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don't want Atonement at all. Some not the atonement of the Bible. The Lord will never lay another foundation stone. The Cross is older than Adam. It is as old as the Love of God. Fix the date of the love of God, then you have fixed the date of the Cross. It behoves thee to be quiet and to hide thyself in the Love and the Mystery of the Cross of Christ.

'There are many who would have the Church

after their own mind.—If so there would be as many churches as there are minds, only the mind is never the same, there could be no *quod semper*, etc. We mustn't invent, we must deliver. 'I delivered to you that which I also received,' said Paul. If we contribute, it must not be to the substance but to the illustration. Our Faith is the Faith of our Fathers. I do not wish to tell you anything outside the Church of Christ.'

Irenæus and the Fourth Gospel.

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III.

(3) *The Elders.* As has already appeared from our discussion, the relation of Irenæus to those whom he calls the elders presents a complex question. Do his references to them imply that he had himself been in contact with them, and thus was able to quote their testimony at first-hand? I have suggested in an earlier paragraph that this possibility must be allowed for. His Letter to Florinus, on any fair reading, assumes his intercourse with 'the elders before us,' and this accords with all the historical probabilities of the situation. Some writers seem to ignore the large numbers of Christian communities to be found in Asia Minor by the middle of the second century, and the intimate relations which bound them together. It would be impossible for a youth with eager Christian interest and high purposes of Christian activity to be brought up in such an environment without frequent opportunities of friendly converse with leading men in the Churches, belonging to an older generation, whom he would naturally call *οἱ πρεσβύτεροι*. Any one acquainted with similar circumstances knows how tenaciously the recollections of such intercourse are preserved by impressive minds. But when we investigate the bearing of the testimony of these older and leading Christians, as referred to by Irenæus, on the problem of John of Asia and his relation to the Fourth Gospel, the result is meagre. We are virtually restricted to three passages in the *Contra Hæreses*. One of these (v. 33. 3) has been already

examined, and its language possibly justifies the assertion that Irenæus was acquainted with an oral tradition of 'the presbyters who saw John the disciple of the Lord,' while he adds that 'Papias also records this.' In ii. 22. 5 he is reporting Ptolemæus, the famous Valentinian Gnostic, with reference to his assimilation of the passion of Jesus to that of the twelfth Æon, who suffered in the twelfth month. Ptolemæus asserts that Jesus suffered in the twelfth month of His public ministry, while still thirty years old, apparently basing his hypothesis roughly on the Synoptic chronology. Irenæus, starting from the larger number of Passovers mentioned in the Fourth Gospel, seeks to show that Jesus, as occupying the position of a teacher, must have passed from the stage of *juvenis* to that of *aetas senior*, and in favour of his view he appeals to 'the testimony of all the elders who had in Asia come into contact with John the disciple of the Lord, that John had reported this. For he survived in their midst until the time of Trajan. Moreover, some of them saw not only John but others of the apostles, and they heard the same account from them.' He thereupon proceeds to base a theory that Jesus was between forty and fifty when he died, on the words of Jn 8⁵⁷: 'Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?'

I am disposed to believe, with Lightfoot and Harnack, that Irenæus reports this testimony directly from the work of Papias. For, as we saw,

it is most likely that when he refers to the testimony of the elders in the present tense (*μαρτυροῦσιν*), as here, he is quoting some document, and by far the most probable document, as the above-mentioned scholars have shown, is the *Expositions* of Papias. The same thing is true of the remaining passage, v. 30. 1. Here Irenæus, in a general discussion of Antichrist, appeals for the interpretation of the number of the Beast in Apoc 13¹⁸ to 'the testimony of those who had seen John face to face.' When we consider that this was the type of subject for which Papias had a predilection, and that the language used agrees with Lightfoot's criterion for a written document, we can scarcely doubt that Irenæus refers to Papias' report of the witness of the elders. Perhaps, therefore, the most important result from these data is the extraordinarily high place given by Papias and his authorities, who must have been to a large extent his own contemporaries, to 'John, the disciple of the Lord.'

(4) *The Elder*. In his *Contr. Haer.* iv. 27-32, Irenæus has various references to an elder whose testimony he plainly regarded as of special weight. He describes him by various terms, 'a certain elder who had listened to those who had seen the apostles,' 'the elder,' 'that senior,' 'that older disciple of the apostles.' In one place he remarks: 'the elder by such reminiscences of the ancient worthies used to refresh us.' I am inclined to follow Lightfoot in supposing that this unnamed authority was Pothinus, the immediate predecessor of Irenæus in the see of Lyons, who, as we have seen, died in 177, over ninety years of age. Whether the identification is accurate or not, these references of Irenæus remind us of the traditions concerning the past which were at his disposal. This remains true, even if we allow that his description of the unnamed presbyter as 'that older disciple of the apostles' may require to be taken in a general sense. It must be noted, however, that he quotes nothing from this source which has a bearing on John of Asia or his connexion with the Fourth Gospel. Only, the facts warn us that, in estimating his own language on these matters, we must not leave out of sight the links which bound him to the earlier apostolic age.

Recognizing, then, that whether as a youth in Asia Minor, or as a presbyter and bishop in Gaul, which was connected with Asia Minor by specially close ecclesiastical ties, Irenæus must have

had ample opportunity of acquainting himself with the main facts in the tradition of the Churches of Asia, let us examine those statements of his which have a bearing upon John of Asia and the documents which, in the last quarter of the second century, we find associated with his name. We must confine ourselves to representative instances selected out of a considerable number, and attempt to estimate their significance.

(a) When Irenæus quotes incidentally from the Fourth Gospel, he usually speaks of its author, John, as *the disciple of the Lord*. E.g., in controverting the Gnostic doctrine that the Christ who temporarily united himself with Jesus had not suffered, he says: 'The gospel knows of no other Son of Man, except Him who was born of Mary, who also suffered . . . but Him who was born, Jesus Christ, it recognizes as the Son of God . . . a truth confirmed by John, the disciple of the Lord, whom he declares,' and then follows Jn 20³¹ (iii. 16. 5). Apparently the term 'disciple of the Lord' was a favourite second-century description of members of the Twelve, for Papias, in the famous paragraph examined above, applies this phrase to them. The same terminology is found in other writers of the period. It need scarcely be pointed out that this reflects the usage of the four Gospels, in which *ἀπόστολος* as compared with *μαθητής* is extremely rare (only once each in Mk. and Mt.).

(b) This John he reckons among *the apostles*. Thus, when urging that the genuine apostolic tradition has been preserved not only at Rome but in other Churches, he mentions among these 'the Church at Ephesus,' which, 'having been founded by Paul, and John having remained in its midst until the time of Trajan, is a true witness to the tradition of the apostles' (iii. 3. 4). Similarly, in pitting the evidence of the elders of Asia 'who had associated with John the disciple of the Lord' against that of the Valentinian Ptolemæus, he remarks that some of those elders 'not only saw John but other apostles also' (ii. 22. 5). Again, in supporting the LXX version of Is 7¹⁴ against those of various heretics, he observes that 'the apostles, who are senior to all of them, agree with the aforesaid translation, and the translation agrees with the tradition of the apostles. For Peter and John and Matthew and Paul and the rest of them and their followers proclaimed all the prophetic messages in accord with the translation of the ancients' (iii. 21. 3).

(c) Several of his references reflect not only his own opinion concerning John, but also *that which was handed down in the Valentinian Gnostic school of Ptolemæus*. Ptolemæus who, as appears almost certain from the Preface of Irenæus (i. *præf.* 2),¹ was alive while Irenæus was writing, had been a disciple of Valentinus, indeed, according to some early testimonies, his chief disciple. It is his special phase of Gnosticism which Irenæus professes to describe. Incidentally, he lets us see this Valentinian sect using the Fourth Gospel to corroborate some of its most typical theories, and associating with the document the name of John. It is just possible that the words of Tertullian (*De Præscr. Hæer.* 38) about Valentinus as 'appearing to use the whole instrument' [*i.e.* the complete Scriptures] are meant to include a knowledge of the Fourth Gospel. As he began to teach about 140 A.D., this would be an important piece of evidence for our discussion. In any case, the testimony of Ptolemæus, who stands completely outside the Church, as to the authoritative character of the Fourth Gospel and its connexion with John, points back to an earlier tradition, which it is in no way necessary to connect with Papias, to whose 'weak understanding' so many modern scholars confine all that can be known of the first quarter of the second century. In accusing the Valentinians of perverting the Scriptures, and especially the Fourth Gospel, so as to accord with their own baseless theories, Irenæus says (i. 9. 2): 'While John proclaims one God and one only-begotten, Christ Jesus, through whom, he asserts, all things came into being . . . these altered his words to suit their own hypotheses, so that according to them, in the above statements John makes (no) mention of the Lord Jesus Christ. For if he spoke of Father and Grace and Only-begotten and Truth and Word and Life and Man and Church, he was referring, according to their hypothesis, to the first ogdoad, which did not yet include Jesus or Christ the teacher of John. But that the apostle was not referring to their syzygies, but to our Lord Jesus Christ, whom he also recognizes to be the Word of God, he himself has made plain.' From this paragraph it is clear that the Valentinians had so keenly busied themselves with the leading terms of the Fourth Gospel that they had become prominent elements in their system. Such a process must have involved a considerable period, and

no doubt stretches back at least as far as the close of the first half of the second century. But Irenæus actually quotes a statement, most probably from Ptolemæus himself, in any case from his school. 'Further,' he says (i. 8. 5), 'they teach that John the disciple of the Lord made known the first ogdoad in actual terms. These are their words: "John the disciple of the Lord, wishing to describe the origin of the universe, when the Father emitted (*προέβαλεν*) all things, assumes a certain first principle. . . . which he calls Only-begotten Son and God. . . . He speaks in this way: In the beginning was the Word, etc.'" Here these Valentinians appeal to John, the disciple of the Lord, whose fundamental ideas they have, in their own fashion, incorporated in their system, as their authority in the Fourth Gospel. It can scarcely be supposed, let me again emphasize, that *their* source of information was the indispensable Papias.

(d) This selection from the testimonies of Irenæus may close with his well-known words in iii. 1. 1, where, in describing how the earliest followers of Jesus carried His message to all the ends of the earth, and then referring to the composition of the four Gospels, he says of John: 'Thereafter John, the disciple of the Lord, who also reclined upon his breast, he too published the gospel, dwelling at Ephesus in Asia.' Before we inquire into the significance of this statement, we must note the remarkable parallel to it found in a fragment of Polycrates, bishop of Ephesus (Eus. v. 24): Polycrates, a contemporary of Irenæus, writing probably between 188 and 199 A.D. to Victor, bishop of Rome, in defence of the Asiatic practice of making the Easter festival culminate on the 14th Nisan, says: 'We observe the exact day: neither adding, nor taking away. For in Asia also great luminaries (*στοιχεῖα*) have fallen asleep, which shall rise again on the day of the Lord's advent.' Among these he names 'Philip, one of the twelve apostles, who fell asleep in Hierapolis,' three daughters of his, 'and, in addition, John, who reclined on the Lord's breast, who became a priest wearing the sacerdotal plate (*πέταλον*), both martyr and teacher. He fell asleep at Ephesus.' After mentioning as further authorities for his position Polycarp of Smyrna and others, he proceeds: 'Moreover, I also, Polycrates, the least of you all, keep to the tradition of my kinsfolk, some of whom I have closely followed. For seven of my kinsfolk

¹ See Lipsius, *Dict. of Christian Biogr.* iv. p. 515.

were bishops, and I am the eighth. And invariably my kinsfolk observed the day when the people put away the leaven. I, therefore, brethren, who have lived 65 years in the Lord, and have associated with the brethren throughout the world, and have gone through every holy scripture, am not scared because of terrifying words.'

Polycrates, who, at the time of writing, is actually head of the Church with which John's name is associated, describes him as a 'great luminary' of Asia, grouping him with Philip, whom he names 'one of the 12 apostles.' There is no good reason for doubting this last statement. The only plausible argument against it is the reference found in the *Dialogue of Gaius with Proclus* (referred to by Eus. iii. 31), which represents Philip the *Evangelist* (mentioned in Ac 6, 8, and 21) as living at Hierapolis with his four daughters who were prophetesses. This tallies exactly with the account in Ac 21⁹ of Philip the *Evangelist* and his family. But Lightfoot has shown that this *Dialogue* came from the Roman Church, probably a quarter of a century later than Polycrates. Its authority is therefore, as he says (*Colossians*, p. 46, note), 'in all respects inferior. It mentions four daughters instead of three, makes them all virgins, and represents them as prophetesses, thus showing the distinct aim of reproducing the particulars as given in Ac 21⁹; whereas the account of Polycrates is divergent in all these respects.' That Eusebius confused the Philip of the *Dialogue* with Philip the Apostle is of no importance for the argument. It is absurd also to find a difficulty in the fact that both Philip the *Evangelist* and Philip the Apostle are said to have had daughters, and the identification of the four in the one case with the three in the other is playing with evidence.

To return to the statement. Polycrates characterizes John of Ephesus by the very phrase used by Irenæus, 'who reclined on the Lord's breast.' The description is of far-reaching significance, inasmuch as it occurs in the very same fashion in the Fourth Gospel itself. The incident is, of course, related in Jn 13²⁵. But in Jn 21²⁰ this is the phrase employed to mark out the unnamed 'disciple whom Jesus loved,' whom the Fourth Gospel undoubtedly means to identify with John. It would seem that the description had attached

itself in the Churches of Asia to this disciple. Polycrates' testimony is very important, for as bishop of Ephesus he must have been in touch with an extended tradition. His further reference to John as 'a priest wearing the sacerdotal plate' is most obscure. None of the attempts to explain it are adequate. Delf's hypothesis that the words point to John as having acted as substitute for the high priest on the Day of Atonement, the one day on which the complete robes were worn, is pure fantasy. Strangely enough, Epiphanius (*Hæer.* 78. 14) uses the same phrase of James of Jerusalem. It is possible that Lightfoot is right in taking the words metaphorically, for he shows that the whole passage is 'a very rude specimen of the florid Asiatic style,' and contains several 'violent' figurative expressions (*Galatians*, p. 362, note 1). But there are really no data for a decision. We must touch at a later point on his description of John as 'martyr.'

Some very significant things may be learnt from the remainder of the paragraph. Polycrates speaks of himself as 'having lived 65 years in the Lord.' I cannot see how this can be taken in any other sense than as marking the period of his *Christian* life. That implies that at least he must have been between seventy and eighty when he wrote to Victor, and if we assign the date of the Letter roughly to 195 A.D., the beginning of his Christian career must fall about 130, possibly a year or two later. At that date he would stand in the midst of a full current of tradition regarding the 'great luminaries' of the Church, so that he comes before us as a witness quite independent of Papias. But he himself deliberately emphasizes his opportunities of knowing the early traditions of the Church. No less than seven of his own relatives had been bishops, and he had associated with brethren from all parts of the Christian community. His agreement with his younger contemporary Irenæus as to John of Asia being the disciple 'who reclined on the Lord's breast' is a remarkable confirmation of Irenæus' opinion. This 'great luminary' of Asia is by two influential witnesses placed in the innermost circle of Jesus' disciples, which all readers of the Synoptics in the second century knew to consist of Peter, James, and John.