

Information on Acts of Carpus, Papyrus, and Agathonice

The following footnote to *H.E.* 4.15.48 is found in the *Ante-Nicene Fathers*:

92 A detailed account of the martyrdoms of Carpus, Papyrus, and Agathonice is extant in numerous mss., and has been published more than once. It has, however, long been recognized as spurious and entirely untrustworthy. But in 1881 Aubè published in the *Revue Archéologique* (Dec., p. 348 sq.) a shorter form of the Acts of these martyrs, which he had discovered in a Greek ms. in the Paris Library. There is no reason to doubt that these Acts are genuine and, in the main, quite trustworthy. The longer Acts assign the death of these martyrs to the reign of Decius, and they have always been regarded as suffering during that persecution. Aubè, in publishing his newly discovered document, still accepted the old date; but Zahn, upon the basis of the document which he had also seen, remarked in his *Tatian's Diatessaron* (p. 279) that Eusebius was correct in assigning these martyrdoms to the reign of Marcus Aurelius, and Lightfoot (I. p. 625) stated his belief that they are to be assigned either to that reign or to the reign of Septimius Severus. In 1888 Harnack (*Texte und Unters.* III. 4) published a new edition of the Acts from the same ms. which Aubè had used, accompanying the text with valuable notes and with a careful discussion of the age of the document. He has proved beyond all doubt that these martyrs were put to death during the reign of Marcus Aurelius, and that the shorter document which we have contains a genuine account related by an eye-witness. These are evidently the Acts which Eusebius had before him. In the spurious account Carpus is called a bishop, and Papyrus a deacon. But in the shorter account they are simply Christians, and Papyrus informs the judge that he is a citizen of Thyatira.

Eusebius apparently did not include the account of these martyrs in his collection of *Ancient Martyrdoms*, and Harnack concludes from that that he found in it something that did not please him, viz. the fanaticism of Agathonice, who rashly and needlessly rushes to martyrdom, and the approval of her conduct expressed by the author of the Acts. We are reminded of the conduct of the Phrygian Quintus mentioned in the epistle of the Smyrnaeans but in that epistle such conduct is condemned.

Tixeront places the death of these three saints in 161-169, the reign of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus, and says that the account is one of an eyewitness (*Handbook of Patrology*, p. 137).

The following bibliographical note is found in Quasten (*Patrology*, vol. 1, p. 182): "A. Harnack, *Die Akten des Karpus, des Papyrus und der Agathonike. Eine Urkunde aus der Zeit Mark Aurels* (TU 3, 3-4). Leipzig, 1888. -- A. Ehrhard, *Die altchristliche Literatur und ihre Erforschung von 1884-1900. Erste Abteilung: Die vornicäenische Literatur*. Freiburg i. B., 1900, 577-579. -- G. Rauschen, *FP 3*. Bonn, 1915, 313-317. -- H. Lietzmann, *Die älteste Gestalt der Passio SS. Carpi, Papyllae et Agathonice: Festgabe für K. Müller*. Tübingen, 1922, 46-57. -- H. Leclercq, *DAL*. 8, 680-685. -- A. M. Schneider, *Das Martyrium der heiligen Karpos und Papylos zu Konstantinopel: Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts* 49 (1934) 416-418. Cf. Quasten, *JL* 14 (1938) 412."