

The Use and Abuse of Papias on the Fourth Gospel

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The main purpose of this note is to suggest that there is extant a fragment of Papias sometimes overlooked in discussion of the authorship of the Fourth Gospel, whose effect is to put *hors*

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concours that modern favourite for authorship, the elusive, "Elder" John. It may suggest that there is some limit to the evidence to be drawn from Papias. Two generations of scholars have felt their theories of gospel origins incomplete until they had perverted the pliable Greek of these fragments. Two generations of theological students have been compelled to encounter these dubious scraps more frequently than any other sentences of the whole patrology. It is improbable that what follows will do anything to end the annoyance.

Papias, in the fragment of his Preface quoted by Eusebius, mentions Ἀριστίων καὶ ὁ πρεσβύτερος Ἰωάννης, τοῦ κυρίου μαθηταί, "Aristion and John the Elder, disciples of the Lord," as sources of tradition along with certain Apostles, among them John, presumably the son of Zebedee The "Elder" John who thus casually appears in history has had a brilliant posthumous career of authorship. He was credited by Eusebius, with some hesitation, with the Apocalypse, and by St. Jerome and Pope St. Damasus with the Epistles we call II. and III. John. Now he is put forward as the author of the Fourth Gospel. As long ago as 1889 his candidature for this honour, was initiated by Delff, and scholars such as Burney, Swete and R. H. Charles have often dallied with him since. But his most complete biographer to date is Dr. Streeter, in *The Four Gospels*¹ and its pendant, *The Primitive Church*.² We may therefore briefly state the case as set forward by that most plausible and attractive advocate.

In Papias' enigmatic ὁ πρεσβύτερος Ἰωάννης, τοῦ κυρίου μαθητ(ῆς) is contained, according to Canon Streeter, the following biography: An actual eye-witness of the Crucifixion was a Jewish boy of twelve or thereabouts, taken by his father to Jerusalem for that year's Passover. This boy subsequently became for a brief time a disciple of John the son of Zebedee in Galilee, "One of his temperament might easily come to conceive a mystical veneration for the aged apostle who had leaned on the Lord's breast at the last supper."³ "A brief and, as it seemed in the halo of later recollection, a wonderful connection with the Apostle—perhaps also a few never-to-

¹ Macmillan, 1924, cited as *F.G.*

² Macmillan, 1929, cited as *P.C.*

³ *F.G.*, p.433. Incidentally, why "aged apostle" at this stage? This would seem to be a "composite Photograph" between the tradition and his own Revised version of the kind Dr. Streeter gently deprecates in connection. with modern apologetic for the Resurrection narratives only two chapters before (*ibid.*, pp. 384 sq.).

be-forgotten words of Christ derived from his lips—would make the attitude towards the Beloved Disciple expressed in the Gospel psychologically explicable.”⁴

Long years afterwards this gifted boy was to become, in the

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dark days of Domitian, Bishop of Ephesus and almost Primate of Asia. There, curiously enough, his following consisted principally of “bright young progressives” and “some of the younger presbyters... spending half their days in hair-splitting discussion.” “To some of them he was already become something of the old fogey now, but to most he was still the great leader, the founder of a truly scientific theology.”⁵ Naturally, the latter opinion triumphed in the end: “Along with, indeed in front of, Clement of Rome, Polycarp of Smyrna, Ignatius of Antioch, we must place the Elder John” as one of the “outstanding leaders in the great Churches.”⁶

All this from three words of Papias may seem to savour more of the methods of Sexton Blake than Lightfoot. Even so, the edifice is less secure than it would seem. The all-important words τοῦ κυρίου μαθηταί are missing both from the Syriac version of Eusebius and from the Rufinian Latin translation, both made within a century of the publication of Eusebius’ *Ecclesiastical History*.⁷ Scholars so various as Mommsen,⁸ Père Lagrange⁹ and Dr. Mofatt,¹⁰ who are all entitled to an opinion, have held them an interpolation in the Greek. Without going so far as that, it is possible to find it easier to see how they might come to be inserted in the Greek than why they were omitted from the Syriac. Before building quite so much upon them, it would have been well to demonstrate their authenticity, or at least to warn us that competent scholars have had their doubts. This question is passed over by Dr. Streeter in the completest silence. But since the only statement the words profess to contain—viz., that John the Elder was an actual “disciple of the Lord”—is quite irreconcilable with Canon Streeter’s deductions from them, perhaps the omission does not greatly matter.

But this new *legenda* goes on:¹¹ In the nineties of the first century Asian Christianity was faced with disruption, and men looked to the aged John, mystic and prophet, perhaps the last survivor through all the Churches of the Mediterranean lands

⁴ *F.G.*, p. 433.

⁵ *F.G.*, pp. 479 *sq.*

⁶ This last quotation is from *P.C.*, p. 97. The *formgeschichtlich*-minded might get valuable practice from a comparison of these two books.

⁷ They are also missing from the Armenian, but that was made from the Syriac version, and is therefore not an independent witness. Rufinus has “caeterique discipuli,” which looks like an early gloss. There is also a slight variation in the Gk. MSS. The οἱ often printed before τοῦ κυρίου μαθηταί is found only in Schwartz’ MS, A. as against T, E, R, B, D, M which omit it.

⁸ Mommsen, *Zeitschrift für N.T. Wissenschaft*, 1902, pp. 156-159.

⁹ P. Lagrange, O.P., *L’Evangüs selon S. Jean*, p. xxxiii.

¹⁰ Moffatt, *Introduction to Lit. of N. T.*, 1911, p. 600.

¹¹ In the next two paragraphs I have tried to condense the arguments put forward *F.G.*, chapters xv. and xvi. in my own words. The original gains much from the charm and skill of its presentation, which a précis cannot reproduce, but otherwise I do not think I have weakened the case.

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of those who had known the Lord in the days of His flesh, burdened in his last years with the Church of the metropolis of Asia. And they did not look in vain. He met and overcame this supreme crisis—with the aid of a "mystic trance"—by becoming the first and greatest "modernist."¹²

The faith was then menaced on the one side by the new-risen Gnostic docetæ with their shadowy "emanations," who emptied of all human substance or historical significance the Person whom John the Elder at the least had seen as a breathing, suffering reality. On the other it was ill served by seers, still filled with all the old this-worldly Jewish mind, that saw the things of the spirit only through the veil of sensuous apocalyptic dreaming. And so we get the gospel of the Word made flesh—all the tense sanctity and passionate brooding of a long high life flaming out into a last splendid utterance of his soul—of all that he himself had come, to be only in virtue of things seen and heard in Jewry all those years ago. This gospel is the reconciliation of the fact and meaning which a later generation would have sundered—the fact real and historical, although—indeed, because—transfigured by its meaning. Thus John the Elder crowned the work of Saul of Tarsus.

It all sounds extraordinarily attractive. Even it would account for the masterful treatment accorded the Synoptics (always a difficulty with "liberal" theories). After all, unlike, Mark and Luke, the pale reflections of Peter and Paul, this man *knew*—"that which our eyes have seen and hands have handled of the Word of Life."¹³ The Fourth Gospel was indeed, as the church has always held, a last and supremely authorized attempt to correct and supplement the Synoptists who had not been, in St. Luke's word, "autoptists," but put forward by John the Elder, the last of all those who had even *seen* the Lord.¹⁴

Unfortunately, we happen to know something of the sort of teaching with which the Elder was accustomed to supplement his gospels. St. Irenæus, in one of his more millenarian moments, tells us that—

"...the Elders who saw John the disciple of the Lord, relate

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that they had heard from him how the Lord used to teach, concerning those days and to say:

¹² It is worth note that the conception of the part played by history in theology which Dr. Streeter attributes to the Elder is the precise and exact opposite of that adopted by "modernists" in the grand manner, Laberthonniere, Loisy, Le Roy, and their fellows.

¹³ On this theory the first phrase would be strictly accurate, the second a gross exaggeration—unless we allow the twelve-year "Elder," with the curiosity of youth, to have assisted at the Descent from the Cross.

¹⁴ Some of those who have felt the attraction of the case for the "Elder" do not seem to have realized that its strong points are simply "lifted" bodily from the case for the Apostle. On the other hand, "the Elder" has weaknesses which are quite his own.

"The days shall come in which vines shall grow, each having 10,000 shoots, on each shoot 10,000 branches, and on each branch 10,000 twigs and on each twig 10,000 clusters, and on each cluster 10,000 grapes, and each grape when pressed shall yield five and twenty measures of wine. And when any of the Saints shall have taken hold of one of the clusters, another shall cry, "I am a better cluster; take me, bless the Lord through me!" Likewise also a grain of wheat shall produce 10,000 heads, and every head, 10,000 grains, and every grain, ten lbs. of fine flour, bright and clean; and other fruits, seeds and the grass shall produce in similar proportions, and all the animals, using those fruits which are products of the soil, shall become in their turn peaceable and harmonious, obedient to man in all subjection.'

These things Papias, who was a hearer of John and a companion of Polycarp, an ancient worthy, witnesseth, in writing in the fourth, of his books, for there are five books by him. And he added saying:

*" ' But these things are credible to them that believe. And when Judas the traitor did not believe, and asked, " How shall such growths be accomplished by the Lord ?" he relates that the Lord said, "They shall see who shall come to these (times)." ' "*¹⁵

It is a little difficult to believe that a mind which could relish these apocalyptic botanizings could also have produced the chapters which were to sterilize for ever the effective millenarian spirit in the Church. Even the "mystic trance"—into which Dr. Streeter is a little inclined to precipitate any primitive saint who shows awkward signs of orthodox doctrine or traditional behaviour¹⁶—does not really explain how this passage and the Fourth Gospel can both be products of one man's religion.

It may be answered that St. Irenæus evidently thought them so, or quotes them as if he did; but almost anything seems to be allowable of St. Irenæus' literary methods, if one is sufficiently "liberal." Description of them vary from "audacious lie" (E. Schwartz)¹⁷ to "dingy" (Dr. Streeter).¹⁸ It is, I think, possible to show conclusively that he did, in this case, make a quite natural mistake, and that with this misunderstanding of the external evidence every trace of a common authorship vanishes.

St. Irenæus' use of this passage of Papias does not stand

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alone. We have a control. in the accurate historian Eusebius, who had also read Papias with care, though he had no high opinion of him. In his *Ecclesiastical History* he notes that Papias wrote "five books of Expositions of Dominical Oracles," and continues:

"These Irenæus also mentions as his only writings somewhat as follows:

¹⁵ St. Irenæus, *Adv. Hær.*, v. 33, 3 and 4. Translation in Lightfoot and Harmer, *Apostolic Fathers*, 1898, pp. 533 sq.

¹⁶ Cf. the treatment accorded St. Ignatius, *P.C.*, pp. 165 sqq. and 228 sq.

¹⁷ *De Pionio et Polycarpo*, Göttingen, 1905, p. 33.

¹⁸ *P.C.*, 1929, p. 194.

“ ‘And these things Papias also, who was a hearer of John and a companion of Polycarp, a man of primitive times, attests in writing in the fourth of his books. For there are five books by him.’

“So indeed says Irenæus. Nevertheless Papias himself in the preface to his discourses makes it plain that he was in no sense a hearer of the holy Apostles....”¹⁹

And Eusebius goes on to cite the famous fragment from Papias’ preface, and to state categorically that it was with John the Elder, not the Apostle, that Papias claimed, or seemed to claim, personal acquaintance.

From this certain facts may be deduced.

(1) Eusebius had read this whole passage of Irenæus with some care, since he here quotes exactly,²⁰ not from the quotation of Papias, but from Irenæus’ own accompanying *dictum*. (2) Irenæus’ statement, that Papias was a “hearer of John” (the apostle) was apparently provoked by finding this *logion* attributed to a John.²¹ (3) Eusebius was therefore led to question Irenæus’ statement that Papias knew the apostle John and to state, the true facts by his examination of this very passage. He must therefore have compared it with the original. Obviously, he did not there find anything which made it clear that it came from the Apostle. But I suspect that it was not made certain either that it came from the Elder, or he would not have felt obliged to bring evidence from another part of Papias’ book to prove that the John Papias knew was not the Apostle. (4) Eusebius tells us that Papias’ “curious” millenarian “parables and traditions of the Saviour,” of which this is a specimen, came to him ἐκ παραδόσεως ἀγράφου from unwritten tradition.”²² He also tells us that John ‘the Elder

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was Papias’ main source for παραδόσεις, “traditions.”²³ It is therefore a fair argument that where we find a millenarian tradition which had reached Papias orally from a “John,” we are dealing with “John the Elder” and not the Apostle or an otherwise unknown “John the Seer.”²⁴

¹⁹ Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, iii., 39, 1. Trans. by Lawler and Oulton, S.P.C.K., 1927, vol. i., p. 99

²⁰ The surviving ‘Latin version. of St. Irenæus agrees literally with Eusebius’ Greek text, despite the latter’s ὡδέ τως.

²¹ The words ὁ μᾶθητις τοῦ κυρίου may have been applied by Papias to the “John” whom he here cited. In this case they must be allowed to have stood in the text of his preface. On the other hand, they are one of St. Irenæus’ regular ways of referring to the author of the Fourth Gospel (he uses it altogether sixteen times), and they do not stand in this passage as verbally quoted from Papias. He may have introduced them himself. If he found them in Papias his mistake was all the more natural.

²² *Eccl. Hist.*, iii., 39, 11.

²³ *Ibid.*, iii., 39, 13.

²⁴ R. H. Charles, *Revelation*, 1920, p. lxxxiv. *sqq.*, is responsible for the apparition of this ghost. Streeter, *F.G.*, p. 469, and *P.C.*, 87 *sq.*, follows Charles in attributing to him the Apocalypse of Patmos. The only function of this transparent eponym in both writers is to receive the discredit for the millenarian apocalypse, in order that the blameless Elder may write the more or less anti-millenarian gospel.

To these arguments from Irenæus and Eusebius may be added a converging indication internal to the passage of Papias itself. This is nothing more than an elaboration of a passage from the Jewish *apocryphon* generally called the *Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch* or *II. Baruch*, which was put out in Hebrew somewhere between A.D. 70 and the beginning of the second century, though much of its material was common form at the time and may be older.²⁵ This passage is thus at once placed in close relations with the Johannine Apocalypse, which is notoriously closely affiliated to similar Jewish works. But Eusebius, who cannot with any probability be supposed to have detected this common affinity, was inclined to attribute the Apocalypse to the Elder, apparently partly on the strength of what he found in Papias.

Lastly St. Jerome tells us²⁶ very definitely that John the Elder was a pronounced millenarian, in a passage which is not entirely dependent, on Eusebius since he also cites Apollinarius the Younger of Laodicea (*ob. c.* 392). The latter was a versatile bishop, who besides being excommunicated in his youth for stopping to the end of the recitation of a hymn to Bacchus by his schoolmaster, had succeeded in getting his Christology condemned by a General Council and forming a schism.²⁷ What is more to our purpose, Jerome tells us that he was the latest of the Asiatic millenarians. He was a student of Papias²⁸ and no doubt furnished St. Jerome with information on the authorities upon which the millenarian doctrine was based. This passage of St. Jerome is cited by Dr. Streeter²⁹ to strengthen his attrib-

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tion of II. and III. John to the Elder, in order thereby to attribute the Fourth Gospel to the same writer. What Dr. Streeter forgot to mention in this note is that though St. Jerome does there attribute these two epistles to the Elder, he expressly separates their authorship from that of the Gospel and the First Epistle, which he attributes to the Apostle, and that he further attributes to the Elder that very *dogma judaicum* of the millennium which Dr. Streeter believes the author of the Fourth Gospel designed to combat.

I believe that on these grounds we are justified in taking it that St. Irenæus was in this case mistaken, and attributed to the Apostle what was in fact a tradition from "the Elder." This is not

²⁵ "The earth shall also yield its fruit ten thousandfold, and on one vine there shall be 1,000 branches, and each branch shall produce 1,000 clusters, and each cluster shall produce 1,000 grapes, and each grape shall produce a cor of wine. And those who have hungered shall rejoice; moreover they shall behold wonders every day" (2 Baruch xxix., 5 and 6. Ed. and Trans. Charles, S.P.C.K., 1917).

²⁶ *De Vir. Illustr.*, 18; cf. In *Ezech.*, cap. xxxvi

²⁷ He was also the author of a gospel in the form of Platonic dialogues, and part author with his father of a translation of the Psalter into Homeric verse, and a Euripidean tragedy on the Passion in which the *Mater Dolorosa* rants in language borrowed alternately from Medea and Clytemnestra.

²⁸ One of our few scraps of Papias is preserved in quotation in a fragment of this writer. Cf. Lightfoot and Harmer: p. 523.

²⁹ *F.G.*, p. 460 n.

to say that he invariably made the same mistake in his statements about "John." He was not infallible, but he was not *ex officio* fallible either.³⁰

Beside all this it is interesting to set a paragraph from Dr. Streeter. In *The Four Gospels*³¹ he writes:

"Certainly few of the surviving fragments of Papias (including an undefined number preserved by Irenaeus as 'Sayings of the Elders'), which are mainly crudely millenarian in character, suggest intimacy with the author of the Fourth Gospel; but we may probably infer that this material came mainly from *Aristion*,³² for it is noticeable that Papias puts his name first. Indeed, Eusebius, if we press the strict meaning of the language used, appears to imply a distinction between 'words of the Lord' derived from Aristion, and 'traditions' [? about, other matters] derived from John. After alluding to a materialistic millenarian statement, attributed by Papias to our Lord;³³ he then adds that Papias 'gives in his own work other³⁴ accounts of words of the Lord (τῶν τοῦ κυρίου λόγων διηγήσεις) on the authority of the aforementioned Aristion, and traditions (παραδόσεις) of the Elder John.' Then he at once gives us an example of such παραδόσεις from the Elder, the famous statement about the origins of Mark."

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There are certain comments on all this which would appear to be in order.

(1) Apart from the passage quoted above, no extant fragment of Papias is "crudely millenarian in character," or millenarian at all for that matter.³⁵

(2) The exact limits of the passages in which St. Irenæus bases himself on "Sayings of the Elders" are hard to define. Lightfoot seems to have made them twenty-four excluding the passage cited in full above, for which Papias is definitely given as the authority. Since none of those are "crudely millenarian in character," it is a little difficult to see why they should be included, even in a bracket, in information derived from the supposedly millenarian Aristion,

³⁰ The late Dr. Burney, in the last chapter of his *Aramaic Origins of the Fourth Gospel* (Oxford, 1922), suggested that St. Irenæus was not entirely in good faith in confusing the two Johns, and had some inkling of the truth that the only John of Ephesus was "the Elder." Streeter (*P.C.*, p. 444 n.) finds this insinuation of bad faith against a Doctor of the Church "attractive" but not altogether proven. It is supported (*op. cit.*, pp. 138 sq.) by comprehensive tables of St. Irenæus' references to "John," to Paul, and to others of the Twelve, designed, to show that while John is styled μαθητής or *discipulus*, the others are styled Apostles. John is admittedly twice intended by the word "Apostle," and I should say more often. Some of Dr. Burney's other figures are misleading, and all references like *Adv. Hær.*, 1., 25, 2 (Stieren's Ed., p. 249), *qui sunt (meliores) quam Illius discipuli, ut puta Petrus et Paulus, et reliqui apostoli...*, which make the argument quite worthless, are not enumerated at all.

³¹ *F.G.* 450 n.

³² Italics mine.

³³ I aspect the passage preserved by Irenæus, which Eusebius has just been discussing.

³⁴ Italics Dr. Streeter's.

³⁵ Eusebius also tells us that P. was a millenarian, but he cites no actual evidence of it (*Eccl. Hist.*, iii., 39, 12).. The presumable fragment of P. which underlies *Adv. Hær.*, v. 36, 1, may conceivably have been millenarian in its original form. Its millenarianism certainly is not "crude" or even apparent in its present setting. It is only mentioned here to do Dr. Streeter the strictest justice.

whose name St. Irenæus never once so much as mentions. Even suppose that Aristion was also called "the Elder," a supposition for which there is no better authority than Canon Streeter's,³⁶ the case against him here will not be greatly strengthened. The only millenarian fragment is assigned to "John the Elder." If we give "Aristion the Elder" all this non-millenarian material—*cue bono*? Will it be suggested that *he* wrote the Fourth Gospel?

(3) "Certainly" very "few" of these passages betray "intimacy with the author of the Fourth Gospel." It would be interesting to know in which of them Dr. Streeter finds suggestion of it. But if he meant "none" he might have written it without greatly weakening his case. Nor, we may add, do any of them show at first sight strong inner connection with I. Peter, which Dr. Streeter has also credited, by a "scientific guess"³⁷ to this same convenient Aristion. But perhaps he had been cured of his "crude millenarianism" by then, by reading his colleague, John the Elder's, gospel.

(4) The neat but flimsy construction upon διηγήσεις and παραδόσεις is rather a darkening of counsel. The two words are used vaguely in later Greek, almost as synonyms. In any case, there is no need to balance them sharply against each other here; Eusebius had felt justified in classing the contributions of both John and Aristion as παραδόσεις in section 7 of this chapter. Though they certainly do come "after" the mention of a

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"materialistic millenarian statement," it might have been made clearer that they come some, way "after"—standing at the beginning of the next paragraph but one. Eusebius is here far more reasonably translated "Papias, also records in his own work other [*i.e.*, different in kind to the foregoing] accounts of the words of the Lord from the aforesaid Aristion κτλ," Since he is here changing the whole subject from millenarianism, in Papias and in general, which he has been discussing, to gospel origins.

An expert *Quellenkritik* of this passage of Dr. Streeter by the new method of "scientific guesses" might establish something like the following results, Dr. Streeter wrote from Eusebius, an historian for whom he has expressed a (widely shared) respect.³⁸ At Eusebius' reference to St. Irenæus (E.H. iii. 39. 1) he called to mind, rather vaguely the "Fragments of Papias" and the "Sayings of the Elders" collected at the end of Lightfoot and Harmer's *Apostolic Fathers*. Of the former the only ones of each importance are drawn from this very chapter of Eusebius (save only the arresting description of the vineyard of the Saints from Irenæus), so that it was not worth while looking them up. And what Lightfoot called "The Reliques of the Elders" are uniformly pious, but rather dull; and they are, besides, printed in smaller type, which gives a general impression of unimportance. They, therefore, get set down as "mainly crudely millenarian" by a

³⁶ *P.C.*, p. 131. "...doubtless (!) Aristion also bore the title Elder." Papias and Eusebius both rather carefully do *not* call him so. Irenæus never mentions him. The Armenian Etchmiadzin codex cited to support this title seems to rest on Moses of Khorene, who was misled by a mispointing by the Armenian translator of the Syriac version of Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History*.

³⁷ *P.C.*, pp. 130 sqq.

³⁸ *P.C.*, pp. 21 sq.

"composite photograph" with the single millenarian fragment from Irenæus. But why ascribe all the non-millenarian passages to Aristion, and on the strength of them proclaim him a "crude" millenarian, when the real culprit was obviously the elder John? Partly because Dr. Streeter had not looked up his Irenæus; partly because he is too fine a critic to waste his time on "symbolism" or "partition" theories of the Fourth Gospel. John the Elder is a valuable alternative to the Apostle, but if Papias derived his millenarianism from the Elder, farewell to any chance of crediting that worthy with the gospel. And Dr. Streeter allowed himself to build up a case of millenarianism against Aristion, against the whole weight of the patristic evidence so impressively cited, by methods which are not strictly those of scholarship.

It will be said that these mistakes are careless and most unfortunate, but that detailed comment is cruel. But we may imagine that were some such process to be disentangled from the writings of an apostolic father, there would be something of an *émeute* among the gentlemen of the left. There is a faction, with which Dr. Streeter has alliances, which noisily claims the

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right to handle doctrine on the basis of its own scientific *critique* of documents. That faction has welcomed with enthusiasm³⁹ the enquiries of Dr. Streeter into Christian origins, enquiries conducted at times by methods one would have thought more apt to induce a vertigo in modern minds. It would seem that where their own anti-supernatural prepossessions are not in question, these gentlemen are as naively uncritical as are, *servatis servandis*, we poor reactionaries ourselves. Which does not predispose us in favour of their claim to scientific results from documents in matters of Christology.

This highly topical attempt to foist an "elder" into the claim of an Apostle has won some following among us, perhaps because it offers the attractions of a compromise; between the traditional authorship and some nameless Philonised Ephesian. It saves the ecclesiastical tradition from conscious fraud or even pseudepigraphy. But by discarding the Apostle it allows the "Liberals" to relegate the Johannine Christology, and all its implications, to the "library of devotion" (Dr. Streeter's phrase⁴⁰), where, we may take it, it will trouble them less.

It is not contended that this note has any but a negative bearing on the authorship of the Fourth Gospel. The retirement of the Elder still leaves the field clear for those unscrupulous Ephesian saints, J₁, J₂ and J_R; or Loisy's (and Gaius of Rome's) Prince of Gnostics," or even Dr. Eisner's more exciting team, composed of Lazarus in a Roman gaol, a Samaritan worshipper of Simon Magus, and a Catholic editor. But all these attributions are dependent wholly on internal evidence, and can only be maintained in the teeth of all the external witness of antiquity that that Gospel was the work of a John, who lived at Ephesus somewhere about the time of Domitian. The whole beauty of John the Elder is that he will meet these facts, and that beside his

³⁹ Cf., e.g. a review of *The Primitive Church* by the Rev. J. S. Bezzant in *The Modern Churchman*. Unfortunately I have not the number by me. It would be in the summer of 1929, probably July or August.

⁴⁰ *F.G.*, p. 395.

comparatively robust figure the other members of the Johannine pleiad of the Liberals⁴¹ seem wraith-like in the extreme.

Papias, and he alone, has preserved for us some faint memory of "the Elder," But it might be said, *pace* Eusebius, that even the famous fragment of his preface would have left it for ever doubtful whether such an ecclesiastic as "the Elder John" ever had existed as an *ens in se*. What does suffice to raise him certainly above the status of a "Liberal" ætiological myth

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is the attribution to him of definite παραδόσεις, as the description of a non-teetotal paradise which attracted St. Irenæus. But Papias has told us just too much about the Elder for him to be credited with the Fourth Gospel.

I would not be thought to imply that Dr. Streeter's "testimonies" alone require cautious handling, Dr. Moffat⁴² can make of an Arian martyrology which does not support, and a Carthaginian calendar which directly contradicts his thesis, two "early catholic calendars" which "embody the tradition" that the Apostle was martyred early, at Jerusalem. Dr. Burney⁴³ cites "Papias" as preserved in "Philip of Side" and "Georgius Hamartolus" *tout court* without the necessary explanations that this reference is to (1) an isolated fragment of what may be an eighth-century epitome of what may be a reference by the lost fifth-century *History* of Philip of Side to something in Papias,⁴⁴ and (2) to an interpolation in a single MS.⁴⁵ of the ninth-century chronicle of Hamartolus, and that this interpolation seems itself to rest on the egregious epitome of Philip, and not on Papias himself. Or there are three consecutive sentences on p. 56 of Dr. Bacon's *Studies in Matthew*⁴⁶ which would furnish material for another article as long as this has grown.

But I would not end controversially. The tradition of Christendom binds us all closer than some of us may think. The writing of stories of the lives of Saints with another purpose than mere history was an exercise of Christian piety before the Middle Ages were in flower. Nor are the objects of this recent hagiographic *cultus* altogether novel. In the *Roman Martyrology* for February 22nd we may read:

Salamina in Cypro, Saneti Aristioniss, qui (ut mox, memorandum Papias testatur) fuit unus de septuaginta duobus Xti. discipulis.

Hierapoli in Phrygia, beati Papiæ, ejusdena civitatis episcopi, qui Sancti Joannis Senioris auditor, Polycarpi autem sodalis fait.

⁴¹ No single critic has discerned more than four "Johns," but altogether they seem to total seven.

⁴² Int. to *Lit. of N.T.*, 1911, p. 606.

⁴³ *Op. cit.*, p. 136.

⁴⁴ It is thus at best a fragment of a précis of a quotation of a lost work by another lost work. It contains one generally admitted blunder concerning Quadratus, but does refer to the Ephesian residence of the Apostle. Neither of these facts is mentioned, *loc. cit.*

⁴⁵ *Cod. Coislinianus*, 305.

⁴⁶ London, 1930. Curiously, Mr. Bezzant contributed another appreciative review to *The Modern Churchman* (April-May, 1931, pp. 191 *sqq.*) which takes no account of these violences to the evidence.

"At Salamis in Cyprus"—it was not Dr. Streeter but Cardinal Baronius who thought of that. Dr. Streeter would identify Aristion with Ariston, first bishop of Smyrna according to *Apostolic Constitutions* vii. 46.⁴⁷ Baronius, by an equally

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brilliant conjecture, would identify him with another Ariston, who figures as that Apostle's companion in the *Acts of Barnabas*.⁴⁸ One of Christ's seventy-two disciples"—neither Baronius nor Streeter invented that, but the ninth-century Usuard; while in the notice of Blessed Papias we may detect the hands of Eusebius and St. Irenæus. "At Salamis in Cyprus"—"One, of the seventy-two disciples"—"A boy of twelve who saw the Crucifixion"—"it must be rather fun to be a Bollandist. But these little variations need not hinder the new clients of this old devotion from celebrating a really imposing *fiesta* in February.

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⁴⁷ *P.C.*, pp, 93 *sqq.*

⁴⁸ "At Salamis" because there the apocryphal *Acts* placed the martyrdom of St. Barnabas, and by inference his companion died there also. I am indebted for this identification to a private letter from Père H. Delehayé, S.J.