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### Criticism and Evaluation of the Book of Revelation

Lorenz Blankenbuehler

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, [ir\\_blankenbuehlerl@csl.edu](mailto:ir_blankenbuehlerl@csl.edu)

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CONCORDIA SEMINARY

CRITICISM AND EVALUATION  
OF  
THE BOOK OF REVELATION  
WITH PARTICULAR EMPHASIS ON THE EXPOSITION  
OF THE EARLY GREEK FATHERS

A DISSERTATION  
SUBMITTED TO THE SEMINARY FACULTY  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF  
BACHELOR OF DIVINITY

DEPARTMENT OF NEW TESTAMENT

BY

LORENZ BLANKENBUEHLER

*Approved:*  
*L. Fuerbringer*  
*W. Andt.*

ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI  
JUNE 1943



## P R E F A C E

The writer in no way claims any originality of thought, or to have discovered anything that was hitherto unknown in the field of sacred letters. But he does claim to have examined the sources appended in the Bibliography in a critical fashion. If Part II of this thesis seems to repeat some of the material in Part I, let me state that in Part I I cite witnesses to prove the apostolic authorship and the veracity of the contention that St. John wrote the Apocalypse, while in Part II I cite the same witnesses either as embryonic expositors of the Revelation or as faithful chroniclers of their own day and time. While this thesis is not exhaustive, the field designated by the title is of limited scope, and very few details have been intentionally omitted.



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## Introduction

To state that the Book of Revelation is a much used, misused, and abused book is perhaps a very trite statement. And yet in times like the present there is great need for a sane evaluation of this sacred book. One can state without fear of contradiction the above opinion in the superlative degree: There is no more abused section of Holy Scripture than the Apocalypse of Saint John the Divine. Ill-informed and seemingly slightly unbalanced teachers loudly trumpet their expositions of the holy seer's words to be the only true and correct ones. The wildest assertions imaginable are made concerning the prophecies contained in this last book of the New Testament canon. The beloved disciple, if he were alive today to witness the current parade of false prophets might be tempted to once more call fire down from heaven to consume these pestilent teachers! At any rate, He would be appalled, nay, horrified at the abuse of his holy book. For his book, which is the result of God-inspired ecstatic visions, has been misinterpreted and twisted and perverted for so many centuries that it has become a veritable slide rule for history, -- a favorite stamping ground for fanatical enthusiasts, and a weighty point of leverage for the radical critics to make unprecedented attacks on God's Word. So widespread have these



fanatical misinterpretations become, that it is necessary for the orthodox Church to counteract them with a true picture of the book. Yes, -a picture; for the Apocalypse is not a slide rule for the historian; it is not a detailed chart for all events that happen in the world until the Lord comes in glory; nor does it purport to give an account of the millennial reign of Christ on earth with his saints in Jerusalem. The revelation of St. John is a symbolical book, an apocalyptic book, and only he who knows the language of symbols is able to read it with any understanding at all. Even then, some portions of it will remain incomprehensible, - and hence it is to be taken for granted that a study of this book must above all be undertaken in utmost humility. The sincere student of the Bible must take the shoes from off his feet, for the place of Revelation is holy ground. Given a sense of the beautiful and a sympathetic feeling of awe and wonder, plus a true appreciation for symbolism (presupposing at least an average intelligence), - the book makes sense. It makes sense because God wrote it. The Holy Spirit did not cause it to be written with the purpose that it should remain an inscrutable mystery. The fact that the early Christians regarded it as a most precious "Trostbuch" in the heat of manifold persecutions alone shows that it meant much to them. God says something to us through this Apocalypse, and the theologian ought to know what it is in order that he may be able to inculcate in his ~~ability~~ <sup>teaching</sup> the proper evaluation of this part of Holy Scripture.



It is the purpose of this treatise to get at the bottom of some of the early misconceptions and misinterpretations of the Apocalypse -- and by a positive approach endeavor to place the book in its rightful place of honor and esteem among the canonical books of the New Testament. May the Holy Spirit bless this work, and confirm the writer and his readers in the opinion of the early church fathers that this grand book of comfort and consolation for the world-weary Christian pilgrim was written by the Apostle St. John the Divine, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and that it is a part of those inspired writings which are "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." With this purpose in mind, then, and with great humility of spirit, and in perfect agreement with the analogy of faith and the historical confessions of the Church, let us study the early history of this much discussed and much perverted Revelation of St. John the Divine.



## I. The Apostolic Authorship of the Book of Revelation

### A. The Evidence in favor of John the Apostle, The Beloved Disciple

The bulk of the material presented in this section of my treatise is based largely upon a study of the writings of the conservative scholars on the Book of Revelation. However, I do not assume *a priori* that their position is the most logical and reasonable because of their conservative position. Wherever possible, I have traced their conclusions to the original sources in order that my final conclusions will be found tenable from a "scientific," as well as from a conservative, point of view. Let me state at the outset that most conservative scholars hold that the book was written by the Apostle of Jesus, St. John the Divine, about the year 96 A.D.

Our Church has commonly accepted this view, chiefly because of the fact that in the first two centuries of the Christian era it was accepted as canonical coming from the pen of St. John without any doubts whatsoever. In the latter half of the third century John's authorship was called into question. During the middle ages it was quite unanimously held to be the work of St. John due to the staunch defense of Jerome and Augustine. Luther's position was at first that it was "neither apostolic nor prophetic." Later on, in his second preface to the book, written in 1545, he modified his



views and left the question as to its apostolic origin an open one. As for the modern critics in general, they "largely take the view that the book does not come from the apostle, but from a different John, perhaps the one who is called the presbyter John, who they say must be distinguished from the apostle."<sup>1</sup> I shall first present the direct historical evidence in favor of the authorship of the Apostle John. Following the presentation of Dr. Abert Barnes the period extending from the death of John in 98 A.D. to the year 250 A.D. is divided into three smaller periods of approximately fifty years each. The first period embraces the time from 98 A.D. to 150 A.D..

In this period four writers bear testimony concerning the Apocâlypse: Hermas, Ignatius, Polycarp, and Papias. Hermas, who probably flourished about 100 A.D. and was a partial contemporary of John the Apostle, is known chiefly for his apocalyptic work called "The Shepherd," or, as the Latin Patrology has it, "The Pastor." This work has several allusions supposedly to the book of Revelation. The style bears a remarkable resemblance to that of the Apocâlypse, and would seem to indicate that Hermas had studied John's book and patterned his ideas according to it. A detailed comparison of the two books may be found in the works of Dr. Nathaniel Lardner ( in Ten Volumes, London, 1829). His conclusion is that Hermas read Revelation and imitated it in his "Shepherd." However, mere allusions are not conclusive evidence and hence the testimony of Hermas is relatively unimportant.

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1. Wm. Arndt, N. T. Isagogics Notes, p. 59.



Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, who flourished 70 - 107 A.D., suffered martyrdom under the Roman emperor Trajan in the year 107 at Rome. As he was on his way to Rome, where he met his end, he wrote his seven famous letters - the Letter to the Ephesians, the Letter to the Magnesians, the Letter to the Trallians, the Letter to the Romans, the Letter to the Philadelphians, the Letter to the Smyrneans, and the Letter to Polycarp. I shall not take time to discuss the authenticity of these letters, but proceed directly to take up the alleged references to the Apocalypse. They are as follows:

a) The Epistle to the Romans: "In the patience of Jesus Christ." This phrase is compared to Rev. 1,9:"I John, who am also your brother and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos," etc.

b) The Epistle to the Ephesians: "stones of the temple of the Father prepared for the building of God." This phrase is apparently based on a knowledge of chapter 21, 2-20 of John's book, the section which describes the heavenly Jerusalem. Rev. 21, verses 19 and 20 read thus: "And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst."



c) The third allusion is found, according to Knight of the British Museum, in his article "Two New Arguments in Vindication of the Revelation of St. John," in the Epistle to the Philadelphians. The quotation reads: "If they do not speak concerning Jesus Christ, they are but sepulchral pillars, and upon them are written only the names of men." The parallel passage in the Apocalypse is Rev. 3,12: "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out; and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God." Evidently Ignatius was contrasting the deplorable lot of the unbeliever with the glorious and blessed condition of the believer, who is sealed upon the forehead with the name of his God.

As Barnes correctly states, the coincidence of language is in itself no certain proof that Ignatius had seen the Apocalypse of St. John. The reader may draw his own conclusions. It might be added that Ignatius does not mention John's residence at Ephesus, his banishment to Patmos, or his death.

Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, suffered martyrdom sometime between 163 and 169 A.D. The majority of scholars in patristic chronology place his martyrdom in the year 168. Many exegetes regard Polycarp as the "angel" of the church when Saint John wrote his message to the church at Smyrna in the Apocalypse (96 A.D.). John's message reads as follows: "And unto the angel of the church at Smyrna write: These



things saith the first and the last, which was dead and is alive; I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death." Thus far the inspired seer John. The many exegetes who hold Polycarp to be the recipient bishop of this letter include chiefly the Catholic expositors and some Reformed scholars (e.g. Vitranga) and the celebrated Archbishop Richard Chenevix Trench. Trench disagrees with the commonly accepted view that the life span of Polycarp totalled 86 years in all, and offers a well-authenticated theory that Polycarp was Bishop of Smyrna when St. John wrote the book of Revelation. To quote Trench on this point: "In early ecclesiastical history Smyrna is chiefly famous as the Church over which Polycarp presided as bishop. This Church must have been founded at a very early date, though there is no mention of it either in the Acts or the Epistles of St. Paul. Knowing as we do that at a period only a little later than this, Polycarp was bishop there, a very interesting question presents itself to us, namely, whether he might not have been



bishop now; whether he may not be the angel to whom this Epistle is addressed. There is much to make this probable; and the fact, if it were so, would throw much light on the character of the Epistle, and beautifully account for that key-note of martyrdom to which it is set; while the difficulties which some find in this, rest mainly on the erroneous assumption that the Apocalypse was composed under Nero or Galba, and not under Domitian. It is true indeed that we have thus to assume an episcopate of his, which lasted for more than seventy years; for the "good confession" of Polycary did not take place till the year 168, while the Apocalypse was probably written in 96. Let us see, however, how far ecclesiastical history will bear us out in this. As early as 108 Ignatius on his way to his Roman martyrdom found Polycarp the bishop or Angel of the Church of Smyrna (MART. IGN. 3), addressing to him a letter which, despite of all which has been said against it, must still be considered genuine. We have only to extend his episcopate twelve years a parte ante, and he will have been angel of Smyrna when this Epistle was addressed to that Church. Is there any great unlikelihood in this? His reply to the Roman governor, who tempted him to save his life by denying His Lord, is well known, -- namely that he could not thus renounce a Lord whom for eighty and six years he had served, and during all this time had received nothing but good from Him (DE S. POLYC. MART. 9; Eusebius, H.E. iv. 15). But these "eighty and six years" can scarcely represent the whole length of his life,



for Irenaeus (ADV. HAER. iii. 3.4; cf. Eusebius, H.E. iv.14) lays much stress on the extreme old age which Polycarp had attained, that, great as this age is, we must yet esteem the number of his years to have been greater still. They represent no doubt the years since his conversion. Counting back eighty-six years from the year 168, being that of his martyrdom, we have 82 A.D. as the year when he was first in Christ. This will give us fourteen years as the period which will have elapsed from his conversion to that when his present Epistle was written, during which time he may very well have attained the post of chiefest honour and toil and peril in the Church of Smyrna. Tertullian indeed distinctly tells us that he was consecrated bishop of Smyrna by St. John (DE PRAESC. HAERET. 32); and Irenaeus, who declares to us that he had himself in his youth often talked with Polycarp, declares the same (Eusebius, H.E. iv. 14; cf. iii.36; Jerome, CATAL. SCRIPT. s.v. POLYCARPUS; Jacobsen, FATT. APOSTOLL. p.564; and Roethe, DIE ANFAENGE D. CHRISTL. KIRCHE, p.429). These are then very sufficient reasons for thinking it at least possible, to me it seems probable, that to Polycarp himself the words (of St. John, Rev. 2, 8-11)....were first spoken.<sup>2</sup> Now whether the position Trench takes is quite plausible, or whether it is mere wishful thinking, I leave it to the reader to decide. But Trench is a solid patristic scholar of no mean reputation. Should we take the traditional view that Polycarp's death occurred when he was eighty-six years old, we must reckon

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2. Richard Chenevix Trench, Commentary on the Epistles to the Seven Churches in Asia: Revelation II, III, Pp.132-135.



that he was in his late teens or even possibly in his early twenties when John died in A.D. 98. What we know of Polycarp is taken from an extent fragment of his letter to the Philip-pans and from an epistle sent from the church in Smyrna to the churches in Pontus, giving the details of his martyrdom. This account is found in Eusebius, Book IV, chapter 15, which is entitled "UNDER VERUS, POLYCARP WITH OTHERS SUFFERED MARTYR-DOME AT SMYRNA." The Verus mentioned here is the Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius Verus. In these two sources there is no mention or allusion to the Apocalypse. But we nevertheless reckon Polycarp as a witness to the Apostolic origin of Revelation because he was the personal friend of St. John, and Irenaeus was the personal friend and pupil of Polycarp. Irenaeus gives us clear and definite statements that the Book of Revelation was written by the Apostle John. How could Irenaeus have maintained this opinion without being contradicted by his teacher Polycarp? It is but natural to assume that Irenaeus got his views on the matter from Polycarp.

Papias was bishop of Hierapolis near Colosse, and flourished about 110 to 115 A.D. He was the intimate friend of Polycarp, a partial contemporary of St. John; to put it as Eusebius has it, he was a "hearer of John." We have only fragments of his writings in the works of Eusebius, Jerome, and in the Commentary of Andreas, bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia. Here is what Andreas has to offer: "In regard now to the inspiration of the book we think it superfluous to extend our discourse, inasmuch as the blessed Gregory, and



Cyril, and moreover the ancient writers, Papias, Irenaeus, Methodius, and Hippolytus bear testimony to its credibility."

Barnes calls attention to the following five points in summarizing the evidence in favor of the Apostolic authorship during the first half-century after St. John's death.

1. The book was known during this period.
2. So far as the testimony goes, it is in favor of its having been written by John the Apostle.
3. The fact is that John the Apostle as author is not called in question or doubted.
4. It was generally ascribed to him.
5. It was probably the foundation of the Millenarian views entertained by Papias, -that is, it is easier to account for his holding these views by supposing that the book was known, and that he founded them on this book, than in any other way.<sup>3</sup>

The second half century, 150-200 A.D., embraces the following writers: Justin Martyr, the Narrator of the Martyrs of Lyons, Irenaeus, Melito, Theophilus, Apollonius, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian.

Justin Martyr, born at Flavia Neapolis (Sichem) in Samaria about 103 A.D., was converted to Christianity about the year 133, and was martyred circa 165 A.D. Methodius characterizes him as "not far removed from the apostles in time or in virtue." This characterization is found in Methodius' Discourse on the Resurrection.<sup>4</sup> Justin Martyr advocated chiliasm, that is, the doctrine that Christ will reign a thousand years on earth. He says in defending this doctrine: "And a man from among us, by name of John, one of the Apostles

3. Albert Barnes, Notes on Revelation, introduction, pp.4-5.

4. Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. VI, p.374.



of Christ, in a Revelation made to him, Ἐν Ἀποκάλυψε  
γενομένη αὐτῷ, - has prophesied that the believers  
 in one Christ shall live a thousand years in Jerusalem; and  
 after that shall be the general, and in a word, eternal  
 resurrection and judgment of all men together."<sup>5</sup> We see  
 here that Justin makes a direct reference to chapter twenty  
 of the Apocalypse. Furthermore he mentions the book by name,  
Ἀποκάλυψις, and says it was the work of John, one  
 of the Apostles of Christ. The Book of Revelation, then, was  
 in existence at Justin's time, about fifty years after John's  
 passing. Justin Martyr's testimony is further enhanced by  
 the fact that he lived in that region where the Apostle John  
 lived, and that his character was admired by all who knew him.

The Narrator of the Martyrs of Vienne and Lyons: This  
 epistle, an account of the persecutions endured here and sent  
 to the churches in Asia and Phrygia, is preserved for us in  
 Eusebius, Book V, ch. 1 of his Church History. This letter  
 was written about the year 177 A.D. One sentence in it is  
 particularly noteworthy: "For he was indeed a genuine disciple  
 of Christ, following the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." There  
 can be no doubt that this refers to Rev. 14, 4, "These are they  
 which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." The reference  
 is to a noble Christian Vettius Epagathus, "one of the brethren  
 and a man filled with love for God and his neighbor."<sup>6</sup>

5. Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. I, p. 240.

6. The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Vol. I., p. 212.



Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons in Gaul, was a disciple of Polycarp and of Papias. Scholars place his death circa 200 A.D., and according to this reckoning, Irenaeus lived to an extremely ripe old age. He became bishop of Lyons after he was past seventy. His principal work is entitled "Against Heresies." His exegesis of the Apocalypse will be taken up at length in the second part of this treatise. Suffice it to say here that he quotes from the book of Revelation no less than thirty-three times.<sup>7</sup> Here I will list only two quotations which testify as to the apostolic authorship and the date of composition. Concerning the time of writing he states: "It was seen no long time ago, but almost in our age, at the end of the reign of Domitian."<sup>8</sup> At another point he discusses the ancient copies thus: "These things being thus, and this number being in all the exact and ancient copies, and they who saw John attesting to the same things, and reason teaching us the number of the name of the beast, according to the acceptation of the Greeks, is expressed by the letters contained in it."<sup>9</sup> This latter statement is taken to refer to Rev. 13,18: "Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man; and his number is six hundred threescore and six."

Melito, bishop of Sardis, which was one of the churches to which the book of Revelation was directed, Rev.

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7. S.L. Bowman, Historical Evidence of the N.T., chart, p.632, par. 417.

8. Ante Nicene Fathers, Vol. I, p.559-560.

9. Ibid., pp.557-560. The quotation is from Eusebius.



3,1-6, flourished about the year 170. The text of John's message reads as follows: "And unto the angel of the Church in Sardis write: these things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name from the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches." Of the writings of Melito of Sardis only fragments remain. The Rev. B.P. Pratten, the translator of the fragments of the second and third centuries, makes the following comment on Melito: "Melito was bishop of Sardis, and flourished in the reign of Marcus Aurelius. He wrote many works, but all of them have perished except a few fragments. The genuineness of the Syrian fragments is open to question."<sup>10</sup> Melito was held in high esteem by the ancient church fathers and was known as "The Philosopher." Moreover, says Barnes, "he was remarkably inquisitive respecting the sacred books; and at the request

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10. Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. VIII, p. 747.



of Onesimus, he made extracts from the Scriptures respecting the Messianic prophecies, and also a complete list of the books of the Old Testament, which is still extant in Eusebius (H.E. iv. 26). He wrote a 'Treatise or Commentary on the Book of Revelation.'<sup>11</sup> Dr. Lardner says of this, 'What it contained we are not informed. I will say that it was a commentary on that book. It is plain he ascribed that book to John, and very likely to John the Apostle. I think it very probable he esteemed it a book of canonical authority.' Dr. Hug, in his "Einleitung in das Neue Testament" makes the following assertion: "Melito himself calls it the Apocalypse of John."<sup>12</sup> To quote from Michaelis on the point whether Melito considered the Apocalypse as from the inspired pen of the Apostle St. John: "Melito, der um das Jahr 170 lebte, hat ein Buch von dem Teufel, und der Offenbarung Johannis geschrieben. Ungeachtet Eusebius nicht dabei sagt, ob er sich fuer oder wider die Offenbarung erklärt habe, und es freilich nicht unmöglich wäre, dass er, gleich andern Alten, ein eigenes Buch geschrieben hätte, die Offenbarung Johannis zu bestreiten: so kommt es mir doch wahrscheinlicher vor, dass diese verloren gegangene Schrift eine Auslegung der Gesichte Johannis gewesen sei, und ich werfe deshalb den Melito unter die Zeugen fuer die Offenbarung Johannis."<sup>13</sup> Pratten conjectures that "Melito may have been the immediate

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11. Albert Barnes, Notes on the N.T., Vol. 11, Revelation, Int. p.5.

12. John Leonhard Hug, Einleitung in das N.T. p. 529-530.

13. Johann David Michaelis, Einleitung in die göttlichen Schriften des Neuen Bundes, Zweiter Teil, p. 1289, bottom.



successor of the "angel" of the church at Sardis, to whom our Great High Priests addressed one of the apocalyptic messages. He was an 'Apostolic Father' in point of fact he very probably knew the blessed Polycarp and his disciple Irenaeus....In the fragments we find him called the Bishop of Sardis, Bishop of Attica, and Bishop of Ittica. He is also introduced to us as the 'Philosopher,' and we shall find him styled the 'Eunuch' by Polycrates. It is supposed that he had made himself a coelebs 'for the kingdom of heaven's sake,' without mistaking our Lord's intent, as did Origen. He was not a monk, but accepted a single estate to be the more free and single-eyed in the Master's service."<sup>14</sup> Westcott, Lightfoot and Barnes consider the testimony of Melito as the strongest possible evidence in favor of the Apocalypse, and the latter commentator lists six reasons for his opinion: "1. Melito was bishop of one of the churches to which the Apocalypse was directed; 2. He lived near the time of John; 3. He was a diligent student on this very subject; 4. He had every opportunity of ascertaining the truth on the subject; 5. He regarded it as the work of the Apostle John; and 6. He wrote a treatise or commentary on it as an inspired book."

Theophilus, according to Eusebius, was the sixth (Jerome calls him the seventh) bishop of Antioch. It would seem that Eusebius is the only Eastern writer of the early centuries to mention this church father. Hence we can cite

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14. Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. VIII, p.750.



only his account as the most original source of information concerning this man. "Of Theophilus, whom we have mentioned as bishop of the church of Antioch, three elementary works addressed to Autolytus are extant; also another writing entitled 'Against the Heresy of Hermogenes' in which he makes use of the testimonies from the Apocalypse of John, and finally certain other catechetical books."<sup>15</sup> As to the dates of the episcopate of Theophilus they are generally reckoned as 169 A.D. to somewhere between 182 and 189 A.D. There is a passage in the extant writings of Theophilus which some regard as a direct reference to the Apocalypse. It reads thus: "This Eve, because she was deceived by the serpent, the evil demon, who is also called Satan, who thus spoke to her by the serpent, - does not cease to accuse this demon is also the dragon." We compare this passage with Rev. 12,9: "And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him."

Apollonius, according to Pratten, wrote a work against the Montanists, probably in the year A.D. 210. This is all that we know of him. In the introduction to his translation of the Apollonius fragment "Concerning Montanism" Pratten states: "He was a most eloquent man, according to St. Jerome; and his writings against Montanism were so forcible as to

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15. Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, p.202.



call forth Tertullian himself, to confute him if possible. He flourished under Commodus and Severus, and probably until the time of Caracalla. He bears testimony to the existence of a canon of Scripture, and to its inspired authority as the rule of faith and practice; and he witnesses, by citation, to the Gospel of St. Matthew. The Revelation of St. John also, according to Eusebius, was employed by him in his works; and he preserves a tradition that our Lord bade the Apostles continue in Jerusalem for the space of twelve years. We cannot affirm that he was invested with any office in the Church."<sup>16</sup> For an ancient appraisal of Apollonius let us permit Eusebius to speak for himself: "This same Apollonius states in the same work that, at the time of his writing, it was the fortieth year since Montanus had begun his intended prophecy. And he says also that Zoticus, who was mentioned by the former writer, when Maximilla was pretending to prophesy in Pepusa, resisted her and endeavored to refute the spirit that was working in her; but was prevented by those who agreed with her. He mentions also a certain Thraseas (Bishop of Eumenia) among the martyrs of that time. He speaks, moreover, of a tradition that the Savior commanded his apostles not to depart from Jerusalem for twelve years. He uses testimonies also from the Revelation of John, and he relates that a dead man had, through the Divine power, been raised by John himself in Ephesus. He also adds other things by which he fully and

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16. Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. VIII, p. 775.



abundantly exposes the error of the heresy of which we have been speaking. These are the matters recorded by Apollonius."<sup>17</sup>

Clement of Alexandria did his best work between the years 192-220 A.D. This man, next to Justin Martyr and Irenaeus, is regarded as the founder of Christian literature, and generally known as Clement the Great. It is indeed fortunate that we have his writings in their entirety. I shall quote Wilson, Clement's translator for the basic facts of this great father's biography. "Titus Flavius Clemens, the illustrious head of the Catechetical school at Alexandria at the close of the second century, was originally a pagan philosopher. The date of his birth is unknown. It is also uncertain whether Alexandria or Athens was his birthplace. On embracing Christianity, he eagerly sought the instructions of its most eminent teachers; for this purpose travelling extensively over Greece, Italy, Egypt, Palestine, and other regions of the East. Only one of these teachers can be with certainty identified, viz., Pantaenus, of whom he speaks in terms of profound reverence, and whom he describes as the greatest of them all. Returning to Alexandria, he succeeded his master Pantaenus in the catechetical school, probably on the latter departing on his missionary tour to the East, somewhere about 189 A.D. He was also made a presbyter of the Church, either then or somewhat later. He continued to teach with great distinction till A.D. 202, when the persecution under Severus compelled him to retire from Alexandria. In the beginning of

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17. Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, 2nd Series, Vol. I, Eusebius, V, pp. 236, 237.



the reign of Caracalla we find him at Jerusalem, even then a great resort of Christian, and especially clerical, pilgrims. We also hear of him travelling to Antioch, furnished with a letter of recommendation by Alexander, bishop of Jerusalem. The close of his career is covered with obscurity. He is supposed to have died about 220 A.D. Among his pupils were Origen, Alexander of Jerusalem, and Hippolytus."<sup>18</sup> In his work "The Instructor" (Paedagogus) Clement quotes the Apocalypse twice. The citations are as follows: "Rightly...the Lord again promises milk to the righteous, that the Word may be clearly shown to be both, 'the Alpha and Omega,' beginning and end," (Rev. 1,8).<sup>19</sup> The second passage reads: "The Apocalypse also says that the Lord Himself appeared wearing such a robe. It says also: 'I saw the souls of those that had witnessed, beneath the altar, and there was given to each a white robe.'" Here the reference is to Rev. 6, v.9 and v.11: "And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the Word of God, and for the Testimony which they held....And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled." In Clement's Stromata or Miscellanies there are four references to the Apocalypse: 1) "Behold the Lord, and His reard is before His face, to give to every one according to his works."<sup>20</sup> This is a paraphrase

18. Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. II, pp. 166-167.



of five Scripture texts; Ps. 62,12:"For thou renderest to every man according to his work;" Is. 40,10:"Behold, the Lord God will come with a strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reard is with him, and his work before Him;" Is. 62,11:"Behold, the Lord hath proclaimed unto the end of the world, Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold thy salvation cometh; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him;" Rom.2,6:"God...will render to every man according to his deeds;" Rev. 22,12:"And behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." 2) "And they say that the seven eyes of the Lord "are the seven spirits resting on the rod that springs from the root of Jesse."<sup>21</sup> This alludes to Rev. 5,6:"And I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth." We may compare here also Is. 11,10:"And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious." 3) "And although here upon earth he be not honoured with the chief seat, he will sit down on the four-and-twenty thrones, judging the people, as John says in the Apocalypse."<sup>22</sup> The reference is of course to Rev. 4,4:And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and

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they had on their heads crowns of gold." Also Rev. 11,16:  
 "And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on  
 their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God."

4) "Thus the Lord Himself is called 'the Alpha and Omega,  
 the beginning and the end,' 'by whom all things were made,  
 and without whom not even one thing was made.'" <sup>23</sup> We  
 compare this with Rev. 1,8; 1,11; and 21,6, the latter read-  
 ing as follows: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the  
 end. I will give to him that is athirst of the fountain of  
 the water of life freely." Dr. Lardner remarks that there  
 is a reference in Clement's writings to Rev. 21,21: "And the  
 twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of  
 one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it  
 were transparent glass." However, in reading through Clement  
 in the Ante-Nicene Fathers I did not locate this allusion.

Tertullian: a contemporary of Clement, although of  
 an entirely different school, and reckoned as the most learned  
 of the Latin Fathers. Although this treatise deals chiefly  
 with the Greek Fathers, I quote from Tertullian merely because  
 his testimony for the Apostolic authorship of the book is  
 overwhelming. According to Bowman he quotes the Apocalypse  
 80 times, although I think this American clergyman overshoots  
 the mark in his compilation.<sup>24</sup> The Ante-Nicene Fathers, in  
 the Text Index lists 79 citations of the Revelation by Ter-  
 tullian, but five of these are duplications and others again

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23. Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. II, p. 513.

24. S.L. Bowman, Historical Evidence of the New Testament, p.652.



are more paraphrases than they are direct quotations. Be that as it may, Tertullian does bear eloquent testimony for the apostolic genuineness of the Apocalypse. A good sample is the following: "The Apostle John, in the Apocalypse, describes a sharp two-edged sword coming out of the mouth of God."<sup>25</sup> Another is: "Though Marcion rejects his revelation, the succession of his shops traced to the original will assure us that John is the author."<sup>26</sup> Marcion, whom Polycarp called the 'first-born of Satan,' rejected the book of Revelation, the whole of the Old Testament, the account of the genealogy and baptism of the Savior, the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistles to Timothy, Titus, the Hebrews, and the Catholic Epistles. Hence his denial of the authenticity of the Apocalypse is rather to be expected than to be considered surprising. As for Tertullian, we may sum up his worth as a defender of the Apostolic origin of the Revelation thus: "There can be no doubt...that Tertullian regarded the Apostle John as the author of the book of Revelation; and his confident assertion may be considered as expressive of the prevailing opinion of his time."<sup>27</sup>

I have quoted Lardner several times heretofore. In order to show that I am not putting too much weight on his authority alone, I will, just for the sake of completeness, refer the reader to the opinions of four other leading scholars

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25. Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. III, p. 663ff.

26. Ibid., Tertullian, Part II, Vs. Marcion, p.

27. Barnes, intro., p. xvii.



among the moderns. Elliott<sup>28</sup> makes this statement regarding the testimony of Tertullian: "His testimony to the Apocalypse is most full and ample. He quotes, or refers to it in more than seventy passages in his writings, appealing to it expressly as the work of the Apostle John." Moses Stuart asserts: "The <sup>of</sup> declarations Tertullian are so frequent and plain, that no doubt can possibly remain as to his belief."<sup>29</sup> Then Michaelis writes in his "Urteile der Alten über die Offenbarung Johannis" upholding Lardner's scholarship: "Aus dem Athenagoras, dem sog enannten Testament der Zwölf Patriarchen, und den Clementinischen Recognitionen, hat Lardner bloss einzelne Anspielungen auf die Offenbarung Johannis angebracht, die eigentlich nicht beweisen, dass man dieses Buch für echt gehalten, sondern nur, dass man es gekannt habe. Hingegen ist von Theophilus Antiochenus, Clemens Alexandrinus, und Tertullianis gewiss, dass sie die Offenbarung fuer echt angenommen haben: und hiemit beschliesset sich das zweite Jahrhundert."<sup>30</sup> Then, finally, Dr. Theogore Zahn's judgment on the matter of Tertullian as a witness for the apostolic authorship and true canonicity of the Apocalypse: "Tertullian nach der Wiener Ausgabe, soweit bisher erschienen (vol. I-III), übrigens nach Gehler. Das vorhin von Irenaeus an letzter Stelle Gerühmte würde wahrscheinlich auch von Tert gelten

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28. E.B. Elliott, Horae Apolypticae, Vol. I, p.27.

29. Moses Stuart, A Commentary on the Apocalypse, Vol. I, p.318.

30. Michaelis, Zweiter Teil, p. 1290.



wenn uns seine Schriften, besonders das im Codex Paris. Lat. 1622 enthalten gewesene Buch DE SPE FIDELIUM, erhalten waeren. Die vollstaendige Zusammenstellung der Citate aus der Apokalypse und der Anspielung bei Roensch, Das Neue Testament Tertullians, pp. 530-544. Pp. 718 -721 erleichtere die Uebersicht sehr." 31

Up to the end of the second century no doubts had been cast on the Apostolic character of the Book of Revelation, as the preceding evidence that has been adduced shows. With the exception of the heresy of Montanus and the so-called Alogi, who seem to have opposed the doctrine of the Logos and hence rejected all the Johannine writings, the testimony of the early fathers for the book is indeed overwhelming. As for the Alogi there is grave doubt whether such a sect ever existed. Dr. Lardner firmly denies their evidence. And Hug sums up the matter very neatly in the following words: "Doch ausser den Kirchenvätern des vierten Jahrhunderts sind uns von Asien schon frühere Gegner der Apokalypse angesagt; nemlich die Secte der Aloger, ueber welche man desto mehr geschrieben hat, je weniger man von ihnen weiss. Epiphnius nemlich bereicherte die Naturhistorie der Ketzer mit einer neuen Species, und nannte sie Aloger. Der Cyprische Bischof hatte vielleicht Aergerniss an den antiapokalyptischen Gesinnungen seiner Nachbarn und Amtsbrueder auf dem festen Lande genommen, und gedachte ihnen ueber ihr Beginnen die

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31. Hug, op. cit., p.538.



Hoelle heiss zu machen."<sup>32</sup> Dr. Theodore Zahn, with his usual thoroughness, comments on the Alogi thus: "Dem von Epiphanius erfundenen Namen Ἀλογος (HAER. 51,3) sheint es zu entsprechen, dass er lediglich in Ruecksicht auf das Vorkommen des Logosnamens nicht nur Johannis 1,1-14; Apocalypse 19,13 ("And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God"), sondern auch I Johannis 1,1 die Vermutung ausspricht, dass auch die johannische Briefe von der Alogern verworfen worden seien. Ist aber neuerdings bewiesen, dass Hippolytus der Verfasser des Canon Muratori ist, so ist doch zu beachten, dass im Canon Muratori, I, 23-34 ebenso nachdruecklich wie bei Epiphanius die Stoffliche Uebereinstimmung zwischen Evangelium und Briefen des Johannes behauptet, und das der in bezug auf die zwei kleineren johannischen Briefe gebrauchte Ausdruck in catholica (sc. ecclesia) habentur Canon Muratori I, 61 das genaue Gegenteil ist von dem, was Epiphanius (HAER. 51,3) nach Anfuhrung von Saetzen aus I Johannis den Alogern nachsagt: οὐκ ἔστι αὐτὰ εἶναι φάσιν ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ. Das nicht naeher bestimmte αὐτὰ weist zurueck auf das kurz vorher gebrauchte οὐδέποτε λέγονται φύσει τὰ βιβλία τὰ ἀπὸ τοῦ ἁγίου Ἰωάννου κεκηρυσμένα. Alles dies weist zurueck auf die Quelle, aus welcher Epiphanius seine teilweise woertlichen Anfuhrungen von Urteilen der Aloger geschoept hat, naemlich eine Schrift Hippolyt's. Dieser wird dann auch Epiphanius 51,3 den von ihm vorgefundenen Titel entlehnt haben: εἶχον γὰρ τὴν ἀρεσκὴν καλουμένην ἀποβέλλουσαν Ἰωάννου τῆς

32. Hug, op. cit., p. 538.



βίβλους .” 33 So much for the Alogi.

The third half century after the death of St. John covers the years 200 to 250 A.D. Here the names of those who are reckoned as bearing witness to the apostolic origin of the Apocalypse are the following fathers: Hippolytus, who flourished circa 220 A.D.; Nepos, an Egyptian bishop; Thascius Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, shortly after 246 A.D.; Origen, the most learned and versatile theologian of the third century, the pupil of Clement of Alexandria and his successor there, and the great editor of the Hexapla edition of the Holy Bible; and finally Methodius, bishop of Olympus in Syria, who apparently suffered martyrdom in 311 A.D. The exegetical views of Hippolytus, Cyprian, Origen, and Methodius will be treated at length in the second part of this treatise. Here we are interested only in their attitude towards the apostolic origin and the canonicity of the Apocalypse.

Hippolytus, presbyter in Rome, exiled to Sardinia in 235 A.D., was a pupil of Irenaeus. After the death of Origen (254 A.D.) he was regarded as the most learned among the Christian writers of his time. He defended the Revelation against the so-called "Alogi." He made it his special responsibility to defend the Johannine writings in general. Before becoming presbyter in Rome he was bishop of Ostia (Portus Romanus) circa 225 A.D. Alford states that Hippolytus "frequently quotes the Apocalypse with the words Ἰωάννης

λέγει "and in one passage (DE ANTICHRISTO, ch.36) he

33. Th. Zahn, Offenbarung des Johannes, Erste Hälfte, Einl., p.56, footnote.



writes thus: "λέξε μοι, μακάριε Ἰωάννη, ἀπόστολε καὶ μάρτυρ  
 τοῦ κυρίου, τί εἶδες καὶ ἤκουσας περὶ βαβυλῶνος." Hippolytus then proceeds  
 to quote Rev. 17, 1-18.<sup>34</sup>

Nepos, of Arsinoe, bishop in Egypt, concerning whose history we know very little. Eusebius discusses his schism (heresy) in chapter 24 of Book VII of the "Ecclesiastical History." The historian quotes the words of Dionysius of Alexandria concerning Nepos: "But since they bring forth a certain work of Nepos, on which they rely confidently, as if it proved beyond dispute that there will be a reign of Christ on earth, I confess that in many other respects I approve and love Nepos, for his faith and industry and diligence in the Scriptures, and for his extensive psalmody, with which many of the brethren are delighted, but the truth should be loved and honored most of all. And while we should praise and approve ungrudgingly what is said aright, we ought to examine and correct what does not seem to have been written soundly."<sup>35</sup> Dionysius is here referring to Nepos' work "Refutation of the Allegorists" in which the Egyptian bishop tried to establish his chiliastic doctrine, and which he directed against Origen and other allegorical interpreters like him, who avoided the materialistic conceptions deduced by so many from the Apocalypse by spiritualizing and allegorizing its language. Unfortunately this work of Nepos is not extant. However, the points is here that Nepos of Arsinoe

34. Dean Henry Alford, Greek Testament, Vol. IV, Proleg. p.200  
 35. Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Vol. I, Eusebius, VII, 24.



believed the Apocalypse to be the work of the Apostle John.

Cyprian of Carthage, who quotes or alludes to the Apocalypse some 56 times in his writings, is an important and interesting witness to the apostolic origin of John's book. "Little is known of the early history of Thascius Cyprian (b. circa 200 A.D.) until the period of his intimacy with the Carthaginian presbyter Cecilius, which led to his conversion, 246 A.D. That he was born of respectable parentage, and highly educated for the profession of a rhetorician, is all that can be said with any degree of certainty. At his baptism he assumed the name of his friend Cecilius, and devoted himself, with all the energies of an ardent and vigorous mind, to the study and practice of Christianity. His ordination and his elevation to the episcopate rapidly followed his conversion. With some resistance on his own part, and not without great objections on the part of the older presbyters, who saw themselves superseded by his promotion, the popular urgency constrained him to accept the office of bishop of Carthage (248 A.D.), which he held until his martyrdom in 258 A.D."<sup>36</sup>

Origen, who died in 254 A.D., quotes from the Apocalypse frequently (ca. 60 times according to Bowman) and never shows any doubt whatsoever as to its author. This fact is especially noteworthy because Origen, of all the church fathers, was the most inquisitive and painstaking in considering all the doubts and objections raised concerning books in the

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36. Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. V, p.264.



Biblical canon. As stated before, he was the most learned and most prolific theologian of the third century. In his commentary on St. Matthew he states his intention of writing an exposition of the Apocalypse; this quotation I could not locate for the reason that his exegesis of Matt. 24 is not included in Scribner's Ante-Nicene Fathers. However, Dr. Zahn who had the most complete critical apparatus before him when he expounded the Revelation, lists in his Einleitung the two passages in which Origen mentions his intentions. Quote: "Alles dies von den sieben Hauptern des Drachens, die vielleicht auf sieben Herrscher (principes rerum) der Bosheit oder auf ebensoviele zum Tode fuhrende Sunden gedeutet werden koennen, im einzelnen auszulegen, ist nicht an/ der Zeit. Es wird aber seiner Zeit ausgelegt werden in der Offenbarung des Johannes." In the second passage Origen comments on the ten horns and the seven crowns: "Jetzt aber muss ich ueber jene Offenbarung nur das auslegen, dass der Schwanz des Drachen den dritten Teil der Sterne des Himmels heruntergerissen und auf die Erde geworfen hat." <sup>37</sup> And then Zahn adds the important statement: "Dass er diese Absicht in bezug auf die Apokalypse ausgefuehrt, oder also Ersatz dafuer Scholien oder Homilien ueber dieses Buch geschrieben habe, ist nirgendwo bezeugt." <sup>38</sup> Zahn proceeds to discuss critically Origen's Scholia and comes to the final conclusion that Origen probably never wrote a commentary on the Apocalypse. I found an extremely interesting comment in the

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37. Zahn, op. cit., Einleitung, pp. 101, 102.

38. Ibid., p. 102.



find biography and critique on Origen by Redepenning:" Die Apokalypse hielt er fuer das Werk des Zebedaiden Johannes (Comm. on John 1,16; 11,100 und oft an anderen Stellen). Dass er sie zu den Buechern der Diatheke rechnete, folgt ueberdies aus seinem Vorhaben, sie durch einen Kommentar zu elaeutern (Ser. in Matt.): nur die heiligen Buecher konnte er auslegen wollen. Vermutlich wuerde bei seinem richtigen Urteile ueber die Schreibart des Briefes an die Hebræer auch hier die Verschiedenheit des Stils ihm nicht entgangen sein, haette nicht der geheimnisreiche Inhalt, der ergiebigsts Stoff allegorischer Deutungen, ihn bestochen." 39

Methodius, really exceeds the limits of our field in the critical analysis of the evidence of the testimony for the Apocalypse in the first 150 years after John's death. However, since I am emphasizing the early Greek Fathers and am also including the Donatist Tychonius in the second part of this paper, I do not think it superfluous to add his testimony to the previously adduced witnesses. His dates are given as A.D. 260-312. Vicary Clark, his translator, says of him: "Methodius, who is also called Eubulius, was, first of all bishop, simultaneously of Olympus and Patara in Lycia, as is testified by several ancient writers. He was afterwards removed, according to St. Jerome, to the episcopal see of Tyre in Phoenicia, and at the end of the latest of the great persecutions of the Church, about the year 312, he suffered

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39. Redepenning, Origenes, eine Darstellung seines Lebens und seiner Lehre, Vol. 2, p.248.



martyrdom at Chalcis in Greece....Methodius is known chiefly as the antagonist of Origen; although, as has been pointed out, he was himself influenced in no small degree by the method of Origen, as may be seen by his tendency to allegorical interpretations of Holy Scripture.... His writings against Porphyry, with the exception of some slight fragments, are lost, as are also his exegetical writings."<sup>40</sup>

There are nine quotations of the Apocalypse in the extant writings of Methodius. I shall here give only one citation here:"And that the Word, when He was incarnate, became Virgin, in the same way as He was chief Shepherd and chief prophet of the Church, the Christ-possessed John shows us, saying in the Book of Revelation, 'And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Zion, and with Him an hundred forty and four thousand, having His name and His Father's name written in their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder; and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: and they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they who follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth.'<sup>41</sup>

Barnes neatly sums up the preceding evidence thus:

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40. Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. VI, p.307ff.

41. Ibid., p.313.



1. The author calls himself John, evidently with the design of representing himself as the apostle of that name, since his revelation to the churches of Asia Minor is such as the relation of the Apostle John was, and because the name John, unless there was something to qualify it, would naturally be understood as referring to the apostle of that name.
2. The fact that John lived at Ephesus, and was well-known to the seven churches in Asia Minor.
3. The fact that he lived to an extreme old age - to the time when the book was supposed to have been written.
4. The fact that there was a persecution in the time of Domitian, when this book was supposed to have been written.
5. Favorable conclusions derived from a comparison with the acknowledged writings of John, the Gospels and the three Epistles.<sup>42</sup>

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42. Barnes, op. cit., Intro. p.10.



. B. The Refutation of the Objections by the Early Critics as to the Apostolic Origin of the Apocalypse.

The first witness the doubters summon to their aid in establishing their position is Gaius, a presbyter at Rome who flourished about 210 A.D. The passage from his writings which lead some to think that he rejected the Revelation of St. John is as follows: "And Cerinthus also, who by his revelations, as if written by some great apostle, imposes upon us monstrous relations of things of his own invention, as shown him by an angel, says, 'that after the resurrection there shall be a terrestrial kingdom of Christ, and that men shall live again in Jerusalem, subject to sensual desires and pleasures. And being an enemy to the divine Scriptures, and desirous to seduce mankind, he says there will be a term of a thousand years spent in nuptial entertainments.'" This is alleged to refer to Rev. 20, 4-6: "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them; and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign



with him a thousand years." Barnes, with his usual perspicuity, remarks: "Caius was opposed to Cerinthus and his views, and hence opposed to the prevailing doctrine of Chiliasm, or the doctrine of the Millenium, that Christ should reign personally on the earth with his saints a thousand years. It may be possible that Cerinthus may have forged a work pretending to be of apostolic origin, in which these doctrines were affirmed. The views referred to by Caius as held by Cerinthus are not the views which are found in Revelation chapter twenty. He spoke of a 'terrestrial kingdom of Christ;' that 'men would reign again in Jerusalem/' that they would be subject 'to sensual pleasures;' that 'the term of a thousand years would be spent in nuptial entertainments.' None of these opinions are found in the Book of Revelation as we now have it."<sup>43</sup>

Furthermore, Caius calls the book 'Revelations' instead of Revelation -- Ἀποκάλυψις -- as it is generally called. Perhaps Caius was referring to a different work from that of John, possibly a forgery, for Theodoret writes "that Cerinthus forged certain revelations as if he himself had seen them, and declares that the kingdom of the Lord will be established on earth."

Dionysius of Alexandria is the most important of the ancient objectors to the apostolic origin of the Apocalypse, although he certainly did not deny its inspiration. Dionysius was a pupil of Origen, and was made bishop of Alexandria in 248 A.D. It is important to note that Dionysius opposed the

<sup>43</sup>. Barnes, op. cit., Intro. pp.11.12.



Apocalypse on dogmatical grounds. As he claims, he "did not understand it;" especially the doctrine of the millennium which he thought it plainly taught. Further, he believed the author of the Apocalypse to be another John, possibly John the Presbyter. So we see that Dionysius is unlike Caius, who opposed the Revelation as a forgery by Cerinthus. Caius is reckoned by Epiphanius as one of the "Alogi," who presumably were those who rejected the writings of John as coming from him, and attributed them to Cerinthus. But let us turn to the Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius once more. The historian quotes Dionysius as follows: "some who were before us have utterly rejected and confuted this book, criticizing every chapter; showing it throughout unintelligible and inconsistent; adding, moreover, that the inspiration is false, forasmuch as it is not John's; nor is a revelation which is hidden under so obscure and thick a veil of ignorance...and this not only no apostle, but not so much as any holy or ecclesiastical man was the author of this writing, but that Cerinthus, founder of the heresy called after him the Cerinthian, the better to recommend his own forgery, prefixed to it an honorable name. For this they say was one of his particular notions, that the kingdom of Christ should be earthly; consisting of those things which he himself, a carnal and sensual man, most admired, the pleasures of the belly, and its concupiscence; that is, eating and drinking, and marriage; and for the more decent procurement of these, feastings and sacrifices and slaughters of victims. But, for my part, I dare not reject the book, since many of the brethren have it



in high esteem; but, allowing it to be above my understanding, I suppose it to contain throughout some latent and wonderful meaning; for although I do not understand it, I suspect there must be some profound meaning in the words; not measuring and judging these things by my own reason, but ascribing more to faith, I esteem them too sublime to be comprehended by me.... I do not deny, then, that his name is John, and this is John's book; for I believe it to be the work of some holy and inspired person. Nevertheless, I cannot easily grant him to be the apostle, the son of Zebedee, brother of James, whose is the Gospel ascribed to John, and the Catholic Epistle; for I conclude from the manner of speech, and the term of expression, and the conduct of the book, as we call it, that he is not the same person; for the evangelist nowhere puts down his name, nor does he speak of himself either in the gospel or the epistle. I think, therefore, that he is another, one of them that dwelleth in Asia; forasmuch as it is said, that there are two tombs at Ephesus, each of them called John's tomb; and from the sentiment, and words, and disposition of them; it is likely that he differed from him who wrote the gospel and epistle."<sup>44</sup> Note here that Dionysius cites no historical evidence against the apostolic authorship of the Apocalypse, but merely refers to internal matters; in a word, reasons from the book itself. Eusebius tries not to be partial one way or another, but it is quite evident that he follows

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44. Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, I, Eusebius, VII, 25.



the opinion of Dionysius. But one thing is sure about Eusebius: In spite of his scruples he does not dare to rob the Apocalypse of its canonical standing. The Apocalypse is not found in most of the early catalogs of the New Testament. Gregory of Nazianzen omits it in his, and the Council of Laodicea, 363 A.D., omits it in the list appended to its canons. Cyril of Jerusalem, who published his list in 360 A.D. omits it also. Amphilocus, bishop of Iconium in 380 A.D. says: "Some admit the Apocalypse of St. John, but most persons say it is spurious." Eusebius, trying to be an unbiased chronicler, straddles the fence and leaves the question of authorship an open one. And regarding its canonicity, he somewhat dubiously classifies it as a Homologoumenon. During the fourth century, however, it was generally classed with the so-called Antilegomena, books spoken against; the Antilegomena are seven in number, "the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Second Epistle of Peter, the Second and Third Epistle of John, the Epistle of James, the Epistle of Jude, and Revelation."<sup>45</sup> Barnes rightly maintains that this flurry of doubts in the latter part of the fourth century cannot down the clear historical evidence of the early writers, for the origin of the Apocalypse must be determined by writers who lived at or about the time when the book was written. Another fine point is brought out by the above-mentioned expositor when he says that "the objections alleged against the Apoca-

45. John Theologe Mueller, Christian Dogmatics, p. 130.



lypse in later times were wholly on internal grounds, and were mainly derived from the fact that it was supposed to countenance the doctrine of Chiliasm, or the doctrine of the personal reign of Christ and the saints for a thousand years in Jerusalem, and from the fact that the followers of Cerinthus appealed to this book in support of their pernicious errors."<sup>46</sup> Hug comments thus: "It was amidst the disputes concerning the millennium that the first explicit and well-authenticated denial of the Apocalypse occurred."<sup>47</sup> Zahn waxes polemical and almost caustic in his remarks: "Die Unzulaenglichkeit der Anstrengungen der Aloger, des Dionysius Alexandrinus and des Eusebius, die bis in die Zeit der des Verfassers der Apokalypse und bis in die Heimat des Buches hinaufreichende Ueberlieferung zu bestreiten, liegt am Tage. Dieses Urteil gruendet sich ja keines wegs nur auf die Mangelhaftigkeit der Auslegung der aelteren Quellen der Ueberlieferung durch die verneinenden Kritiker des dritten und vierten Jahrhunderts, auf die wuerdelose Feigheit, mit der sie ihren Widerspruch vertreten, und die rohe Gemeinheit ihrer Vorgaenger im zweiten Jahrhundert, sonder vor allem darauf, dass die gelehrten Kritiken sich auf keinerlei anders lautende Ueberlieferung zu berufen gewagt haben, offenbar aus dem zwingenden Grunde, dass es bis zu ihrer Zeit und ueberhaupt im ganzen Beriech der alten Kirche keine andere Ueberlieferung ueber die Entstehung der Apokalypse gegeben hat. Es war unserer Zeit vorbehalten, zwar nicht eine andere Tradition positiven Inhalts

46. Barnes, op. cit., intro. p. 15.

47. Hug, op. cit., p. 533.



aus zuverlässigen Quellen nachzuweisen, wohl aber erstens die einzige alte Ueberlieferung zu verdunkeln und zweitens eine erst nach dem Jahre 400 hier und da auftauchende Angabe so zu deuten, dass dadurch die einzige wirkliche Ueberlieferung ausgeschlossen erscheint."<sup>48</sup>

In concluding this section let me state my personal conviction in this matter, in view of the evidence presented above. I am convinced that Revelation was written by the Apostle John for the simple and compelling reason that its apostolic origin was not questioned for over two centuries after it was written. In view of the fact that the early Church was so careful about admitting books to the Sacred Canon, in view of the fact that so many apocryphal gospels and epistles were so definitely rejected, I do not see how the Apocalypse could have escaped a similar fate if it had been the least doubted when it appeared. As the years roll by and we are taken ever farther from the year 96 A.D. when John wrote the Apocalypse, modern criticism is dwarfed when it is ranged alongside the testimony of the first centuries of the Christian era.

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48. Zahn, op. cit., Erste Haelfte, Einl. pp.78.79.



**II. The Historical Interpretation of the Apocalypse by the Earliest Greek Expositors (from the death of St. John to 380 A.D.)**

**A. A Brief Summary of the Oral and Written Tradition concerning the Revelation of St. John the Divine.**

At the turn of the second century into the third we find the Book of Revelation in almost every congregation of the Christian Church; it was regarded as a sacred writing of permanent value, and was adopted and studiously read in public worship. The only exception to this tradition was the Syrian National Church in and about Edessa, which at that time was in the early stages of organization. From the Apocalypse more than any other book of the Bible the early Christians, both laity and clergy, women as well as men, drew comfort in their sufferings under Roman persecutors and heroic courage for the confession of their faith by word and blood. This we know clearly from the Greek report of the congregations of Lyons and Vienne in the year 177 A.D. on the bloody persecution they endured in that very year; furthermore, from the Latin Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs (named thus after their birthplace in Numidia) of the year 180 A.D. and the Carthaginian women Perpetua and Felicitas in the years 202-203 A.D. The Gallic Christians quote the words of Rev. 22,11: ("He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which



is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still.") as a prophecy which has found its fulfillment in the bestial handling of the corpses of the martyrs by the Roman officials and the enraged populace. Eusebius, in his

"Ecclesiastical History" writes: ὅτι ἡ κραυγή πληρωθῆ  
ἡ ἄνομος ἀνομιβάτω ἔτι καὶ ὁ δίκαιος δικαιοδότης Proceeding  
ἔτι.  
 this quotation he describes the joy with which Blandina met

her death, picturing her in the words of Revelation 19,9:

"ὡς εἰς γυμνασίον δεσπυὴν κεκλημένη". From Rev. 1,5  
 (cf. 3,15) arises Eusebius' phrase (V,2,3) τῷ πιστῷ καὶ  
ἀληθινῷ μάρτυρι καὶ πρωτοτόκῳ τῶν νέκρωων, which  
 fits closely with the phrase καὶ ἀρχηγῷ τῆς ζωῆς  
τοῦ θεοῦ (3,15). From Rev. 14,4, after the comparison  
 of a young martyr with old Zacharias (Eus. V,1,9-10): χρηστὸς  
Χριστοῦ μαθητῆς ἀκολουθῶν τῷ ἀρνίῳ ὅπου ἔστη.<sup>49</sup>

The spokesman of the Twelve Martyrs from Scillium, Speratus, refuses the demand of the judges that they swear by the spirit of the Emperor with the words borrowed essentially (with a small admixture from Rom.13,7) from Rev. 17,14 ("These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful;" cf. Rev. 19,6:"And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the

49. Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Vol. I, Eusebius, V, 1-3.



voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." cf. also Rev. 1,5: "And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth."): "I know nothing of the empire of this world. More than the Emperor we serve that God, whom no man has seen, nor can see with these eyes (John 1,18). I have not committed a theft, but rather, when I buy something, I pay the rate because I acknowledge my Lord, the King of kings and Ruler of all the nations."

A Christian woman named Donata also adds to this confession: "Honor is due the Emperor as Emperor, but fear is due God." (Cf. I Peter 2,17: "Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king." Cf. also Rev. 13,3-7: "And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast. And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him? And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.")

Among the sacred writings which were discovered among the earthly possessions of the martyrs in a book case and were



taken into custody, the Apocalypse, says Zahn,<sup>50</sup> must have been found. Still clearer "the Acts of Perpetua" testify of the influence of the Apocalypse particularly on the spiritual morale of the women of the early Christian Church.

I shall now briefly sketch the oral and written tradition of the second century fathers with reference to their estimation of the Apocalypse. Irenaeus bases his eschatology on the Book of Revelation. He considers John the Apostle as author as self-evident, although he does mention him specifically as its author (Joannes in apocalypsi ait, inquit, vidit). Hippolytus, recently shown to be the author of the Muratorian Canon, speaks of the writer of the Revelation as ὁ προφήτης καὶ ἀπόστολος. Tertullian also defends the Apocalypse as an apostolic book, the last revelation of Christ with the true apostolic authority. In the days of Clement of Alexandria the distinction between canonical and non-canonical books was not so definite in Alexandria as it was in the Occident. Yet he too accepts St. John as the author. While Theophilus of Antioch in Syria favors the Apocalypse, the authority of the book vanishes gradually on a account of the rising influence of the Syrian National Church. In Asia Minor our witness Melito, bishop of Sardis (150-180 A.D.) has unfortunately come down to us only in the form of titles and fragments. What we know of him has already been quoted from Eusebius (Eκ. IV, 26:2). Poly-  
carp, the disciple of St. John himself, forms the unbroken

50. Zahn, op. cit., Einl. p.2.



link between the Apostle and Irenaeus. The tradition lines up as follows: Christ - St. John - Polycarp - Irenaeus. This tradition, as Zahn so ably shows, even if oral, is so strong and reliable that it is extremely difficult for the critics to accomplish its total elimination and destruction. St. John, it would seem, joined the band of the Lord's disciples at the age of 27. He was about 95 years old when he wrote the Apocalypse. Polycarp was born circa 55 A.D., converted about 69 A.D., ordained bishop of Smyrna about 85 A.D., met Ignatius (cf. his letter to Smyrna) somewhere between 105-110 A.D. journeyed to Rome in 154 A.D., and was martyred 155 A.D. Irenaeus was born about 115 A.D. and became associated with Polycarp about 129 A.D.; he accompanied Polycarp to Rome, 154 A.D. He was presbyter in Lyons up to 177, and after a visit to Rome was made bishop of Lyons. Papias, whom I will discuss in a moment, defends John's authorship. His dates are uncertain, but Zahn holds that he wrote during the time of the Emperor Hadrian (117-138 A.D.), and that he was born later than Polycarp and died at an earlier date than the latter. Eusebius is prejudiced against Papias and ridicules him for his millennialistic views. But Irenaeus calls him Ἰωάννου ἀκουστής, Πολυκάρπου ἑταῖρος (Iren. V, 34, 4). Justin Martyr, whom I will examine critically shortly, accepts John, or rather what to him is John's doctrine of the millennium, during the lifetime of Polycarp and Papias (130-135 A.D.)

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51. Zahn, op. cit., Erste Haelfte, Einl. p.22.



and "in seinem erheblich spaeter um 151-155 geschriebenen Dialog mit dem Juden Tryphon (ch. 80,81), durch den wir diese Tatsachen erfahren, bezeugt er, dass alle 'ganz rechtglaebigen (ὀρθογνώμονες κατὰ πάντα) Christen an eine Auferstehung des Fleisches und an ein tausendjaehriges Dasein in einem neugebauten Jerusalem glauben."<sup>51</sup>

Montanus of Phrygia also plays into the tradition of the Apocalypse. Montanus was a peasant who proclaimed the millennarian view that the new Jerusalem would come in his day. Two women joined him in proclaiming this "doctrine." The passage in John's Gospel (14,16 - 16,15) which deals with the sending of the Paraclete, he applies to himself. The logical conclusion we must reach here then is this: If John's Apocalypse and his Gospel had not been generally accepted, Montanus could not have based his false exegesis on them.

Certain legends concerning the Apostle John are also of some importance in the present study. The Περίοδοι Ἰωάννου, or the "Wanderings of John" by Leucius Charinus ( a pseudonym), who poses as a disciple of St. John, pictures John the Apostle as the author of the Apocalypse. This production of the so-called Leucius (imitation of the name Luke) was accepted by a personage of no mean reputation, none other than Clement of Alexandria, as perfectly authentic and genuine. The "Wanderings of John," be it a mixture of

51. Zahn, op. cit., Erste Haelfte, Einl. p.22.



truth and legend or not, nevertheless describes the Apocalypse as that "book which Jesus Christ revealed to His Disciples."<sup>52</sup>

The influence of the Apocalypse was late. It was delayed. Why? The critics say that since the fathers traveled about a good deal the Revelation should have reached Rome and Antioch in Syria at an earlier date than it actually did, but that the fact is that the Apocalypse was yet unknown in these two cities in the year 110 A.D. and thereabouts. However we know that Ignatius the noble Christian martyr, went to Asia Minor around 110 A.D., wrote his seven famous letters, and passed through Ephesus. Ephesus was doubtless the first Christian congregation to receive the message of St. John (cf. Rev. 2,1-7). We know furthermore that Ignatius bishop of Antioch in his references to the relationship between the Ephesian Christians and the apostles of the Lord, despises Christian prophecy. He speaks of the fast approaching end of the world, and hence we can easily see why he would be wary of a prophetic book like the Apocalypse. The point here is that the Apocalypse had not yet come to Antioch at the turn of the first and second century mark (100 A.D.). Similarly, there was no knowledge of it at Rome at the early date of 110 A.D.

Some scholars stoutly maintain that Hermas knew the Apocalypse of St. John and imitated it. However, Dr. Zahn upholds the opposite view when he states that the Pastor

52. J.B. Lightfoot, The Apostolic Fathers, Greek Text p.307; transl. p.413.



Hermae (Shepherd of Hermas), written by a Roman Christian, did not know of John's Revelation; but that the Pastor Hermae was accepted as canonical in all churches from Lyons to Carthage. Yet it must have been written no less than five, and not more than ten years after the Apocalypse of St. John appeared. It is thought that the author of the Pastor Hermae was the brother of Bishop Pius of Rome. At any rate, in the fourth century it was definitely ruled out of the N.T. canon. Already around the year 200 A.D. the Apocalypse was the only prophetic book allowed in the public service. Zahn is quite positive in his assertion that neither Clement of Rome nor the author of Pastor Hermae had seen or knew the Book of Revelation. I quite agree with Zahn on this point; nevertheless, in order not to ignore those who take the opposite view, I quote Bishop Lightfoot's translation of the passage in the Shepherd which he takes to refer to Rev. 21,14 ("And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb): "Here now concerning the stones that go into the building. The stones that are squared and white, and that fit together in their joints, these are the apostles and bishops and teachers and deacons, who walked after the holiness of God, and exercised their office of bishop and teacher and deacon in purity and sanctity for the elect of God, some of them already fallen or asleep, and others still living. And because they always agreed with one another, they both had peace among themselves and listened to one another. Therefore their joinings fit together in the



building of the tower."<sup>52</sup> The Greek text for this is as follows:

Ἀκουε νῦν περὶ τῶν λίθων τῶν ὑπαχόντων  
εἰς τὴν οἰκοδομήν. οἳ μὲν οὖν λίθοι οἳ  
τετράγωνοι καὶ λευκοὶ καὶ συμφωνοῦντες  
ταῖς ἀρμοχαῖς αὐτῶν, οὗτοί ἐσιν οἱ ἀπόστολοι  
καὶ ἐπίσκοποι καὶ διδάσκαλοι καὶ διάκονοι  
οἳ παρευθύντες κατὰ τὴν σεμνότητα τοῦ  
θεοῦ καὶ ἐπισκοπήσαντες καὶ διδάξαντες  
καὶ διακονήσαντες ἀγνῶς καὶ σεμνῶς τοῖς  
ἐκλεκτοῖς τοῦ θεοῦ, οἳ μὲν κεκοιμημένοι, οἳ δὲ ἔτι  
ὄντες· καὶ πάντοτε ἑαυτοῖς, συμφωνήσαντες καὶ ἐν ἑαυτοῖς  
εἰρήνην ἔχον καὶ ἀλλήλων ἤκουον· διὰ τοῦτο ἐν τῇ οἰκοδομῇ τοῦ

ἔργου συμφωνοῦσιν / The passage in the genuine Epistle of St. Clement  
of Rome to the Corinthians, which, Lightfoot says, refers  
to Rev. 22,12 ("And behold, I come quickly; and my reward is  
with me, to give every man according as his work shall be"),  
reads thus: "The good workman receiveth the bread of his work  
with boldness, but the slothful and careless dareth not look  
his employer in the face. It is therefore needful that we  
should be zealous unto well-doing, for of Him are all things:  
since He forewarned us saying: Behold, the Lord, and His  
reward is before His face, to recompense each man according  
to his work."<sup>53</sup> The Greek version of the above reads:

προλέγε  
γὰρ ἡμῖν· Ἴδού ὁ Κύριος, καὶ ὁ μισθὸς αὐτοῦ πρὸ  
προσώπου αὐτοῦ, ἀποδοῦναι ἐκίστω κατὰ τὸ ἔργον  
αὐτοῦ .54

52. Lightfoot, op. cit., Greek text p.307; trans. p.413.

53. Ibid., p.71.

54. Ibid., p.23.



The Epistle of Barnabas (written between 70-79 A.D.) is general in object and character, in opposition to the Judaizing teachers of that period. The document was written in Greek and attached to the famous Greek MS of the New Testament found by Dr. Tischendorff in the convent of St. Catharine, at Mt. Sinai, in 1859, and published in 1862. It is obvious from this epistle that the three Synoptic Gospels, the Epistle to the Romans, the two to the Corinthians, the Philippians, the Second to Timothy, and the Second of Peter, and the Apocalypse, were all in circulation at that time, which was within 5 to 15 years of the publication of the Gospels.<sup>55</sup> The quotation of the Epistle of Barnabas from Revelation reads thus: "The day is at hand, in which everything shall be destroyed together with the Evil One. 'The Lord is at hand and His reward.'" This is evidently a paraphrase of Rev. 22,12, although it resembles Is. 40,10 (Behold the Lord God will come with a strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him) more than the Apocalypse passage. Zahn finds another reference in Barnabas to the Apocalypse, quote: "Wenn Barnabas, c.7,9 in seiner allegorischen Deutung der beiden Boecke im Ritus des Versoehnungsfestes (Lev. 16, 7-10. 21-22) schreibt: ὅψονται αὐτὸν τότε τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τὸν ποδῆρη ἔχοντα τὸν κόρηνον περὶ τὴν θάρκκ καὶ ἐροῦσιν οὐχ οὗτός ἐστιν, ὅν ποτε ἡμεῖς ἐσταυρώσαμεν ἐξουθενήσαντες καὶ κατήκεντῶντες<sup>55</sup> versetzt er den Leser

55. Bowman, Op. cit., pp.622-623.



nicht an den Tag der Kreuzigung und bezieht sich nicht auf Johannes 19,37, wo ein typisches Vorspiel der endgueltigen Erfuellung der Weissagung Sacharjas dargestellt ist, sondern an den Tag der Parusie Christi, von dem er gleich darauf (c. 7,10) sagt: ὅτι ἰδού ἐν αὐτῷ ἡμεῖς ἐρχόμεθα. Barnabas gibt also den Gedanken von Apokalypse 1,7 wider ("Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen"). Was er von dem scharlachboten, bis zu den Fuessen herabreichenden Mantel sagt, ist selbstverstaendlich in Erinnerung an Matt. 27,28 ("And they stripped Him, and put on Him a scarlet robe") geschrieben; aber das Wort ποδήνην, dem bei Matthaeus χιτῶνα entspricht, steht so nahe bei der von Barnabas zugrunde gelegten Stelle (Rev. 1,7), naemlich Ap. 1,13 ("one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdel;") in der Beschreibung der Kleidung des dem Johanno erschienenen Christus, dass an der Abhaengigkeit des Barnabas von der Apokalypse nicht zu zweifeln ist.<sup>56</sup>

Zahn then goes on to prove his opinion that the author of the Didache was dependent on the Apocalypse for certain passages. But before bringing in Zahn's evidence for this conviction, let me quote an American commentator on this matter of the early circulation of the Revelation, a scholar whom I have not hitherto cited, namely, Dr. Beckwith, formerly prof-

56. Zahn, op. cit., Einl. pp.32.33.



essor of New Testament Interpretation at the General Theological Seminary in New York City. He writes: "No other writing of the New Testament can claim in comparison with the Apocalypse more abundant and more trustworthy evidence that it was widely known at an early date. It is also shown beyond question to have been recognized from an early time in a part of the Church, and by certain fathers in all parts of the Church, as belonging in the category of authoritative Scriptures. Many of the witnesses to these facts specify also the name of the author.... A rapid circulation of the Apocalypse from the outset would be favored by two circumstances: it was directly addressed to seven churches and each of these would be likely to obtain a copy of a message sent specifically to itself from a prophet and teacher well known to it, and of evident authority. But it was also seen to be a message to the whole church, and its predictions and promises related to Christians everywhere in the perilous times upon which the Church was not entering. As it was heard when read in the Asian congregations, it must have stirred the profoundest emotions, and eventually copies of it could be carried afar in the busy intercourse of Asia Minor with the world. The Apostolic Fathers contain no certain trace of acquaintance with the book. Some scholars have thought to find reminiscences of it in Ignatius, Barnabas, and Hermas. But the parallelisms occur in ideas which the Apocalypse has in common with earlier known writings, or are too remote to furnish evidence of acquaintance. The silence of these writers



does not however prove their ignorance of the book; they have in general no occasion to quote it. Possibly in the case of Hermas and the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles we might expect some echo of it, since they speak particularly of the Last Things; but the absence of such reminiscence from these writings is far from convincing evidence that the book had not yet reached Rome, or the home of the Teaching (Didache). A few years later, testimony to the book becomes direct and unquestionable."<sup>57</sup>

And now Zahn on the Apocalypse in the Didache: "Noch deutlicher und tiefer greifend ist die Abhaengigkeit der sogenannten Didache von der Auktorität der Apokalypse. Der Verfasser, der seinem Buch den Titel gegeben hat: 'Lehre des Herrn durch die Zwölf Apostle an die Heiden,' schliesst den ersten Hauptteil seiner Schrift (c.6,2-3) mit den Worten: 'Wenn du das ganze Joch des Herrn tragen kannst, wirst du vollkommen sein. Wenn du es aber nicht kannst, tue was du kannst. In bezug auf die Speisen trage, was du kannst. Vor dem Genuss des den Goetzen geopfertem Fleisches aber huette dich sehr; denn das ist eine Verehrung toter Goetter.' So konnte nur einer schreiben, der von noch anderen Verordnungen in bezug auf Enthaltung von gewissen Nahrungsmitteln wusste, welche der Herr durch die Apostel den Heiden christen gegeben hatte. Der Verfasser kannte also den Beschluss des Apostelkonzils, und es entspraechte seinem Ideal, dass die Heiden-Christen sich des Genusses nicht nur von Goetzenopferfleisch

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57. Isbon T. Beckwith, The Apocalypse of John, pp.337-338.



sondern auch vom Blut und vom Fleisch erstickter Tiere enthielten. Dass er es trotzdem wagt, im Namen der 12 Apostel selbst auf diest δὲ μὲν κῆρυγμα ὑπὸ τῶν ἀποστόλων (Acts 16,4) mit einer einzigen Ausnahme zu verzichten, erklart sich nur daraus, dass einer der 12 Apostel, der eben-  
 sogut wie die uebrigen Apostel (Acts 15,28) dabei im heiligen Geist gehandelt hatte, naemlich der Apostle Johannes oder vielmehr der Herr durch diesen in dem Buch der Apokalypse mit derselben Verzichtleistung vorangegangen war (Cf. Acts 15, 23-29; 15,20; 21,25 with Rev. 2,14;20,25). Der Einfluss dieses Buches auf den Verfasser zeigt sich auch an anderen Stellen in der im Vergleich mit anderen Schriften der Zeit vor der Montanistischen Bewegung gesteigerten eschatologischen Erwartung und in der Hochschatzung der christlichen propheten und der christlichen Prophetie der Gegenwart. Dass die Didache, auf welche schon der Maertyrer Justinus um 155 also auf ein von den Aposteln ueverliefertes Word sich beruft, andererseits sich vom Hirten des Hermas abhaengig zeigt, hat nichts befremdliches, da der Hirt gleich nach seiner Abfassung von Rom aus durch den Gemeindevorsteher Clemens an eine Mehrzahl von auswaertigen Gemeinden versandt worden ist. Unbegreiflich dagegen waere unter der noch immer sehr verbreiteten Voraussetzung, dass die johanneische Apokalypse um 68-70 geschrieben sei, die unbestreitbare, aus dem Hirten des Hermas und dem Brief des Clemens ersichtliche Tatsache, dass um 100 die roemische Gemeinde und ihre fuehrenden Geister mit der Apokalypse voellig unbekannt waren. Denn dies waere unvertraeglich mit der Hoch-



schaetzung der apostilischen Auktoritaet in den beiden roemischen Schriften um 100 einerseits und der ebenso unbestreitbaren Tatsache andererseits, dass die Apokalypse nicht nur im Lande ihres Ursprungs, sondern ueberall, wohin sie kam, also Werk eines Apostels angesehen worden ist. Da ferner das Buch selbst, trotz seiner naechsten Bestimmung fuer die sieben Gemeinden der Provinz Asien keinen Zweifel darueber laesst, dass er der gesamten Christenheit zugedacht sei (Rev. 1,1; 22,6-8.10-15.17; 19,7-9), so erscheint die Hypothese von der Entstehung der Apokalypse um 68-70 ausgeschlossen und dagegen die Ueberlieferung von der Abfassung der Apokalypse um 95 und des vierten Evangeliums in den ersten Jahren Trajans (98-100) bestaetigt.<sup>58</sup>

Lest I be criticised for putting too much stock in the solid German scholarship of Zahn, let me refer to an Anglican scholar who spent twenty-five years studying the Apocalypse before consenting to write a commentary on it for T. & T. Clark of Edinburgh. I refer to Dr. R.H. Charles, Archdeacon of Westminster and Fellow of the British Academy. I quote him on the circulation and reception of the Revelation: "There are most probable but no absolutely certain traces of John's Apocalypse in the Apostolic Fathers. In the Shepherd of Hermas (Vision II, 2.7) there is a very probable connection with our author. The fact that Hermas used the same imagery as the Apostle John in the Apocalypse may be rightly used as evidence that he knew it. Thus the Church (vision II,4) is represented by a woman (Rev. 12,1ff.); the enemy of the Church by a beast (θηρ), Vision IV, 6-10 as compared with

58. Zahn, op. cit., Einl. pp.33-34.



Rev. 13: out of the mouth of the beasts proceed fiery locusts, Vision IV, 1,6 as compared with Rev. 9,3: whereas the foundation stones of the Heavenly Jerusalem bear the name of the Twelve Apostles, Rev. 21,14, and those who overcome are made pillars in the spiritual temple, Rev. 3,12, in Hermas the apostles and other teachers of the Church form the stones of the heavenly tower erected by the archangels, Vision III, 5.1. The faithful in both are clothed in white and are given crowns to wear, Rev. 6,11; 2,10; 3,12; Hermas, SIM.VIII, 2.1,3.... (Charles here, in the sentences omitted in this citation, gives textual evidence of similarities between the Apocalypse and Hermas and the Epistle of Barnabas)...As for the passages in Ignatius, Ad. Phil. VI,1 has nothing to do with Rev. 3,12, nor Ad. Eph. XV.3, with Rev. 21,3: nor does Barnabas VI, 13 reflect Rev. 21,5: for the sense is absolutely different. Nor should we connect Clement of Rome (To the Corinthians 34,3 with Rev. 22,12."<sup>59</sup> This last comment of Charles conflicts with what I have previously cited as an allusion listed by Bishop Lightfoot. I again state that in this detail Clement is rather following Is. 40,10 than Rev. 22,12.

The above must suffice for the early tradition of the Apocalypse.

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59. R.H. Charles, I.C.C. Revelation of St. John, Vol.I, pp.97-98.



B. Seven Early Greek Exegetes: Their Exposition of the Apocalypse; An Evaluation of their Exegesis (ca. 100-380 A.D.)

The fathers that I shall treat in the following pages are, in their proper chronological order: Papias, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Hippolytus, Origen, Methodius, and Tichonius (also Tychonius, Ticonius). Tertullian and Cyprian I have omitted because they are reckoned as Latin Fathers. Clement of Alexandria, Origen's great teacher, has little to say of the Apocalypse, whereas his famous pupil quotes or alludes to it upwards of sixty times. Dr. Charles dismisses my whole thesis in five short sentences: "Greek commentaries: The Apocalypse does not owe much to Greek expositors. The earliest were probably the best. Fragmentary expositors are preserved in Justin and Irenaeus which are referred to by Jerome, DE VIR. ILLUSTR. II, 9. The two earliest complete commentaries by Melito and Hippolytus are lost. Clement of Alexandria commented on the Apocalypse, and Origen recorded his intention of so doing, IN MATT. 49; that his Scholia on the Apocalypse have been preserved is highly probable."<sup>60</sup> Charles does, it is true, discuss critically the worth of the so-called text of Origen, but textual criticism has no part in this treatise. Scholars of modern Germany have reconstructed the commentary of Tichonius, and I have exhausted the resources at my disposal to present a fairly adequate picture of this unusual

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60. Charles, op. cit., Vol. I, Intro. pp. 187-188.



expositor of the Apocalypse. Eusebius I bring in only incidentally, as he is primarily a church historian, not an exegete.

Our first consideration centers on Papias. Only fragments of his writing have been preserved. The Oxford MS. contains a supposed reference by Papias to the death of John as a martyr. But Zahn points out that modern critics, influenced undoubtedly by Irenaeus, unjustly regard Papias as superstitious and unreliable. Let us let the man speak for himself and then weigh the evidence. I shall quote in full six fragments of Papias in order that the reader may get as complete a picture as possible of the man's doctrinal position.

I. From the Exposition of the Oracles of the Lord (Eus., H.E. III, 39): "The writings of Papias in common circulation are five in number, and these are called an Exposition of the Oracles of the Lord. Irenaeus makes mention of these as the only works written by him, in the following words: 'Now testimony is borne to these things in writing by Papias, an ancient man, who was a hearer of John, and a friend of Polycarp, in the fourth of his books; for five books were composed by him.' Thus wrote Irenaeus. Moreover, Papias himself, in the introduction to his books, makes it manifest that he was not himself a hearer and eye-witness of the holy apostles, but he tells us that he received the truths of our religion from those who were acquainted with them (i.e. the apostles) in the following words: But I shall not be unwilling to put down, along with my interpretations, whatsoever instructions I received with



care at any time from the elders and stored up with care in my memory, assuring you at the same time of their truth. For I did not, like the multitude, take pleasure in those who spoke much, but in those who taught the truth; nor in those who related strange commandments, but in those who rehearsed the commandments given by the Lord to faith, and proceeding from truth itself. If, then, any one who had attended on the elders came, I asked minutely after their sayings, what Andrew or Peter said, or what was said by Philip, or by Thomas, or by James, or by John, or by Matthew, or by any other of the Lord's disciples: which things Aristion and the presbyter John, the disciples of the Lord, say. For I imagined that what was to be got from books was not so profitable to me as what came from the living and abiding voice."<sup>61</sup>

The second citation is from Irenaeus (Ag. Her, 5, 32):

"As the elders who saw John the disciple of the Lord remembered that thou had heard from him how the Lord taught in regard to those times, and said: 'The days will come in which vines shall grow, having each ten thousand branches, and in each branch ten thousand twigs, and in each true twig ten thousand shoots, and in every one of the shoots ten thousand clusters, and on every one of the ten thousand clusters ten thousand grapes, and every grape when pressed will give five and twenty metrites of wine. And when any one of the saints shall lay hold of a cluster, another shall cry out, 'I am a better bluster, take me; bless the Lord through me.' In like manner he said that a grain of wheat would produce ten thousand ears,  
61. Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. I, p.153.



and that every ear would have ten thousand grains, and every grain would yield ten pounds of clear, pure, fine flour; and that apples, and seeds and grass would produce in similar proportions; and that all animals, feeding them only on the productions of the earth, would become peaceable and harmonious, and be in perfect subjection to man."<sup>62</sup> (Testimony is borne to these things in writings by Papias, an ancient man, who was a hearer of John and a friend of Polycarp, in the fourth of his books; for five books were composed by him. And he added, saying: 'Now these things are credible to believers. And Judas the traitor,' says he, 'not believing, and asking, 'How shall such growth be accomplished by the Lord?' the Lord said, 'They shall see who shall come to them.' These, then, are the sayings mentioned by the prophet Isaiah: 'And the wolf shall lie down with the lamb,' Is.11,6ff.).

The third fragment is found also in Irenaeus (Ag, Her. 5,36); but, says our translator, it is a mere guess that the saying of the presbyters is taken from the work of Papias. Quote:"As the presbyters say, then (i.e. in the future state) those who are deemed worthy of an abode in heaven shall go there, others shall enjoy the delights of Paradise, and others shall possess the splendor of the city; for everywhere the Savior will be seen, according as they shall be worthy who see Him. But that there is this distinction between the habitation of those who produce an hundred-fold, and that of those who produce sixty-fold, and that of those who produce thirty-

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62. Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol.I, Fragments of Papias, pp.153.154.



fold; for the first will be taken up into the heavens, the second class will dwell in Paradise, and the last will inhabit the city; and that on this account the Lord said, 'In my Father's house are many mansions' (John 14,2): for all things belong to God, who supplies all with a suitable dwelling place, even as His word says, that a share is given to all by the Father (Matt.20,23), according as each one is or shall be worthy. And this is the couch (Matt.22,10) in which they shall recline who feast, being invited to the wedding. They presbyters, the disciples of the apostles, say that this is the gradation and arrangement of those who are saved, and that they advance through steps of this nature; that, moreover, they ascend through the Spirit to the Son, and through the Son to the Father; and that in due time the Son will yield up His work to the Father, even as it is said by the Apostle 'For He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.' (1 Cor.15,25-26). For in the times of the kingdom the just man who is upon the earth shall forget to die. 'But when he saith all things are put under Him, it is manifest that He is excepted which did put all things under Him. And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.' (1 Cor. 15,27,28).

The following fragment is found in Eusebius (H.E. III, 39): "Papias, who is now mentioned by us, affirms that he received the sayings of the apostles from those who accompanied them, and he moreover asserts that he heard in



person Aristion and the presbyter John ((A certain presbyter, of whom see Apos. Constitutions, VII, 46, where he is said to have been ordained by St. John the Evangelist.]). Accordingly, he mentions them frequently by name, and in his writings gives their traditions. Our notice of these circumstances may not be without its use. It may also be worth while to add to the statements of Papias already given, other passages of his in which he relates some miraculous deeds, stating that he acquired the knowledge of them from tradition. The residence of the Apostle Philip with his daughters in Hierapolis has been mentioned above. We must now point out how Papias, who lived at the same time, related that he had received a wonderful narrative from the daughters of Philip. For he relates that a dead man was raised to life in his day ((In his day may mean: in the days of Papias, or in the days of Philip. As the narrative came from the daughters of Philip, it is more likely that Philip's days are meant)). He also mentions another miracle relating to <sup>t</sup>Justus, surnamed Barnabas, how he swallowed a deadly poison, and received no harm on account of the grace of the Lord. The same person, moreover, has set down other things as coming to him from unwritten tradition, amongst these some strange parables and instructions of the Savior, and some other things of a more fabulous nature.<sup>63</sup> Amongst these, he says that there will be a millennium after the resurrection from the dead, when the personal reign of Christ will be established ON THIS EARTH. He moreover hands

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63.Ed. note of translator: "Not even Irenaeus, much less Eus., should be accepted, otherwise than as relating vague reports."



down, in his own writings, other writings given by the previously mentioned Aristion of the Lord's sayings, and the traditions of the presbyter John. For information on these points we can merely refer our readers to the books themselves; but now, to the extracts already made, we shall add, as being a matter of primary importance, a tradition regarding Mark who wrote the Gospel, which he (i.e. Papias) has given in the following words: And the presbyter said this: 'Mark having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately whatsoever he remembered. It was not, however, in exact order that he related the sayings or deeds of Christ. For he neither heard the Lord nor accompanied Him. But afterwards, as I said, he accompanied Peter, who accommodated his instructions to the necessities of his hearers, but with no intention of giving a regular narrative of the Lord's sayings. Wherefore Mark made no mistake in thus writing some things as he remembered them. For of one thing he took especial care, not to omit anything he had heard, and not to put anything fictitious in to the statements. (This is what is related by Papias regarding Mark; but with regard to Matthew he has made the following statements) Matthew put together the oracles of the Lord in the Hebrew language, and each one interpreted them as best he could. (The same person uses proofs from the First Epistle of John, and from the Epistle of Peter in like manner). And he also gives another story of a woman (Rufinus says: John 8, 1011) who was accused of many sins before the Lord, which is found in the Gospel according to the Hebrews."<sup>64</sup>

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64. A.N.F., Vol I, p.154.



Fragments 8 and 9 offer extremely valuable testimony for John and the Apocalypse. Number 8, taken from Andrew of Caesarea, reads: "With regard to the inspiration of the book (Revelation), we deem it superfluous to add another word; for the blessed Gregory Theologus, and Cyril, and even men of still older date, Papias, Irenaeus, Methodius, and Hippolytus, bore entirely satisfactory testimony to it." Fragment 9 is taken from Anastasius Sinaita: "Taking occasion from Papias of Hierapolis, the illustrious, a disciple of the Apostle who leaned on the bosom of Christ, and Clements, and Pantaenus, the priests of the Church of the Alexandrians, and the wise Ammonius, the ancient and first expositors, who agreed with each other, who understood the work of the six days as referring to Christ and the whole Church."<sup>65</sup>

Since I am no scholar of the early Church Fathers permit me to quote the translator and editor of the Papias fragments on the merits of Papias as a faithful chronicler of the things he heard and saw, and thus get an unbiased estimate of the records left to us by this man. Quote: "It seems unjust to the holy man of whose comparatively large contributions to early Christian literature such mere relics have been preserved, to set them forth in these versions, unaccompanied by the copious annotations of Dr. Routh."<sup>66</sup> If even such crumbs from his table are not by any means without

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65. A.N.F., Vol. I, p.155.

66. Routh, Reliquiae Sacrae, V.I.I. could not locate this book in St. Louis.



a practical value, with reference to the Canon and other matters, we may well credit the testimony (though disputed) of Eusebius, that he was a learned man, and well verse in the Holy Scriptures (see Lardner, Vol. 2, p.119). All who name poor Papias are sure to do so with the apologetic qualification of that historian, that he was of slender capacity. Nobody who attributes to him millennarian fancies, of which he was but a narrator, as if these were characteristics rather than the blemishes of his works, can fail to accept this estimate of our author... (Cf. Iren. AG.HER., V, 33)... Papias has the credit of association with Polycarp, in the friendship of St. John himself, and of 'others who had seen the Lord.' He is said to have been bishop of Hierapolis, a city Phrygia, in the first half of the second century. Later writers affirm that he suffered martyrdom about 163; some saying that Rome, others that Pergamos, was the scene of his death. He was a hearer of the Apostle John, and was on terms of intimate intercourse with many who had known the Lord and His Apostles. From these he gathered the floating traditions in regard to the sayings of the Lord, and wove them into a production divided into five books. This work does not seem to have been confined to an exposition of the sayings of Christ, but to have contained much historical information. Eusebius (H.E. III, 39) speaks of Papias as a man most learned in all things and well acquainted with the Scriptures. In another passage he describes him as of small capacity."<sup>67</sup>

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67. A.N.F., Vol I, pp.151-152.



In concluding our discussion of Papias, who I may say was the first avowed chiliast of the N.T. Church after the appearance of the Apocalypse, let me state Beckwith's appraisal of the worth of Papias: "Papias (70-155 A.D.), bishop of Hierapolis in the early part of the second century, called by Irenaeus a companion of Polycarp (of whom Irenaeus himself was a younger contemporary) and a man of olden time, ἱερατικός ἀνὴρ, knew the book and accepted it as inspired. His testimony is not preserved in his own words, but Andreas in his commentary on the Apocalypse, in which he shows that he had used the writings of Papias among many other earlier writers, reports him as bearing witness with Irenaeus, Methodius, and Hippolytus to the inspiration, of the Apocalypse. Most scholars are agreed that there is no ground to question the accuracy of Andreas' (bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia) report of Papias."<sup>68</sup> Says Charles: "Papias was the first... to attest, not its authorship, but its credibility: Περὶ μὲντοι τοῦ θεοπνεύστου τῆς βίβλου περὶ τὸν μηκύνειν τὸν λόγον ἡκούμενα, τῶν μακαρίων Τρηφάρου... καὶ Κυρίλλου, προσέτι δὲ καὶ τῶν ἀρχαιότερων Παπίου, Εἰρηναίου, Μεθοδίου καὶ Ἰππολύτου προσημαστρούντων τὸ Eusebius, however, never definitely says that John's Apoca- ἀξιόπιστον lypse was known to Papias. The statement, however (III, 39) which he attributes to Papias, seems to be an echo of the

68. Beckwith, op. cit., Intro. p. 338.



Apocalypse: χελιδάκινα φησὶ ἔτι ἔσεσθαι μετὰ τὴν ἑκ νεκρῶν ἀνάστασιν, σωματικῶς τῆς Χριστοῦ βασιλείας ἐπὶ ταυτησί τῆς γῆς ὑποστησισμένης.

But Eusebius proceeds to say that this statement of Papias was due to his misunderstanding of certain apostolic statements, ἀποστολικῆς διηγήσεως, which he took literally instead of figuratively.<sup>69</sup>

In the writings of our second expositor there is only one not-worthy passage that bears on the Apocalypse. Like his contemporary Papias, Justin Martyr (floruit, 133-160 A.D.) was a chiliast. In order to get at his doctrinal position on the millennium I shall quote chapters 80 and 81 of his "Dialogue with Trypho" (155-160). In the latter chapter we have a primitive exegesis of Rev. 20,4-5: "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them; and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had they received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection." And now to let Justin speak for himself (Chap. 80: The Opinion of Justin with Regard to the Reign of a Thousand Years; Several Catholics reject it): "And Trypho to this replied: 'I remarked to you, sir, that you are very anxious to be safe in all respects, since you cling to the Scriptures. But tell me, do you really admit that

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69. Charles, op. cit., Vol. I, Intro., p. 98.



this place, Jerusalem, shall be rebuilt; and do you expect your people to be gathered together, and made joyful with Christ and the patriarchs, and the prophets, both the men of our nation, and other proselytes who joined them before your Christ came? or have you given way, and admitted this in order to have the appearance of worsting us in the controversies?' Then I answered, 'I am not so miserable a fellow, Trypho, as to say one thing and think another. I admitted to you formerly, that I and many others are of this opinion, and believe that such will take place, as you assuredly are aware; but, on the other hand, I signified to you that many who belong to the pure and pious faith, and are true Christians, think otherwise. Moreover, I pointed out to you that some who are called Christians but are godless, impious heretics, teach doctrines that are in every way blasphemous, atheistical, and foolish. But that you may know that I do not say this before you alone, I shall draw up a statement, so far as I can, of all the arguments which have passed between us; in which I shall record myself as admitting the very things which I admit to you. For I choose not to follow men or men's doctrines, but God and the doctrines delivered by Him. For if you have fallen in with some who are called Christians, but who do not admit this truth, and venture to blaspheme the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; who say there is no resurrection of the dead, and that their souls, when they die, are taken to heaven; do not imagine that they are Christians, even as one, if he would



rightly consider it, would not admit that the Sadducees, or similar sects of Genistae, Meristae, Galileans, Hellenists, Pharisees, Baptists, are Jews (do not hear me impatiently when I tell you what I think), but are only called Jews and children of Abraham, worshipping God with the lips, as God Himself declared, but the heart was far from Him. But I and others, who are right-minded Christians on all points, are assured that there will be a resurrection of the dead, and a thousand years in Jerusalem, which will then be built, adorned and enlarged, as the prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah and others declare."

Chap. 81: He Endeavors to Prove This Opinion from Isaiah and the Apocalypse: "For Isaiah speak thus concerning this space of a thousand years: 'For there shall be the new heaven and the new earth, and the former shall not be remembered or come into their heart; but they shall find joy and gladness in it, which things I create. For, Behold, I make Jerusalem a rejoicing, and my people a joy; and I shall rejoice over Jerusalem, and be glad over My people. And the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, or the voice of crying. And there shall be no more there a person of immature years, or an old man who shall not fulfill his days. For the young man shall be an hundred years old; but the sinner who dies an hundred years old, he shall be accursed. And they shall build houses, and shall themselves inhabit them; and they shall plant vines, and shall themselves eat the produce of them, and drink the wine; they shall not build,



and others inhabit; they shall not plant, and others eat. For according to the days of the tree of life, shall be the days of my people; the work of their toil shall abound. Mine elect shall not toil fruitlessly, or beget children to be accursed; for they shall be a seed righteous and blessed by the Lord, and their offspring with them. And it shall come to pass that before they call, I will hear; while they are still speaking, I shall say, What is it? Then shall the wolves and the lambs feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox; but the serpent shall eat earth as bread; They shall not hurt or maltreat each other on the holy mountain, saith the Lord.' (Is. 65, 17-25). Now we have understood that the expression used among these words, 'According to the days of the tree (of life) shall be the days of my people; the works of their toil shall abound,' obscurely predicts a thousand years. For as Adam was told that in the day he ate of the tree he would die, we know that he did not complete a thousand years. We have perceived, moreover, that the expression, 'The day of the Lord is as a thousand years,' (Ps. 90, 4; II Pet. 3, 8) is connected with this subject. And further, there was a certain man with us, whose name was John, one of the apostles of Christ, who prophesied, by a revelation that was made to him, that those who believed in our Christ would dwell a thousand years in Jerusalem; and that thereafter the general, and in short, the eternal resurrection and the judgment of all men would likewise take place. Just as our Lord also said, 'They shall



neither marry nor be given in marriage, but shall be equal to the angels, the children of the God of the resurrection.†

(Luke 20,35).<sup>70</sup> Beckwith finds more in Justin's writings than the above quoted passage: "Also his language regarding Satan (Apology I, c.28) 'The prince of evil demons is called a serpent and Satan and the devil as you can learn, by examination, from our writings' alludes plainly to Rev. 12,9, "And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent called the Devil and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him;" and Rev. 20,2: "And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years."<sup>71</sup> Justin Martyr clearly bases his false conception of the return of Christ on Rev. 20,1-6. His dogmatical tenets in this matter may have had the additional foundation of the deep-seated, ingrained, inveterate, and perverted materialistic conception of the Messiah which the Jews with whom he associated had. We know that when the Messiah 'came into His own, His own received Him not.' (John 1,11). The Jews were looking for a temporal king, a mighty delivered who would crush their enemies under his feet and make of them a powerful nation among the kingdoms of the world. They wanted a military hero like unto Samson, Digeon, David, Solomon, and Hezekiah of old. Hence their offense

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70. A.N.F., Vol. I, pp.239-240.

71. Beckwith, op. cit., Introd. p.338.



when the mild and loving Nazarene appeared among them. Hence their loathing of the cross of Calvary and Him that was crucified upon it. Even Jesus' own disciples longed for a temporal king, long~~ed~~ after He, the Master Teacher had told them that He was the Way, the Truth, and the Life, their only Hope in reaching heaven; for they asked him: "Lord, wilt thou at this time (after His resurrection) restore again the kingdom of Israel?" (Acts 1,6) Thus Justin's millennarian views may have also found basis on the Jewish misconception of the O.T. prophecies concerning the return of the Messiah in glory. Bousset, in his Excursus on Rev. 12, writes the following: "Aber es erheben sich grosse Bedenken gegen die Deutung der merkwuerdigen Schilderung von der Geburt des Messias. Einmal ist eine solche Kombination der beiden Messiasbilder in so fruherer Zeit durchaus nicht nachweisbar. Die juedische Idee von dem doppelten Erschienen des Messias scheint erst in ziemlich spaeter Zeit entstanden zu sein. Justin, ein genauer Kenner juedischer Haggada, weiss noch nichts davon, obwohl er gerade auf dem Gebiet juedisch messianischer Vorstellungen gut orientiert ist."<sup>72</sup> We compare here the passage in his "Dialogue with Trypho" chapter 8, the words: "But Christ, - if He has indeed been born, and exists anywhere-, is unknown and does not even know himself, and has no power until Elias come to anoint Him, and make Him manifest to all. And you, having accepted a groundless report, invent a Christ for

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72. Wilhelm Bousset, Offenbarung des Johannes, (Meyer's Kommentar) Vol.16, p.348.



yourselves, and for his sake are inconsiderately perishing."

(Cf. Cum. Try. 110, εἰ δὲ καὶ ἑλληλυδίνας λέγουσιν, οὐ γινώσκουσιν, ὅς ἐστιν, with John 7, 27: "Howbeit, we (the Jews) know this man, whence he is: but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is." "We know this man: his parentage and place of birth." "No man knoweth whence he is;" the Jews knew that Messiah should be a descendant of David, and born in Bethlehem, Matt. 2, 4-6. But they had the idea that, before his manifestation as king of Israel, he would hide himself, and then suddenly appear from an unknown quarter (Cf. Mal. 3, 1; Matt. 24, 26.<sup>73</sup> Bousset adds the note: "Naehrer unsrer Erzählung kommt schon Targum Jonathan zu Micha 4, 8: 'Du Gesalbter Israels, der du verborgen bist, wegen der Sünden des Volkes zu Zion, Dir wird das Reich zu Teil.' Vielleicht ist erst in der Polemik mit den Christen die Idee von dem doppelten Erscheinen des Messias auf juedischer Seite entstanden. Auf eine spätere Zeit weist auch der Name des Messias, Menachem."<sup>74</sup> I must say that I do not take much stock in the opinions of Bousset, and wherever he and Dr. Zahn are in disagreement I follow the latter because of his superior scholarship and wider knowledge of the field of patristics.

The first church writer and theologian who made consistent and continuous exegesis on the Apocalypse was Irenaeus (b. ca. 130-135). His exposition is to be found

<sup>73</sup>. The Concordia N.T. with Notes, p. 255.

<sup>74</sup>. Bousset, op. cit., p. 348.



in Book V of his monumental work "Against Heresies." His interpretation is frequently symbolical and figurative. Bousset has endeavored to show that Irenaeus bases his eschatology not on the Apocalypse, but in most cases on an old eschatological tradition which was accessible to him, which reaches into the New Testament era, and which he reads into the Apocalypse. He works in many peculiar details by learned combinations, e.g., Daniel 2 and 7; Rev. 13 and 17. According to Irenaeus ten kings will reign in the Last Days (V, 30:2). Of these the Antichrist will kill three and rule over the remaining seven as the eighth king (V, 26:1). The second beast in Rev. 13 is the false prophet mentioned in V, 28:2, namely, the Antichrist. In this chapter 28 of Book V Irenaeus quotes II Thess. 2, 10-12; Rev. 19, 20; 13, 11ff; and II Pet. 3, 8. In chapter 50 of the same book the author quotes Rev. 22, 19; 7, 5-7; and 17, 8. According to Jeremiah 8, 16 ("The snorting of his horses was heard from Dan: the whole land trembled at the sound of the neighing of his strong ones; for they are come, and have devoured the land, and all that is in it; the city and those that dwell therein") the Antichrist originates from the tribe of Dan. Therefore in the enumeration in Rev. 7, 5-8 ("Of the tribe of Judah were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Naphtalim were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasseh were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe



of Levi were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Zabulon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand.") the name of Dan is not mentioned. Cf. Ir. V,30:2. Apparently Irenaeus was right and the descent of Antichrist from Dan was an old tradition.

Already in Irenaeus the historcial considerations of the writings have vanished from memory completely. He gives a wearisome, allegorical interpretation of the number 666 (V, 28:2f; 29:2), and virtually rejects all explanations of it as referring to a definite individual or name, although he does, in order to show that he is able and competent in this respect also, gives the possibilities EUANTHAS, LATEINOS, and TEITAN, apparently as previously discovered solutions; this is recorded in V,30:2ff. Most vigorously does he protest against the false reading 616, especially opposing those who on account of such a reading have embraced false interpretations, V,30,1. The fact that Irenaeus is a strong chiliast is important in understanding his conception of the doctrine of the Apocalypse. After the conquest of the Antichrist the saints will dwell in Jerusalem one thousand years with Christ (the seventh week-day of the world's existence). This idea we find developed in V,30:4; 32:1; 35:1ff. As a purpose for this inter-regnum it is advanced that it is a principality of incorruption, through which kingdom those who are accounted worthy will shortly pass to be with God. Cf. V,32:1 to V,35. All prophecies of an earthly, future state of bliss are



applied and co-related to this inter-regnum. Bousset takes John the presbyter to be the author of the Revelation. And this John is the John mentioned throughout the works of Irenaeus. And the words of the presbyter regarding the fruitfulness of the vine are brought to bear on this inter-regnum (V,33:3). Tertullian too shares the chilastic position of Irenaeus in his stand against Marcion (III:24): "nam et confitemur in terra nobis regnum repromissum, sed ante coelum, sed alio statu, uppote post resurrectionem, in mille annos in civitate divini operis Hierusalem coelo delata." Then the universal judgment will take place, and there will be a new heaven and a new earth. However, no world destruction occurs, but only a transformation (V,36:1 "οὐ γὰρ ἡ ὑπόβιβσις, οὐδὲ ἡ οὐβία τῆς κτίσεως ἐξηφανίζεσθαι, ἀλλὰ τὸ σχῆμα παύσει τοῦ κόσμου τούτου".

In the world to come (eternity) there will be divers habitations :1 in heaven; 2) in paradise; and 3) in the new city (tradition of the Presbyter, V,36:1.). Also the individual incidental observations of Irenaeus have influenced later commentators. The four cherubim, already in Irenaeus, signify the four evangelists; John the lion, Luke the Ox, Matthew the man, and Mark the eagle. The interpretation is indeed strange. Usually Mark is represented as the lion, and St. John as the eagle. But Irenaeus' symbolism is based on the order of succession of the beasts mentioned in Ezekiel: man, lion, ox, and eagle, which are combined correspondingly with the order of the Gospels: Matthew, John, Luke, and Mark.



Certainly Irenaeus must have readily discovered the interpretation which follows the succession of the Gospels indicated in III,1:1, namely, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and the succession of the beasts in III,11:8 ("for the living creatures are quadriform, and the Gospel is quadriform")<sup>75</sup> As Irenaeus did, so Victorinus had done according to the recently discovered early manuscript of his commentary. Together with this symbolism the various attributes and characteristics of Christ are treated (III, 11:1; 11:8). The Nicolaitanes are traced back to the deacon Nicholas, mentioned in Acts 6,5 (I,23). Beckwith summarizes the interpretation of Irenaeus neatly in the following words: "The Beast, Antichrist, is a person springing out of the tribe of Dan, in whom will be concentrated all world-power and all apostasy and hostility to God's people. While in the mind of Irenaeus the Roman empire embodies the world-power hostile to God, and he sees its dissolution predicted among the events preceding the advent of Christ, he does not identify Antichrist with any known Roman emperor. He suggests LATEINOS among possible explanations of 666, the number of Antichrist's name, but rejects it as he does all other precise names, interpreting the number in a highly artificial way as summing up Antichrist's essential character. The series of plagues that precede the End he takes literally of visitations similar to those sent upon Egypt.

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75. A.M.F., Vol. I, p.429.



As a rule he understands the book realistically, yet in some cases a purely symbolical interpretation is given; for example, the four living creatures about the throne of God symbolize the functions of Christ; the lion his kingship, the calf his priesthood, the man his humanity, the eagle his prophetic office; the number four determines the number of the Gospels. Irenaeus is closely followed by Tertullian."<sup>76</sup>

Hippolytus, the pupil of Irenaeus, was bishop of Portus Romanus (Ostia). The date of his death is 235 A.D. There are four works of his to be considered in giving account of his position regarding the Apocalypse. These are :1) The Ἀπόδειξις ἐκ τῶν ἁγίων γραφῶν περὶ τοῦ ἁλοῦ καὶ περὶ τοῦ Ἀντιχριστοῦ. 2) His commentary on Daniel in which several single passages are treated, notably Rev. 5, 3) A lost commentary on the Apocalypse. Fragments of it have perhaps been preserved in an Arabian commentary, the manuscript of which is to be found in the Paris Library. 4) A lost writing, of which fragments are extant, against the opponent of the Apocalypse Gaius (Κεφάλαια κατὰ Γαίου). This lost treatise was a polemic refuting objections which had been raised against John's Gospel and the Apocalypse.

Hippolytus, in his exposition of the Apocalypse, clings to several specific details which Irenaeus held. For example, the number of the beast he interprets in the same way. Above all he shows more clearly than does Irenaeus the

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76. Beckwith, op. cit., Introd. pp.320-321.



imprint and influence of the old tradition concerning the Antichrist. Twice he cites an unknown prophet, plainly an apocalypse, which treats of the Antichrist. According to this tradition Hippolytus refers to the two witnesses (Rev. 11) as Elias and Enoch. This interpretation from now on becomes standard. As Christ has a twofold Parousia, so also he has a twofold forerunner. Hippolytus would have us know that the first half of chapter 13 of the Apocalypse points to the Roman Empire; but since he follows the traditional exposition about the Antichrist, he consequently falls into the fantastic (the word is Bousset's) conclusion that the second beast of Rev. 13 must be the Antichrist also, and the mortal wounds of the first beast as the breaking up of the Roman Empire into ten kingdoms. The restoration of these kingdoms means the visible restoration of the order of Antichrist. As in Irenaeus, so also in Hippolytus we find from now on a prevalent combination of Dan.7 and Rev.13 and 17 in the exposition of the seven heads and the ten horns (in the Arabic fragment no.17 the ten horns are simply adherents and representatives of the Antichrist, the identification with the Roman Empire being lacking). Leading heavily on Dan.11,41-43, and already here following the regular tradition, Hippolytus knows that the three kings killed by the Antichrist are those of Libya, Ethiopia, and Egypt. Already in Rev. 12 the interpretation so prevalent in later times is found: the woman is the Church which is about to give birth to the Son of God. The second half of



chapter 12 Hippolytus makes to signify the flight of the believers from the Antichrist, who seeks to compel these to worship him. The two eagle-wings of the woman are the wings of faith (i.e. Hope and Love).

The time of Antichrist Hippolytus reckons according to Rev. 17,10, "And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space." The world will stand 6000 years after him; 5 heads, or world eras are fallen, the sixth comprises Dan. 4, 23, "And whereas the king saw a watcher and an holy one coming down from heaven, and saying, Hew the tree down, and destroy it; yet leave the stump of the roots thereof in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts of the field, till seven times pass over him." Since Christ's birth falls in the year 5,500 after him, 500 years will elapse from that time on until the coming of the Antichrist. This computation, the reader will readily see, is not based on chronological, but on allegorical considerations, following out of Hippolytus' exegesis of Dan. 4, 24 and 32: "This is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the Most High, which is come upon my Lord the king.... And they shall drive thee from me, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will."



Hippolytus is a chiliast. This is easily seen from his explanation of Dan. 4,23 in the following words: τὸ

σάββατον τύπος ἐστὶ καὶ ἑκὼν τῆς μελλούσης  
βασιλείας τῶν ἁγίων, ἡνίκα συμβασιλεύσουσι  
τῷ Χριστῷ τετραγενομένου κυρίου ἀπ' οὐρανῶν,  
ὡς Ἰωάννης ἐν τῇ ἀποκάλυψις αὐτοῦ  
διηγεῖται.

"He placed the millennium in a comparatively late future, in the year 500. He takes the book of Daniel as the norm for understanding the Revelation. The first beast he identifies with the fourth beast of Daniel, which he makes the Roman Empire. One of the heads will be wounded unto death in that the empire will be broken up by the ten kings; it will then be healed in the restoration of world-sovereignty by Antichrist. Antichrist, who was represented by Antiochus Epiphanes and who will come out of the tribe of Dan, will reign  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years, persecuting the Church, and putting to death the Two Witnesses, the forerunners of the Parousia (held to be Elijah and Enoch)!....666's "true meaning is a mystery only to be understood in the future. The great harlot and Babylon are Rome. The woman with child is the Church continually bearing through preaching the Word of God, her flight into the wilderness is the flight of the Church from the persecutions of Antichrist, the two wings of the eagle given to her are faith in Christ who stretched out his two arms on the cross."<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> E. Beckwith, op. cit., Introd. pp. 320-321.



As I stated before, Clement of Alexandria plays little part in the history of the interpretation of the Apocalypse. It is very questionable that he expounded the Revelation of St. John. Eusebius, in his History of the Church (VI,14), assures us that Clement had expounded the entire Scriptures in his ὑποτυπώσεις, even the Antilegomena. But under the latter head, where he enumerates them by name, he does not mention the Apocalypse. In general Clement follows the tradition of the Church, and quotes Revelation as part of Holy Scripture (PAED.II,19: τὸ Συμβολικὸν τῶν γραφῶν) and as the work of John the Apostle (QUIS DIVES, 42: STROMATA, VI, 106-107). Let this suffice then for Clement and serve as an approach to the consideration of his more famous pupil, Origen.

So much has been written about Origen that it is extremely difficult for the interested lay reader to get a well-balanced view of the man as a Christian and as an interpreter of the Scriptures. Aside from a few biographical references, I am concerned only with Origen as an exegete, with particular emphasis on his position with regard to the Apocalypse.

Origen was born ca.185 A.D. of Christian parents at Alexandria, Egypt. His father suffered martyrdom in 202 A.D. and shortly thereafter Origen succeeded the great Clement as head of the catechetical school in Alexandria. Thirteen years later the persecution of Caracalla drove him from his own country to Caesarea, where though still a layman



he preached at church meetings. Recalled to Alexandria, he labored there for fifteen years further as teacher and author. In the year 231 his ordination at Caesarea to the office of presbyter drew down upon him the condemnation of the bishop of Alexandria, and this promotion was instrumental in his permanent withdrawal from Egypt. At Caesarea he now formed the new school of Christian training similar to that from which he had been driven. At this time, as well as in the earlier period of his life, he made various journeys to different parts of the world. His death was undoubtedly brought about by sufferings inflicted upon him in the persecution of Decius, and occurred at Tyre about the year 254.

Before proceeding let me acquaint the reader on the matter of the extant and lost works of Origen. His Scholia (ΣΗΜΕΙΩΣΕΙΣ) are mostly lost; his homilies are, for the most part, preserved in the Latin translations of Jerome and Rufinus, which, unhappily, cannot be trusted, since the translators modified and tampered with them. They fill three folios, though much is lost. His commentaries (ΤΟΜΟΙ) extended over the whole Old Testament, with the exception of Ruth, Esther, and Ecclesiastes; he covered the New Testament with the exception of Mark, I and II Corinthians, I and II Peter, I, II, and II John, James, Jude, and the Apocalypse.

The very mention of the name Origen at once suggests to the student of theology the allegorical system of interpretation. Origen has become proverbial for allegory in Scripture.



Just how did he approach the Bible? He "shared many of the views about Scripture which we have already noticed in writers like Philo, Barnabas, Justine, and Clement of Alexandria. He believed in the inspiration of the Septuagint, and saw hidden mysteries in its solecisms and errors. He appeals to the apocryphal books as authoritative and inspired...he shows clear traces of methods traditionally received both from Palestinian Rabbis and the Alexandrian theosophists. He admits that the N.T. is not written in the best Greek, but says that this is unimportant, because the revelation consists not in the words but in the things revealed. Yet, he held in its strongest form the theory of verbal inspiration. Not one iota, he said, of Scripture is empty; and it must not be forgotten that his Scripture included the Apocrypha...the errors of the exegesis which Origen tended to establish for more than a thousand years had their root in the assumption that the Bible is throughout homogeneous and in every particular supernaturally perfect....Literalism, he said, would destroy the possibility of the Christian faith...Having started with the assumption that every clause of the Bible was infallible, supernatural, and divinely dictated, and having proved to his own satisfaction that it could not be intended in its literal sense, he proceeded to systematize his own false conclusions. The Bible, he argued, is meant for the salvation of man; but man, as Plato tells us, consists of three parts - body, soul, and spirit. Scripture therefore



must have a three-fold sense corresponding to this trichotomy. It has a literal, a moral, and a mystic meaning analogous to the body, to the soul, to the spirit."<sup>78</sup> Redepenning says that Origen's threefold sense is practically the fourfold sense of the Fathers, for his "spiritual" sense involves both allegory and anagogue, though he does not practically make this division. He uses the word ἀναγωγὴ of explanations which are simply allegories.<sup>79</sup> For a first hand account of Origen's exegetic views, the student will find them scattered throughout the third and fourth books of his De Principiis. One more word here and then we shall discuss his views on the Apocalypse. Farrar states that "we can only come to the conclusion that the foundations of his exegetic system are built upon the sand."<sup>80</sup>

Origen, according to Bowman, cites the Apocalypse 60 times. He quotes it 16 times in his commentary on the Gospel of St. John, 4 times in his polemic work Contra Celsum, 2 times in his De Principiis, one in Book XIV of his commentary on St. Matthew. Elsewhere he mentions the book and John as the author; what I have enumerated above are direct quotations; the rest are scattered references and allusions to the Apocalypse.

The four citations in Contra Celsum are as follows:

In Book VI, chapter 6 he quotes Rev. 10,9: "And I went unto

78. F.W. Farrar, History of Interpretation, pp. 187-197.

79. Redepenning, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 226.

80. Farrar, op. cit., p. 201.



the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey." Quote: "Ezekiel received a roll (Ezek. 2, 9-10) written within and without, in which were contained 'lamentations,' and 'songs,' and 'denunciation,' but at the command of the Logos, he swallowed the book, in order that its contents might now be written, and so made known unto unworthy persons. John is also recorded to have seen and done a similar thing." In the very same chapter Origen quotes Rev. 10, 4, "And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not." Quote: "And once more, John, in teaching us the difference between what ought to be committed to writing and what not, declares that he heard seven thunders instructing him on certain matters, and forbidding him to commit their words to writing."<sup>81</sup> Thus writes Origen on the matter of withholding prophecy from the unworthy unbelievers. In chapter 23 of Book VI Origen writes against Celsus' claim that Christianity has borrowed from the religion of Mithras and the ancient mystery cults. He says: "If one wished to obtain means for a profounder contemplation of the entrance of souls into divine things, not from the statements of that very insignificant sect which he quoted, but from the books, - partly those of the Jews, which

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81. A.N.F., Vol. IV, pp.575.576.



are read in their synagogue, and adopted by Christians, and partly from those of Christians alone - , let him peruse, at the end of Ezekiel's prophecies, the visions beheld by the prophet (Ezekiel 48), in which gates of different kinds are enumerated, which obscurely refer to the different modes in which divine souls enter into a better world (epi ta kreittna); and let him peruse also, from the Apocalypse of John, what is related of the city of God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and of its foundations and gates." This passage bears on Origen's esteem for the grand and glorious portrayal of the celestial Jerusalem in Revelation chapter 21. The fourth and last quotation from Contra Celsum reads thus: "He (Celsus) does not perceive that we regard the spirit of every good man as an altar from which arises an incense which is truly and spiritually sweet smelling, namely, the prayers ascending from a pure conscience. Therefore it is said by John in Revelation, 'The odours are the prayers of saints.'" (Book VIII, ch.17). This is a reference to Rev. 5,8: "And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and the four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints."<sup>82</sup> Origen here shows his reverent attitude toward Christian prayer which he says denotes a truly pure conscience.

The two quotations from De Principiis are as follows:

"And that you may understand that the omnipotence of Father and Son is one and the same, and God and the Lord are one and



the same with the Father, listen to the manner in which John speaks in the Apocalypse: 'Thus saith the Lord God, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.'" (Eck. I, ch.2, ON CHRIST, par.10). This is a citation of Rev. 1,8: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty." And from Eck. IV, ch. 1, par.25, "At the time(i.e, of Christ's Second Coming) when He will more worthily transfer all the saints from a temporal to an everlasting Gospel, according to the designation, employed by John in the Apocalypse, of 'an everlasting Gospel.'"<sup>83</sup> This chapter one deals with the thesis that the Scriptures are divinely inspired (or as the Greek original has it: On the Inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and how the same is to be read and understood, and what is the reason of the uncertainty in it; and of the impossibility or irrationality of certain things in it, taken according to the letter).

In the commentary on St. Matthew I was able to locate only one quotation in the English. That is an allusion to Rev. 21,2("And I john saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband"): "Only this is our conception of the passage (Matt. 18,23ff., "Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which

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83. A.N.F., Vol. IV, p.375.



owed him ten thousand talents," etc.); that, as 'the Jerusalem which is above' is 'the mother' of Paul and of those like unto him, so there may be a mother of others after the analogy of Jerusalem, the mother, for example, of Syene in Egypt, or Sidon, or as many cities as are named in Scriptures. Then, as Jerusalem is 'a bride adorned for her husband,' Christ, so there may be those mothers of certain powers who have been allotted to them as wives or brides." (Cf. Gal.4,26). The above citation is a good example of Origen's allegorical method applied to the meaning of father, mother, and children in Matt. 18,25.<sup>84</sup>

It is in the Matthew Commentary of Origen that the author mentions his intention of expounding the Apocalypse (IN MATT.49, see the Lommatzsch edit. iv,307). The Matthew commentary unfortunately is extant in the Latin only. In the Commentary on John we find the most extended expositions of passages from the Revelation. His Christology of the Logos he developed on the basis of Rev. 19,10ff. (See Comm. on John, Thomas II,4); on the so-called ascetic passage (Rev. 14,1ff.) Origen has commented in detail. Samples of his Greek the reader will find appended at the close of this treatise. Origen is no longer, strictly speaking, a chiliast, but he yet thinks about a spiritual coming of the Lord upon the earth, in a definite period of history and at a new time on the earth, when there will be the kingdom of progressive development. The above sentence is Bousset's opinion. I am inclined to think that this is wishful thinking on his part. He is a radical and favors the development-theory of Christian doctrine,

84. A.N.F., vol. IX, p.503.



making of it a sort of unfolding, evolutionary process, culminating in the final consummation of the world. Farrar seems to agree with Bousset when he writes that Origen "was perhaps the first propounder of a definite 'doctrine of development.'"<sup>85</sup> On this matter I refer the reader to Origen's 5th Homily on Psalm 36 and to De Principiis Book II, chap. 11 on Counter Promises (Repromissionibus). Bousset further maintains that Origen shows himself dependent on the old tradition when treating the doctrine of the Antichrist. The reference here is Contra Celsum Book VI, chap. 45 and following. I will not discuss this passage in the present writing because Origen does not cite the Apocalypse once in this particular treatment of his conception of the Antichrist.

For the sake of completeness I will list all the references Origen makes in his exposition of the Gospel of John to the Apocalypse. In Tomus I there are nine: Rev. 7, 2-5; 7, 3-4; 14, 1-5; 14, 6-7; 22, 13; 1, 18; 1, 17-18; 16, 5-7; 19, 11 (the list is consecutive and may easily be followed on the margin of Brocke's fine critical edition of the Commentary of Origen on St. John's Gospel, Cambridge University Press, 1896). Tomus II has only one quotation: Rev. 19, 11-16 on the discussion of the Logos as One. Tomus V has four citations: Rev. 10, 4 on the seven thunders; 3, 7 (Cf. A.N.F., IX, p. 348); Rev. 5, 1-5 with reference to the "root of David and the key of David;" Rev. 10, 9-10: "And John, too, when he

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85. Farrar, op. cit., p. 193.



speaks of his eating the one roll, in which both front and back were written on, means the whole Scripture, one book which is, at first, most sweet when one begins, as it were, to chew it, but bitter in the revelation of himself which it makes to the conscience of each one who knows it." <sup>86</sup>

In Tomus VI there is but one quotation, a reference to Rev. 5,6("And I behold, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb, as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth."). Origen makes reference to this in his discussion of Jesus as a Lamb in respect to His human nature. He writes, after quoting Is. 53,7("like a gentle lamb led to the slaughter"), "Hence, too, in the Apocalypse a lamb is seen, standing as if slain. This slain lamb has been made, according to certain hidden reasons, a purification of the whole world, for which, according to the Father's love to man, He submitted to death, purchasing us back by His own blood from him who had got us into his power, sold under sin. And he who led this Lamb to the slaughter was God in man, the great High-Priests, as he shows by the words: 'No man taketh My life away from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.'" <sup>87</sup> Finally, in Tomus IX Origen cites Rev. 3,12 ("Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple

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86. A.N.F., Vol. IX, p.348.

87. Ibid., p.377.



of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name") in chapter 26, which is entitled, 'The Promises Addressed to Jerusalem in the Prophets Refer to the Church, and are Still to be Fulfilled.' After quoting Is.54,15("Behold, proselytes shall come to thee through Me, and shall flee to thee for refuge"), Origen comments as follows:"And if all that is to take place with the captives, then it is plain that they must be about their temple, and that they must go up there again to be built up, having become the most precious of stones. For we find with John in his Apocalypse, the promise made to him that overcomes, that he will be a pillar in the temple of God, and will go no more out. All this I have said with a view to our obtaining a cursory view at least of the matters pertaining to the temple, and the house of God, and the Church and Jerusalem, which we cannot now take up systematically. Those, however, who in their reading of the prophets, do not shrink from the labor of seeking after their spiritual meaning, must inquire into these matters with the greatest particularity, and must take account of every possibility. So far of 'the temple of His body.'"<sup>88</sup>

All the early expositors I have discussed previous to the consideration of Origen have taken the Apocalypse fairly literally. These exponents of the book understood its

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88. A.N.F., Vol. IX, p.406.



message as one of comfort and encouragement in times of bitter persecution. This outlook was retained as long as the Roman empire was hostile to Christianity and intent on its eradication. But over against this realistic "Anschauung" of the Apocalypse came an entirely new interpretation of its nature and purpose. And this new turn of thought was due to the growing influence of Greek thought in the Church. Greek thought was violently opposed to the literalistic methods of the Jewish apocalyptists, "and the passage of the centuries without the appearance of the Lord to set up the long looked-for kingdom led to an effort to find a non-literal meaning in the prophecies. Also the opposition to the heresy of Montanism, which made great use of the Apocalypse and gave extravagant form to its millennial teaching, caused it to be either rejected or differently interpreted. Thus a spiritualizing or allegorizing exegesis arose. The leader in this was Origen, the vehement opponent of Millenarianism... he lays down the principle that the true meaning of prophecy is to be found only by going beyond the literal and historical sense to the spiritual; and he says specifically of the Apocalypse that the mysteries hidden in it can be understood only in this way. His whole interpretation of the book is therefore spiritual rather than literal. At a definite period the Lord will come, not visibly, but in spirit, and establish his perfected kingdom on earth. The time of His advent will coincide with the coming culmination of evil in the person of Antichrist, a future world-ruler, a child of Satan. The



imagery of the visions is to be taken allegorically; for example, the seven heads of the dragon are seven deadly sins, the ten horns are serpent-like powers of sin which assail the inner life, the robl with seven seals is the Scripture, whose meaning Christ alone can unseal; the warrior whose name is the Word of God, issuing upon a white horse from the opened heavens, is Christ, who opens heaven by giving the white light of truth to those who receive him."<sup>89</sup> So much for Origen.

Methodius (known also as Eubulius) was bishop of both Olympus and Patara in Lycia, according to St. Jerome. Later he served as bishop of Tyre in Phoenicia, and at the end of the last of the great persecutions he suffered martyrdom (ca. 312; Zahn gives 311). His translator, Clark, says of him: "Methodius is known chiefly as the antagonist of Origen; although, as has been pointed out, he was influenced in no small degree by the method of Origen, as may be seen by his tendency to allegorical interpretations of Holy Scripture. The only complete work of this writer which has come down to us is his Banquet of the Ten Virgins, a dialogue of considerable power and grace, in praise of the virginal life. His antagonism to Origen, however, comes out less in this than in his works On the Resurrection and On Things Created. The treatise On Free Will is...of doubtful authorship; his writings against Porphyry, with the exception of

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89. Beckwith, op. cit., p.323.



some slight fragments are lost, as are also his exegetical writings.<sup>90</sup>

There are nine citations of the Apocalypse in the extant works of Methodius. For the sake of completeness I shall include all of them here. In chapter V of his symposium, The Banquet of the Ten Virgins he treats of Christ setting an example by His virginity according to His flesh, and of the small number of virgins in proportion to the number of saints. In this passage he quotes Rev. 14,1-4; 14,4-5; and 7,9 consecutively. "What then did the Lord, who is the Truth and the Light, take in hand when He came down from heaven? He preserved the flesh which He had taken upon Him incorrupt in virginity, so that we also, if we would come to the likeness of God and Christ, should endeavor to honor virginity. For the likeness of God is the avoiding of corruption. And that the Word when He was incarnate, became chief Virgin, in the same way as He was chief Shepherd and chief Prophet of the Church, the Christ-possessed John (Χριστόληπτος or Θεόληπτος) shows us, saying, in the Book of Revelation, 'And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with Him an hundred and forty and four thousand, having His name and His Father's name written in their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder; and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: and they sung as

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90. A.N.F., Vol. VI, p.307.



as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they who follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth; 'showing that the Lord is leader of the choir of virgins. And remark, in addition to this, how very great in the sight of God is the dignity of virginity:' These were redeemed from among men, being the first-fruits unto God and to the Lamb, And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault,' he says, 'and they follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth.' And he clearly intends by this to teach us that the number of virgins was, from the beginning, restricted to so many, namely, a hundred and forty and four thousand while the multitude of the other saints is innumerable. For let us consider what he means when discoursing of the rest. {I beheld a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues.' (Rev. 7,9). It is plain, therefore as I said, that in the case of the other saints he introduces an unspeakable multitude, while in the case of those who are in a state of virginity he mentions only a very small number, so as to make a strong contrast with those who make up the innumerable number."<sup>91</sup>

From Discourse III of the same work, chapter 3 ('A Comparison between the First and Second Adam) I quote:"And

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91. A.N.F., Vol. VI, p.313.



first, we must enquire if Adam can be likened to the Son of God, when he was found in the transgression of the Fall, and heard the sentence, 'Dust thou art, and to dust shall thou return.' (Gen. 3, 19). For how shall he be considered 'the first-born of every creature' (Col. 1, 15), who, after the creation of the earth and the firmament, was formed out of clay? And how shall he be admitted to be 'the tree of life' who was cast out for his transgression, lest 'he should again stretch forth his hand and eat of it, and live for ever?'<sup>92</sup> In Discourse VI, chapter 5, treating of the reward of virginity, Methodius states: "I have become the torch-bearer of the unquenchable (unapproachable, cf. I Tim. 6, 16) lights, and I join with their company in the new song of the archangels, showing forth the new grace of the Church; for the Word says that the company of virgins always follow the Lord, and have fellowship with Him wherever He is. And this is what John signifies in the commemoration of the hundred and forty-four thousand (Rev. 7, 4; 14, 4)."<sup>93</sup> In Discourse VIII, chapter 4, which is an exhortation to the cultivation of virginity, Methodius writes: "John, in the course of the Apocalypse, says 'And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: and she, being with child, cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red

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92. A.N.F., Vol. VI, p. 317.

93. Ibid., p. 331.



dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born. And she brought forth a man-child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to His throne. And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed there a thousand two hundred and three score days' (Rev. 12,1-6). So far we have given, in brief, the history of the woman and the dragon. But to search out and explain the solution of them is beyond my powers. Nevertheless, let me venture, trusting in Him who commanded to search the Scriptures. If, then, you agree with this, it will not be difficult to undertake it; for you will quite pardon me, if I am unable sufficiently to explain the exact meaning of the Scripture.<sup>94</sup> The following eight chapters of the same discourse are Methodius' interpretative views of this much-discussed passage. Permit me to list here the summaries of these chapters. Chapter V: The woman who brings forth, to whom the dragon is opposed, the Church; her adornment and grace. Ch. VI: The works of the Church, the bringing forth of children in baptism the moon in baptism, the full moon of Christ's Passion. Chapter VII: the child of the woman in the Apocalypse not Christ, but

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94. A.N.F., Vol. VI. p.336.



the faithful who are born in the laver. Chapter VIII: the faithful in baptism males, configured to Christ; the saints themselves Christs. Chapter IX: The Son of God, who ever is, is today begotten in the minds and sense of the faithful. Chapter X: The dragon, the devil; the stars struck from heaven by the tail of the dragon, heretics; the numbers of the Trinity, that is, the persons numbered; errors concerning them. Chapter XI: The woman with the male child in the wilderness<sup>95</sup> is the Church; the wilderness belongs to virgins and saints; the perfection of numbers and mysteries; the equality and perfection of the number six; the number six related to Christ; from this number too, the creation and harmony of the world completed. Chapter XII: Virgins are called to the imitation of the Church in the wilderness overcoming the dragon. Chapter XIII: The seven crowns of the beast to be taken away by victorious chastity; the ten crowns of the dragon, the vices opposed to the Decalogue; the opinion of Fate the greatest evil.<sup>95</sup> From Chapter III of the 9th Discourse I quote the last reference of Methodius in the work under consideration. Speaking of the matter of how each one ought to prepare himself for the future resurrection, he says: "Such fruit (i.e. of faith) it is necessary that we bring when we come to the judgment seat of Christ, on the first day of the feast; for if we are without it we shall not be able to feast with God, nor to have part, according to John (Rev. 20,6), in the first

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95. A.N.F., Vol. VI., pp.536-340.



resurrection. For the tree of life is wisdom first begotten of all." (Rev. 2,7). Finally, from Methodius' Discourse on the Resurrection, I list two quotations, Rev. 20,13 and 1,5, preserved to us by Photius. Part III, par. 9 has the following: "Consider, he says, whether too the blessed John, when he says, 'And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them,' does not mean the parts which are given up by the elements for the reconstructions of each one? By the sea is mean the moist element; by hell, the air, derived from ἀεὶ δέξ, because it is invisible, as was said by Origen; and by death, the earth, because those who die are laid in it; whence also it is called in the Psalms the 'dust of death,' (Ps. 22, 15), Christ saying that He is brought (into the dust of death' (375). Paragraph 13 has this: "How then could Christ be celebrated by prophets and apostles as 'the first begotten of the dead' (Rev. 1,5)." I should like to quote this entire paragraph in order to illustrate Methodius' opposition to Origen on the matter of the state of the body after the resurrection: "If then, O Origen, you maintain that the resurrection of the body changed into a spiritual body is to be expected only in appearance, and put forth the vision of Moses and Elias as a most convincing proof of it; saying that they appeared after their departure from life, preserving no different appearance from that which they had from the beginning; in the same way will be the resurrection of all men. But Moses and Elias arose and appeared with this form of which you speak, before



Christ suffered and rose. How then could Christ be celebrated by prophets and apostles as 'the first-begotten of the dead?' For if the Christ is believed to be the first begotten of the dead, He is the first begotten of the dead as having risen before all others. But Moses appeared to the apostles before Christ suffered, having this form in which you say the resurrection is fulfilled. Hence, then, there is no resurrection of the form without the flesh. For either there is a resurrection of the form as you teach, and then Christ is no longer 'the first begotten of the dead,' from the fact that souls appeared before him, having this form after death; or He is truly the first begotten, and it is quite impossible that any should have been thought meet for a resurrection before Him, so as not to die again. But if no one arose before Him, and Moses and Elias appeared to the apostles not having flesh, but only its appearance, the resurrection in the flesh is clearly manifested. For it is most absurd that the resurrection should be set forth only in form, since the souls, after their departure from the flesh, never appear to lay aside the form which, he says, rises again. But if that remains with them, so that it cannot be taken away, as with the soul of Moses and Elias; and neither perishes, as you think, nor is destroyed, but is everywhere present with them; then surely that form which never fell cannot be said to rise again."<sup>96</sup>

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96. A.N.F., Vol. VI, pp.375.376.



In conclusion of this study of Methodius let me point out in what respects he influenced the later history of interpretation of Revelation. It is true indeed that he follows an exclusively spiritualizing method, and in this respect does not differ essentially from his predecessor Origen. His exegesis of Rev. Ch. 12 that the woman signifies the Church bearing children into spiritual life is a dominant factor in deciding the course of later exegetes. The rejection of the woman's child as referring to the birth of Christ is a sharp point of difference between him and Origen. His express denial that the child is Christ reads thus: ὁ δὲ Ἰωάννης περὶ παρόντων καὶ μελλόντων βεβαιῶσει, ὁ δὲ Χριστὸς πάλαι κυνθεῖς οὐκ ἠσπίσθη, ὅποτε ἐτέχνη, πρὸς τὸν ἰρόνον τοῦ Θεοῦ φόβου τοῦ μὴ λυμηνεῖν αὐτὸν τὸν ὄφιν: μεχρίτερον ἂν εἰσέλθῃ τὸ πλήρωμα τῶν ἐθνῶν, ὡς ἐνόσθα καὶ ἀναγεννώσθαι τοὺς ψυχικοὺς ἐν πνευματικῶν (VIII, Par. 6 and 7).

The dragon, the devil, seeks to destroy the being of the regenerate, but he does not succeed since the reborn soul is in heaven (with the Spirit). The stars as false teachers are described as ἡ ἐστροφὴ τῶν ἀπίστων who ascribe to themselves a knowledge of heavenly things and who have fallen from the faith. (VIII, 10). The seven heads of the dragon are the seven deadly sins; the ten horns are the ἄνω ἑσείς of the Ten Commandments (VIII, 13).



In my opinion the contributions of Methodius to the field of exegesis of the Apocalypse have been generally underestimated.

Since Arnobius made no comments on the Apocalypse, I shall proceed directly to the consideration of the Donatist exegete Tichonius. The Tichonius commentary in its original Greek form is no longer extant. But it has been reconstructed on the basis of the Latin versions of Beatus, Primasius, and Augustine. His successor, Gennadius, said of him (V.iii.18): "Exposuit et Apocalypsin ex integro, nihil in ea corporale, sed totum intelligens spirituale...mille quotus annorum regni in terra justorum post resurrectionem futuri suspensionem tulit." Gennadius, who himself wrote an exposition of Revelation, gives us his estimation of Tichonius' Biblical learning in the following description: "Tichonius, natione Afer, in divinis litteris eruditus, iuxta historiam sufficienter et in saecularibus non ignarus fuit et in ecclesiasticis negotiis studiosus." 97

In the work of Tichonius the interpretation of the Apocalypse took an entirely new turn. If we study the fragments (Rev. 2,18 to 4,1 and 7,16 to 12,6) preserved in the manuscript SPICILEGIUM CASINENSE (Bk, III, L) under the heading Tyconii Afri fragmenta Commentarii in Apocalypsin ex codice Taurinensi, together with what is preserved in Primasius, Augustine, Pseudo-Augustine, Beatus, and Bede, and

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97. Zahn, op. cit., p.105.



compare them diligently, we are on the right track in getting at the true, genuine Tichonius. Beatus, Primasius, and Pseudo-Augustine are dependent upon the commentary of Victorinus.<sup>98</sup> If we subtract those elements in which the three witnesses and Victorinus are commonly agreed, then the real Tichonius appears in the remainder. I might note here that the three witnesses have stripped Tichonius' commentary of its Donatistic heresies. The expositions of Tichonius are so characteristic, forceful, and original, that they are recognized with little difficulty.

The Commentary of Tichonius the Donatist was written after a great persecution against the Donatists had taken place, at a time when the rest of Christendom enjoyed a period of comparative quiet. Since Tichonius reckons the three and a half years of the two witnesses (that is, of the Church; Rev. 11,3) as 350 years from the death of Christ forward, and since he thought that the end of the world to be very near, we place the date of composition for his commentary in the period before 380 A.D. Since Tichonius is a Donatist, he finds prophesied in the Apocalypse throughout the sufferings, fears, and hopes of his church. He sees in the power of the Beast, which arrays itself against the true church, that which to the Donatists was the hostile, worldly kingdom and the secularized Roman Catholic Church with its false leaders, both bishops and priests. It seems also that

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98. Victorinus, a Latin Father, d.305 A.D. a martyr, a chiliast, and the first to use the Nero redivivus myth. Nero is the beast and Antichrist.



Tichonius fought against a faction within his own Donatist party. He belonged to the strictest of the Donatists, clinging fast to the unity of the Church in the sacraments.

While he generally recognizes the classification of humanity into three groups (1. pagans 2. the true church. 3. the false church) he mentions incidentally as a fourth group also the schismatics, and thereby alludes to the events in North Africa. The adherents of the Catholic Church are to him altogether 'false brethren' and 'hypocrites.' But in no way, - and here now the characteristic eschatology of Tichonius is clearly seen, - are all the members of the true church vanished away out of that church of false bishops and priests. In Africa especially is the true Church revealed by open controversy between Carthage and the Roman See. But that the Word of God has been preserved not only in Africa alone, that prophecy which was made the church at Philadelphia proves, to Tichonius' was of thinking, that a divine visitation shall come upon the entire world. The time will come in which the preaching of the true Church in Africa will be heard and accepted throughout the whole earth. Then above all a new separation will occur. Whoever at that time is still separated from the true Church will have no more time to turn back, for then the true Church and the false church will be revealed on earth. Then will the great persecution begin, namely the period of  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years of the sway of Antichrist.

The method of exposition which is uniformly applied throughout by Tichonius is strictly spiritual. And the faithful



execution of this method by Tichonius is what has brought it about that his comments on the Apocalypse have had such a colossal influence on the following interpreters of later centuries. In spite of his spiritualizing method, and, I should say, without violating this exegetical norm, his work evinces an historical-realistic approach. Especially does Tichonius become polemical against the interpretation of the two witnesses as definite personalities. The two witnesses are the Church, which preaches Christ through the medium of the Old and New Testaments. The  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years are the 350 years in which they bear their testimony. The resurrection of the witnesses is the general resurrection of the dead. The Beast is the Symbol of worldly might; the seven heads denote all the kings of the world; the ten horns are all the kingdoms of the world; the eighth head, which yet belongs to the seven, or the head wounded unto death, is the false, secularized priesthood which belongs rather to the world, although it does not appear outwardly to belong to it, and which, instead of the glory of the crucified Christ, makes known its own glory and that of Satan. The number 666 of Rev. 13,18 Tichonius reads as 616 -, and he interprets it in a rather hazy and conventional way -calling it the sign of the Antichrist (Cf. Zahn, Einleitung in das N.T., II, p.628). This Antichrist is for him in many places no longer a single individual but much more that diabolical power which had already at that time united forces against



against the true Church. On the other hand, Tychonius also speaks of a particular person, who will be placed by the devil as REX NOVISSIMUS at the head of the kingdom of Satan which will battle with the true Church in the last times. Whether Tychonius has given this rex novissimus the title of Antichrist or not is uncertain.

Especially has Tychonius had a profound influence on later exegesis in this respect, that his interpretation of the Apocalypse had conclusively broken away from all chiliastic leanings and all the realistic eschatology of the Latin Church. Hence his sadly underestimated historical importance in shaping the trends of the later history of interpretation of the Apocalypse. In a clear and definite manner is the idea of the millennial kingdom, the binding of Satan by the angel (Rev. 20,1-6) which to Tichonius meant the victory of the strong (Matt. 12,29) by virtue of the first appearance of Christ, the 1000-year reign of the saints, which to him represented that period of the church's history from the first coming of the Lord up to His second advent, first given a new interpretation by this epoch-making Donatist expositor. As Beckwith states, "His interpretation is throughout spiritualistic; he explains nothing by the events and circumstances of the age of the Apocalyptist...Jerusalem is the symbol of the Church, as Babylon is the symbol of the antichristian world. Ticonius is followed by Augustine in his spiritualizing method, though the latter in the application of the method avoids the heresies of the Donatist. Both



writers adopt the recapitulation theory."<sup>99</sup> This theory, namely, that the events do not all form a continuous series, but some scenes recapitulate the events of other scenes, is found applied (among the extant commentaries] by Victorinus, bishop of Petavium. This concentric plan of the Apocalypse, as Dr. Fuerbringer has so ably pointed out in his lectures on Revelation, recognizes a difficulty in the formal make-up of the book, and offers a solution used by many modern exegetes in their exposition of St. John's glorious prophecy.

One concluding thought. Four of the seven fathers discussed in the preceding pages were chiliasts. The last three represent the new spiritualizing method of the Alexandrine school. Strictly speaking, chiliasm is a branch of Eschatology. The prophecy of the Millennium in Rev. 20 must be taken literally, if we are to call certain expositors chiliasts. I have tried to show that Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and Hippolytus fall directly into this class. I have also endeavored to show that this chiliastic interpretation, beginning with Clement of Alexandria, was displaced by the spiritualizing methods of the Alexandrine school. Tichonius, adopting these methods, rejected the literal interpretation of Rev. 20 and treated the Millennium as the period between the First and Second Advents of our Lord Jesus Christ. Jerome and Augustine followed in the footsteps of Tichonius, and a realistic eschatology was ruled out of existence in the church

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99. Beckwith, pp.324.325.



for a full 800 years. The Eschatological Method, including Chiliasm, was revived by Joachim de Flore (ca. 1200 A.D.), but the latter branch was again rejected for some centuries and declared heretical by the Augsburg and Helvetic Confessions. In England, where these Confessions were without authority, Chiliasm was reinstated by Mede, Sir Isaac Newton, and Whiston. This brief overview of the chiliastic and spiritualizing methods must suffice for the present writing.

THE END



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## THE LATIN RESCENSION

## OF ORIGEN "IN MATTHAEOUM"

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Patrologia Graecia, Vol. 13. Origenis, Vol. 3. Series Veteris Interpretationis Commentariorum Origenis in Matthaeum. Section 49-Paragraph 867.

"Adhuc autem ad ea quae dicta sunt de cadentibus stellis, non sine ratione est assumere de Revelatione Joannis, de tertia parte stellarum tracta a cauda draconis in terram. Dicit enim ita: 'Et visum est aliud signum in caelo; et ecce draco magnus rufus habens capita septem, et cornua decem, et super capita sua cornua septem; et cauda eius traxit tertiam partem stellarum caeli, et misit eas in terram' (Rev. 12:3,4). Omnia haec exponere singillatim de capitibus septem draconis, quae forsitan possunt referri ad aliqua principes rerum nequitiae, sive ad tanta ducentium ad mortem peccata, non est temporis huius: exponetur autem tempore suo in Revelatio Joannis. Sed et decem cornua dicere quoniam sunt regna serpentinae malitiae, et habentis serpentis naturam, et semper pectore et ventre incedere per peccata, nec modo exponere tempus est. Quid narratio praesens de septem diadematis quae draco videtur habere super septem capita sua? Utpote diademata per singulos qui iunguntur suscipit aliquod caput draconis. Has autem principales expositiones atque probationes oportet fieri cum ipse liber propositus fuerit nobis ad exponendum: Nunc autem hoc solum oportet de Revelatione illa exponere, quoniam cauda draconis traxit tertiam partem stellarum caeli, et misit eam in terram. Existimo enim quoniam qui debet audire: 'Post Dominum Deum tuum ibis' et 'Venite post me' (Matt. 4:19), et ad haec quidem obstruit aures suas peccatum autem sequitur, trahitur a cauda draconis vadens post eum. Si autem contigerit eum qui sic vixit ut audiat: 'Vos estis lux mundi' (Matt. 5:14), et aliquando splenduerint opera eius bona, hic aliquando con-



stitutus stella, et in caelo habens <sup>†</sup>conversionem, si avulsus fuerit a dracone in terram, hic erit stella a cauda draconis tracta et missa in terram. Sic stellae a cauda draconis trahuntur et mittuntur in terram. Sunt autem aliae quorum pars aliqua obscuratur, et quod maius est quidem, luminosum est, quas videtur ostendere de Revelatione sermo sic habens: 'Et quartus angelus tuba cecinit, et percussa est tertia pars lunae, et tertia pars stellarum, ut obscuraretur tertia pars eorum.' Sunt quidam autem qui nec omnino servaverunt quod dictum est: 'Sic luceat lumen vestrum coram hominibus' nec omnino extincti et obscurati sunt sed ex parte (Delarue Ed. pp.1673;1674).

#### The Ascension (Acts 1:9-11)

Et in Revelatione Joannes similiter dicit (Rev.1:7): 'Ecce veniet cum nubibus, et videbit eum omnis oculus, et qui eum pupugerunt.' Intelligat autem qui potest, utrum id ipsum est super nubes caeli venire eum, et cum nubibus eum venire; aut aliae quidem sunt nubes super quas veniet, aliae autem cum quibus veniet? (Cf. Is. 19:1).....Secundum enim ipsum Joannem (Rev. 11:8), locus 'in quo Dominus eorum crucifixus est, vocatur spiritaliter Sodoma et Aegyptus,' sive totus mundus, sive Judaea, Sodoma et Aegyptus appellatur. Qui autem super nubem levem venit in Aegyptum, primum ascensionem faciet in Judaeam. Rationis est enim venientem eum iterum, illic primum fieri Sodoma autem ubi Dominus eorum crucifixus est appellatur, sicut et aliquando dictum est ad populum illum et principes Sodomorum, attendite legem Dei, plebs Gomorrhae.' (Is.1:10).



The 144,000 Sealed in the Apocalypse are Converts to Christ from the  
Gentile World

Translation

οὐκ οὖν οἱ ἐκ πάσης φυλῆς  
ὑψῶν Ἰσραὴλ σφραγίζονται  
ἐπὶ τῶν μετώπων αὐτῶν ῥηδὶ  
εἰς χιλιάδας τὸν ἀριθμὸν. κέτινες  
ῥηδὶ χιλιάδες ἐν τοῖς ἑξῆς πρὸς τῷ  
Ἰωάννῃ λέγοντας ἔχειν τὸ ὄνομα  
τοῦ ἀρνίου καὶ τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ  
γεγραμμένον ἐπὶ τῶν μετώπων αὐτῶν,  
οὐδὲ παρθένοι καὶ μετὰ γυναικῶν  
οὐ μόλυνθέντες; τίς οὖν ἄλλη εἴη  
ἢ σφραγὶς ἢ ἐπὶ τῶν μετώπων ἢ τὸ  
ὄνομα τοῦ ἀρνίου καὶ τὸ ὄνομα  
τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ, εἰ ἀμφοτέρως  
τοῖς τόποις, τῷ μετώπων λεγομένων  
ἔχειν πῆ μὲν τὴν σφραγίδα πῆ δὲ  
τὰ γράμματα περιέχοντα τὸ ὄνομα  
τοῦ ἀρνίου καὶ τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ πατρὸς  
αὐτοῦ; ἄλλὰ καὶ οἱ ἀπὸ φυλῶν εἰ οἱ  
αὐτοὶ εἰς τοὺς τοὺς παρθένας, ὡς  
προαπεδείξαμεν, ὁπῆνος δὲ ὁ ἐκ  
τοῦ κατὰ σάρκα Ἰσραὴλ πιστεύων,  
ὡς τὰς τομῆδας αὐτὴν εἶπεν Ἀἰ  
συμπληροῦσθε ἀπὸ τῶν ἐκ τοῦ κατὰ  
σάρκα Ἰσραὴλ πιστευόντων μὲν τῶν  
τῶν ῥηδὶ χιλιάδων ἀριθμὸν, ὁμῶς ὅτι  
ἐκ τῶν ἀπὸ τῶν ἔθνων τῷ θεῷ  
προσερχομένων λόγῳ συνίσταται  
αἱ ῥηδὶ χιλιάδες μετὰ γυναικῶν οὐ  
μόλυνομένων, ὥστε μὴ ἐν ἀποκείνῃ  
τῆς ἀληθείας τὸν φάσκοντα ἀπαρῆν  
ἐκάστης εἴσε φυλῆς, τοὺς παρθένας  
αὐτῆς. καὶ γὰρ ἐπιφέρειται. Οὗτοι ἤσαν  
ἀβδύσαν ἀπὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἀπαρῆν  
τῷ θεῷ καὶ τῷ ἀρνίῳ καὶ ἐν τῷ

These, then, who are sealed on their foreheads from every tribe of the children of Israel, are a hundred and forty-four thousand in number; and these hundred and forty-four thousand are afterward said in John to have the name of the Lamb and of His Father written on their foreheads, and to be virgins, not having defiled themselves with women. What else could the seal be which is on their foreheads but the name of the Lamb and the name of His Father? In both passages their foreheads are said to have the seal; in one the seal is spoken of, in the other it appears to contain the letters forming the name of the Lamb, and the name of His Father. Now these taken from the tribes are, as we showed before, the same persons as the virgins. But the number of believers is small who belong to Israel according to the flesh; one might venture to assert that they would not nearly make up the number of a hundred and forty-four thousand. It is clear, therefore, that the hundred and forty-four thousand who have not defiled themselves with women must be made up of those who have come to the divine word out of the Gentile world. In this way the truth of the statement may be upheld that the first fruits of each tribe are its virgins. For the passage goes on: "These were bought from owing men to be a first fruit to God and to the Lamb; and in their mouth was found no guile, for they are without blemish." The statement about the 144,000 no doubt admits of mystical interpretation; but it is unnecessary at this point, and would divert us from our purpose, to compare with it those passages of the prophets in which the same lesson is taught regarding those who are called from among the Gentiles. (102)

102) The Anti-Nicene Fathers. Vol. IX p. 297

στόματι αὐτῶν οὐκ εὐρέθη ψεῦδος, ἄμωμοι γὰρ εἰσιν. οὐκ ἄγνωστον  
δὲ ὅτι ὁ περὶ τῶν ῥηδὶ χιλιάδων παρθένων λόγος ἐπεδέχεται ἀνωμολίαν.  
περὶ τῶν δὲ νῦν. καὶ οὐ κατὰ τὸν προκειμένον λόγον τὸ παρατίθεσθαι  
λέξεως προφητικῆς ταῦτον περὶ τῶν ἐξ ἔθνων ἡμῶν διδασκουσας.



Origen: Commentary on St. John--Brooke: p. 7. p. 300 (Anti-Nicene Fathers).

καὶ ἐν τῇ Ἀποκαλύψει. Ἐγὼ  
εἶμι τὸ Ἄ καὶ τὸ Ω, ἡ ἀρχὴ  
καὶ τὸ τέλος, ὁ πρῶτος καὶ ὁ  
ἔσχατος. (103)

And in the Apocalypse, "I am  
the Alpha and the Omega, the  
beginning and the end, the  
first and the last." (104)

Rev. 3:20

καὶ ἀπέπεπλῶς τὰ συνίσταντα  
τὴν χριστοῦ ἐπίδημίαν καὶ  
κατασκευάζοντε τὴν παρουσίαν  
αὐτοῦ, ἐμπολοῦντά τε αὐτὴν τῆς  
ψυχῆς τῶν βουκουμένων παρὰ  
θύρας τὸν ἐστῶτα ἐπὶ τὴν  
θύραν, καὶ κρούοντα καὶ εἰσ-  
ελθεῖν βουδόμενον εἰς τὰς  
ψυχὰς λόγον θεοῦ. (105)

And in a word all that was  
said or written to perpetuate  
the knowledge of Christ's so-  
journ on earth and to prepare  
for His second coming, or to  
bring it about as a present  
reality in those souls which  
were willing to receive the  
word of God as He stood at the  
door and knocked and sought  
to come into them.

103. Brooke, Commentary of Origen on St. John, Vol. I, p. 7.  
104. Anti-Nicene Fathers - Vol. IX, p. 300.  
105. Brooke, Op. Cit. Vol. I, p. 8.



Rev. 7:2-5

Καὶ εἶδον ἄλλον ἄγγελον ἀναβαίνοντα ἀπὸ ἀνατολῆς ἡλίου, ἔχοντα βραγαδίδα θεοῦ ζῶντος, καὶ ἐκέκραξε φωνῇ μεγάλῃ τοῖς ἄγγελοις, ὡς εἶδον αὐτοῦ ἰδὼν καὶ τὴν γῆν καὶ τὴν θάλασσαν λέγων Μὴ ἔδωκεν ἔπι μίτε τὴν γῆν μίτε τὴν θάλασσαν μίτε τὰ δένδρα, ἄχος βραγαδίσωμεν τοὺς δούλους τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν ἐπὶ τῶν μετώπων αὐτῶν, καὶ ἤκουσα τὸν ἀριθμὸν τῶν ἐσφραγισμένων, ἑκατὸν τεσσαράκοντα ἑξα χιλιάδες ἐσφραγισμένοι ἐκ φυλῆς φυλῆς υἱῶν Ἰσραὴλ· ἐκ φυλῆς Ἰουδα ἑβ' ἑκατὰ χιλιάδες ἐσφραγισμένοι, ἐκ φυλῆς Ρουβην ἑκατὰ χιλιάδες, καὶ μετὰ τὸ δευτέρου τῆς λοιπῆς φυλῆς πᾶρες τοῦ Δαν, ἑξῆς μετὰ αὐτοῦ ἐπιφέρει.

ΤΟΜΟΣ Α'

Rev. 14:1-5

Καὶ εἶδον, καὶ ἰδοὺ τὸ ἄρνιον ἑστὸς ἐπὶ τὸ ὄρος ζιών, καὶ μετ' αὐτοῦ ἑκατὸν τεσσαράκοντα ἑξα χιλιάδες ἑσφραγισμένοι ἐπὶ τῶν μετώπων αὐτῶν. καὶ ἤκουσα φωνὴν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ὡς φωνὴν ὕδατων πολλῶν, καὶ ὡς φωνὴν βροντῆς μεγάλης, καὶ ἡ φωνὴ ἣν ἤκουσα κινδρῶν, κινδρῶν ἐν ταῖς κινδρῶν αὐτῶν. καὶ εἶδον ἄρνην κειμένην ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου καὶ ἐνώπιον τῶν ἑξῶν καὶ τῶν πρεσβυτέρων· καὶ οὐδεὶς ἐδύνατο μαθεῖν τὴν ᾠδὴν εἰ μὴ αἱ ἑκατὸν τεσσαράκοντα ἑξα χιλιάδες οἱ ἠγορασμένοι ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς· οὗτοι εἰσιν οἱ μετὰ χυτακῶν οὐχ ἐμοιούνησαν πᾶρνεοὶ γὰρ εἰσιν· οὗτοι οἱ ἀκολουθαῖς τῷ ἄρνιῳ ὅπου ἐστὶν ἐπέμνη, οὗτοι ἠγορασμένοι ἀπὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἀπαρχὴ τῷ θεῷ καὶ τῷ ἄρνιῳ· καὶ ἐν τῷ στόματι αὐτῶν οὐχ εὐρέθη ψεῦδος, ἀμωμοί εἰσιν.

TRANSLATION

And I saw another angel ascending from the sunrising, having the seal of the living God, and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, Hurt not either the earth, or the sea, or the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads. And I heard the number of them that were sealed, a hundred and forty-four thousand who were sealed, out of every tribe of the children of Israel; of the tribe of Juda were sealed 12 thousand; of the tribe of Roubem 12 thousand. And he mentioned each of the tribes singly, with the exception of Dan. Then someway further on, he continues:

"And I saw, and behold the Lamb standing on Mt. Zion, and with Him a hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder. And the voice which I heard was as the voice of harpers harping with their haps; and they sing a new song before the throne and before the four beasts and the elders, and no one could learn the song but the hundred and forty-four thousand who had been purchased from the earth. These are they which were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are they who follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were purchased from among men, a first fruits to the God and to the Lamb; and in their mouth was found no lie, for they are without blemish.



ὅτι δὲ ταῦτα ἔγραψε τῷ Ἰωάννῃ περὶ  
 τῶν ἐν Χριστῷ πεπιστευκότων  
 λέγεσθαι, καὶ αὐτῶν ὑπαρχόντων ἀπὸ  
 φυλῶν, καὶ μὴ δοκῆ τὸ γραμμῆτικόν  
 αὐτῶν γένος ἀνατρέχειν εἰς τὸ  
 σπέρμα τῶν πατριαρχῶν, ἐστὶν  
 οὕτως ἐπιλογιστέον. (Rw. 7:3,4)

Now this is said in John with  
 reference to these who have  
 believed in Christ, for they  
 also, even if their bodily des-  
 cent cannot be traced to the  
 seed of the Patriarchs, are yet  
 gathered out of the tribes. That  
 this is so we may conclude from  
 what is further said about them.

Μὴ ἀδικήσητε, φησὶ, τὴν γῆν μήτε τῶν θάλασσων μήτε  
 τὰ δένδρα, ἀλλ' ἐφραχθεὶς τοὺς δούλους τοῦ Θεοῦ  
 ἡμῶν ἐπὶ τῶν μετώπων, αὐτῶν. καὶ ἤκουσα τὸν  
 ἀριθμὸν τῶν ἐφραχισμένων, ἑκατὸν ἑξήκοντα, ἑφραχί-  
 μένων ἐκ πάσης φυλῆς υἱῶν Ἰσραὴλ.

THE END