

Fathers were silent on the details of Jesus' life

What documents would be next in importance to the New Testament? Obviously, the next oldest related writings. These are the apostolic Fathers, that is, the fathers of the Church who supposedly learned from the apostles. Christians say that Jesus is likely to have existed when the Apostolic Fathers say he did exist.

The Fathers tell us so little about him that he could easily have been an invention. It is not enough for them to say they believe or know that Jesus was a real person and not a fake.

Clement says that Jesus died a bloody death and rose again. He was sent by God and sent the apostles to preach his message after their doubts had been cured by his return from the dead. He quotes Jesus saying that it is better to be murdered than to lead a person into sin.

He doesn't say if the apostles saw the resurrected Lord or even when Jesus lived. His Jesus could have been a being who was crucified by demons in the distant past and rose sometime since then and who appeared to somebody in a dream who converted the apostles later for all we know. His Jesus could have been a dream.

Ignatius said that Jesus was born of Mary (Ephesians 7), baptised (18), sinless (Magnesians 7) and was God.

He says that he wants "you to be unshakably convinced of the Birth, the Passion, and the Resurrection which were the true and indisputable experiences of Jesus Christ, our Hope, in the days of Pontius Pilate's governorship" (Magnesians 11). This is very important for it is the testimony of a Christian who was likely to have known the apostle John that Jesus Christ was born of Mary and died and rose when Pilate was Procurator. This period is from 26-36 AD! Was Jesus only ten years old when he was killed? This would prove the gospels to be sheer fantasy. If one takes the unwarranted view that Ignatius structured the sentence badly and meant that Jesus suffered and rose and was not born in Pilate's time, then one can just as easily say that he meant that Jesus was not born and did not suffer in Pilate's day. He only rose in it. Indeed because the resurrection was nearest to the Pilate mention it is clear that it must have been what was meant, if you wish to use that road. The text then would deny that Jesus was born and died in the reign of Pilate.

Also, the evidence for the birth and death and resurrection of Jesus is said to provide unshakeable conviction. Why? Because they are the experiences of Jesus Christ. Clearly this indicates that Jesus revealed these events after they happened. They happened and are evidenced not by testimonies or gospels but are evidenced by the witness of the resurrected Jesus. In other words, nobody heard of them until Jesus started speaking of them in visions. This supports the hypothesis that Jesus never lived. You will not get unshakeable conviction from evidence for it is a human thing and nobody sees everything the same way. Evidence can lead you in the wrong direction. The Church says that though Ignatius feels that you are certain of the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus because of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit through whom Jesus testifies to you, he did not exclude the methods of finding the truth by examining testimonies and reports of Jesus. He does not. If you get an unshakeable conviction through turning to God what would you need anything else for? It would imply doubt.

In addition, Ignatius wrote, "To profess Jesus Christ while continuing to follow Jewish customs is an absurdity" (Magnesians 10). The early Church on the contrary held that it could keep as much of the Jewish law as it wanted. Some, including myself believe that there is no evidence that the early Church shelved the rules of the Jewish Law but they did teach that the Law was good but not a Law anymore for Christians for they don't have to be forced to obey it though they should obey it. Ignatius was contradicting the New Testament and the gospels in what he said. He denied the Jesus of the gospels.

The Epistle to the Smyrnaeans (1) says that Christ was born of the virgin and was baptised by John and then "in the days of Pontius Pilate and Herod the Tetrarch" was crucified. This seems to give the impression that Jesus was born and baptised before their taking office. But Jesus according to the gospels must have been baptised when Pilate was Procurator (Luke 3:1). He gives a quote from Jesus saying touch me for I am not a spirit that seems to have been plucked from Luke 24:39. But Luke says more than that. There Jesus says touch me and see that I am not a spirit for a spirit does not have flesh and bones like I have. Had Ignatius known Luke he would have quoted it completely for it was believed that spirits could be touched after they materialise themselves so the author of Luke had to go and say they felt flesh and bones to make it seem more real. His logic was that it was better to feel flesh and bone and not just flesh alone. The apostles thought that Jesus was a ghost and ghosts can give the illusion of being touched. Luke looks like an improvement on Ignatius' assertion meaning that Luke was written by a follower of Ignatius. The absurdity of Jesus' declaration that being touchable meant he could not be a ghost shows that the risen Jesus could not be trusted.

Smyraeans (3) tells us that Jesus was resurrected and was still like any natural man. This can agree with Jesus being a child

when he died for man meant women and children as well as men. The Catholic creed says: "for us men and for our salvation he came down from Heaven."

The first century Epistle to Diognetus simply says that Jesus was the sinless Saviour who taught his apostles the Gospel in the plainest language (11). This contradicts the gospel of John where the apostles complain about Jesus not speaking plainly. There is a lot of vague talk even in the synoptics, that is the gospels of Mark, Matthew and Luke. And Jesus even said once that he hid his teaching in parables to keep their meaning from the people. Diognetus is proving that John's gospel is a hoax and the same about the other gospels. It also denies that the Jewish regulations in the Torah were literal though Jesus observed them and took them literally which shows it knows nothing of the Jesus of the gospels and which makes his existence improbable. It even undermines the visions of the risen Jesus to the apostles which supported the Law which may mean that it is accusing the apostles of not reporting what the risen Jesus said accurately. And it is older than the gospels so its word comes first.

Barnabas from the first century mentions the miracle power, death and resurrection of but goes into no detail. Judging by the silliness of his letter it is obvious that his standard of what a miraculous wonder would be would be rather low just like many of those who write into the appalling St. Martin's Magazine to say what "miracles" he did for them have.

Epiphanius of Salamis who died in 403 CE in his Panarion 29:3 wrote, "For with the advent of the Christ, the succession of the princes from Judah, who reigned until the Christ Himself, ceased. The order [of succession] failed and stopped at the time when He was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Alexander, who was of high-priestly and royal race; and after this Alexander this lot failed, from the times of himself and Salina, who is also called Alexandra, for the times of Herod the King and Augustus Emperor of the Romans." Some say it puts Jesus long before the time the gospels say he lived. Christians say it does not and just needs punctuation. The truth is nobody knows ... But it looks like something Epiphanius took from another source and did not proof right and it looks like that something did not date Jesus in the first century.

The apostolic Fathers provide no convincing evidence for Jesus being a historical reality. They often contradict the Gospel which shows that either they knew nothing about them or did not recognise them as having any authority. They say nothing about Jesus apart from some things as if he were almost a stranger or obscure. They say nothing in the way of evidence and depend only on hearsay.