



An Emendation of the Papias Fragment

Author(s): B. W. Bacon

Source: *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (1898), pp. 176-183

Published by: The Society of Biblical Literature

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3268790>

Accessed: 12/03/2010 14:24

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/action/showPublisher?publisherCode=sbl>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



The Society of Biblical Literature is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Journal of Biblical Literature*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

An Emendation of the Papias Fragment.

PROF. B. W. BACON.

NEW HAVEN.

I FIND in *The Expositor* for 1895 (p. 333 sq.) an article by Edwin A. Abbott entitled "The Elders of Papias," in which the distinguished author gives what appears to me to amount to a demonstration of the incorrectness of the clause *εἰ τοῦ Κυρίου μαθηταί*, which in our texts follows upon the names of "Aristion and John the Presbyter." Dr. Abbott has been showing that the extremely early date adopted by Lightfoot (*Supern. Rel.* p. 150) for the birth of Papias, viz., A.D. 60-70 is incredible. He suggests 80-90 A.D. as preferable. Since Dr. Abbott's article appeared, Professor Harnack has called our attention to the fact that De Boor's discovery of a fragment (*Texte u. Unters.* v. 2) attributing to the work of Papias the statement that those brought back to life by Jesus *ἔως Ἀδριανῶν ἔζων*, compels us to bring down our date for the *Ἐξηγήσεις* at least to 140, probably between 145 and 160 A.D. According to Harnack (*Chron.* p. 357) the period of Papias' enquiries, referred to in our fragment of his preface, certainly that of his boyhood (*καλῶς ἐμνημόνευσα*), must fall *ca.* 100 A.D. Dr. Abbott's date for his birth (80-90 A.D.) is therefore, if anything, an understatement of the case.

Let us see how he proceeds. "No doubt this late date of Papias is inconsistent with the supposition that he obtained direct¹ information from 'Aristion and John the Elder, *the disciples of the Lord.*'" Of course it is the descriptive clause only with which the late date conflicts, and these words "the disciples of the Lord" Dr. Abbott italicizes, adding, "There is reason for thinking they are spurious and could not have been known to Eusebius." But even if it be insupportable that Papias could have been 'a hearer,' or even a contem-

¹ This is not quite correct. Papias expressly says that the information here spoken of was obtained *indirectly*; and even Eusebius, who takes him for "a hearer of Aristion and the Elder John," immediately qualifies the statement by adding: "At all events he mentions them frequently by name, and besides records their traditions in his writings."

porary of 'disciples of the Lord,' it does not follow that Eusebius would perceive the anachronism. It may be impossible that Papias should have so written, but that is far from proving that Eusebius did not so read.

Another recent discovery, to which Dr. Abbott might have referred as indicating the incredibility of the descriptive clause, is that of F. C. Conybeare (*Expositor*, 1893, pp. 241 sqq.), who found in an Armenian MS. the spurious ending of Mark (vs.³⁻²⁰), prefaced by the formal title in red ink, similar to the titles the MS. prefixed to the gospels: "From the Presbyter Ariston." The identification of this Ariston with the Aristion of the Papias fragment is extremely probable; but even those who are most certain of this will admit, I think, that the verses in question can hardly have been written by a μαθητῆς τοῦ Κυρίου.

But perhaps the proof of the inherent difficulty of the reading, which to us would be most convincing of all, is found in an article of W. Beyschlag (*Th. Stud. u. Krit.* 1898) deprecating Professor Harnack's criticism of the gospels in the work above cited. If Professor Beyschlag is reduced to the desperate expedient of advocating, as here, that the clause οἱ τοῦ Κυρίου μαθηταί, which just before has been applied to Andrew, Peter, Philip, Thomas, James, John, and Matthew, when applied to Aristion and the Presbyter John must be rendered as simply equivalent to οἱ μαθηταί, referring us to Acts 21¹⁶, then the difficulty is great indeed. Imagine Papias citing as his principal informants: α) followers of the apostles; β) certain persons who could tell him what was said by Aristion and John—"the Christians"!

All things considered, the reading must be admitted to present at least very great inherent difficulties. I need hardly say to those who are familiar with the present concentration of the critical discussion on the problem of the Gospels about the argument of Harnack's *Chronologie*, that the question of the identity of these two men, Aristion and the Presbyter John, is of absolutely vital importance, so that if there is anything in Dr. Abbott's argument it is high time it were brought out. Beyschlag, *e.g.*, argues with very great force against the possibility of a confusion in Irenaeus' mind, such as Harnack suggests, between John the Presbyter and John the Apostle. How is such a confusion conceivable, he asks, in the mind of one who had been a hearer of Polycarp in Asia, if John the Presbyter actually survived Polycarp, or was the contemporary of his later years? But, as we have already said, it is a desperate expedient for bringing

down the date of the Presbyter, to interpret the clause *οἱ μαθηταὶ τοῦ Κυρίου* as meaning no more than *οἱ μαθηταί*.

Let us see then what textual evidence Dr. Abbott has to cite in favor of his contention that the clause is "spurious and unknown to Eusebius." He refers us to Dr. Taylor (*Expositor*, 4th Ser., iii. p. 245), who tells us: "Rufinus omits *τοῦ Κυρίου*. The Armenian version omits the whole clause *οἱ τοῦ Κυρίου μαθηταί*. Several Greek MSS. omit *οἱ*."

(1) The intrinsic difficulty of the reading based on the late date of Papias has already been spoken of. Lightfoot himself (*l.c.*) admits that it "would involve a chronological difficulty,"² one so great that in Dr. Abbott's opinion Eusebius could not have overlooked it. Moreover Mk. 16⁹⁻²⁰, if it be Aristion's, is not what we should expect from a "disciple of the Lord." (2) The context is opposed to this reading. Why repeat the phrase "Andrew, etc., disciples of the Lord," and "Aristion, etc., disciples of the Lord?" Why not use the descriptive term once for both if it means the same? (3) Eusebius is arguing that Papias derived his information not from apostles, but from their "followers." Dr. Abbott maintains that he could not speak as he does if Papias cited as his informants actual *μαθηταὶ τοῦ Κυρίου*. It is true that this is a misunderstanding on Eusebius' part, for Papias does not pretend to have seen these presbyters; but that does not affect the question of Eusebius' use of language. He cannot well, says Dr. Abbott, have overlooked the anachronism.

Except for the reënforcements, as I deem them, drawn from the discoveries of Conybeare and de Boor, the above are the arguments on which Dr. Abbott bases his opinion that the words *οἱ τοῦ Κυρίου μαθηταί* are either a corruption or an interpolation in the text of Eusebius. As between the two alternatives he naturally prefers the former: for the variant readings, while unfavorable to our text, cannot, of course, have arisen out of nothing. If the Armenian version, with its simple *ἄτε Ἀριστίων καὶ ὁ πρεσβύτερος Ἰωάννης λέγουσιν*, represents the original, then the variants are unaccountable. Dr. Abbott therefore supposes Eusebius to have read and written *οἱ [τῶν] τοῦ*

² The "chronological difficulty" is greatly enhanced if we accept the reasoning of Beyschlag that the tense of *λέγουσιν* (in contrast with the *εἶπεν* preceding) implies that Aristion and John were alive at the time of writing! But Harnack's reference of the present *λέγουσιν* to the time of Papias' boyhood enquiries is certainly allowable under Greek usage, which commonly presents indirect discourse in the direct form. "I would enquire, What are . . . saying," where we should write, "What . . . were saying." The argument above is based on the less favorable alternative.

Κυρίου [μαθητῶν] μαθηταί. This is doubtless awkward enough to account for almost any degree of transcriptional corruption; but it is quite too awkward for either Papias or Eusebius to have written. Moreover, if it gave rise to change on the part of scribes it could scarcely give rise to misunderstanding, and it is misunderstanding that we have here to account for.

But waiving the question whether Dr. Abbott's conjectural emendation would represent the true form of the original, does not the evidence show that Eusebius must have read and written something equivalent to this, instead of the highly improbable statement of the received text?

Our answer must be, I think, in spite of all the objections to the present reading, which we have found to be not less strong, but decidedly stronger than Dr. Abbott represents, — in spite even of the variant readings, Eusebius can have read and written nothing else than just what we now read in his received text. I have but one objection to Dr. Abbott's reasoning, and this objection is only an *argumentum e silentio*, yet it seems to me absolutely fatal to any such reading as Dr. Abbott proposes, or any substantially equivalent one. If Eusebius had before him such a plain statement that Aristion and John the Presbyter were disciples of the apostles, why did he not say so, instead of beating about the bush with elaborate arguments from the position of the second group of names, reference to the traditional two tombs of John at Ephesus and the like? Obviously it is just because his text of Papias *failed* to make any such clear distinction in the descriptive terms it applied to the two groups of authorities that Eusebius found it necessary thus to explain the great difference between the Apostle John and the Presbyter John. The fact that he ignores the second of the two clauses οἱ τοῦ Κυρίου μαθηταί does not show that he had a text like that of the Armenian version; for that we have seen to be insupportable. It shows rather that the clause *was* there just as we read it in his text: only he did not quite know what to make of it, because he rightly perceived that its apparent sense could not be the true one; for if these two men had been actual disciples of Jesus Papias could scarcely have been content to act as he says he did, and certainly could not have written as he did, actually ranking the report of their living testimony as secondary to that of unknown, unnamed "followers of the apostles."

What then shall we say to all the accumulation of evidence external and internal against the reading? — This: that the corruption, for such I am convinced it is, goes back of Eusebius; but not so far

back as Irenaeus. For I think it can be shown with reasonable probability that Irenaeus employs this passage, and that he read it in the following form: *Εἰ δέ που καὶ παρηκολουθηκώς τις τοῖς πρεσβυτέροις ἔλθοι τοὺς τῶν πρεσβυτέρων ἀνέκρινον λόγους· τί Ἀνδρέας ἢ τί Πέτρος εἶπεν ἢ τί Φίλιππος ἢ τί Θωμᾶς ἢ Ἰάκωβος ἢ τί Ἰωάννης ἢ Ματθαῖος ἢ τις ἕτερος τῶν τοῦ Κυρίου μαθητῶν, ἅτε Ἀριστίων καὶ ὁ πρεσβύτερος Ἰωάννης, οἱ τοῦτων [sc. τῶν ἀποστόλων] μαθηταὶ λέγουσιν.*

The work of Papias was not in Eusebius' hands alone, nor in those of Irenaeus alone; it must have been known to many of the transcribers and translators of Eusebius' History. The variant readings of this clause in the texts and versions of Eusebius may of course be accounted for as due to attempts of the scribes and translators to correct a patent error. But I feel tolerably sure that Dr. Abbott is wrong in thinking Eusebius perceived the anachronism — else would he not have called attention to it? — and if Eusebius did not perceive it we are attributing a good deal to the intelligence of mere scribes and translators to impute to their unaided sagacity the detection and elimination of the anachronism. No, there is a reasonable probability that the variants rest ultimately upon the tradition that in some texts at any rate Papias did not speak of Aristion and John the Presbyter as *μαθηταὶ τοῦ Κυρίου*. However, they cannot have referred to the original, for none of their readings is the true one.

Irenaeus, on the contrary, must have had before him the work of Papias in a copy presumably far older and more correct than that employed by Eusebius. This was already made extremely probable by Lightfoot in his convincing argument above referred to (*l.c.* pp. 142–216), and is now corroborated by Harnack (*Chron.* p. 336, n.), who points out that the expression of Irenaeus by which in two instances (v. 5, 1 and v. 36, 1) he introduces long series of extracts from the work of Papias, as given on the authority of *οἱ πρεσβύτεροι τῶν ἀποστόλων μαθηταί* is simply a briefer equivalent for Papias' description of his authorities in the passage before us. *Μαθηταὶ τοῦ Κυρίου* is here conspicuous by its absence, which is scarcely credible if Papias had indeed referred to such. *Μαθηταὶ τῶν ἀποστόλων* on the other hand is just the expression to cover in a general way both classes of Papias' informants, if the genuine reading was that which we have supposed. It meant primarily Aristion and John, whom Eusebius also wrongly takes to be first-hand informants of Papias; but it included also the other class of Papias' informants, whom he speaks of as *παρηκολουθηκότες τοῖς πρεσβυτέροις*. The inference is

that in Irenaeus' copy of Papias Aristion and John were spoken of as disciples not "of the Lord," but "of the apostles."

But Irenaeus gives additional testimony. In iv. 27, 1, he is not referring to Papias, whom he does not seem to have known otherwise than through his writings; for he takes him to have been not only a personal disciple of Aristion and John, but even, it would seem, an actual hearer of the apostle John. Irenaeus in iv. 27, 1, a passage preserved only in the Latin, refers to another member of the same Asiatic circle, supposedly Pothinus. Harnack (*l.c.* p. 338) collects six other references in Irenaeus to this presbyter, whom in one of them he even calls *senior apostolorum discipulus*, though not apparently in the strict sense; for in the passage which especially interests us it is the distinction of this presbyter to belong to the third, not the second, generation from the apostles. The passage is as follows: *Quemadmodum audiivi a quodam presbytero, qui audierat ab his qui apostolos viderant et ab his qui didicerant.* We are interested, of course, not so much in the presbyter himself as in the description of his informants. The presbyter himself stood in point of authority almost exactly on a par with Papias. The difference is that Pothinus (?) had had "direct information" from Aristion and John the presbyters, which Irenaeus *supposes* Papias to have had also.³ In any event the circle of informants is the same as that to which Irenaeus understood Papias to refer, and what is here said of the informants of *ille senior discipulus*, Irenaeus might, and very naturally would, express by an adaptation of Papias' description of *his* informants. We may even have a hint of this origin in the order: ἀποστόλους ἑωρακότες — ἀποστόλων μαθηταί, as in Papias, instead of ἀποστόλων μαθηταί — ἀποστόλους ἑωρακότες. If this be its origin, we have a somewhat fuller paraphrase of the Papias passage. The two classes of informants he mentions are no longer fused into one, but kept apart as in the original, and they are again, not ἀποστόλους ἑωρακότες καὶ τοῦ Κυρίου μαθηταί, but ἀποστόλους ἑωρακότες καὶ τούτων μαθηταί, *i.e.* μαθηταὶ τῶν ἀποστόλων.

It seems to me, therefore, that we have reasonably strong evidence from the transcribers and translators of Eusebius, and more particularly from the above cited passages from Irenaeus, for an emendation — not of Eusebius as Dr. Abbott proposes but — of Papias.

³ There may be some slight confusion in the text, but the sense is unmistakable. Abbott had rendered παρά τῶν τοῦ ἀποστόλου ἑωρακόντων, καὶ τῶν παρ' αὐτῶν ἀκουσάντων. Harnack preferably: παρά τῶν τοῦ ἀποστόλου ἑωρακόντων, καὶ παρὰ τῶν ὑπ' αὐτῶν μαθητευθέντων.

Just one word in conclusion as to the transcriptional evidence. Dr. Abbott's proposed emendation seems to me to transcend the bounds of reasonable probability. A scribe could hardly corrupt *οἱ τῶν τοῦ Κυρίου μαθητῶν μαθηταί* into *οἱ τοῦ Κυρίου μαθηταί*, even though the latter expression did stand just before as the model. But consider how the latter expression looks in uncial script with the usual form of abbreviation, and observe how almost indistinguishable the alternatives might become by a very slight mutilation or obliteration, if for ΟΙΤΟΝΚΥΝ ΜΛΘΗΤΛΙ we substitute ΟΙΤΟΝΤΩΝ ΜΛΘΗΤΛΙ. This latter reading will explain all variants, including the reading of Eusebius himself, and best of all it suits exactly the apparent references of Irenaeus, and the inner requirements of the context itself.

I cannot leave this important subject without a word as to the effect of our proposed emendation upon that vital chain of tradition by which Irenaeus, and we through him, are brought into personal contact with the apostles. Papias' statement as we now understand it is as follows: In my boyhood in Hierapolis I had special opportunity in two ways of informing myself as to what the Lord had taught. For in the first place certain persons came my way who had been actually associated with the apostles. These, among whom I may mention the surviving daughters of Philip the evangelist, who lived to a great age in Hierapolis, and who in their girlhood in Cesarea had of course had frequent opportunity of seeing and hearing many of the apostles, — these followers of the elders, I say, I would ask what Andrew, or Peter, had said, or Philip, or Thomas, or James, or John, or Matthew, or any other of the Lord's disciples. Also in the second place I was wont to enquire of those who came my way from Ephesus, what Aristion and the Presbyter John, disciples of the above named, were saying. For I did not think what I got from books would profit me so much as the living and abiding voice.

Here the great church dignitaries in Ephesus, although, as *μαθηταὶ τῶν ἀποστόλων*, really superior in authority to mere chance comers who as *ἑωρακότες τοῦ ἀποστόλου* had this and that to relate, are subordinated and put in the second rank because the boy in Hierapolis had not been able to interrogate them personally. Nevertheless as their voice was still "living and abiding" in his time, and not far away, so that he could get abundant information as to what they were saying, he thought it right to add their testimonies freely, almost as if he had heard them himself — so much so in fact that Eusebius, Irenaeus, and apparently even Dr. Abbott seem to think he actually had heard them himself. He says nothing about Polycarp, who in

point of age must have been of the same circle, and who was also a *μαθητῆς τῶν ἀποστόλων*, doubtless because in the period of which he is now speaking, that of his boyhood in Hierapolis, information as to what Polycarp was teaching in the remoter Smyrna was comparatively inaccessible to him. His later association with Polycarp his readers might naturally take for granted.

As to the *ἑωρακότες τοὺς ἀποστόλους* whom Papias mentions, we know that the daughters of Philip were such, and we have no reason to doubt that there were others in Asia *ca.* 100 A.D. As to the *μαθηταὶ τῶν ἀποστόλων*, the report of Papias in regard to the Presbyter John is corroborated by an independent tradition to the effect that the apostle John installed a namesake of his own in Ephesus. It is certain from the testimony of Irenaeus that Polycarp in Smyrna was such, and we have no reason to doubt the fact in the case of Aristion.

Of all these, however, the only survivor who in the boyhood days of Irenaeus could still claim to have seen the apostles, was Polycarp, lingering till the age of almost a hundred years, so that Irenaeus could regard it as a singular providence of God that he could yet remember the very look of the old man as he sat and taught. Doubtless John the Presbyter had died many years before. Papias *ca.* 150 A.D. would not speak of him as still alive in his boyhood days, if his death had not taken place somewhere in the first quarter of the century. But could Irenaeus confuse this man, the older contemporary of Polycarp, with John the apostle? On the answer to this question depends the whole Harnackian theory of the Johannine writings. And the answer to this question will largely depend on the further one, Did Irenaeus, who, as now seems probable, had before him the work of Papias, read after *ὁ πρεσβύτερος Ἰωάννης, οἱ τοῦ Κυρίου* or *οἱ τούτων μαθηταί*?