## II.

# JOHN OF EPHESUS.

CHRISTIAN tradition of the second century speaks of a certain John who lived at Ephesus until the time of Trajan (98–117), and was buried there. He had been a personal follower of the Lord, and is almost invariably styled ὁ μαθητὴς τοῦ κυρίου, *Domini discipulus*; it is usual to identify him with the Beloved Disciple who wrote the Fourth Gospel. From the middle of the second century this person is occasionally described as an Apostle or associated with the Apostles; and a little later on he is freely identified with John the son of Zebedee and brother of James. The question of his identity is further complicated by the statement that more than one John resided at Ephesus toward the end of the Apostolic age.

The purpose of this paper is to bring together afresh the chief points of the evidence in the hope that some light may be thrown upon the problem.

1. In a fragment often transcribed and discussed, Papias of Hierapolis, an ἀκουστὴς Ἰωάννου (Iren. v 33. 4), relates that it was his practice, when he met any one who had followed the elders, to ask what they had said: τί Ἀνδρέας ἢ τί Πέτρος εἶπεν, ἢ τί Φίλιππος ἢ τί Θωμᾶς ἢ Ἰάκωβος ἢ τί Ἰωάννης ἢ Ματθαῖος, ἤ τις ἕτερος τῶν τοῦ κυρίου μαθητῶν· ἃ τε Ἀριστίων καὶ ὁ πρεσβύτερος Ἰωάννης, οἱ τοῦ κυρίου μαθηταί, λέγουσιν. Eusebius who has preserved this fragment (*H. E.* iii 39) draws the inference that Papias here mentions two Johns, both 'elders', but the former an Apostle, the latter not of Apostolic rank; and though this conclusion has been disputed, it is certainly the obvious and natural interpretation of the words.[1]

2. The Muratorian fragment on the canon appears to contrast the author of the Fourth Gospel as a disciple with Andrew as an Apostle: 'quarti evangeliorum Iohannis ex decipolis (*sic*: = ὁ μαθητής) . . . eadem nocte revelatum Andreae ex apostolis (τῷ ἀποστόλῳ).'

3. With Irenaeus John of Ephesus is always 'the disciple of the Lord' (ii 22. 5, iii 3. 4); indirectly, however, he seems to class John with the Apostles (ii 22. 5, iv 26. 2, v 5. 1).[2]

4. The Valentinians reckoned the Evangelist as an Apostle, e. g. Ptolemaeus *ad Floram* 1. 6; Heracleon *ap.* Origen *in Ioann.* t. vi 2.[3]

[1] See Lightfoot *Supernatural Religion* p. 144.

[2] The passages are collected by Lightfoot, *S. R.* p. 218.

[3] See Zahn *Intr.* iii p. 199.

5. In a rhetorical passage of his *De Antichristo* (Lagarde, p. 17) Hippolytus addresses John in the words Ἰωάννη, ἀπόστολε καὶ μαθητά.

6. Writers from the end of the second century onwards assume the identity of John of Ephesus with the Apostle John; e.g. Clement of Alexandria *Quis dives* 42 ἄκουσον μύθου οὐ μῦθον, ἀλλὰ ὄντα λόγον περὶ Ἰωάννου τοῦ ἀποστόλου παραδεδομένον: Tertullian *adv. Marc.* iii 14 'apostolus Iohannes in Apocalypsi': *ibid.* iv 5, where the 'Iohannis alumnae ecclesiae' are reckoned among the 'ecclesiae apostolorum'.

7. A similar tendency to pass from 'disciple' to 'apostle' shews itself in the Latin prologues to St John. Thus while the Monarchian prologue (Wordsworth-White, p. 485 sq.) contents itself with saying 'Hic est Iohannes evangelista unus ex discipulis Dei', the Toletan boldly announces the identity of the Beloved Disciple with the Apostle: 'Iohannes Apostolus, quem Dominus Iesus amavit plurimum . . . scripsit evangelium'.

8. I have reserved to the last the one weighty testimony to this identity. Justin expressly numbers the author of the Apocalypse[1] among the Apostles (*Dial.* 81 παρ' ἡμῖν ἀνήρ τις ᾧ ὄνομα Ἰωάννης, εἷς τῶν ἀποστόλων τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ἐν ἀποκαλύψει γενομένῃ αὐτῷ κτλ.). Justin was at Ephesus in the early years of the fourth decade of the second century, and for the last year or two of his residence there he was a Christian[2]; but what his relations with the Christian Society at Ephesus were, or how far he can be regarded as a trustworthy exponent of Ephesian ecclesiastical tradition, we do not know. All that can reasonably be inferred from his statement is that at Ephesus the title of Apostle had begun to be attached to John as early as 130, i.e. within little more than thirty years after his death. How loosely, however, the title could be used and was used by Justin himself is clear from other passages in his writings, where the Gospels are called the ἀπομνημονεύματα τῶν ἀποστόλων (*Apol.* i 66; *Dial.* 101, 103).

9. The position held in the Ephesian church by John of Ephesus is not very clearly defined. Irenaeus is careful to say that he was not its founder, and claims for him only the influence which comes from a long abode in the same place (iii 3. 4 ἡ ἐν Ἐφέσῳ ἐκκλησία ὑπὸ Παύλου μὲν τεθεμελιωμένη, Ἰωάννου δὲ παραμείναντος αὐτοῖς κτλ.). There is nothing to shew that he was in any sense, like Timothy, the delegate of the Apostolic founder; his rôle is rather that of an itinerant who elected to settle down in a great centre of Christian life (cf. *Didache* 13). But whether by force of character or length of service or both he acquired a position of quite exceptional authority throughout the

[1] I assume that Justin, like Irenaeus (*Haer.* iv 20. 11), identifies the author of the Apocalypse with the *Domini discipulus*.

[2] See Harnack *Chronologie* i p. 284.

province of Asia. It is thus described by Clement of Alexandria *Quis dives* l. c. *ἐπειδὴ γὰρ . . . μετῆλθεν ἐπὶ τὴν Ἔφεσον, ἀπῄει παρακαλούμενος καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ πλησιόχωρα τῶν ἐθνῶν, ὅπου μὲν ἐπισκόπους καταστήσων, ὅπου δὲ ὅλας ἐκκλησίας ἁρμόσων, ὅπου δὲ κλήρῳ ἕνα γέ τινα κληρώσων τῶν ὑπὸ τοῦ πνεύματος σημαινομένων.* As we see it in this summary, John's work during the last few years of his life was more than episcopal; indeed, if we may trust Tertullian, he was the founder of the Episcopate (*adv. Marc.* iv 5 'ordo episcoporum ad originem recensus in Iohannem stabit auctorem'). Was he then an Apostle? Not necessarily. In the yet fluid state of Church organization one of the few surviving disciples of the Lord, a great Christian teacher and prophet,[1] who was the acknowledged leader in his own neighbourhood of Christian thought and life, would doubtless have taken precedence of the local church officers, and exercised the authority of the Church. It is noticeable that Clement, though he calls him an Apostle, does not represent him as using apostolic authority, but as acting on the invitation of the churches (*παρακαλούμενος*). A similar account is given of his action in adding a fourth Gospel to the three already in circulation; he did this not on his own initiative but (says the Muratorian canon) 'cohortantibus condiscipulis et episcopis suis', or, as Clement has it (*ap.* Eus. *H. E.* vi 14), *προτραπεὶς ὑπὸ τῶν γνωρίμων.* In neither of these two great activities of his later life does John lay claim to Apostolic independence.

10. John of Ephesus was buried at Ephesus (Polycrates *ap.* Eus. *H. E.* v 24 *Ἰωάννης ὁ ἐπὶ τὸ στῆθος τοῦ κυρίου ἀναπεσών . . . οὗτος ἐν Ἐφέσῳ κεκοίμηται*). The Acts of John give a singular account of his descent into the grave and subsequent disappearance, which is evidently an attempt to realize the conviction, *Ὁ μαθητὴς ἐκεῖνος οὐκ ἀποθνήσκει.* The story is given in a slightly different form by the writer of the Monarchian prologue (Wordsworth and White, p. 486): 'descendens in defossum sepulturae suae locum, facta oratione, positus est ad patres suos, tam extraneus a dolore mortis quam a corruptione carnis invenitur alienus.'[2]

The death of John of Ephesus occurred after the beginning of Trajan's reign (Iren. ii 22. 5 *παρέμεινεν γὰρ αὐτοῖς μέχρι τῶν Τραϊανοῦ χρόνων*), and therefore not before the year 98, when any personal follower of the Lord who survived must have been of advanced age.

[1] Of the prophets the *Didache* says (*c.* 13), *αὐτοὶ γάρ εἰσιν οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς ὑμῶν.* It is just possible that this accounts for the story of the *πέταλον*, though I have suggested in the previous paper another explanation and think it preferable.

[2] Dionysius of Alexandria (*ap.* Eus. *H. E.* vii 25) had heard that there were at Ephesus two tombs bearing the name of John: cf. Eus. *H. E.* iii 39. But the fact, if it be such, does not help us; there might have been in the first and second centuries many Jewish residents at Ephesus of the name of John.

Tradition, moreover, represents John as having ended his long life in peace. But according to a statement attributed to Papias, John the son of Zebedee was, like his brother James, slain by the Jews. A fragment printed by De Boor from an Oxford MS of the seventh or eighth century (Barocc. 142), which probably forms part of an epitome of the *Chronicle* of Philip of Side (v), says: Παπίας ἐν τῷ δευτέρῳ λόγῳ λέγει ὅτι Ἰωάννης ὁ θεολόγος καὶ Ἰάκωβος ὁ ἀδελφὸς αὐτοῦ ὑπὸ Ἰουδαίων ἀνῃρέθησαν. Similarly one of the MSS of Georgius Hamartolus (ix) states that John the son of Zebedee μαρτυρίου κατηξίωται,[1] adding Παπίας γὰρ ὁ Ἱεραπόλεως ἐπίσκοπος, αὐτόπτης τούτου γενόμενος, ἐν τῷ δευτέρῳ λόγῳ τῶν κυριακῶν λογίων φάσκει ὅτι ὑπὸ Ἰουδαίων ἀνῃρέθη. If these MSS are strictly independent witnesses, it is difficult or wellnigh impossible to doubt that Papias used the words Ἰωάννης . . . ὑπὸ Ἰουδαίων ἀνῃρέθη or the like. Neither Lightfoot's restoration of the text,[2] nor Zahn's supposition that John the Baptist is intended,[3] has much probability. But it is possible that Papias was misled by a misconception arising out of the saying in Mark x 39, or that he was misunderstood by the readers to whom the statement in the two late MSS is due. It is certainly strange that early Christian tradition is without a vestige of any other reference to the martyrdom of the Apostle John,[4] and that writers like Eusebius, who had access to the work of Papias, are silent about it. On the whole, then, it is precarious to use this piece of evidence until further light is thrown upon it.

But putting aside for the present De Boor's discovery, and relying only upon the undoubted witness of early Christian writers, we do not appear to have any convincing proof of the identity of the Apostle John with John of Ephesus, or even of the residence of the former at Ephesus towards the end of the first century. Whether John of Ephesus is to be identified with the πρεσβύτερος Ἰωάννης of Papias is uncertain; that he was an Apostle in the narrower sense, is at least 'not proven'. The gradual application to him of the title 'apostle' with or instead of ὁ μαθητὴς τοῦ κυρίου seems to have arisen from a loose use of the higher designation, coupled with a desire to do honour to the memory of the greatest teacher the Asian Church had known after the passing of St Paul.

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[1] The other MSS of this writer have ἐν εἰρήνῃ ἀνεπαύσατο.

[2] *S. R.* p. 212.

[3] *Intr.* iii p. 206.

[4] Polycrates indeed speaks of John of Ephesus as μάρτυς καὶ διδάσκαλος, but μάρτυς may refer to John xxi 24, or to the exile to Patmos.