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Abstract

The “world” of the Church’s Fathers. Between Occident and Orient – the same Spirit but a different Sensibility

The word *Father* is used in the New Testament to mean a teacher of spiritual things: “For if you have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet not many fathers. For in Christ Jesus, by the Gospel, I have begotten you. Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ” (1 Corinthians 4:15, 16). The first teachers of Christianity seem to be collectively spoken of as “the Fathers” (2 Peter 3:4). The Fathers have learnt from other Fathers, and in the last resort from the Apostles, who are sometimes called Fathers in this sense: “They are your Fathers”, says St. Leo, of the Princes of the Apostles, speaking to the Romans.

The Fathers of the whole Church are especially the earlier teachers, who instructed it in the teaching of the Apostles, during its earliest stage. It is difficult to define the boundaries of the first age of the Church, or the age of the Fathers. It is commonly held that the Council of Chalcedon in 451 has to be considered the final limit of the period of the early Church. Nevertheless, “The Fathers” must undoubtedly include, in the West, St. Isidore of Seville (d. 636), and in the East, St. John Damascene (d. about 754).

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