CHAPTER TWO

AN ANALYSIS OF POLYCARP’S CITATIONS, ALLUSIONS, AND REMINISCENCES

Polycarp demonstrates throughout his letter a thoroughgoing indebtedness to Jewish and especially early Christian writers as well as to the teaching of Jesus. Each possible citation of, allusion to, or reminiscence of earlier writings found in Pol. Phil. will be analyzed in this chapter.1 The analysis which follows is not a commentary on Pol. Phil. even though it follows the order of the book. It is an attempt to determine Polycarp’s literary dependencies. The reasoning processes behind each decision will be briefly laid out so that later students of Pol. Phil. will have a basis upon which to agree or disagree with the decisions made here.2

A summary of each ‘almost certain,’ ‘probable,’ or ‘possible’ citation, allusion or reminiscence will be given at the end of each subsection. Cumulative results appear in the appendix. There exists an almost endless number of possible allusions and reminiscences to earlier writings. Those evaluated in this section are clauses, phrases or expressions which for some reason truly point toward a possibility of literary dependence.

Salutation

Πολύκαρπος καὶ οἱ σὺν αὐτῷ πρεσβύτεροι τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ τῇ παροικούσῃ Φιλιπποῖς: ἔλεος ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη παρά θεοῦ παντοκράτορος καὶ Ἰσοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν πληθυνθεῖ.

Polycarp and the presbyters with him to the church of God that sojourns at Philippi: may mercy and peace from God Almighty and Jesus Christ our Savior be yours in abundance.3

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1 In a previous article (‘Polycarp of Smyrna’s View of the Authorship of 1 and 2 Timothy’ VC 53 [1999]: 349-360) I drew up a list of ‘probable’ and ‘also possible’ citations and allusions (see pp. 353-355). Note that my goal in that article was to draw up a list which would, as far as possible, represent the conservative consensus among scholars who had drawn up their own lists. In contrast, the decisions in this chapter represent my own judgments. This accounts for the differences between the list found in that article and the decisions found here.

2 Most scholars cited in this chapter have not revealed their reasoning processes; they have simply reported their decisions. Exceptions to this general situation do exist.

3 I have often simply adopted the excellent English translation of J. B. Lightfoot, J.
The problem of dependence upon earlier sources faces us immediately in the salutation of the letter. Polycarp’s greeting is standard Christian fare. Therein lies the problem. Some of the expressions (but not all) are found in 1 Clement, Ign. Phil., 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, 1 Peter and 2 Peter. The substitution of ἔλεος (‘mercy’) for χάρις in the typical Pauline ‘grace and peace’ could have (but not necessarily) been inspired by Jude 2, 1 Tim 1:2 or 2 Tim 1:2. The optative verb πληθυνθείη (‘be multiplied’) in the salutation is similar to such usage in the salutations of 1 Peter, 2 Peter, Jude, 1 Clement, and Mart. Pol. But these observations really only suggest generic similarities, not dependence.

1 Clement provides the strongest parallel, particularly since the phrase τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ τῇ παροικώσει... (‘to the church of God that sojourns...’) is verbally identical. This suggestion is strengthened by the use of παρὰ θεοῦ παντοκράτορος (‘from God Almighty’) which in 1 Clement is ἀπὸ παντοκράτορος θεοῦ and the presence of πληθυνθείη, as has just been mentioned. Still, the idea of sojourning (the only distinctive word in the salutation) may be based upon similar ideas in 1 Pet 1:1 and 2:11, and could have influenced both 1 Clement and Polycarp. Influence from 1 Peter would not be a surprise since there is a regular dependence upon 1 Peter throughout Pol. Phil.

Even though similarities such as those listed above exist, the combination of expressions wholly belongs to Polycarp. Therefore, though he is dependent in a general sense upon conventional Christian practice in the way he forms his greeting, and though he may have been

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R. Harmer and Michael W. Holmes, trans. and eds., The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations of Their Writings, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992), though I have at some points modified that translation when I have needed to make the argument clearer. Where possible I have tried to include an English equivalent to aid those who are less comfortable in the languages being discussed.

4 P. N. Harrison, Polycarp’s Two Epistles to the Philippians (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1936), 301 suggests Jude 2.


6 William R. Schoedel, Polycarp, Martyrdom of Polycarp, Fragments of Papias, vol. 5 of The Apostolic Fathers: A New Translation and Commentary, ed. Robert M. Grant (Camden, N.J.: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1967), 1. Note, however, that Schoedel is in general more optimistic about dependence upon 1 Clement by Polycarp throughout the letter than are other scholars. He comments on p. 5, “Polycarp seems to have been particularly familiar with 1 Clement.” This general optimism seems occasionally to influence particulars.