Lord through the Twelve Apostles to the Gentiles" (Διδαχὴ κυρίου διὰ τῶν δώδεκα ἀποστόλων τοῖς ἔθνεσιν). The longer title appears as an amplification of the former.

Called the Book of the Two Ways, the second source for the *Constitutions* has a generally orderly composition along its 16 chapters. The first part, between chapters I to VI, is a moral catechism, the second part of the Didache, between chapters VII to X, is a liturgical compendium, and chapters XI to XV, which form the third part, contain canonical teachings or matters of discipline.

The third main source of inspiration for the *Apostolic Constitutions* is the Apostolic Tradition of Ipolytus. Probably written around 215 by Ipolytus in Rome, the Apostolic Tradition is, with the exception of the Didache, the oldest and most important Christian ecclesiastical constitution. This primary evangel or sacramentary has 42 chapters.

The Apostolic Canons is a very late compilation of ecclesiastical ordinances of various dogmatic, moral, cultic, and canonical character, treating, in no particular order, the principal ecclesiastical questions. The author or compiler of the Apostolic Canons would have been the same as the one who compiled the *Apostolic Constitutions*. Their style is entirely reminiscent of the usual style of the canons of the ancient synods. The compilation borrows many of their provisions.

The *Apostolic Constitutions* were handed down to posterity under the name of Clement. This is not a pseudonym. It was simply intended to lend credibility to the work by falsely attributing to it the name of this person, St. Clement (1st cent.), one of the first successors of St. Apost. Peter and leader of the Church of Rome.

Two clues point to Syria as the general setting in which the *Apostolic Constitutions* were written. The naming of the months in terms of the Syro-Macedonian calendar is the first argument. Then liturgical feasts such as Nativity and Epiphany are mentioned.

Whether the work of the *Apostolic Constitutions* was composed before or after the Second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople is not known. The following conclusion can be drawn: the compilation saw the light of day at the time of the Synod in the capital of the Byzantine Empire, around 380, a little before, but certainly not much after that year.

The *Apostolic Constitutions* is a compilation of eight books, each with several chapters. The first book of the *Apostolic Constitutions* has 10 chapters, preceded by a prologue. It bears the title "Universal Teaching on the Laity" (Καθολοδικὴ διδασκαλία περὶ λαϊκῶν).

Book II is entitled "On Bishops, Priests and Deacons" (Περὶ ἐπισκόπων, πρεσβυτέρων καὶ διακόνων), and has 63 chapters. They represent an amplification of the topics omitted between chapters IV-XIII of the Didascalia.

And in Book III, "On Widows" (Περὶ χηρῶν), ideas similar to the Didascalia. In its 20 chapters, it is a reworking and development of chapters XIV-XVI of the work that appeared in the first half of the third century.

The shortest of the eight books of the *Apostolic Constitutions* is Book IV, "On Orphans" (Περὶ ὀρφανῶν), which consists of 14 chapters. They represent a reworking and amplification of three chapters, XVII, XVIII and XXII, of the Didascalia.

And Book V, "On the Martyrs" (Περὶ μαρτύρων), is also written from fragments of the Didascalia. Specifically, it is chapters XIX-XXI. The compiler of the *Apostolic Constitutions* considered treating the theme of the martyrs in 20 chapters.

Book VI, "On Schisms" (Περὶ σχισμάτων), represents the development of the last four chapters of the Didascalia, namely from XXIII to XXVI. This elaboration, which the author of the *Apostolic Constitutions* considers necessary to be part of his compilation, contains 30 chapters.

The penultimate book of the *Apostolic Constitutions*, "On the Conduct of the Christian, on Thanksgiving, and on Christian Initiation" (Περὶ πολιτείας καὶ εὐχαριστίας καὶ τῆς κατὰ Χριστὸν μυστικῆς) or "On the Use of Life, on Multitudes, and on Introduction into the Christian Faith" has 49 chapters. In fact, the first part, between chapters I-XXII, is a developed reworking of the Didache, the second part, between chapters XXIII-XLIX, consists of formulations of prayers and prescriptions concerning catechumenate and baptism.

The last book of the *Apostolic Constitutions*, "On the Graces, Ordinations, and Ecclesiastical Canons" (Περὶ καὶ χειροτονιῶν καὶ κανόνων ἐκκλησιαστικῶν) comprises 48 chapters. The first two are connected with the work On Gifts (Περὶ χαρισμάτων ἀποστολῆς παράδοσις) of Ipolytus, those between III-XXVII constitute an amplified version of the Apostolic Tradition drawn up by the same author, those between XXVIII-XLVI are rules relating to the cultic life, the penultimate represents the Apostolic Canons, and the last is a final exhortation.

The second part of the doctoral research, The Theological Basis of the Spiritual Life, consists of three sub-chapters, each of which contains further sub-divisions. The following topics are treated: the Church of Antioch during the making of the *Apostolic Constitutions*, the Theology of the *Apostolic Constitutions*, and Divine Attributes and the Christian Life.

In Antioch, the characteristics of an entirely pagan city life, in celebrations, customs and ceremonies, with paganism present everywhere, and the Christian's need to distinguish himself from his environment, are discernible.

After 360 the Antiochian crisis reached its most complex: the community of Antioch at that time numbered four rival communities, each headed by a bishop.

Being an atypical work, the question naturally arises: which of the four groups concerned with theological issues in Antioch around 380 influenced the style and content of the work produced "through Clement" in a "workshop"?

The presentation of the theology of the *Apostolic Constitutions* makes it difficult to obtain the desired result, if one looks for traces of Arianism or other heresies in its contents. This writing comes from a tradition of canonists and ecclesiastical pastors who were essentially concerned for the good of their communities.

In order to arrive at a correct appreciation of the theology of the late fourth-century compilation, it is important to keep in mind two characteristics of this writing. The first feature is the scattering of theological observations throughout the entire work. The second feature of the *Apostolic Constitutions* is the lack of homogeneity inherent in any compilation.

Among the important sources of inspiration used by the "compiler" in the realization of the *Apostolic Constitutions* are biblical quotations, used more as interpolations. The "author" either fills in quotations from the Didache or the Didascalia, or adds one or more quotations with the same meaning that he has found in his sources.

The compiler made extensive use of expressions that were common in his time: repeated statements of the confessions of faith and of the euhologomena or prayers commonly used by Christian communities, terms from the Neoplatonic and Philonic vocabulary transmitted through Jewish blessings and incorporated into liturgical language.

As is evident from the contents of the late fourth-century compilation, the concerns of its compiler are pastoral rather than doctrinal. He is interested above all in the defense of Christian communities against the ravages of heresy and the education of catechumens in the true faith.

The sovereignty and omnipotence of God is manifested first and foremost in creation, evoked numerous times in the *Apostolic Constitutions*, sometimes in brief allusions, sometimes in detailed and colorful descriptions, as in the anaphorale of VIII, 12, 8-17, where the various parts of the universe are presented in turn: the unseen creatures, the stars, the vegetable kingdom, the animal world, humanity.

In vain would one search the *Apostolic Constitutions* for a treatise on Christology. The references to the Second Person of the Holy Trinity are scattered in an apologetic demonstration or within a prayer.

One aspect of the theology of the *Apostolic Constitutions*, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, may have contradicted the copyists of this work in the centuries that followed. This teaching is contrary to that defined by the Council of Constantinople of 381. The doctrine concerning the Third Person of the Holy Trinity was not brought to light until more modern times, because the copyists erased the fragments they considered heretical.

Together with cherubim, seraphim, and other heavenly powers, the unseen world is held up in the *Apostolic Constitutions* as a model of the Church, both for its obedience to God (II, 56, 1) and for the continual glorification it brings to Him.

The last part of the doctoral research is made up of four sub-chapters, each of which contains further sub-divisions. Thus, the following themes are dealt with: *Apostolic Constitutions*, an important source for ecclesiastical law, Private worship reflected in the *Apostolic Constitutions*, Public prayers inspired by the *Apostolic Constitutions*, The topicality of the *Apostolic Constitutions* revealed by the ethical aspects of the First Book.

The *Apostolic Constitutions* are a set of rules governing the life of Christian communities, compiled at the end of the fourth century and one of the major expressions of canon law in the early centuries.

Unwilling sins actually bring into question the responsibility of all fallen and sinful humanity. Thus every man, although not a priori responsible for the evils from which his Adamic nature suffers, becomes partly responsible a posteriori through personal sin, thus associating himself with Adam and assuming to some extent his own fault.

By the second half of the 4th century, an evening service had already been established, with the original and central rite of the lighting of the lights, with prayers and hymns and psalms (antiphons) in general use throughout the Christian East.

In Christianity, the evening and morning prayers represent the earliest Mosaic tradition of its earliest followers recruited from among the Jews, with motifs corresponding to the evening and morning sacrifices prescribed by the Old Testament.

From the *Apostolic Constitutions* VIII, 35, 2 we find a description concerning what would later become the service of vespers: "When evening is evening, you shall assemble the Church, bishop, and after the psalm of light (τὸν ἐπιλύχνικον ψαλμὸν) has been said, the deacon shall offer the ectensis for catechumens, the possessed, those for the light, and penitents, as I have said above."

The Simeon Prayer of Right Simeon (Lk. 2:29-32) which is said or sung after the stihoavna at vespers is one of the few prayers of biblical origin used in Orthodox worship. It is mentioned in the *Apostolic Constitutions*, VII, 48, 4 (PG, 1, 1058B), and has probably been used since ancient times as an evening prayer, as part of the evening hymn.

The earliest complete description of the ordinance of the unction in the early Christian Church is found in the *Apostolic Constitutions*. Thus, in VIII, 34, 1. 7 we find: "Say morning prayers... at the crowing of the roosters..., for this hour proclaims the coming of the day for the work of the deeds of light (cf. Rom. 13:12-13)."

The early Church recalls the custom of the faithful bringing the gifts necessary for the Holy Sacrifice, all who attended Mass and were to receive Holy Communion bringing their gifts as a concrete symbol of their spiritual offering. It is from this action of bringing the sacrificial materials that the term "proskomidia" (προσκομιδή from πρός meaning "before" and κομίζειν meaning "to carry, to bring, to transport"), which means "to bring, to set before or to offer", is used in ecclesiastical language.

But before the beginning of the Proskomidion, the washing of the hands of the liturgists takes place. It is the oldest ritualistic element in this part of the Liturgy. The *Apostolic Constitutions*, in VIII, 11, 12 (PG, 1, 1089 D), mention this action at the beginning of the Mass of the Faithful as part of the preparatory rite for the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice.

From the *Apostolic Constitutions* VIII, 5, 11 (PG, 1, 1076 A) it can be seen that the Liturgy of the catechumens began with the biblical readings, "the reading of the Law and the Prophets, of our Epistles and Acts and of the Gospels." The Preparation of the Gifts or Proskomidia, the rite we are accustomed to perform before the high blessing at Mass, took place after the reading of these texts.

The *Apostolic Constitutions* II, 57, 4 (PG, 1, 725 A) and VIII, 12, 4 (PG, 1, 1092 B) respectively, hint that bishops and deacons wore vestments appropriate to their offices: the deacons had broad vestments, which did not hinder their movements: 'equipped in the great garment (τῆς πλείονος ἐσθῆτος)', and the bishop wore a 'bright vestment (λαμπρὰν ἐσθῆτα)'.

The anaphora in VIII, 12 is the most important part of the compilation in several respects. First here we find the main elements of the synagogal blessing of Yom Kippur, the great day of reconciliation. Then we find essential elements of the extended prayer of thanksgiving, namely the reconciliation between God and man as a result of the Incarnation of Christ. Last but not least, we find fundamental notions of the heavenly hierarchy.

The first of the eight parts that make up the compilation compiled towards the end of the 2nd cent. IV, is regarded as a small treatise on Christian ethics. The Prologue which

begins the Universal Teaching on the Laity lists the addressees to whom the instructions are addressed: all who come from among the heathen (τοῖς ἐξ ἔθνῶν ἔθνῶν), the Church, reckoned as God's offspring and His chosen vine (Θεοῦ φυτεία καὶ ἀμπελὼν αὐτοῦ ἐκλεκτός), and, again, all who are Christians.

The whole doctrine of the *Apostolic Constitutions* is founded on these rules of Christian conduct, occasionally mentioned elsewhere: one must obey God, please or be pleasing to Him, and punishment threatens him who resists God's will.

The contents of the book Universal Teaching on the Laity can be divided into two sections, different in scope: exhortations addressed to men, and then exhortations offered to women.

Among the perceptions addressed to men are those concerning the sin of covetousness, the unjust acquisition of neighbor's goods, the love of neighbor, behavior in relations with women, work and amusements. Care towards labor is commended, even loved or appreciated by God. As to reading, pagan books are to be rejected, all the more as those of the Bible favorably supplant all other literature. One pastime, considered a pastime, is bathing or bathing.

Three series of exhortations are addressed to women: advice to wives, advice about bathing and avoiding quarrels. Lengthy passages from the Proverbs of Solomon 31, taken from Book I of the compilation, provide wives with a model of conduct. They are followed by warnings about the risks and harmful effects of adornment, and recommendations on dress and attire.

The last words of the book entitled Universal Teaching on the Laity are telling. They are to be found in I, X, 4: "seek to know the teachings by which you may approach the kingdom of our Lord in a way pleasing to him".

The *Apostolic Constitutions* are still today an important source for patrologists, liturgists, canonists, and moralists, being a treasure trove of information from the past with application to the life of the contemporary Church. The work with which we have been concerned may be considered, because of its content and the guidance it gives, the culmination of ancient canonical literature.

The literary genre of the *Apostolic Constitutions* is neither treatise, nor commentary on a scriptural text, nor homily, nor dialog: it is a compilation of traditions which deal with questions of an institutional and liturgical nature. Therefore, the theology of this work is not approached in a speculative but in a historical and prayerful way. Because the purpose of the work is to call for behavior in conformity with that of the two Supreme Shepherds, God the Father and Christ, the connections that exist between the events and

episodes of salvation, together with the recalling of examples, leads to the amplification of the author's intentions.

To find the right way in presenting the faith you need a lot of love. And love is neither sentimentality, nor only good intentions, but the great struggle of overcoming oneself – that is holiness, as the Church says. If one or more readers succeed in syllabizing faith through this study, the paradox of the pool of Siloam will once again be true: with a little love, people's eyes will be opened to the miracle of life.

Key words:

Apostolic Constitutions, prayer, order, moral life, hierarchy, obedience, laity, philanthropy, canons, structure of the Masses.