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a *Grace Notes* course

## **History of the Christian Church**

By Philip Schaff

### **VOLUME 1. First Period – Apostolic Christianity**<sup>1</sup>

Chapter 7: St. John; the Consolidation of Jewish and Gentile Christianity

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# History of the Christian Church

## VOLUME 1. First Period – Apostolic Christianity

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## VOL 1: Chapter 7. St. John; the Consolidation of Jewish and Gentile Christianity

### 1.40 The Johannean Literature

#### I. SOURCES.

1. The *Gospel, Epistles, and Revelation of JOHN*. The notices of John in the Synoptical Gospels, in the Acts, and in Gal. 2:9. (See the passages in Young's *Analytical Concordance*.)

2. Patristic traditions. IRENÆUS: *Adv. Haer.* II. 22, 5 (John lived to the age of Trajan); III. 1, 1 (John at Ephesus); III. 3, 4 (John and Cerinthus); V. 30, 3 (John and the Apocalypse). CLEMENS ALEX.: *Quis dives salvus*, c. 42 (John and the young robber). POLYCRATES of Ephesus in Eus. *Hist. Eccl.*, III. 31; V. 24 (John, one of the μεγάλα στοιχεῖα, and a ἱερεὺς τὸ πέταλον πεφορηκῶς). TERTULLIAN: *De praescr. haer.*, c. 36 (the legend of John's martyrdom in Rome by being steeped in oil, and his miraculous preservation). Eusebius: *Hist. Eccl.*, III. chs. 18, 23, 31; IV. 14; V. 24 (the paschal controversy). JEROME: *Ad Gal. 6:10* (the last words of John); *De vir. ill.*, c. 9. AUGUSTIN: *Tract. 124 in Evang. Joann. (Opera III. 1970, ed. Migne)*. NICEPHORUS CAL.: *Hist. Eccl.*, II. 42.

#### II. Apocryphal Traditions.

*Acta Johannis*, ed. Const. TISCHENDORF, in his *Acta Apost. Apocr.*, Lips., 1851, pp. 266–276. Comp. Prolegg. LXXIII. sqq., where the patristic testimonies on the apocryphal Acts of John are collected.

*Acta Joannis, unter Benutzung von C. v. Tischendorf's Nachlass bearbeitet von THEOD. ZAHN*. Erlangen, 1880 (264 pages and clxxii. pages of Introd.).

The "Acta" contain the πράξεις τοῦ ... Ἰωάννου τοῦ θεολόγου PROCHORUS, who professes to be one of the Seventy Disciples, one of the Seven Deacons of Jerusalem (Acts 6:5), and a pupil of St. John; and fragments of the περίοδοι Ἰωάννου, "the Wanderings of John," by LEUCIUS CHARINUS, a friend and pupil of John. The former work is a religious romance, written about 400 years after the death of John; the latter is assigned by Zahn to an author in Asia Minor before 160, and probably before 140; it uses the fourth as well as the Synoptical Gospels, and so far has some apologetic value. See p. cxlviii.

Max Bonnet, the French philologist, promises a new critical edition of the Acts of John. See E. Leroux's "Revue critique," 1880, p. 449.

*Apocalypsis Johannis*, in TISCHENDORF'S *Apocalypses Apocryphae Mosis, Esdrae, Pauli, Johannis, item Mariae Dormitio*. Lips., 1866, pp. 70–94.

This pseudo-Johannean Apocalypse purports to have been written shortly after the ascension of Christ, by St. John, on Mount Tabor. It exists in MS. from the ninth century, and was first edited by A. Birch, 1804.

On the legends of St. John comp. Mrs. JAMESON: *Sacred and Legendary Art*, I. 157–172, fifth edition.

#### III. Biographical and Critical.

FRANCIS TRENCH: *Life and Character of St. John the Evangelist*. London, 1850.

DEAN STANLEY (d. 1881): *Sermons and Essays on the Apostolic Age*. Oxford and London, 1847, third ed., 1874, pp. 234–281.

MAX KRENKEL: *Der Apostel Johannes*. Leipzig, 1871.

JAMES M. MACDONALD: *The Life and Writings of St. John. With Introduction by Dean Howson*. New York, 1877 (new ed. 1880).

WEIZSÄCKER: *Das Apost. Zeitalter*. 1886, pp. 493–559.

Comp. the biographical sketches in the works on the Apostolic Church, mentioned § 20 (p. 189); and the Introductions to the Commentaries of LÜCKE, MEYER, LANGE, LUTHARDT, GODET, WESTCOTT, PLUMMER.

#### IV. Doctrinal.

The Johannean type of doctrine is expounded by NEANDER (in his work on the Apost. Age, 4th ed., 1847; E. transl. by Robinson, N. York, 1865, pp. 508–531); FROMMANN (*Der Johanneische Lehrbegriff*, Leipz., 1839); C. REINH. KÖSTLIN (*Der Lehrbegriff des Ev. und der Briefe Johannis*, Berlin, 1843); REUSS (*Die Johann. Theologie, in the Strasburg "Beiträge zu den Theol. Wissenschaften," 1847, in La Théologie johannique, Paris, 1879, and in his Theology of the Apost. Age*, 2d ed. 1860, translated from the third French ed. by ANNIE HARWOOD, Lond. 1872–74, 2 vols.); SCHMID (in his *Bibl. Theol. des N. T.*, Stuttg. 1853); BAUR (in *Vorlesungen über N. T. Theol.*, Leipz. 1864); HILGENFELD (1849 and 1863); B. WEISS (*Der Johanneische Lehrbegriff*, Berlin, 1862, and in his *Bibl. Theol. des N. T.*, 4th ed. 1884). There are also special treatises on John's Logos-doctrine and

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Christology by WEIZSÄCKER (1862), BEYERSCHLAG (1866), and others.

#### V. Commentaries on the Gospel of John.

The Literature on the Gospel of John and its genuineness, from 1792 to 1875 (from Evanson to Luthardt), is given with unusual fulness and accuracy by Dr. CASPAR RENÉ GREGORY (AN AMERICAN SCHOLAR), IN AN APPENDIX TO HIS TRANSLATION OF Luthardt's *St. John, the Author of the Fourth Gospel*. Edinb. 1875, pp. 283–360. Comp. also the very careful lists of Dr. EZRA ABBOT (down to 1869) in the article John, *Gospel of*, in the Am. ed. of Smith's "Dict. of the Bible," I. 1437–1439.

ORIGEN (D. 254) CHRYSOSTOM (407); AUGUSTIN (430); CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA (444) CALVIN (1564); LAMPE (1724, 3 vols.); BENDEL (*Gnomon*, 1752); LÜCKE (1820, 3D ED. 1843); OLSHAUSEN (1832, 4TH ED. BY EBRARD, 1861) THOLUCK (1827, 7TH ED. 1857); HENGSTENBERG (1863, 2D, I. 1867 ENG. TRANSL. 1865); LUTHARDT (1852, 2D ED. ENTIRELY REWRITTEN 1875; ENG. TRANSL. BY GREGORY, IN 2 VOLS., AND A SPECIAL VOLUME ON THE AUTHORSHIP OF THE FOURTH GOSPEL, 1875) DE WETTE-BRÜCKNER (5TH ED. 1863); MEYER (5TH AND LAST ED. OF MEYER, 1869; 6TH ED. BY WEISS, 1880); EWALD (1861); ALFORD (6TH ED. 1868; WORDSWORTH (5TH ED. 1866), GODET (1865, 2 VOLS., 2D ED. 1877, ENG. TRANSL. IN 3 VOLS.; 3D EDITION, PARIS, 1881, TRSL. BY T. DWIGHT, 1886); LANGE (AS TRANSLATED AND ENLARGED BY SCHAFF, N. Y. AND EDINB. 1871); WATKINS (in Ellicott's "N.T. Com. for English Readers," 1878); WESTCOTT (IN "SPEAKER'S COMMENTARY," 1879, AND SEPARATELY); MILLIGAN AND MOULTON (IN "SCHAFF'S POPUL. COM.," 1880); KEIL (1881); PLUMMER (1881); THOMA (*Die Genesis des Joh. Evangeliums*, 1882); PAUL SCHANZ (Tübingen, 1885).

#### VI. Special Treatises on the Genuineness and Credibility of the Fourth Gospel.

We have no room to give all the titles of books, or the pages in the introductions to Commentaries, and refer to the lists of Abbot and Gregory.

##### a. Writers against the Genuineness:

E. EVANSON (*The Dissonance of the Four generally received Evangelists*, Gloucester, 1792). K. G. BRETSCHNEIDER (*Probabilia de Ev. et Ep. Joh. Ap. Indole et Origine*, Leips. 1820, refuted by Schott, Eichhorn, Lücke, and others; retracted by the author himself in 1828). D. F. STRAUSS (in his *Leben Jesu*, 1835; *withdrawn in the 3d ed. 1838, but renewed in the 4th, 1840 in his Leben Jesu für das deutsche Volk*, 1864); LÜTZELBERGER (1840); BRUNO

BAUM (1840).—F. Chr. BAUR (first in a very acute and ingenious analysis of the Gospel, in the "THEOL. JAHRBÜCHER," OF TÜBINGEN, 1844, and again in 1847, 1848, 1853, 1855, 1859). HE REPRESENTS THE FOURTH GOSPEL AS THE RIPE RESULT OF A LITERARY DEVELOPMENT, OR EVOLUTION, WHICH PROCEEDED, ACCORDING TO THE HEGELIAN METHOD, FROM THESIS TO ANTITHESIS AND SYNTHESIS, OR FROM JUDAIZING PETRINISM TO ANTI-JEWISH PAULINISM AND (PSEUDO-) JOHANNEAN RECONCILIATION. HE WAS FOLLOWED BY THE WHOLE TÜBINGEN SCHOOL; ZELLER (1845, 1847, 1853); SCHWEGLER (1846); HILGENFELD (1849, 1854, 1855, 1875); VOLKMAR (1870, 1876); SCHENKEL (1864 AND 1873); HOLTZMANN (in Schenkel's "Bibellexikon." 1871, and *Einleitung*, 1886). KEIM (*Gesch. Jesu v. Nazara*, since 1867, vol. I, 146 sqq.; 167 sqq., and in the 3d ed. of his abridgement, 1875, p. 40); HAUSRATH (1874); Mangold (in the 4th ed. of Bleek's *Introd.*, 1886); THOMA (1882). IN HOLLAND, SCHOLTEN (LEYDEN, 1865, AND AGAIN 1871). IN ENGLAND, J. J. TAYLER (LONDON, 1867); SAMUEL DAVIDSON (in the new ed. of his *Introduction to the N. T., 1868, II. 323 sqq. and 357 sqq.*); *the anonymous author of Supernatural Religion (vol. II. 251 sqq., of the 6th ed., London, 1875); and E. A. A. (Edwin A. Abbott, D. D., of London, in art. Gospels, "Encycl. Brit.," vol. X., 1879, pp. 818–843).*

The dates assigned to the composition of the Fourth Gospel by these opponents vary from 110 to 170, but the best scholars among them are more and more forced to retreat from 170 (Baur's date) to 130 (Keim), or to the very beginning of the second century (110). This is fatal to their theory; for at that time many of the personal friends and pupils of John must have been still living to prevent a literary fiction from being generally accepted in the church as a genuine work of the apostle.

REUSS (in his *Théologie johannique*, 1879, in the sixth part of his great work, "*La Bible*" and in the Sixth edition of his *Geschichte der heil. Schriften N. T.*, 1887, pp. 249 sqq.) leaves the question undecided, though inclining against the Johannean authorship. SABATIER, who had formerly defended the authenticity (in his *Essai sur les sources de la vie de Jésus*, 1866), follows the steps of Reuss, and comes to a negative conclusion (in his art. Jean in Lichtenberger's "Encycl. des Sciences Relig.," Tom. VII., Paris, 1880, pp. 173 sqq.).

WEISSE (1836), SCHWEIZER (1841), WEIZSÄCKER (1857, 1859, 1862, 1886), HASE (in his *Geschichte*

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*Jesu*, 1875, while in his earlier writings he had defended the genuineness), and RENAN (1863, 1867, and 1879) admit genuine portions in the Fourth Gospel, but differ among themselves as to the extent. Some defend the genuineness of the discourses, but reject the miracles. Renan, on the contrary, favors the historical portions, but rejects the discourses of Christ, in a special discussion in the 13th ed. of his *Vie de Jésus*, pp. 477 sqq. He changed his view again in his *L'église chrétienne*, 1879, pp. 47 sqq. "Ce qui paraît le plus probable," he says, "c'est qu'un disciple de l'apôtre, dépositaire de plusieurs de ses souvenirs, se crut autorisé à parler en son nom et à écrire, vingt-cinq ou trente ans après sa mort, ce que l'on regrettait qu'il n'eût pas lui-même fixé de son vivant." He is disposed to ascribe the composition to the "Presbyter John" (whose very existence is doubtful) and to Aristion, two Ephesian disciples of John the Apostle. In characterizing the discourses in the Gospel of John he shows his utter incapacity of appreciating its spirit. MATTHEW ARNOLD (*God and the Bible*, p. 248) conjectures that the Ephesian presbyters composed the Gospel with the aid of materials furnished by John.

It should be remarked that Baur and his followers, and Renan, while they reject the authenticity of the Fourth Gospel, strongly defend the Johannean origin of the Apocalypse, as one of the certain documents of the apostolic age. But Keim, by denying the whole tradition of John's sojourn at Ephesus, destroys the foundation of Baur's theory.

b. The genuineness has been defended by the following writers:

JOS. PRIESTLEY (UNITARIAN, AGAINST EVANSON, 1793). SCHLEIERMACHER AND HIS SCHOOL, ESPECIALLY LÜCKE (1820 AND 1840), BLEEK (1846 AND 1862), AND DE WETTE (after some hesitation, 1837, 5th ed., by *Brückner*, 1863). CREDNER (1836); NEANDER (*Leben Jesu*, 1837) THOLUCK (in *Glaubwürdigkeit der evang. Geschichte*, against Strauss, 1837); ANDREWS NORTON (Unitarian, in *Evidences of the Genuineness of the Gospels*, 1837–1844, 3 vols., 2d ed. 1846, abridged ed., Boston, 1875); EBRARD (1845, AGAINST BAUR; AGAIN 1861, 1868, AND 1880, IN HERZOG'S "ENCYKL." THIERSCH (1845, AGAINST BAUR); SCHNEIDER (1854); HENGSTENBERG (1863); ASTIÉ, (1863); HOFSTEDE DE GROOT (*BASILIDES*, 1863; Germ. transl. 1868); VAN OOSTERZEE (AGAINST SCHOLTEN, GERM. ED. 1867; ENGL. TRANSL. BY HURST); TISCHENDORF (*Wann wurden unsere Evangelien verfasst?* 1865, 4th ed. 1866; also translated into

English, but very poorly); RIGGENBACH (1866, AGAINST VOLKMAR). MEYER (*Com.*, 5th ed. 1869); WEISS (6TH ED. OF MEYER, 1880); LANGE (in his *Leben Jesu, and in his Com.*, 3d ed. 1868, translated and enlarged by Schaff, 1871); SANDAY (*Authorship and Historical Character of the Fourth Gospel*, London, 1872); BEYSCHLAG (IN THE "STUDIEN UND KRITIKEN" FOR 1874 AND 1875); LUTHARDT (2D ED. 1875); LIGHTFOOT (in the "Contemporary Review," 1875–1877, against *Supernatural Religion*); GEO. P. FISHER (*Beginnings of Christianity*, 1877, ch. X., and art. *The Fourth Gospel*, in "The Princeton Review" for July, 1881, pp. 51–84); GODET (*Commentaire sur l'Évangile de Saint Jean*, 2d ed. 1878; 3d ed. "complètement revue," vol. I., *Introduction historique et critique*, Paris, 1881, 376 pages); WESTCOTT (*Introd. to the Gospels*, 1862, 1875, and *Com.* 1879); MCCLELLAN (*The Four Gospels*, 1875); MILLIGAN (IN SEVERAL ARTICLES IN THE "CONTEMP. REVIEW" FOR 1867, 1868, 1871, AND IN HIS AND MOULTON'S *Com.*, 1880); EZRA ABBOT (*The Authorship of the Fourth Gospel*, Boston, 1880; republished in his *Critical Essays*, Boston, 1888; conclusive on the external evidences, especially the important testimony of Justin Martyr); GEORGE SALMON (*Historical Introd. to the N. T.*, London, 1886; third ed. 1888, pp. 210 sqq.). See also A. H. FRANCKE: *Das Alte Test. bei Johannes*, Göttingen, 1885.

#### VII. Commentaries on the Epistles of John.

OECUMENIUS (1000); THEOPHYLACT (1071); LUTHER; CALVIN; BULLINGER; LÜCKE (3D ED. 1856); DE WETTE (1837, 5TH ED. BY BRÜCKNER, 1863); Neander (1851, Engl. transl. by Mrs. Conant, 1852); DÜSTERDIECK 1852–1856, 2 VOLS.); Huther (in Meyer's *Com.*, 1855, 4th ed. 1880); F. D. MAURICE, (1857); Ebrard (in Olshausen's *Com.*, 1859, transl. by W. B. Pope, Edinb. 1860); EWALD (1861); Braune (in Lange's *Com.*, 1865, Engl. ed. by Mombert, 1867); CANDLISH (1866); Erich Haupt (1869, Engl. transl. by W. B. Pope, Edinb., 1879); R. ROTHE (posthumous ed. by K. Mühlhäuser, 1879); W. B. POPE (in Schaff's *Pop. Com.*, 1883); WESTCOTT (1883).

#### VII. Commentaries on the Apocalypse of John.

BULLINGER (1535, 6TH ED. 1604); GROTIUS (1644); JOS. MEDE (*Clavis Apocalyptica*, 1682); BOSSUET (R. C., 1689); VITRINGA (1719); BENDEL (1740, 1746, AND NEW ED. 1834); HERDER (1779); EICHHORN (1791); E. P. ELLIOTT (*Horae Apocalypticae, or, a Com. on the Apoc.*, 5th ed., Lond., 1862, 4 vols.) LÜCKE (1852); EWALD (1828 AND 1862); ZÜLLIG (1834 AND 1840) MOSES STUART (1845, 2 VOLS.); DE

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WETTE (1848, 3D ED. 1862); ALFORD (3D ED. 1866); HENGSTENBERG (1849 AND 1861); EBRARD (1853); AUBERLEN (*Der Prophet Daniel und die Offenbarung Johannis*, 1854; Engl. transl. by Ad. Saphir, 1856, 2d Germ. ed. 1857); DÜSTERDIECK (1859, 3D ED. 1877); BLEEK (1820 AND 1862); LUTHARDT (1861); VOLKMAR (1862); KIENLEN (1870); LANGE (1871, AM. ED., WITH LARGE ADDITIONS BY CRAVEN, 1874); COWLES (1871); GEBHARDT (*Der Lehrbegriff der Apokalypse*, 1873; Engl. transl., *The Doctrine of the Apokalypse*, by J. Jefferson, 1878); KLIEFOTH (1874); Lee (1882); Milligan (in Schaff's *Internat. Com.*, 1883, and in *Lectures on the Revel.*, 1886); SPITTA (1889). VÖLTER (1882) AND Vischer (1886) deny the unity of the book. Vischer makes it a Jewish Apocalypse worked over by a Christian, in spite of the warning, Apoc. 22:18, 19 which refutes this hypothesis.

### 1.41 Life and Character of John

#### THE MISSION OF JOHN.

Peter, the Jewish apostle of authority, and Paul, the Gentile apostle of freedom, had done their work on earth before the destruction of Jerusalem—had done it for their age and for all ages to come; had done it, and by the influence of their writings are doing it still, in a manner that can never be superseded. Both were master-builders, the one in laying the foundation, the other in rearing the superstructure, of the church of Christ, against which the gates of Hades can never prevail.

But there remained a most important additional work to be done, a work of union and consolidation. This was reserved for the apostle of love, the bosom-friend of Jesus, who had become his most perfect reflection so far as any human being can reflect the ideal of divine-human purity and holiness. John was not a missionary or a man of action, like Peter and Paul. He did little, so far as we know, for the outward spread of Christianity, but all the more for the inner life and growth of Christianity where it was already established. He has nothing to say about the government, the forms, and rites of the visible church (even the name does not occur in his Gospel and first Epistle), but all the more

about the spiritual substance of the church—the vital union of believers with Christ and the brotherly communion of believers among themselves. He is at once the apostle, the evangelist, and the seer, of the new covenant. He lived to the close of the first century, that he might erect on the foundation and superstructure of the apostolic age the majestic dome gilded by the light of the new heaven.

He had to wait in silent meditation till the church was ripe for his sublime teaching. This is intimated by the mysterious word of our Lord to Peter with reference to John: "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" No doubt the Lord did come in the terrible judgment of Jerusalem. John outlived it personally, and his type of doctrine and character will outlive the earlier stages of church history (anticipated and typified by Peter and Paul) till the final coming of the Lord. In that wider sense he tarries even till now, and his writings, with their unexplored depths and heights still wait for the proper interpreter.

The best comes last. In the vision of Elijah on Mount Horeb, the strong wind that rent the mountains and brake in pieces the rocks, and the earthquake, and the fire preceded the still small voice of Jehovah. The owl of Minerva, the goddess of wisdom, begins its flight at twilight. The storm of battle prepares the way for the feast of peace. The great warrior of the apostolic age already sounded the keynote of love which was to harmonize the two sections of Christendom; and John only responded to Paul when he revealed the inmost heart of the supreme being by the profoundest of all definitions: "God is love."

#### JOHN IN THE GOSPELS

John was a son (probably the younger son) of Zebedee and Salome, and a brother of the elder James, who became the protomartyr of the apostles. He may have been about ten years younger than Jesus, and as, according to the unanimous testimony of antiquity, he lived till the reign of Trajan, *i.e.*, till after 98,

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he must have attained an age of over ninety years. He was a fisherman by trade, probably of Bethsaida in Galilee (like Peter, Andrew, and Philip). His parents seem to have been in comfortable circumstances. His father kept hired servants; his mother belonged to the noble band of women who followed Jesus and supported him with their means, who purchased spices to embalm him, who were the last at the cross and the first at the open tomb. John himself was acquainted with the high priest, and owned a house in Jerusalem or Galilee, into which he received the mother of our Lord.

He was a cousin of Jesus, according to the flesh, from his mother, a sister of Mary. This relationship, together with the enthusiasm of youth and the fervor of his emotional nature, formed the basis of his intimacy with the Lord.

He had no rabbinical training, like Paul, and in the eyes of the Jewish scholars he was, like Peter and the other Galilean disciples, an “unlearned and ignorant man.” But he passed through the preparatory school of John the Baptist who summed up his prophetic mission in the testimony to Jesus as the “Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world,” a testimony which he afterwards expanded in his own writings. It was this testimony which led him to Jesus on the banks of the Jordan in that memorable interview of which, half a century afterwards, he remembered the very hour. He was not only one of the Twelve, but the chosen of the chosen Three.

Peter stood out more prominently before the public as the friend of the Messiah; John was known in the private circle as the friend of Jesus. Peter always looked at the official character of Christ, and asked what he and the other apostles should do; John gazed steadily at the person of Jesus, and was intent to learn what the Master said. They differed as the busy Martha, anxious to serve, and the pensive Mary, contented to learn. John alone, with Peter and his brother James, witnessed

the scene of the transfiguration and of Gethsemane—the highest exaltation and the deepest humiliation in the earthly life of our Lord. He leaned on his breast at the last Supper and treasured those wonderful farewell discourses in his heart for future use.

He followed him to the court of Caiaphas. He alone of all the disciples was present at the crucifixion, and was entrusted by the departing Saviour with the care of his mother. This was a scene of unique delicacy and tenderness: the *Mater dolorosa* and the beloved disciple gazing at the cross, the dying Son and Lord uniting them in maternal and filial love. It furnishes the type of those heaven-born spiritual relationships, which are deeper and stronger than those of blood and interest. As John was the last at the cross, so he was also, next to Mary Magdalene, the first of the disciples who, outrunning even Peter, looked into the open tomb on the resurrection morning; and he first recognized the risen Lord when he appeared to the disciples on the shore of the lake of Galilee.

He seems to have been the youngest of the apostles, as he long outlived them all; he certainly was the most gifted and the most favored. He had a religious genius of the highest order—not indeed for planting, but for watering; not for outward action and aggressive work, but for inward contemplation and insight into the mystery of Christ’s person and of eternal life in him. Purity and simplicity of character, depth and ardor of affection, and a rare faculty of spiritual perception and intuition, were his leading traits, which became ennobled and consecrated by divine grace.

There are no violent changes reported in John’s history; he grew silently and imperceptibly into the communion of his Lord and conformity to his example; he was in this respect the antipode of Paul. He heard more and saw more, but spoke less, than the other disciples. He absorbed his deepest sayings, which escaped the attention of others; and although he himself did not

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understand them at first, he pondered them in his heart till the Holy Spirit illuminated them. His intimacy with Mary must also have aided him in gaining an interior view of the mind and heart of his Lord. He appears throughout as the beloved disciple, in closest intimacy and in fullest sympathy with the Lord.

#### THE SON OF THUNDER AND THE BELOVED DISCIPLE

There is an apparent contradiction between the Synoptic and the Johannine picture of John, as there is between the Apocalypse and the fourth Gospel; but on closer inspection it is only the twofold aspect of one and the same character. We have a parallel in the Peter of the Gospels and the Peter of his Epistles: the first youthful, impulsive, hasty, changeable, the other matured, subdued, mellowed, refined by divine grace.

In the Gospel of Mark, John appears as a Son of Thunder (Boanerges). This surname, given to him and to his elder brother by our Saviour, was undoubtedly an epithet of honor and foreshadowed his future mission, like the name Peter given to Simon. Thunder to the Hebrews was the voice of God. It conveys the idea of ardent temper, great strength and vehemence of character whether for good or for evil, according to the motive and aim. The same thunder which terrifies does also purify the air and fructify the earth with its accompanying showers of rain. Fiery temper under the control of reason and in the service of truth is as great a power of construction as the same temper, uncontrolled and misdirected, is a power of destruction. John's burning zeal and devotion needed only discipline and discretion to become a benediction and inspiration to the church in all ages.

In their early history the sons of Zebedee misunderstood the difference between the law and the gospel, when, in an outburst of holy indignation against a Samaritan village which refused to receive Jesus, they were ready, like Elijah of old, to call consuming fire

from heaven. But when, some years afterwards, John went to Samaria to confirm the new converts, he called down upon them the fire of divine life and light, the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The same mistaken zeal for his Master was at the bottom of his intolerance towards those who performed a good work in the name of Christ, but outside of the apostolic circle. The desire of the two brothers, in which their mother shared, for the highest positions in the Messianic kingdom, likewise reveals both their strength and their weakness, a noble ambition to be near Christ, though it be near the fire and the sword, yet an ambition that was not free from selfishness and pride, which deserved the rebuke of our Lord, who held up before them the prospect of the baptism of blood.

All this is quite consistent with the writings of John. He appears there by no means as a soft and sentimental, but as a positive and decided character. He had no doubt a sweet and lovely disposition, but at the same time a delicate sensibility, ardent feelings, and strong convictions. These traits are by no means incompatible. He knew no compromise, no division of loyalty. A holy fire burned within him, though he was moved in the deep rather than on the surface.

In the Apocalypse, the thunder rolls loud and mighty against the enemies of Christ and his kingdom, while on the other hand there are in the same book episodes of rest and anthems, of peace and joy, and a description of the heavenly Jerusalem, which could have proceeded only from the beloved disciple. In the Gospel and the Epistles of John, we feel the same power, only subdued and restrained. He reports the severest as well as the sweetest discourses of the Saviour, according as he speaks to the enemies of the truth, or in the circle of the disciples.

No other evangelist gives us such a profound inside-view of the antagonism between Christ and the Jewish hierarchy, and of the growing intensity of that hatred which culminated in

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the bloody counsel; no apostle draws a sharper line of demarcation between light and darkness, truth and falsehood, Christ and Antichrist, than John. His Gospel and Epistles move in these irreconcilable antagonisms. He knows no compromise between God and Baal. With what holy horror does he speak of the traitor, and the rising rage of the Pharisees against their Messiah! How severely does he, in the words of the Lord, attack the unbelieving Jews with their murderous designs, as children of the devil! And, in his Epistles, he terms every one who dishonors his Christian profession a liar; every one who hates his brother a murderer; every one who willfully sins a child of the devil; and he earnestly warns against teachers who deny the mystery of the incarnation, as Antichrists, and he forbids even to salute them. The measure of his love of Christ was the measure of his hatred of antichrist. For hatred is inverted love. Love and hatred are one and the same passion, only revealed in opposite directions. The same sun gives light and heat to the living, and hastens the decay of the dead.

Christian art has so far well understood the double aspect of John by representing him with a face of womanly purity and tenderness, but not weakness, and giving him for his symbol a bold eagle soaring with outspread wings above the clouds.

#### THE APOCALYPSE AND THE FOURTH GOSPEL

A proper appreciation of John's character as thus set forth removes the chief difficulty of ascribing the Apocalypse and the fourth Gospel to one and the same writer. The temper is the same in both: a noble, enthusiastic nature, capable of intense emotions of love and hatred, but with the difference between vigorous manhood and ripe old age, between the roar of battle and the repose of peace. The theology is the same, including the most characteristic features of Christology and soteriology.

By no other apostle is Christ called the Logos. The Gospel is, "the Apocalypse spiritualized,"

or idealized. Even the difference of style, which is startling at first sight, disappears on closer inspection. The Greek of the Apocalypse is the most Hebraizing of all the books of the New Testament, as may be expected from its close affinity with Hebrew prophecy to which the classical Greek furnished no parallel, while the Greek of the fourth Gospel is pure, and free from irregularities; yet after all John the Evangelist also shows the greatest familiarity with, and the deepest insight into, the Hebrew religion, and preserves its purest and noblest elements; and his style has all the childlike simplicity and sententious brevity of the Old Testament; it is only a Greek body inspired by a Hebrew soul.

In accounting for the difference between the Apocalypse and the other writings of John, we must also take into consideration the necessary difference between prophetic composition under direct inspiration, and historical and didactic composition, and the intervening time of about twenty years; the Apocalypse being written before the destruction of Jerusalem, the fourth Gospel towards the close of the first century, in extreme old age, when his youth was renewed like the eagle's, as in the case of some of the greatest poets, Homer, Sophocles, Milton, and Goethe.

#### NOTES.

##### I. THE SON OF THUNDER AND THE APOSTLE OF LOVE.

I quote some excellent remarks on the character of John from my friend, Dr. GODET (*Com.* I.35, English translation by Crombie and Cusin):

"How are we to explain two features of character apparently so opposite? There exist profound receptive natures which are accustomed to shut up their impressions within themselves, and this all the more that these impressions are keen and thrilling. But if it happens that these persons once cease to be masters of themselves, their long-restrained emotions then burst forth in

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sudden explosions, which fill the persons around them with amazement. Does not the character of John belong to this order? And when Jesus gave to him and his brother the surname of Boanerges, sons of thunder (Mark 3:17), could he have described them better? I cannot think that, by that surname, Jesus intended, as all the old writers have believed, to signalize the eloquence which distinguished them.

Neither can I allow that he desired by that surname to perpetuate the recollection of their anger in one of the cases indicated. We are led by what precedes to a more natural explanation, and one more worthy of Jesus himself. As electricity is stored up by degrees in the cloud until it bursts forth suddenly in the lightning and thunderbolt, so in those two loving and passionate natures impressions silently accumulated till the moment when the heart overflowed, and they took an unexpected and violent flight.

We love to represent St. John to ourselves as of a gentle rather than of an energetic nature, tender even to weakness. Do not his writings insist before and above all else upon love? Were not the last sermons of the old man 'Love one another?' That is true; but we forget other features of a different kind, during the first and last periods of his life, which reveal something decisive, sharp, absolute, even violent in his disposition.

If we take all the facts stated into consideration, we shall recognize in him one of those sensitive, ardent souls, worshippers of an ideal, who attach themselves at first sight, and without reservation, to that being who seems to them to realize that of which they have dreamt, and whose devotion easily becomes exclusive and intolerant. They feel themselves repelled by everything which is not in sympathy with their enthusiasm. They no longer understand a division of heart which they themselves know not how to practice. All for all! such is their motto. Where that all is not, there is in their eyes nothing. Such affections do not subsist without including an alloy of impure egoism. A divine work is needed, in order that the true devotion, which constitutes the basis of such, may shine forth at the last in all its sublimity.

Such was, if we are not deceived, the inmost history of John."

Dr. Westcott (in his *Com.*, p. xxxiii.): "John knew that to be with Christ was life, to reject Christ was death; and he did not shrink from expressing the thought in the spirit of the old dispensation. He learned from the Lord, as time went on, a more faithful patience, but he did not unlearn the burning devotion which consumed him. To the last, words of awful warning, like the thunderings about the throne, reveal the presence of that secret fire. Every page of the Apocalypse is inspired with the cry of the souls beneath the altar, 'How long' (Rev. 6:10); and nowhere is error as to the person of Christ denounced more sternly than in his Epistles (2 John 10; 1 John 4:1ff.)." Similar passages in Stanley.

## II. THE MISSION OF JOHN.

Dean STANLEY (*Sermons and Essays on the Apost. Age*, p. 249 sq., 3d ed.): "Above all John spoke of the union of the soul with God, but it was by no mere process of oriental contemplation, or mystic absorption; it was by that word which now for the first time took its proper place in the order of the world—by LOVE. It has been reserved for St. Paul to proclaim that the deepest principle in the heart of man was Faith; it was reserved for St. John to proclaim that the essential attribute of God is Love. It had been taught by the Old Testament that 'the beginning of wisdom was the fear of God;' it remained to be taught by the last apostle of the New Testament that 'the end of wisdom was the love of God.' It had been taught of old time by Jew and by heathen, by Greek philosophy and Eastern religion, that the Divinity was well pleased with the sacrifices, the speculations, the tortures of man; it was to St. John that it was left to teach in all its fullness that the one sign of God's children is 'the love of the brethren.' And as it is Love that pervades our whole conception of his teaching, so also it pervades our whole conception of his character. We see him—it surely is no unwarranted fancy—we see him declining

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with the declining century; every sense and faculty waxing feebler, but that one divine faculty burning more and more brightly; we see it breathing through every look and gesture; the one animating principle of the atmosphere in which he lives and moves; earth and heaven, the past, the present, and the future alike echoing to him that dying strain of his latest words, 'We love Him because He loved us.' And when at last he disappears from our view in the last pages of the sacred volume, ecclesiastical tradition still lingers in the close: and in that touching story, not the less impressive because so familiar to us, we see the aged apostle borne in the arms of his disciples into the Ephesian assembly, and there repeating over and over again the same saying, 'Little children, love one another;' till, when asked why he said this and nothing else, he replied in those well known words, fit indeed to be the farewell speech of the Beloved Disciple, 'Because this is our Lord's command and if you fulfill this, nothing else is needed.' "

#### **1.42 Apostolic Labors of John**

##### JOHN IN THE ACTS

In the first stadium of Apostolic Christianity John figures as one of the three pillars of the church of the circumcision, together with Peter and James the brother of the Lord; while Paul and Barnabas represented the Gentile church. This seems to imply that at that time he had not yet risen to the full apprehension of the universalism and freedom of the gospel. But he was the most liberal of the three, standing between James and Peter on the one hand, and Paul on the other, and looking already towards a reconciliation of Jewish and Gentile Christianity. The Judaizers never appealed to him as they did to James, or to Peter.<sup>2</sup> There is no trace of a Johannine party, as there is of a Cephas party and a party of James. He stood above strife and division.

In the earlier chapters of the Acts he appears, next to Peter, as the chief apostle of the new

religion; he heals with him the cripple at the gate of the temple; he was brought with him before the Sanhedrin to bear witness to Christ; he is sent with him by the apostles from Jerusalem to Samaria to confirm the Christian converts by imparting to them the Holy Spirit; he returned with him to Jerusalem. But Peter is always named first and takes the lead in word and act; John follows in mysterious silence and makes the impression of a reserved force which will manifest itself at some future time. He must have been present at the conference of the apostles in Jerusalem, A.D. 50, but he made no speech and took no active part in the great discussion about circumcision and the terms of church membership. All this is in entire keeping with the character of modest and silent prominence given to him in the Gospels. After the year 50 he seems to have left Jerusalem. The Acts no more mention him nor Peter. When Paul made his fifth and last visit to the holy City (A.D. 58) he met James, but none of the apostles.

##### JOHN AT EPHESUS

The later and most important labors of John are contained in his writings, which we shall fully consider in another chapter. They exhibit to us a history that is almost exclusively inward and spiritual, but of immeasurable reach and import. They make no allusion to the time and place of residence and composition. But the Apocalypse implies that he stood at the head of the churches of Asia Minor. This is confirmed by the unanimous testimony of antiquity which is above all reasonable doubt, and assigns Ephesus to him as the residence of his latter years. He died there in extreme old age during the reign of Trajan, which began in 98. His grave also was shown there in the second century.

We do not know when he removed to Asia Minor, but he cannot have done so before the year 63. For in his valedictory address to the Ephesian elders, and in his Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians and the second to

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Timothy, Paul makes no allusion to John, and speaks with the authority of a superintendent of the churches of Asia Minor. It was probably the martyrdom of Peter and Paul that induced John to take charge of the orphan churches, exposed to serious dangers and trials.

Ephesus, the capital of proconsular Asia, was a centre of Grecian culture, commerce, and religion; famous of old for the songs of Homer, Anacreon, and Mimnermus, the philosophy of Thales, Anaximenes, and Anaximander, the worship and wonderful temple of Diana. There Paul had labored three years (54–57) and established an influential church, a beacon-light in the surrounding darkness of heathenism. From there he could best commune with the numerous churches he had planted in the provinces. There he experienced peculiar joys and trials, and foresaw great dangers of heresies that should spring up from within. All the forces of orthodox and heretical Christianity were collected there. Jerusalem was approaching its downfall; Rome was not yet a second Jerusalem.

Ephesus, by the labors of Paul and of John, became the chief theatre of church history in the second half of the first and during the greater part of the second century. Polycarp, the patriarchal martyr, and Irenæus, the leading theologian in the conflict with Gnosticism, best represent the spirit of John and bear testimony to his influence. He alone could complete the work of Paul and Peter, and give the church that compact unity which she needed for her self-preservation against persecution from without and heresy and corruption from within.

If it were not for the writings of John the last thirty years of the first century would be almost an entire blank. They resemble that mysterious period of forty days between the resurrection and the ascension, when the Lord hovered, as it were, between heaven and earth, barely touching the earth beneath, and appearing to the disciples like a spirit from the other world. But the theology of the

second and third centuries evidently presupposes the writings of John, and starts from his Christology rather than from Paul's anthropology and soteriology, which were almost buried out of sight until Augustine, in Africa, revived them.

#### JOHN AT PATMOS

John was banished to the solitary, rocky, and barren island of Patmos (now Patmo or Palmosa), in the Aegean sea, southwest of Ephesus. This rests on the testimony of the Apocalypse. 1:9, as usually understood: "I, John, your brother and partaker with you in the tribulation and kingdom and patience in Jesus, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for (on account of) the word of God and the testimony of Jesus." There he received, while "in the spirit, on the Lord's day," those wonderful revelations concerning the struggles and victories of Christianity.

The fact of his banishment to Patmos is confirmed by the unanimous testimony of antiquity. It is perpetuated in the traditions of the island, which has no other significance. "John—that is the thought of Patmos; the island belongs to him; it is his sanctuary. Its stones preach of him, and in every heart, he lives."

The time of the exile is uncertain, and depends upon the disputed question of the date of the Apocalypse. External evidence points to the reign of Domitian, A.D. 95; internal evidence to the reign of Nero, or soon after his death, A.D. 68.

The prevailing—we may say the only distinct tradition, beginning with so respectable a witness as Irenæus about 170, assigns the exile to the end of the reign of Domitian, who ruled from 81 to 96. He was the second Roman emperor who persecuted Christianity, and banishment was one of his favorite modes of punishment.<sup>3</sup> Both facts give support to this tradition. After a promising beginning he became as cruel and bloodthirsty as Nero, and surpassed him in hypocrisy and blasphemous self-deification. He began his letters: "Our Lord and God

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commands,” and required his subjects to address him so. He ordered gold and silver statues of himself to be placed in the holiest place of the temples.

When he seemed most friendly, he was most dangerous. He spared neither senators nor consuls when they fell under his dark suspicion, or stood in the way of his ambition. He searched for the descendants of David and the kinsmen of Jesus, fearing their aspirations, but found that they were poor and innocent persons. Many Christians suffered martyrdom under his reign, on the charge of atheism—among them his own cousin, Flavius Clemens, of consular dignity, who was put to death, and his wife Domitilla, who was banished to the island of Pandateria, near Naples.<sup>2</sup> In favor of the traditional date may also be urged an intrinsic propriety that the book which closes the canon, and treats of the last things till the final consummation, should have been written last.

Nevertheless, the internal evidence of the Apocalypse itself, and a comparison with the fourth Gospel, favor an earlier date, before the destruction of Jerusalem, and during the interregnum which followed the death of Nero (68), when the beast, that is the Roman empire, was wounded, but was soon to be revived (by the accession of Vespasian). If there is some foundation for the early tradition of the intended oil-martyrdom of John at Rome, or at Ephesus, it would naturally point to the Neronian persecution, in which Christians were covered with inflammable material and burned as torches.

The unmistakable allusions to imperial persecutions apply much better to Nero than to Domitian. The difference between the Hebrew coloring and fiery vigor of the Apocalypse and the pure Greek and calm repose of the fourth Gospel, to which we have already alluded, are more easily explained if the former was written some twenty years earlier. This view has some slight support in ancient tradition, and has been adopted by

the majority of modern critical historians and commentators.

We hold, then, as the most probable view, that John was exiled to Patmos under Nero, wrote the Apocalypse soon after Nero’s death, A.D. 68 or 69, returned to Ephesus, completed his Gospel and Epistles several (perhaps twenty) years later, and fell asleep in peace during the year of Trajan, after A.D. 98.

The faithful record of the historical Christ in the whole fullness of his divine-human person, as the embodiment and source of life eternal to all believers, with the accompanying epistle of practical application, was the last message of the Beloved Disciple at the threshold of the second century, at the golden sunset of the apostolic age. The recollections of his youth, ripened by long experience, transfigured by the Holy Spirit, and radiant with heavenly light of truth and holiness, are the most precious legacy of the last of the apostles to all future generations of the church.

### 1.43 Traditions Respecting John

The memory of John sank deep into the heart of the church, and not a few incidents more or less characteristic and probable have been preserved by the early fathers.

Clement of Alexandria, towards the close of the second century, represents John as a faithful and devoted pastor when, in his old age, on a tour of visitation, he lovingly pursued one of his former converts who had become a robber, and reclaimed him to the church.

Irenæus bears testimony to his character as “the Son of Thunder” when he relates, as from the lips of Polycarp, that, on meeting in a public bath at Ephesus the Gnostic heretic Cerinthus, who denied the incarnation of our Lord, John refused to remain under the same roof, lest it might fall down. This reminds one of the incident recorded in Luke 9:49, and the apostle’s severe warning in 2 John 10 and 11. The story exemplifies the possibility of

uniting the deepest love of truth with the sternest denunciation of error and moral evil.

Jerome pictures him as the disciple of love, who in his extreme old age was carried to the meeting-place on the arms of his disciples, and repeated again and again the exhortation, "Little children, love one another," adding: "This is the Lord's command, and if this alone be done, it is enough." This, of all the traditions of John, is the most credible and the most useful.

In the Greek church John bears the epithet "the theologian (θεολόγος), for teaching most clearly the divinity of Christ (τὴν θεότητα τοῦ λόγου). He is also called "the virgin" (παρθένος), for his chastity and supposed celibacy. Augustin says that the singular chastity of John from his early youth was supposed by some to be the ground of his intimacy with Jesus.<sup>4</sup>

The story of John and the huntsman, related by Cassian, a monk of the fifth century, represents him as gently playing with a partridge in his hand, and saying to a huntsman, who was surprised at it: "Let not this brief and slight relaxation of my mind offend thee, without which the spirit would flag from over-exertion and not be able to respond to the call of duty when need required." Childlike simplicity and playfulness are often combined with true greatness of mind.

Polycrates, bishop of Ephesus, at the close of the second century, relates (according to Eusebius) that John introduced in Asia Minor the Jewish practice of observing Easter on the 14th of Nisan, irrespective of Sunday. This fact entered largely into the paschal controversies of the second century, and into the modern controversy about the genuineness of the Gospel of John.

The same Polycrates of Ephesus describes John as wearing the plate, or diadem of the Jewish high-priest (Ex. 28:36, 37; 39:30, 31). It is probably a figurative expression of priestly holiness which John attaches to all

true believers (Comp. Rev. 2:17), but in which he excelled as the patriarch.

From a misunderstanding of the enigmatical word of Jesus, John 21:22, arose the legend that John was only asleep in his grave, gently moving the mound as he breathed, and awaiting the final advent of the Lord.

According to another form of the legend he died, but was immediately raised and translated to heaven, like Elijah, to return with him as the herald of the second advent of Christ.