

## THE AUTHOR OF JOHN XIX 32b-42.

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WE are fortunately in a position to prove not only the Gentile origin of John xix, 32b-42, but to determine also the time when it first was published. The later additions to the Fourth Gospel proclaim Jesus *the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world* and relates how the sin is washed off by the blood and the water which flowed from the pierced side of Jesus. The Christians among whom this conception of Jesus originated, regarded accordingly the day on which Jesus died as the most holy day in his human career and felt in duty bound to call the attention of the entire Roman world to that new discovery.

The Jewish Christians, at least in Palestine, observed always the Passover as well as the other religious feasts of the Old Testament including the Sabbath. They gathered at the temple three times every year until it was destroyed by Titus. For Jesus, as he had warned them expressly, had not come to destroy, but to fulfil the law and the prophets. The Gentile Christians of the apostolic age however did not observe the 14th of Nisan nor any other holy day of the Old Testament. They rather held their religious meetings on Sunday very likely because their heathen neighbors did so.

Polycarp, a bishop of Smyrna and a Gentile Christian, introduced the celebration of the 14th of Nisan in his city. His teachings were apparently *by and by* accepted by a small group of churches near the western coast of Asia Minor. But he made, even before he approached his neighbors, a serious attempt of winning the Christians of Rome for the teachings of the Fourth Gospel he brought to them. That book was unknown to the Christians at large who up to that time had become familiar only with the three Synoptic Gospels. Otherwise the discrepancy between the Synoptic

and Johannine tradition as to the day on which Jesus was crucified would have caused an earlier discussion. On the other hand, if the last two chapters of the Fourth Gospel with the story of the resurrection had been a part of the book of Polycarp, he would hardly have called upon the Roman pontiff with the request to proclaim the 14th of Nisan as the most holy day of the Christians. As it was, Anicetus, the bishop of Rome, was just ready to announce Easter Sunday as the most holy day. Easter is the old spring holiday of the Aryan nations of Europe and appealed as such to the Gentile Christians. The outcome of the meeting of the two bishops was according to Eusebius E. H. V 24:

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Neither did Polycarp persuade Anicetus to observe it.

Eusebius E. H. IV 19 enables us to fix within a year the time when these two rival sponsors of a new Gentile religion met at Rome, the proper place for such an innovation. He writes: "It was in the eighth year of Verus that Anicetus, who had held the episcopate at Rome for eleven years, was succeeded by Soter." Verus as adopted brother of Marcus Aurelius shared with the latter the imperial throne from 161-169. Anicetus therefore died either in 168 or 169. But in the latter case, our authority would probably have said *in the last year of Verus*. Therefore Anicetus became bishop of Rome in the year 157 and Polycarp called on him very likely at once. It was of vital importance for him to reach Anicetus before he had proclaimed *ex cathedra* the paramount holiness of Easter Sunday. For the Gentile churches recognized even then the bishop of Rome as the superior and head of all provincial bishops. For Rome was not only the capital of the Empire and seat of the Emperor, but the very mother of the Roman world. The people of Rome were looked upon for that reason by all provincials as superior beings in every line of human activity. That becomes very clear in the controversy with the Quartodecimans, the followers of Polycarp.

Anicetus accepted gladly the new doctrine that Jesus had died as the lamb of God because it removed in the eyes of the Gentiles the stumbling block of the crucifixion of Jesus. But he rejected the 14th of Nisan. He may have disliked the observance of a Jewish holiday. But he probably had made up his mind to proclaim Easter Sunday as the most holy day before Polycarp called upon him.

It seems to be clear however that the observance of the day of

resurrection did not begin before the year 158. For if it had reached back into the apostolic age, Polycarp would never have thought of proposing the 14th of Nisan. The Christians of all the provinces would have protested. As it was, even Anicetus treated Polycarp with respect.

But as fast as the celebration of the resurrection spread, opposition against the Quartodecimans grew more and more bitter and determined under the leadership of Rome. About 170, Rome, Alexandria, and even churches of Asia Minor raised a protest against the observance of the 14th of Nisan by the Christians of Laodicea. In the year 196, bishop Victor of Rome wanted to excommunicate the followers of Polycarp in Asia Minor, especially at Ephesus; but the churches outside of Italy proved unwilling to go that far. In the third century, the Quartodecimans were listed as heretics at Rome. At last, the General Council of Nicaea closed in 325 that chapter by condemning the Quartodecimans.

These heretics claimed John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, as their authority. They even insisted that Polycarp was a personal disciple of John. That is, however, excluded by the peculiar character of his additions to the genuine parts of the Fourth Gospel.

This fact brings us face to face with the question: When and why can John have visited the western districts of Asia Minor? *He was not an apostle*, although one of the three disciples who had joined Jesus as intimate companions. Jesus appointed only one of them as apostle, namely Simon Peter.

Later tradition has indeed surrounded Jesus with twelve apostles, one for each of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel. But ever since 722 B. C., when Sargon, king of Assyria, destroyed the kingdom of Israel, and 586 B. C., when Nebuchadnezzar did the same to the southern kingdom, the ten tribes of Israel and a large number of the people of Judah and Benjamin lost their identity and religion in Mesopotamia where they were absorbed by a kindred, Semitic population. Ever since the return of 42,300 Jews from the Babylonian captivity, the worshippers at the temple of Jerusalem have called themselves Jews. For the remnants of the Israelites in Galilee were adopted by the tribe of Judah because they were too few to organize a tribe of their own.

The second chapter of the Epistle to the Galatians states very clearly that Peter and Paul were the only apostles at that time, the

first, the apostle of the Jews, the second, the apostle of the Gentiles. These two traveled over the whole empire, proclaiming the message of Jesus.

Chapter ii, 1-10 admits of no doubt as to that fact. As late as seventeen years after Paul's conversion, there were only two apostles. Verse 9 mentions by name James, the brother of Jesus, Cephas, and John as present at Jerusalem and calls them *pillars* and verse 6 *those who were reputed to be somewhat* as well as *they who were of repute*. But the decisive statements are found in verse 9 f. where Paul declares: *When they saw that I had been intrusted with the gospel of the uncircumcision, even as Peter with the gospel of the circumcision and when they perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they unto the circumcision.* To render it even more emphatic, verse 8 repeats verse 7, saying: *He that wrought for Peter unto the apostleship of the circumcision wrought for me also unto the Gentiles.*

Accordingly, more than seventeen years after the death of Jesus—how many years later, we do not know—there were only two apostles, one for the Jews and another for the Gentiles. They were accompanied on their journeys by companions, as for instance Paul by Barnabas. But that did not make those companions apostles. The reason why may be learned from Acts xiv, 12, where the people of Lystra salute Barnabas as Jupiter and Paul as Mercury *because he was the chief speaker*. The same difference as far as the gift of convincing speech is concerned must have existed between Peter and his fellow pillars.

Chapter i, 18-19 seems to contradict ii, 6-9. We read there: *I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas, and tarried with him fifteen days. But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother.*

If it were not for what we have learned in chapter II, we should come to the conclusion that James, the brother of Jesus, was one of the twelve apostles to the Jews. That would be in harmony with the generally accepted legend. But chapter ii forbids us to regard James as an apostle. Therefore, i, 19 must have been altered by a transcriber who lived about 100 years after the apostolic age when the legend of the twelve apostles had been accepted as history. He was clearly unaware of what he did when he changed the genitive

singular into the plural. Otherwise, he would have replaced also ἑτερου by ἄλλον. For ἑτερος means one of two whereas ἄλλος is one of more than two. Paul himself wrote: *Another than the apostle I saw not except James, the Lord's brother.*

Under these circumstances, John was not an apostle. His task was not to carry the gospel of Jesus to his countrymen in Palestine and the Diaspora, but to stay in his native land and take care as a good shepherd of the lambs of his master. If he ever went to Asia Minor—and we possess in the Fourth Gospel the strongest evidence of such a visit—he can have gone there only as a good shepherd, not as a hireling, who had to save the flocks entrusted to his care. Such an emergency arose as a result of the Jewish revolt against the Roman government which lasted from 66-70 and ended with the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple.

McGiffert in his *Apostolic Age*, p. 608 has come very near to that conclusion. Only he sends John to Ephesus as a fugitive, who was unmindful of his master's warning: "He that is a hireling, and not a shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, beholdeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth, and the wolf snatcheth them and scattereth them."

During those terrible years from 66-70, the Christians in Palestine must have suffered incredibly from both warring parties. The Roman soldiers would maltreat them because they were Jews, and the Jewish rebels would handle them with even less mercy because they refused to fight for their country and religion. As long as the war lasted, outside help could not reach them. For the Romans would of course not permit anybody to send food, clothing, and other things to Jews in Palestine. That is not even done in modern, Christian wars. As long as the war lasted, there was no help for those Christians. But as soon as peace was restored, those, still living could appeal to their brethren in Asia Minor and elsewhere. That some Gallilean Christians had survived the war is proved by the two grandsons of Judas, the brother of Jesus. They were summoned before the emperor Domitian to show that they were poor, harmless farmers.

Under such conditions, John not only may, but must have called for help upon the rich cities of the western shore of Asia Minor, especially Ephesus and Smyrna, but besides all other cities of that region where Paul had gathered believers, and Peter had possibly

preached among the Jews. These and other Gentile Christians had helped their brethren in Palestine before as we learn from Galatians ii, 10. But in the year 70, conditions in Palestine must have been simply terrible. The homes of the survivors were ruined, their cattle had been taken away, their fields lay fallow, their vineyards and orchards had been cut down. They could not even cover their nakedness. They were bound to perish together with their neighbors who did not believe in Jesus if quick and abundant help was not brought to both.

To secure such help can have been the only reason that prompted John to visit Asia Minor. He cannot have deserted his friends and neighbors in Palestine to fatten himself at the flesh-pots of the rich cities on the Aegean Sea. His task must have been to obtain immediate and sufficient assistance for the perishing victims of the terrible war.

Such a mission required of course time. No single city contained Christians and Jews enough to supply alone the urgent wants of the Palestinians. He had to visit quite a number of cities before he could return to his native land. In each city, he had to linger for some time in order to meet all friends, Jews as well as Gentiles, and arrange with them what they would do and how they were to deliver their gifts.

He must have celebrated at least one Passover feast in Asia Minor and that in the city of Ephesus as we learn from Eusebius E. H. V 24. But that fact cannot mean that he was a Quartodeciman. As a faithful Jew, he was undoubtedly invited by either Jews or Jewish Christians to eat the Passover lamb with them, and he was bound to accept such an invitation gladly. Even Gentile Christians may have eaten the Passover at that occasion as guests of Jewish Christians. But that had as a matter of fact nothing to do with the Quartodeciman conception of the death of Jesus.

During his stay in Asia Minor he wrote a short account of the death of Jesus and its cause, beginning with the cleansing of the temple and ending with his interment. To that he added some reminiscences as for instance what Jesus had said of the Good Shepherd and of the other sheep not of the fold of Israel. These writings were given possibly to a Gentile Christian and came afterwards into the possession of Polycarp. He incorporated them with

quite a number of legendary additions into the present Fourth Gospel with the exception of chapter xx and xxi. He is thus the author or rather the editor of this Gospel. It is our task, if possible, to separate the chaff of Polycarp from the wheat of John and restore his genuine memoirs in their pristine truth and beauty.