CHAPTER THREE

ANDREW AND THE “ACTS” AMONG THE CHURCH FATHERS, UP TO 500

Before discussing the age and origin of the various "Acts of Andrew", let us first consider the references to the First-Called Apostle in the Church Fathers up to the ninth century. The following is an exhaustive listing of all Latin, Greek, Syriac, Coptic, and one Gothic, mentionings of the Apostle Andrew outside the longer "lives" of him collected by Bonnet, James, Hennecke, Budge, Lewis, and Malan.

The Gospel of Peter (usually dated as about 150)\(^1\) is a contamination of the canonic four Gospels and the unknown author's Docetic, if not Gnostic, theology. Serapion of Antioch (c. 190)\(^2\) already attacks it for its Docetism. The surviving fragment is very small and gives us really only a hint of how its author used (like the Fourth Evangelist) the other apostles to bolster his story. The conclusion, however, (clearly based on John 21) will show something of the nature of the story. "But I, Simon Peter, and my brother Andrew took our nets and went to the sea; and with us was Levi the son of Alphaeus, whom the Lord..."

This is the only mention of either Andrew or Levi in the fragment which has come down to us. Unfortunately, like so much of the literature of the early church the Gospel of Peter is bitterly anti-Jewish, a tendency which poisons apocryphal acts and gospels far more than the canonic.

The Epistle of the Apostles, written perhaps about 160 in Asia Minor\(^3\), is a quite uninteresting more or less orthodox pamphlet

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in which Jesus answers questions of the Apostles in lengthy and unrealistic form. It survives completely in Ethiopic, and in Coptic and Latin fragments. It is quoted by Clement of Alexandria (died c. 215) as "Scripture" and the *Apostolic Constitutions* (earliest form c. 250, quotation in form of c. 400). The writing is distinctly anti-Docetic, as the following passage (also the only one in which Andrew is involved as an individual) shows: "Peter, put your finger in the print of the nails in my hands and you, too, Thomas, put your finger into the wound of the spear in my side; but you, Andrew, look on my feet and see whether they press the earth; for it is written in the prophet: "A phantom of a devil makes no footprint on the earth." The anti-Docetism interpretation of John 20:27 is largely based on this passage. As for the prophet above quoted, no one knows. Harnack suggests Wisdom of Solomon 18:17 while Guerrier suggests Daniel 14:18 ff. Commodian of Gaza (c. 250?) quotes the passage as "*Vestigium umbra non facit.*" (Shades leave no traces).\(^1\)

*The Muratorian Fragment*, which may date from the end of the second century, credits Andrew in part for the Gospel of John. "On the same night, it was revealed to Andrew of the Apostles that, all [the Apostles] knowing, John should describe in his own name all the facts."\(^2\)

Origen (died 254), in one of his occasional excessive interpretations of Scripture attempts to give the etymology of Andrew’s name. He explains it as "fitting power, or the answerer".\(^3\) In a lost passage, cited by Eusebius, Origen gives the mission field of the Apostles, "Andrew (receiving) the Scythians."\(^4\) This is the oldest passage which bears the influence of the Acts of Andrew and *Matthias*. Stachys, who (in legends later than the ninth century), is called a disciple of Andrew, is in Origen’s *Commentary to Romans* 16:9 simply called “with Ampliatus, a participant in the apostolic work.”\(^5\)

After Origen’s monumental work, especially in Old Testament, Gnostic writings take a more orthodox character. At least one text coming down to us fully recognizes the value of the Old Testament, even if the treatment is allegoric in order to bring the Older Covenant

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3 PL 23, pp. 1171-1173.