Scholastic Rabbinism

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A number of brief generalizations concerning the relationship among the three texts, PA, ARNA and ARNB, will pull together the major data and conclusions established in preceding chapters. The similarities and differences among the texts compel us to posit a complex growth for these traditions. Several sections in each version will be examined to see what relation they have to the Palestinian and Babylonian Talmuds, since we know the approximate dates for these documents and something about their development and editing. Finally, some suggestions will be made concerning the oral and literary development of PA and the two versions of ARN in the light of ancient Mediterranean culture. These conclusions reached on the basis of the texts will serve as a foundation for hypotheses in ch. 10 concerning the historical setting and dates of the texts.

**Similarities**

The two versions of ARN and Mishna Tractate Abot share a great fund of common sayings, stories and exegeses. Most of PA is found in each version of ARN and in the sections on the chain of tradition and on Johanan ben Zakkai's disciples PA serves for the most part as the text on which ARN comments. In all sections of ARN the two versions have comments, stories, exegeses and sayings not found in PA, and often not found elsewhere, which form the core of both versions. This common material is especially striking in the first two sections, the chain and the Johanan section. These first two sections also follow the same order and structure and seem to have the same purpose. The third section on the early sages varies greatly in order, structure and point in the two versions of ARN and in PA, chs. 3 and 4. Though most of the sayings in PA, chs. 3 and 4 are found in ARN, they have been rearranged into very different structures and used for purposes peculiar to each document. The two versions of ARN have some common material not found in PA, but the order of the materials (mostly sayings) and their functions differ greatly. The final sections of all these works, containing enumeration sayings, exhibit the same characteristics as the sayings of the early sages. The enumerations and other sayings presented in PA, ch. 5 reappear for the most part in both versions of ARN but they are structured
and handled differently. ARNA follows PA more closely and is edited more tightly than ARNB. ARNB has many more enumerations than ARNA, but the organization and purpose of the enumerations remain unclear.

Almost every chapter in both versions of ARN mentions Torah or a related theme and many chapters have Torah as the central theme. Themes unrelated to Torah occur in ARN and even dominate in parts of chapters, but these themes are isolated and have no coherent effect on ARN as a whole. The authors and editors of ARN chose and organized their diverse materials to explain Torah and encourage its study. Torah is, of course, not only Scripture or the Pentateuch, but tradition, revelation, the commandments from God, the interpretations of the Rabbis, etc. Related themes are study of Torah, the master-disciple and disciple-disciple relationship, ethical behavior, virtues demanded by Torah or by a life of communal study, good works, deeds of loving kindness and their results such as peace. Various Biblical and Rabbinic figures exemplify Torah, study and virtue in sayings and stories, for example, Moses, Aaron, Hillel, Johanan ben Zakkai, Akiba, Eliezer, et al. Special emphasis is given to questions concerning God, apologetic questions, and the source of authority for Torah and its interpretation. ARN also develops the coordinate themes of obedience to God and obedience to the rules of the Sages which interpret the commandments of God. All of these themes and strictures are supported by exegesis of Scripture, parables, life experience and wise sayings. This complex of themes centered on Torah strongly suggests a school setting for ARN, a conclusion which will be summarized in the following chapter.

Differences

PA and each of the versions of ARN stand as independent and individual literary works, despite their many and deep similarities. In ch. 2 we already pointed out that PA is a sayings collection and that its wisdom sayings are organized to establish the authority of a continuous and coherent group of teachers and teachings and that it is centered around the major emphases of that group, Torah and Torah study. Virtually everything in chs. 1 and 2 furthers that aim and most of chs. 3, 4 and 5 are equally focused on the main theme and purpose. The two versions of ARN are longer and more diffuse than PA and so lack its spare and pointed form. Some parts and especially the chain of tradition
is a commentary on PA. In later chapters elements from PA are simply mixed in with other similar sayings. Sometimes a saying from PA will initiate a series of relevant and related sayings, stories and exegeses and other times sayings from PA are not marked out from surrounding material in any other way. Certain sayings occur with variants, minor and major, in ARN. Consequently, though both versions of ARN are related to PA, they are not simply a commentary on it, especially not a commentary on Tractate Abot as it exists in the Mishna.

Some differences between the two versions of ARN can be easily discerned, especially digressions and collections of sayings proper to only one version. For example, ARNA adds extensive materials on Adam and his creation when treating his hedge in ch. 1. Likewise, ch. 3 contains many stories and sayings concerning Akiba as an example of poverty in study. Stories concerning Moses and associated figures are added to the saying of Nittai the Arbelite (ch. 9) on an evil neighbor and to Hillel's sayings (ch. 12). Ch. 18 on Judah the Prince and chs. 27-30 are both collections assembled by the authors and editors of ARNA for their own purposes. ARNB expands on the events during and after the siege of Jerusalem (ch. 7) and on creation and male and female (chs. 8-9). It has a separate collection of sayings by Johanan ben Zakkai and Hillel in ch. 31 and many more enumeration sayings in chs. 36-48 than are found in PA and ARNA. In addition, each version has separate organizational principles in the sayings of the early sages (cf. ch. 7).

Less massive differences and nuances have been pointed out for many passages in chs. 4-6 above. The change of a word or phrase and the addition of a comment often turns a saying towards study of Torah or a related theme. An apologetic note may modify the thrust of a section, such as ARNA's assertion (ch. 2) that Moses did not really decide four things on his own, but acted on direct divine command. ARNA also changed the order of hedges in ch. 2 to place Torah in a more prominent place. ARNB relies on lengthy interpretations of Scripture to make its point in chs. 4 and 5.

J. Goldin analyzed over a dozen passages found in both versions where ARNA emphasizes study of Torah and ARNB good works and "piety." He also notes many other passages on the same topics and some passages found in only one or another version. Goldin is correct that the final forms of ARNA and ARNB manifest differ-
different tendencies in many passages and it is especially clear that ARNA has turned some passages which refer naturally to good works toward study of Torah. That later editors of ARNB have revised sayings to refer to good works is not so clear. Goldin's detailed study complements the analyses in previous chapters here. This study describes the overall emphasis on Torah, study and related themes common to both versions of ARN. Goldin demonstrates that later editors and authors of ARNA further developed and highlighted study of Torah as the essential for Judaism. Since ARNA enjoyed more currency in the tradition and was the version copied and read down through the middle ages, it is likely that the editors and copyists' interest in study manifested itself in modifications of the text.

Relationship to the Talmuds

Many of the stories, sayings, exegeses and parables found in the two versions of ARN are found elsewhere in Rabbinic literature. Consequently, ARN must be located within this larger literary tradition. Since a complete study of all the parallels between the two versions of ARN and Rabbinic literature would fill more than one volume, some limited observations and explorations will be attempted here. Further parallels may be found in Schechter's edition of ARN and Saldarini's commentary on ARNB.

The most logical place to begin a study of parallels to ARN would be the midrash. Both Schechter and Saldarini cite many more parallels in the midrash than in the Talmuds. The contents of ARN are haggadic and similar to the contents of many midrashim. Consequently, ARN seems to have interacted with the midrash more than with the Talmuds. However, most of the midrashim lack firm dates and the processes which led to the collecting of their many exegesis sometimes produces a clear developmental sequence, but more often results in uncertainty.

The Talmuds will be more useful for our literary and historical inquiries into the development of ARN. We know that the Babylonian Talmud took shape from the third to sixth centuries and was further modified by the Seboraim and Geonim. Dependency in either direction can place ARN or its contents within the tradition. Though ARN is printed in the Babylonian Talmud, because PA lacks a Gemara, ARNA is not a proper part of the Talmud. Nor is ARN wholly derived from the Talmuds since it has only a limited number of parallels to them. We shall examine several sections of each version of ARN for Talmudic parallels. Our limited sample
reveals that some traditions common to both are independent of one another in wording and form and others are virtually identical. In some cases the Talmud merely alludes to traditions which are fully developed in ARN. ARNA is a little closer to the Babylonian Talmud than ARNB, reflecting its association with the Talmudic tradition which caused additions to be made directly from the Talmud or from common sources and traditions.

Several examples of the relationship of each version of ARN to the Talmuds will be given. The first chapter of each version expands on the account of Adam's hedge with further accounts of creation and the sin of Adam and Eve. Version A especially draws together many stories, exegeses and explanations concerning this popular midrashic subject. Many of the subjects and observations in ARNA are found also in the Babylonian Talmud, but almost always in different words. This argues that both texts were influenced by current thought, but are not literally dependent on one another; this is to be expected in a culture which was both oral and literary. Titus' entry into the Temple is paralleled by a more general story of a Greek king entering the Temple in b. Sukkah 56b; the ten curses placed on women are found in b. Erubin 100b. The decrees against Adam are recounted in b. Pesahim in different words. The idea of the excessive hedge erected by Adam is alluded to in b. Sanhedrin 29a as an idea already known. The story of Adam's sacrifice is told in different words in b. Abodah Zarah 8a. Both versions say that the serpent, had he not sinned, would have been a valuable pack animal but they vary in details of the tradition and its attribution. ARNA is closer to b. Sanhedrin 59b and ARNB to b. Erubin 18a. Finally, both versions as well as ten other sources have a list of the events which took place in each of the twelve hours during the day Adam was created. Terminology and exact steps vary so that twenty-six different items are used. Most of the exegeses in this section are similar in all versions. ARNA is closest to, though not identical with, b. Sanhedrin 38b and ARNB stands independent. These results suggest that ARN has its own traditions, but that when additions have been made to ARNA, which was more actively read and copied in Rabbinic circles, they are influenced by materials in the Babylonian Talmud.

Both versions of ARN recount that Moses made a hedge about his words by adding a third day of purification for the Hebrew people at Sinai before the commandments were given (ch. 2). Then they add three more instances where Moses reasoned out an action and God agreed with him. Two Talmudic sources also have a group
of three cases where Moses reasoned. The other cases are that Moses separated from his wife, broke the tablets and kept away from the tent of meeting. Their order is as follows:

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<th>ARNB</th>
<th>ARNA</th>
<th>b. Shab 87a</th>
<th>b. Yeb. 62a</th>
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<td>third day</td>
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<td>tent of meeting</td>
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In both versions of ARN, the last three items are united under an introductory rubric which says that in three cases Moses reasoned for himself. In both Talmudic passages the introductory rubric lists the three items in the same order, separation, tablets, and third day, even though b. Shabbat does not follow that order in explaining each. Both versions of ARN use one of the cases as an example of the hedge; then they must add another case (keeping away from the tent of meeting) to make the following group equal three. ARNB and b. Shabbat have the same order for the first three cases. ARNA has moved the breaking of the tablets to last position so that it can add a group of apologetic materials to explain how Moses could do such a seemingly blasphemous thing. ARNA shows signs of later hesitations about these cases since additional materials explain that Moses did not really reason on his own, but was obeying commands of God implied by Scriptural passages. Both Talmuds cite Amoraic comments on these cases and present them with wording different from ARN. Moses' decisions are a popular tradition which each of the sources has modified and put to use in its own way.

In ARNA, ch. 3, which was specially edited to show Akiba as a model of study and good deeds, one story has a parallel in the Mishna and three have parallels in the Babylonian Talmud. The story of Akiba's judgment of a man who uncovered a women's head in the marketplace occurs in Baba Kamma 8:6. In three places ARNA makes the narrative more full or dramatic: the man's friend gives him detailed advice about what to do, the man's appeal to Akiba is more extensive and the ending is a dramatic confrontation, in contrast to the Mishna where the legal point is reinforced by another halakic example. It seems likely that ARNA has used a well known story, perhaps getting it directly from the Mishna, but has felt free to recast it slightly to fit its own character. ARNA, ch. 3 also has a series of three stories about good men. The first is about a charitable hasid who heard two spirits talking with one another in a graveyard and learned from them about the
future. A fundamentally identical version of the story occurs in b. Berakot 18b where the point is the obligation to pray when a member of one's immediate family is unburied. The second concerns an habitually charitable hasid who was lost at sea yet lived. Qoh. 11:1, "Cast your bread upon the waters," is used in the story. ARNA uses the story to encourage giving alms, a theme of ch. 3.

B. Yebamont 121a deals with the halaka about whether the wife of a man who has been lost at sea may remarry. Qoheleth Rabba groups this story under 11:1 along with other sea stories. Though Schechter (ad loc.) suggests that ARNA is a combination of the other two stories, the changes in the versions of the story suggest that each source has tailored the story to its own needs. Finally, a story about the charity of Benjamin the Righteous occurs in ARNA and b. Baba Bathra 11a with minor variations. At some point the author or an editor of ARNA organized ch. 3 to make a special point (see ch. 4 above) and to that end collected together three traditional stories, using the Talmud or the traditions behind the Talmud as his source.

The story of Johanan's escape from Jerusalem occurs four times in Rabbinic literature: ARNA, ch. 4; ARNB, ch. 6; b. Gittin 56; and Lamentations Rabba 1:5 (31). These four versions fall into two parallel traditions: the two versions of ARN which have much in common and b. Gittin and Lamentations Rabba which have many similarities. Each version has its own peculiarities, especially Gittin/Lamentations which have clear later additions. ARN carries an independent tradition which parallels the Talmudic.

In the descriptions of the siege of Jerusalem which follow the story of Johanan's escape (ARNA, ch. 4 and ARNB, ch. 7) each version of ARN has arranged materials independently. Though some stories and exegeses are found in Talmudic sources, the forms and functions vary by source. At the end of ch. 7, ARNA recounts that the doors of the Temple used to open by themselves during the night. B. Yoma 39b recounts the same phenomenon, among several others, and says that Johanan ben Zakkai rebuked the doors so that they stayed closed, a detail lacking in ARNB. Both versions of ARN, b. Taanit 29a, and other sources, tell the story of the priests throwing the keys of the burning Temple back to heaven, saying that they had been unworthy. This story is told with minor variants in all versions. ARNA's application of Zech. 11:2 ("Wail, o cyprus tree, for the cedar is fallen.") to the Temple is also found in b. Yoma 39b. Finally, ARNA, ch. 4 ends with the three things which distinguish one human from another, voice, taste and
appearance, to form an inclusion with Simeon the Just's three things on which the world stands at the beginning of the chapter. B. Sanhedrin 38a has voice, appearance and mind with a different attribution and with a discussion of mind. The traditions associated with the fall of Jerusalem manifest no consistent dependence on Talmudic sources.

Both versions of ARN have stories concerning leading Rabbis. The beginnings of the careers of Akiba and Eliezer (ARN, ch. 6 and ARNB, chs. 12-13) and a large group of sayings and stories concerning Hillel (ARN, ch. 12; ARNB, chs. 24-27) are typical. The Babylonian Talmud has a reference to the golden crown called a "Golden Jerusalem" which Akiba had made for his wife (b. Shabbat 59b); it also mentions that he had 12,000 pairs of disciples (b. Ketubot 63a; b. Yebamot 62b), details found in ARN. The story of Eliezer's leaving his family and engaging in study occurs also in Genesis Rabba and Tanhuma, but not in the Talmud. Most of the Hillel materials are unparalleled in the Talmuds, but the Moses traditions associated with him do have parallels.

In these few examples which have been reviewed, traditions common to both versions of ARN are most often not found in the Babylonian Talmud (nor the Palestinian). Digressions and elaborations of basic points, especially those unique to one version of ARN, are more often paralleled in the Talmud than common materials, but each source hones its contents in its own way. Neither the two versions of ARN nor their oral/written earlier stages manifest direct dependence on the Babylonian Talmud. Sometimes individual pericopae show a close relationship, especially in ARNA which was read and edited in the same tradition as the Babylonian Talmud.

These same phenomena continue in the section on Johanan and the section on the early sages. B. Baba Bathra 134a, b. Sukkah 28a and p. Nedarim 5:7 (39b) have material found in ARNA, ch. 14 and ARNB, ch. 28 concerning Johanan as Hillel's successor. ARNA and b. Baba Bathra (identical with Sukkah) say that Hillel had eighty disciples of whom Johanan was the least/youngest and also list the subjects which he studied and then quote Prov. 8:21 apropos of him. ARNB and Nedarim say Hillel has eighty pairs of disciples (an analogy with the pairs in the chain of tradition) and in addition they recount Hillel's praise of Johanan from his deathbed. Nedarim lacks Johanan's curriculum and ARNB has it added on after Prov. 8:21. ARNB stands between ARNA and p. Nedarim and ARNA stands with the Babylonian Talmud. The Babylonian Talmud
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has put together a group of things which were said concerning Johan an ben Zakkai and it is likely that the Talmud drew from ARNA. ARNB could have influenced the Palestinian Talmud or vice versa.

In ARNA, ch. 14 much is made of Eleazar ben Arak's decision to leave Jamnia for Emmaus. B. Shabbat 147b presumes knowledge of this story, but does not recount it. In ARNA, ch. 15 and ARNB, ch. 29 three stories which illustrate Hillel's patience are told. The order of the stories and details vary. In b. Shabbat 30b-31a the same three stories are told in an abbreviated form. The sequence is the same with the addition of one story. Since there is a common number for a group of stories and since the stories seem abbreviated in the Talmud, it is likely but not certain that Shabbat drew upon ARNA. Right after the Hillel stories comes the saying of Rabbi Eliezer, "Repent one day before your death," accompanied by an explanation. This material occurs in b. Shabbat 153a in an appropriate context with similar but not identical wording. Finally, only one of Johan an's sayings in ARNB, ch. 31 has a parallel in the Talmud: "If the young men say to you: Let us go and build the temple, do not listen to them..." occurs in the name of Simeon ben Eleazar in b. Megilla 37b; this attribution is derived from t. Abodah Zarah 1:19. It is probable that this and other sayings were gathered into a special collection in ch. 31 to praise Johan an ben Zakkai further.

The section of ARNB containing the sayings of the early sages (chs. 32-35) has almost nothing in common with either Talmud. ARNA, chs. 19-26, its parallel, contains many sayings without Talmudic parallel. Among the stories, several deathbed scenes stand out. In ch. 19 Eliezer's meeting with his disciples and final teachings are paralleled by b. Berakot 28b, but the two texts are very different. Another independent story of his death and last teachings is told in ARNA, ch. 25. Eliezer's mind is proved sharp because he recognizes that his son is incorrectly preparing for the Sabbath. Consequently, his colleagues led by Akiba ask him a number of halakic questions and he laments the lack of learning among his contemporaries. The basic story occurs in a confused form in p. Shabbat 2:7; in b. Sanhedrin 68a Akiba rather than Eliezer instructs the son on correct preparations for the Sabbath, thus destroying the main action of the story. Finally, in ARNA, ch. 25 Johan an worries on his deathbed about punishment. The basic story occurs also in b. Berakot 28b along with the version of Eliezer's death found in ARNA, ch. 19. In b. Berakot Eliezer's
final words concern prayer and study, the themes of b. Berakot here; the story of Johanan's death has joined it by attraction. 7

Finally, near the beginning of ARNA, ch. 26 stand six admonitions attributed to Akiba. Some of them, especially those concerned with vows, are presented in a different form in b. Nedarim 20a. Neither version can be certainly related to the other.

These selected comparisons between the two versions of ARN and the Talmuds, especially the Babylonian Talmud, seem typical of the whole. By far the majority of the traditions in ARN lack parallels in the Talmuds; consequently, ARN is not compiled from Talmudic materials or even heavily influenced by them, as are some later midrashim. In many cases ARN has its own independent traditions, which are likely to have formed the early core of ARN before the two versions became differentiated. When traditions in ARN and the Talmud are parallel, they each have their own wording and nuances which fit them to their own contexts. Occasionally traditions are virtually identical. In long digressions on traditional subjects (Adam, the evil inclination, etc.), the influence of Talmudic traditions can be seen and we may speculate that additions were made under the influence of the Talmud or of traditions that were being drawn into the Talmud. This is especially true for ARNA which interacted with the Talmudic tradition more than ARNB.

Literary Origins and Development

The history and date of ARN belong to the next chapter. However some observations and hypotheses about the nature of PA and the two versions of ARN may be made from the data assembled thus far. Though we have three fixed written texts now, the texts were more fluid in antiquity and at some early stage the traditions were passed on orally. A complete distinction between written and oral sources cannot be maintained because in antiquity much written literature was meant to be read aloud and was written under the influence of oral techniques. 8 In Greek literature Homer is the most well known example of literature standing on the threshold between oral and written communication. Plato marks the move of philosophy from oral to written form with the consequence that abstraction plays a larger role. Oral communication is distanced from life and allows history and thought to be fixed in time and manipulated in more formal ways. Oral communication more effectively involves the listener in what is being said and elicits an appropriate response; written communication
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encourages precision and dispassionate analysis. Oral traditions change with each generation and remain eternally contemporary; written texts gradually become antiquated and spawn further interpretative genres.

The origins of oral traditions both before and after 70 C.E., their place and function in the tradition and the rise of the concept of oral Torah can be only imperfectly understood. Both J. Neusner and Peter Schäfer conclude that the Rabbis at Jamnia after 70 C.E. began earnestly and comprehensively to gather and transmit the traditions which formed the Mishna. This process culminated in the mnemonic patterns of the Mishna at the end of the second century. Schäfer points out that the concept of oral Torah and the contention that the oral Torah in general goes back to Sinai develops only at the end of the process in the third century. However, the processes of collection and memorization went on in the Rabbinic school during the second century. Thus, PA 1:1 speaks only of Moses receiving the Torah on Sinai and does not distinguish oral or written Torah. The Mishna itself in three places makes the claim that individual halakot derive from Moses on Sinai, but it does not claim that its traditions in their entirety derive from Moses nor that the traditions have been passed on word for word. These claims arise slightly later than the Mishna. But the Mishna itself, which was first published orally through professional memorizers, stands as evidence that oral traditions were carefully formulated for memorization.

PA and ARN in their written forms bear the marks of oral transmission, though not of precise formulation and memorization. They consist of a series of related sayings, stories and exegeses, each with a particular point but so structured as to convey meaning. The discussion is not carried on with precise concepts or dispassionate analysis, like that found in Greek philosophy. The sayings are proverbial, deriving from one of the most common and early types of spoken communication. The stories are popular forms recounting the origins, deeds and destiny of major Biblical and Rabbinic figures or encouraging virtue by example. The exegeses are the closest to a properly literary activity, but we know that the Bible was actively read, translated into Aramaic and interpreted. Consequently, much Biblical interpretation was oral and popular and the listing of Biblical verses in the enumeration sayings, and elsewhere, seems to be as old as the Rabbinic movement.
This mixed oral and written character to the Rabbinic tradition, something that affected the early years of the Mishna also, means that there is no fixed or canonical text of PA or ARN. That explains why few parallel sayings and stories reach verbal identity. To repeat a saying does not mean using exactly the same words in contrast to quoting exactly from a book. A.B. Lord has shown that over the years the same story is told with striking changes, though all within the framework of the story and traditional themes. Never is a story told twice word for word. The many traditions in the two versions of ARN which are substantially similar but not identical may be related through oral transmission. Oral transmission also allows for modification of the traditions to fit new contexts in ARN, midrashim and the Talmuds. These modifications may have occurred in the writing of the texts and may also have been introduced by copyists.

This history of how the texts which we have became fixed is lost. We may speculate with some probability about the independence and relatedness of the texts and the stages of their development. We have noted that Tractate Abot as it exists in the Mishna differs from the Abot which is commented on or integrated into the parts of ARN. From the end of the second and beginning of the third century Tractate Abot underwent its own development within the Mishna. The two versions of ARN did not develop as adjuncts to the Mishna, like the two Talmuds. ARN went its own way, in contact with the midrashic traditions which were ultimately collected into the surviving midrashic collections. The two versions of ARN each modified the received form of PA to serve new goals.

The many traits common to PA and the two versions of ARN suggest that these three works had a common beginning within the Rabbinic tradition either as oral tradition or as a rudimentary written document. The material in PA and ARN was popular and imaginative and so it grew in at least three directions. In ch. 10 we will develop hypotheses concerning time, place and setting with proper cautions dictated by the paucity of evidence. The literary structures and relationships among the versions suggest only that diverse groups in different places must have preserved and augmented the two versions of ARN and that they must have had time to develop and attain their present shape. The process of development was probably diffuse and its exact stages cannot be recovered. Previously we have seen that certain digressions and sections bear the marks of compilations on popular subjects and were probably added. Certain other themes and traits betray the
hands of strong authors or editors who made sure that their major interests were communicated through the text. As whole works, the two versions of ARN and PA suggest the interests and goals of scholastic groups. An attempt to describe them will occupy the next chapter.