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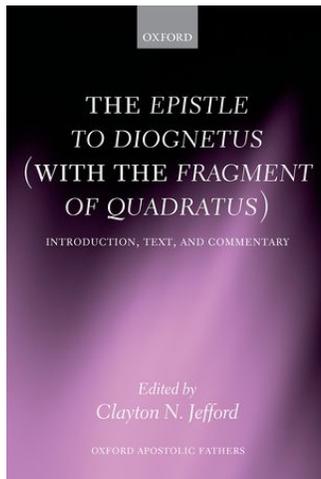
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Clayton N. Jefford

The Epistle to Diognetus (with the fragment of Quadratus): Introduction, Text, and Commentary
(Oxford Apostolic Fathers)

Oxford University Press, 2013

Pp. ix + 281. ISBN: 978-0-19-921274-3. \$185.00
[Hardback]. [Purchase](#)

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It has been over 60 years since a critical edition of the *Epistle to Diognetus* was published in English. That edition, by Henry Meecham, stood the tests of time well. But with the advent of Oxford University Press' *Oxford Apostolic Fathers* series, Clayton N. Jefford has produced a worthy successor. His volume, as with each volume in the *Oxford Apostolic Fathers* series, consists of three parts: Introduction, Text, and Commentary. The introduction provides the basis and framework for establishing the Greek text as well as the translation and commentary, and as such will be the primary focus of this review.

Jefford sets the context for his discussion well. Today, only one manuscript is known to contain this material, and it was subsequently lost in a fire. Only three early transcriptions of the text were completed and subsequent Greek editions are based on that material. Based on his evaluations of those transcriptions, Jefford concludes the manuscript itself was even harder to read and decipher and more

lacunose than notes in modern editions lead one to believe. The result of this work is immediately apparent in the scope and detail of the apparatus provided for the Greek text. This is valuable information that has not been available in a single edition and is essential knowledge for those doing serious work involving this text.

Jefford next delves into provenance, which is difficult. There is no longer any existing manuscript witness, little is known about where it came from, and only qualified guessing can be done on any of these topics. There have been several possible authors suggested, all of them supposition. Intelligently argued, many of them, but all constrained to the incredibly small pool of names we actually know and settings we actually understand. Jefford does a good job navigating this tension and reviewing the options and the cases for and against them, even including more recent approaches, such as Charles Hill's thesis of authorship which points to Polycarp. Jefford, cautious here as in his other work, mentions the possibilities, weighs in on some of them, but is rightly hesitant to point to a specifically named person as the author of this work.

The majority of scholars of early Christianity see *Diognetus* as two parts. Charles Hill has recently and somewhat persuasively argued that these two sections, despite the lacuna, are of the same author and they should be considered as a whole. Jefford upholds the consensus that the two parts are not directly related, using the more developed forms of arguments Hill has largely anticipated in his work asserting their unity. Regarding integrity, Jefford again hints of his development theory, noting that while the latter portion is an edition, he allows for extensive editorial action to conform the first section with the last section more seamlessly.

Regarding the relationship between *Epistle to Diognetus* and Scripture, Jefford provides an amazing array of intertextual possibilities. He interacts with Michael Bird's recent work on the relationship between *Epistle to Diognetus* and Paul's epistles, and also with the well-known reflection of Johannine language.

From here, Jefford moves from review of scholarship and development into positing his own ideas on Diognetus. Though his examination of structure, development, integrity, and relation to Scripture in the introduction, Jefford identifies material that he sees as largely secondary and not necessary for the core of the work. He isolates and removes this material, leaving just the core, which he considers "the rough form of what may once have been oral performance" (117).

Jefford has defended his proposal well, but this reviewer thinks suggestions like his prompt more questions than they solve. There are questions about any revisions or edits to the text and who might have made them. If oral, did the original author expand the edition for written publication? When did these editorial expansions happen, and why? What source did they come from? In Jefford's defense, he does frame his discussion well. He notes that his proposal is not a certain and he is more convinced of the generalities of it than any specifics he may elucidate in the discussion.

In sum, Jefford's edition has become the essential reference on all things having to do with the *Epistle to Diognetus*. Scholars working with

it or with texts that may share some intertextual relation with it should take the time to consult and benefit from Jefford's work.

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