

THE EPISTLE TO DIOGNETUS

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The Epistle to Diognetus by L. B. Radford

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L. B. RADFORD

**THE EPISTLE
TO DIOGNETUS**

Early Church Classics *rep*

THE EPISTLE
TO
DIOGNETUS

BY THE

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THE
EPISTLE TO DIOGNETUS

INTRODUCTION

I. HISTORY OF THE TEXT

THE story of the *Epistle to Diognetus* is one of the most romantic episodes in the history of literature. It is the story of a solitary mediæval manuscript discovered in the sixteenth century and destroyed in the nineteenth. During the disturbances of the French Revolution (1793-95) there came into the municipal library at Strassburg a codex of 260 pages containing amongst other writings a number of treatises assigned by their titles to Justin, the philosopher and martyr (d. 163), viz. 1. "On the monarchia" (of God); 2. "An exhortation to the Greeks"; 3. "An exposition of the faith concerning the right confession, or concerning the Trinity"; 4. "To the Greeks"; 5. "To Diognetus." Among the writings that followed

the *Epistle to Diognetus* were the *Petition of Athenagoras on behalf of the Christians* (c. 177), and his treatise *On the Resurrection*. The rest of the contents of the MS. were in a later hand, but the style of the earlier hand pointed to the thirteenth or fourteenth century as the date of the writing of the MS. A note on the back of the codex, in the handwriting of Reuchlin, the famous scholar of Pforzheim (d. 1522), stated that the manuscript was once in his possession, and had been bought by him from the Carthusian brotherhood in his native town. About 1560 it was in the monastic library of Mursmünster in Alsace. In 1586 a transcript was made by the scholar-printer, H. Stephanus of Paris, and another transcript was made soon afterwards by J. Beurer, a professor at Freiburg; and the variations in Beurer's copy were embodied by Stephanus in the appendix to the edition of the *Epistle* which he published in 1592, and again by F. Sylburg of Heidelberg in the notes of his edition of Justin's works in 1593.¹ The text of Stephanus' edition was adopted in the editions of Prudentius of S. Maur (Paris, 1742), of Gallandi (Venice, 1765), and of Oberthür (Wurzburg, 1777), and formed the basis of the critical editions of

¹ For the history of the MS. see Otto, *Corp. Apol. Chr.*, vol. iii.; *Just. Op.* ii., pp. xiii.-xx.; Gebhardt, *Patr. Apost. Op.* I. 2, pp. 142-6; Kihn, *Der Ursprung des Briefes an Diognet*, p. 34 foll.

Böhl (Berlin, 1826) and Hefele (Tübingen, 1839). At last the Strassburg MS. (*Codex Argentoratensis Græc.* ix, so called from the old Latin name of the city, Argentoratum), with its edges gnawed by mice and otherwise injured by damp and rough usage, was carefully examined by Ed. Cunitz in 1842 for Otto's edition of the Epistle (1843, 1849, 1852), and again by Ed. Reuss in 1861 for Otto's third edition of Justin's works (Jena, 1879). It was fortunate, indeed, that its evidence on points of textual criticism was thus recorded; for nine years later the codex itself perished in the flames when the Alsatian city-fortress was bombarded by the Prussian forces (Aug. 24, 1870). Beurer's transcript had long been lost; only the transcript of Stephanus now remained, in the University of Leyden, where it is still preserved (*Codex Græc. Voss., Q.* 30). Ten years later (1880) it lost its pride of place, for Dr. Neumann of Halle discovered in the University library at Tübingen a yet earlier transcript made by Bernard Haus in 1580 for the Tübingen professor, Martin Crusius (*Codex Misc. Tübing., M. b.* 17). The text of the Epistle has now probably reached its final form. Many of the brilliant emendations made by Lachmann and Bunsen in Bunsen's *Analecta Antenicæna* (Lond., 1854, i. 103-121) have found permanent acceptance. Gebhardt provided a complete *apparatus criticus* in his edition of the Apostolic Fathers (*Patr. Apost.*