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and who, though he might not understand or fully appreciate, could never forget.

These two invaluable words are a welcome contribution in a Gospel in which Jesus appears chiefly as an energetic original actor. They show that the force of His intellect was equal to the force of His will. They also prove that the impassioned temperament was balanced by a deep imperturbable tranquility of spirit; for such great, universal, eternal thoughts visit only minds blessed with perennial repose.

A. B. BRUCE.

*THE DATE OF THE EPISTLE OF THE GALLICAN CHURCHES IN THE SECOND CENTURY.*

It is commonly assumed that the date of this Epistle is fixed by Eusebius as the seventeenth year of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, A.D. 177. I shall endeavour to show (1) that this is an error, (2) that there are reasons for thinking it to be the seventeenth year of Titus Antoninus Pius, his predecessor, A.D. 155.

It is commonly assumed that certain martyrs who are described by Eusebius as writing to Eleutherus, Bishop of Rome—but not bishop till A.D. 177—belong to the number of those mentioned in the Gallican Epistle. I shall endeavour to show (1) that this may not be his meaning, (2) that if it is, he was probably confusing some martyrs who suffered in a later persecution (perhaps A.D. 177) with those who suffered in the earlier persecution recorded in the Gallican Epistle of A.D. 155.

§ 1. "THE SEVENTEENTH YEAR."

The statements of Eusebius as to the Emperor, and the year of the Imperial reign, are brought into connection with each other in the following extracts: (*H.E.*, v., *Proem.*

and *ch.* 1-5) " Now Soter, bishop of the Church of Rome, is succeeded by Eleutherus, twelfth in succession from the apostles. It was *the seventeenth year of the Emperor Antoninus Verus*, in which (or, at which time, *ἐν ᾧ*), in certain parts of the world, the persecution against us burst out with unusual violence, arising from onsets made on us in the several cities. That myriads of martyrs throughout the empire (*οἰκουμένην*) met a glorious death (*διαπρέψαι*), may be conjectured from the events in a single nation—events handed down in writing to posterity. . . . Now the whole compilation of the full and complete information on these points (*τῆς μὲν οὖν περὶ τούτων ἐντελεστάτης ὑφηγήσεως τὸ πᾶν σύγγραμμα*) has been placed by me in my Collection of Martyrs . . . : but such matters as may have to do with the subject now under consideration . . . I will here quote. . . . (v. 1. 3). And I will quote their own words: 'They that dwell in Vienne and Lyons of Gaul, servants of Christ, to them that are in Asia and Phrygia.' . . . [Here follows a long account of a persecution, in which several martyrs suffered.] (v. 2. 1) Such were the events that came to pass . . . *in the time [of the above-mentioned Emperor, whence one may reasonably conjecture what was also done in the other provinces. To these it is worth while appending next in order from the same volume (γραφῆς) some other extracts, wherein is recorded also the thoughtfulness and gentleness of the above-mentioned martyrs in their very words. [Here the brethren describe how the martyrs prayed for their persecutors and also for relapsers.] . . . (v. 3. 1) But the same volume about the aforesaid martyrs contains also another noteworthy story. [Here follows an account of a revelation to one of the imprisoned martyrs, and of its influence on the conduct of another martyr.] . . . And so much for this (καὶ ταῦτα μὲν ᾧδι ἐχέτω).*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> On the reasons for supposing that a new section should begin after these words, see below, p. 119.

Now, as the followers of Montanus . . . were just then for the first time diffusing widely (*παρὰ πολλοῖς*) their views about prophecy, . . . the brethren in Gaul once more<sup>1</sup> submit for consideration their own decision (*κρίσιν*) on these points also, . . . publishing, too, various letters of the martyrs who had gained the crown of martyrdom among them (*τῶν παρ' αὐτοῖς τελειωθέντων μαρτύρων*)—which letters, while still in bonds, they indited to the brethren in Asia and Phrygia, yea, and to Eleutherus as well, Bishop of Rome at that time, making themselves, as it were, ambassadors (*πρεσβεύοντες*) for the sake of the peace of the Church. (v. 4. 1) Now the same martyrs also commended Irenæus, who was already at that time a presbyter of the diocese of Lyons, to the above-mentioned Bishop of Rome. . . . (v. 4. 3) But as for matters *in the times of Antoninus* (*ἀλλὰ τὰ μὲν ἐπ' Ἀ.*), such was their tenour. (v. 5. 1) Now<sup>2</sup> *his brother, Marcus Aurelius Cæsar*, is reported. . . . [Here follows the story of the Thundering Legion, which undoubtedly must be connected with Marcus Aurelius and no other Emperor.] ”

Let us collect the italicized statements: (1) The Emperor under whom the persecution broke out is “Antoninus Verus”; (2) he is called “Antoninus”; (3) his brother is “Marcus Aurelius”; (4) he reigned at least “seventeen years.” This combination of assertions is absurdly erroneous. There certainly was an emperor—namely, the brother of Marcus Aurelius—who is said by one or two historians to have been called Antoninus Verus; but he reigned *nine* years, not “seventeen.” Moreover, there is no other instance in the *History* or *Chronicon* of Eusebius in which he is called “Antoninus Verus,” and no instance at all in which he is simply called “Antoninus.” Some of the confusion is easily explicable. Capitolinus and

<sup>1</sup> See below, p. 120.

<sup>2</sup> Δή; but δέ would make better construction.

Spartianus both agree (Lightfoot, *Ign.*, i. 657) that, on the death of Titus Antoninus Pius, when Marcus Aelius Aurelius Verus ascended the throne, he determined to share it with his younger adopted brother, Lucius Aelius Aurelius Commodus, to whom he gave his own name of "Verus," while both alike assumed the name of "Antoninus" from their predecessor.<sup>1</sup> According to this, the elder brother would cease to be "Verus," and would become "Marcus Aurelius Antoninus"; the younger would cease to be "Commodus," and would become "Lucius Aurelius Verus." But, in practice, the elder Emperor appears to have been still called "Verus" by historians, *and he is so called by Eusebius*; and the younger was not called "Antoninus" in his "style," *and is never so called by Eusebius* (setting aside the passage now under discussion).<sup>2</sup> Hence we infer that by "Antoninus Verus," and by the subsequent "Antoninus," Eusebius meant Marcus Aurelius. But, then, what are we to say to the astonishing fact that in the very next sentence (v. 5. 1) *Marcus Aurelius is described as this Emperor's brother?*

<sup>1</sup> For the sake of clearness, it may be well to place here the following facts (taken from Lightfoot, *Ign.*, i. 703) concerning the (a) original, (b) adoptive, and (c) imperial, names or styles of the two adopted sons of Titus Antoninus Pius.

(1) The elder, (a) M. Annius Verus, became, when adopted, (b) M. Aelius Aurelius Verus; and, when Emperor, (c) Imp. Cæsar M. *Aurelius Antoninus* Augustus.

(2) The younger, (a) L. Ceionius Commodus, became, when adopted, (b) L. Aelius Aurelius Commodus; and, when Emperor, (c) Imp. Cæsar L. *Aurelius Verus* Augustus.

Thus, in *practice*, the elder brother alone took the name of Antoninus, as though T. Antoninus Pius had been his father; while the younger took the name of Verus, as though M. Aelius Aurelius Verus had been his father. But in *theory* (according to the two historians above mentioned) both brothers took the name of Antoninus.

<sup>2</sup> Eusebius calls the *elder* brother "Antoninus Verus" (in *H.E.*, iv. 13. 8 and 18. 2) at the time when he was Emperor. In iv. 26. 2 and v. 9 he calls him simply "Antoninus." The younger brother is called in the *Chronicon*, at his accession, "Lucius Aurelius Commodus" (so the Hieronymian and Armenian versions—the Greek has *καὶ Κόμμοδος*, no doubt a mistake for *ὁ καί*, as, in the same paragraph, Aurelius is called *ὁ καὶ Οὐῆρος*), and subsequently "Lucius Cæsar."

The most probable explanation is that some phrase containing the words "17th year of Antoninus" was taken by Eusebius out of the Gallican "volume," and inconsistently interpreted by him when he wrote his *History*. In any case the blunders here pointed out could not fail to be detected by him as soon as the *History* was published. If evidence were needed to prove this, it could be proved from his *Chronicon*, which, in its extant shape, is a later work than the *History*. In the interval between the publication of the two, the author appears to have ascertained, not only that some of his dates required correction, but also that the martyrdoms in Gaul had occurred about the same time as the martyrdom of Polycarp in Smyrna; for in the *Chronicon* he places both opposite the same year—namely, "the 7th year" of the two Emperors, M. Aurelius and his brother. He did not venture to place them in "the 17th year" of M. Aurelius, (1) because he now knew there was a blunder *somewhere* in his old date, "17th year of Antoninus Verus"; (2) because it was too radical a reform to make Polycarp's martyrdom quite so late. In the *History* he had connected Polycarp's death with the accession of Aurelius in such vague terms (iv. 15. 1, "meanwhile") as to leave it open whether it happened at the close of the reign of Antoninus Pius or at the beginning of the reign of Aurelius; and he felt certain it was not so late as "the 17th year" of the latter. Now, if it had occurred to him that the blunder was in inserting the "Verus"—which a scribe might naturally have added to define an indefinite "Antoninus"—he would have been able to retain "the seventeenth year of Antoninus," and to refer the date to the reign of Antoninus Pius, and thus he would have anticipated the precise conclusion arrived at fifteen centuries afterwards by Waddington and Lightfoot—viz., that Polycarp was martyred in A.D. 155, viz., "the seventeenth year" of Titus Antoninus Pius. Unfortunately

he took a much more natural course. He compromised the matter in the *Chronicon* by supposing that Polycarp's martyrdom might be a little later than he had thought, and the Gallican a little earlier. "Very possibly 17 was a mistake for 7. So be it. Then let the date of the joint martyrdoms go down in the *Chronicon* as the 7th year of Marcus Aurelius and his brother, *i.e.* A.D. 167."

That we are doing no injustice to Eusebius in accepting, upon less than demonstrative evidence, the hypothesis that he was somewhat careless about dates, may be inferred from several passages in Lightfoot's *Ignatius*, e.g. i. 620, 621; and especially from one dealing with the passage under discussion: (*Ign.*, i. 631) "Eusebius, therefore, is convicted of gross ignorance respecting the imperial annals at this time. He has prolonged the life of L. Verus for several years, and he has hopelessly confused the two imperial brothers." This is, perhaps, rather too severe on the historian. The reader himself may have found it a little difficult to keep in mind the distinctions between the original names and the adopted names, and the imperial titles, of the two Emperors who succeeded Antoninus Pius; and Eusebius may well have experienced a similar difficulty. It is probable that the letter of the Churches in Gaul was originally dated "the 17th year of Antoninus"; but in a few years the question was sure to arise, "*Which* Antoninus?" The copy that fell into the hands of Eusebius may have added "Verus"; or "the 17th year of Antoninus *Verus*" may have been given in the volume as the date of *later* martyrdoms, and may have been taken as giving the date of *earlier* martyrdoms as well. Hastily assuming this to be correct, the historian seems to have accepted "Antoninus Verus" as accurate in the strict historical sense in which it would have been understood by Capitolinus and Spartianus, *i.e.* as representing the younger brother of Aurelius; and accordingly

he describes M. Aurelius as his "brother."<sup>1</sup> Our conclusion is that Eusebius may have erred not so much through gross ignorance as through blindly following a document that led him into error: "17th year of Antoninus" might have led him right, but "17th year of Antoninus Verus" would lead him wrong.<sup>2</sup>

## § 2. THE GALLICAN "VOLUME."

But at this point we are confronted by a seemingly solid objection. How could the Gallican martyrs have written about Montanism to Bishop Eleutherus in A.D. 155, since he was not Bishop till A.D. 177? And how could they have been troubled in Gaul about Montanism in A.D. 155, if (as the *Chronicon* says) it did not "arise" in Phrygia till A.D. 172? At this point, Eusebius' exact words require the closest examination. They will be found to state merely that "*the same martyrs*" who sent letters to Asia about Montanism also sent a letter to Eleutherus. They do not state that any of the martyrs mentioned in the *Gallican Epistle* wrote these letters. What if the "volume" from which he extracted his account contained a number of documents describing various Gallican persecutions that took place under the Antonines? And what if some martyrs—perhaps, actually in "the 17th year" of M. Aurelius Antoninus, *i.e.* A.D. 177, five years or there-

<sup>1</sup> Not improbably Eusebius, or the writer from whom Eusebius borrowed, was influenced here by Christian tradition, which (see Tertull., *Apol.*, 5) represented M. Aurelius as the protector of the Church, and as testifying to the efficacy of its prayers. The character of M. Aurelius was preserved by stating that the persecution took place "in the year of"—a phrase that suggested "with the sanction of"—his brother.

<sup>2</sup> Lightfoot suggests that (*Ign.*, i. 630-32) in the *Chronicon*, Eusebius may have grouped together the Gallican and Smyrnan martyrdoms because he did not know their precise date; but this is inconsistent with the supposition that he retained his confidence in "the 17th year of Antoninus Verus" as the precise date of the former. And if he did not retain his confidence in it, then the evidence for it (so far as the authority of Eusebius is concerned) disappears.



abouts after the rise of Montanism in Phrygia—wrote the letter in question to the recently appointed Bishop Eleutherus? This would at once make everything clear. If there was a persecution in Lyons “in the 17th year of T. Antoninus” (A.D. 155), contemporary with that of Polycarp, and another “in the 17th year of M. Antoninus” (A.D. 177), about five years after Montanism sprang up, and if the former was entitled in Eusebius’ collection of MS., “In the 17th year of Antoninus,” and the latter, “In the 17th year of Antoninus Verus”—how natural to infer (1) that the two described the same event, (2) that the earlier Emperor could not be meant, since some of “the same martyrs” wrote letters to Bishop Eleutherus, who was not bishop until long after that Emperor’s death!

“But what reason have we for supposing that Eusebius could make such a blunder?” This reason, that *he has made a similar blunder, only worse, in dealing with another “volume” of martyrdoms*. In describing Polycarp’s martyrdom, Eusebius speaks of a “volume (γραφή)” containing other martyrdoms continuously narrated. These he mentions as occurring “about the same period of time,” and proceeds to narrate one of them, that of Pionius. “But,” says Lightfoot (*Ign.*, i. 624), “Eusebius falls into a serious error with regard to its date. In the chronological notice appended to the document, as we have seen, the martyrdom is stated to have taken place under Decius (A.D. 250); and internal evidence points to this epoch. But Eusebius apparently makes it nearly synchronous with Polycarp’s martyrdom, and therefore under the Antonines.” Now if, *in spite of a notice in the MS. stating that a martyrdom took place in the reign of Decius A.D. 250, Eusebius synchronizes it with one that took place under the Antonines about A.D. 155*, does it need a great stretch of uncharitable imagination to suppose that, in some similar “volume” containing a number of Gallican martyrdoms, he committed the same

mistake of synchronizing here, only with far more excuse owing to the identity of the imperial name ("Antoninus"), and possibly also the identity of the imperial year ("seventeenth")?

Again, the language of Eusebius himself, in quoting from the Gallican "volume," will be found, if carefully examined, to contain one slight indication of *an interval between the writing of the Gallican Epistle and the letters to Eleutherus*. Turning to the extracts at the beginning of this article, the reader will see that the "volume" contained, first, the Gallican Epistle, from which extracts are given; then (v. 2, 1) a section containing anecdotes concerning those who were confessors but not martyrs; then another (v. 3, 1) about a revelation (possibly one of many) to those in prison. Then comes a formula ("So much for this. . . . But") *habitually employed by Eusebius to indicate the conclusion of one subject and transition to another*.<sup>1</sup>

Here, therefore, a new chapter ought to have commenced, thus: "Now whereas the heresy of Montanus was just then for the first time (*ἄρτι τότε πρῶτον*) coming into general note, . . . the brethren in Gaul *once more* (*αὐθις*)"<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> καὶ ταῦτα μὲν ὧδι ἐχέτω. τῶν δ' ἀμφί.... These or similar words are *habitually used to introduce a new chapter*: comp. i. 4-5, καὶ ταῦτα μὲν ὧδε ἐχέτω. Φέρε δέ... : i. 7-8, ὧδι μὲν οὖν καὶ ταῦτα ἐχέτω. Ἄλλὰ γάρ... : i. 11-12, ἀλλὰ ταῦτα μὲν ἐχέτω ταύτη. Τῶν γε μὴν... : iv. 14-15, Ἀντωνίνον μὲν δὴ τὸν Ἐ. κληθέντα... διαδέχεται. Ἐν τούτῳ δέ... : iv. 18-19, καὶ τὰ μὲν κατὰ τόνδε τοιαῦτα ἦν. Ἡδὴ δέ... : iv. 23-24, τὰ μὲν τοῦ Δ. τοσαῦτα. Τοῦ δὲ Θ... : iv. 26-27, τὰ μὲν ἐπὶ τοῦ Μ. τοσαῦτα. Τοῦ δὲ Ἀ... : iv. 29-30, καὶ τὰ μὲν κατὰ τούσδε τοιαῦτα ἦν. Ἐπὶ δέ... : v. 4-5, ἀλλὰ τὰ μὲν ἐπ' Ἀ. τοιαῦτα. Τούτου δὴ (? δέ)... More than once a book terminates with μὲν (e.g. v. 28, καὶ ταῦτα μὲν τούτων ἱστορήσθω τὸν τρόπον, after which, the next book begins with Ὡς δέ). Somewhat exceptionally, the sentence with μὲν...δέ introduces a new chapter in iii. 10. 11, ἀλλὰ τὰ μὲν ... (δε)δηλώσθω, ἴωμεν δ' ἐπὶ τὰ ἐξῆς.

All this indicates that the text here has been misarranged, and that a new chapter should have begun with Τῶν δ' ἀμφί.... There has probably been a similar misarrangement in i. 12. 5, ταῦτα μὲν οὖν περὶ τῶνδε. τῆς δὲ περὶ τὸν Θαδδαίου ἱστορίας τοιούτος γέγονεν ὁ τρόπος. A new chapter should have begun with τῆς δέ (unless this is an exceptional transition like that in iii. 10. 11).

<sup>2</sup> This use of αὐθις is quite distinct from that of καὶ αὐθις in v. 2, 5, 6, for there the context shows the interval to be that of a few words in a document.

submit their own decision. . . ." Compare the language in which the historian elsewhere, *after mentioning a considerable interval of peace for the Church*, proceeds to say that the devil, finding this intolerable (v. 21. 1), "accordingly stripped *once more* for the conflict (*ἀπεδύετο δ'οὖν αἰθίς*)," and it will be seen that the use of this adverb, as well as the transitional formula above mentioned, decidedly favours the supposition of an interval here. Possibly Eusebius is describing from the Gallican "volume" what "the brethren *once more*" did, and was not aware of the exact intention of the writer whose words he was using. The latter may have meant to say that [whereas they had previously sent to the churches of Asia, along with the account of the martyrdoms in the 17th year of [Titus] Antoninus, some expression of their own opinion on disputed points, now, in the 17th year of [Marcus] Antoninus], in consequence of the Montanist heresy, "*which was just then for the first time coming into note*," the brethren in Gaul "*once more submitted*" to their correspondents an expression of opinion, together with letters from martyrs who had recently suffered. Even if Eusebius did not take the words thus, this is a justifiable interpretation of them; and he may as well have misinterpreted these expressions as he has misinterpreted "the 17th year of Antoninus Verus." As in many other instances, Eusebius appears to be faithfully transcribing an original from which he possibly draws an erroneous inference.

### § 3. INTERNAL EVIDENCE FAVOURS THE EARLIER DATE.

In arguing for the earlier date of the martyrdom of Polycarp, Lightfoot justly calls attention to the fact that (*Ign.*, i. 650) "throughout the Smyrnæan Letter the singular is

"And again *after a short interval* they say (*καὶ αἰθίς μετὰ βραχέα φασίν*).... And then they say, *after other expressions* (*καὶ αἰθίς φασὶ μεθ' ἕτερα*)."<sup>1</sup> It differs also from the use of (v. 4. 3) *καὶ αἰθίς* ("and then again") in enumerations.

used of the Emperor." The same argument applies to the Gallican Epistle. In "the 17th year" of M. Aurelius (*i.e.* A.D. 177) there would be two emperors, for he was by that time co-emperor with his son Commodus.<sup>1</sup> Yet the singular is used in the narrative of the Gallican martyrs in describing how (v. 1, 44) the governor applied to Cæsar for instructions, and (*ib.* 57) Cæsar gave them. The inference drawn in the case of Polycarp is also to be drawn here, that "Cæsar" is Titus Antoninus Pius, who reigned alone.<sup>2</sup>

Again, a great many expressions in the Gallican Epistle indicate that persecution *had been for a long time discontinued*, that it now suddenly burst out in consequence of the action of the populace, that the governor and the officials led the populace rather than followed them, and that, owing to the want of recent precedent, the authorities were in some perplexity as to the course to be taken. Eusebius himself tells us that (*H. E.* v. *Proem.*) the persecution broke out like a conflagration, using the same word with which he describes the outbreak of the Jewish war.<sup>3</sup> He does not mean in the former case that there had been a persecution before, just as in the latter he does not mean that there had been a war before. He means, in both cases, that there had been smouldering embers which were now suddenly "fanned into a flame." The Gallican brethren repeatedly refer to the intense hatred of the people against them, to the (v. 1-7 *passim*) insults, onsets, and outrages from "the mob" and "the infuriated multitude," both before they were brought

<sup>1</sup> This argument is equally destructive to the date given by the *Chronicon*, "the 7th year" of M. Aurelius; for at that time he was still co-emperor with his brother Lucius.

<sup>2</sup> It must be admitted, however, that as Commodus in A.D. 177 was an emperor of very recent creation, the argument is not so strong as it otherwise would have been. The young Emperor might be practically overlooked.

<sup>3</sup> *H. E.*, ii. 26. 1: τὴν ἀρχὴν ἀναβρῆμισθῆναι τοῦ πολέμου. There were always at hand the precedents of Nero and Domitian, to which the populace could appeal when some famine, drought, or earthquake excited them against the Christian "atheists."

before the authorities, and afterwards during their examinations and sufferings. They tell us that, as if he had gone too far, the governor writes to Cæsar to know what he is to do, not only as to Roman citizens, but also as to all those in prison. He awaits the imperial reply, which is that those who will not deny Christ shall be beaten to death, but the others are to be released. Here the irregularity of the previous proceedings is patent; for (v. l. 33) those who had denied Christ already had been kept in prison and had partaken in the hardships of the confessors.

All these popular excesses, these official irregularities, and especially the appeal to the emperor, exactly suit the 17th year of Titus Antoninus, when the populace in many parts of the empire was attempting to revive disused persecution. Trajan had not encouraged persecutions. Hadrian had gone further and so discouraged them that in his reign they appear to have been almost non-existent; but that in the later part of the reign of Titus Antoninus (who reigned A.D. 138-61) they had broken out with extraordinary violence, and that they continued without any long intermission during the remainder of his reign and that of his successor, is proved by the convergent testimony, direct and indirect, of (a) non-Christian and (b) Christian writers. (a) Galen (about A.D. 160) says (*Lightf., Ign.*, i. 515-21), "That the Christians despise death, we see for ourselves"; Lucian (about A.D. 165) introduces a character saying that Pontus is full of atheists and Christians, who are to be stoned to death if people would have the favour of heaven; Marcus Aurelius himself (about A.D. 174) writes of the readiness of the Christians to meet death; (b) Justin Martyr, about mid-way between A.D. 140 and 160, and not improbably about A.D. 155, speaks of crucifixions, beheadings, burnings and other punishments, as being endured by Christians at the time when he was writing; Melito tells us that Titus Antoninus himself *wrote to "the cities," and among the*

rest to "all the Greeks," commanding them to desist from irregular violence against the Christians; Minucius Felix (placed by Lightf. about A.D. 160) speaks of tortures as being then borne by men, women, and children. About A.D. 163 (Lightf., *Ign.*, i. 494) Justin Martyr and others, brought before the Prefect of Rome, are simply "interrogated one after the other, confess themselves Christians, and are ordered off to execution." This very fact is made a ground of complaint in a treatise of Athenagoras (A.D. 177) that (Lightf., *Ign.*, i. 521) "the very name" of "Christian" suffices to ensure death. In the face of such a continuity from A.D. 155 to A.D. 177, who can deny that there must be some error in a statement that persecution "broke out like a fire from smouldering embers" at the latter date? And how could a Governor of Lyons in A.D. 177, with the precedents of more than twenty years before him, fail to know what must be done with imprisoned Christians, and find himself obliged to trouble the emperor for special instructions? But place the "breaking out" of the conflagration in A.D. 155 and under an emperor who had recently written to "all the Greeks" to desist from turbulence against the Christians, and then the language of Eusebius becomes justifiable and the conduct of the governor intelligible.

#### § 4. THE EVIDENCE OF CIRCUMSTANCES.

The following objection must now be met. We know that Irenæus was not yet bishop of Lyons when the Gallican martyrs commended him, as an "elder," to Bishop Eleutherus A.D. 177. Now the death of Pothinus is described by the Gallican Epistle, which (if the earlier date be adopted) was written A.D. 155. This necessitates an interval between the two bishops of at least twenty-two years, and possibly many more. But Eusebius asserts in his *History* that (v. 5. 8) when Pothinus, bishop of Lyons, died, Irenæus succeeded him.

This assertion, however, is not supported by the *Chronicon*, nor by any other independent testimony, and it is full of difficulties. For how could a bishop, succeeding to a diocese under persecution, leave martyrs in prison, and his whole flock in danger, in order to travel to Rome? Some have suggested that there may have been a vacancy for two or three years; others, that he did not go to Rome at all. Since conjecture of some kind is needed, it is at least reasonable to conjecture that some other bishop may have been immediately appointed in A.D. 155, and that Irenæus, when appointed, succeeded, long afterwards, to the bishopric of Lyons indeed, but not as the immediate successor of Pothinus. This exactly suits the arrangement and statements in the *Chronicon*, which says nothing about "succession," but, under the fifth year of Commodus (*i.e.* A.D. 180 or 181), says simply, "Irenæus, bishop of Lyons, a city of Gaul, was famous (διέλαμπε) for his divine words and works." The assertion in the *History* is not difficult to explain. Eusebius had before him a letter from martyrs of Lyons commending Irenæus, an elder of Lyons, to Bishop Eleutherus, who became bishop of Rome A.D. 177. At the time when he was composing the *History* he believed that Pothinus, bishop of Lyons, died as a martyr at that date. He knew that Irenæus became bishop of Lyons. Putting these facts together, he hastily inferred that Irenæus became bishop by *immediate* succession to Pothinus. But it appears to have been nothing but an inference, and it is quite possible that if he had given a definite date in the *Chronicon*, he would have given a different one from that implied in the *History*.

On the other hand, if Pothinus died A.D. 155, in the same year as Polycarp, and if Irenæus did not come to Lyons till afterwards, this explains why Irenæus, in the whole of his works, makes no mention of the venerable bishop. Had he seen the nonagenarian martyr in the flesh, had he worked

with him in his diocese, he could hardly have refrained from telling us some such anecdotes about him as he has told us about Polycarp. Tradition relates that, (*Lightf., Ign.*, ii. 986) on the day on which Polycarp was martyred, Irenæus was at Rome and heard a voice from heaven announcing the fact. This agrees with our hypothesis that in that year he was not in Lyons. Again, if Irenæus had been in Lyons at the time of the persecution recorded in the Gallican Epistle, we might surely expect that the sayings of the martyrs, when quoted by him, would have been quoted, if not exactly, at all events without flagrant error. Now a reference of Irenæus to these martyrs is preserved in a compressed form<sup>1</sup> by Œcumenius; but, beside being tediously lengthy as compared with the Gallican narrative, it also misses the point of one of the replies of the martyrs, and ascribes it to the well-known and heroical Blandina, whose unshaken constancy amazed even her torturers, whereas it was really uttered (*H.E.*, v. 1. 25) by poor Biblias, one who denied her Lord, but who returned to her allegiance under the rack. Inaccurate though Irenæus is, he could hardly have committed this error had he been presbyter of Lyons when the sufferings and sayings of Blandina and Biblias were in the ears of every Christian in the place. But allow that he was in Rome when the first persecution was raging (A.D. 155), that he did not come to Lyons till, say, A.D. 170-5, and did not become bishop till, say, A.D. 180-5, and then we can well understand that, by the time he was composing his *Refutation*, the memory of Pothinus had become a thing of the past, so that the new bishop had nothing to say about the old bishop, whom he had never seen, and from whom he was divided by one or two predecessors and by an interval of twenty-five or thirty years; nor can it then be surprising if, in referring casually to the earliest Antoninian

<sup>1</sup> Irenæus fragm. 13, ed. Grabe, p. 469: Œcumenius says "to quote it briefly (*ὡς διὰ βραχέων παραθέσθαι*)."



persecutions without having the "volume" before him, he confused details of which he knew nothing except by oral tradition and writing.

In conclusion it may be pointed out that the date here advocated is obtained, not by conjecture, however plausible, but *by correcting Eusebius from Eusebius, in accordance with the researches of Waddington and Lightfoot*. The historian Eusebius mentions "the 17th year of Antoninus Verus," a manifest error. The chronicler Eusebius substitutes (by implication) (1) "7th year of M. Antoninus," and (2) "simultaneous with the martyrdom of Polycarp." Of these two corrections, we reject the former (as being probably the result of a mere conjecture), but accept the latter, subject to this condition, that the date of Polycarp's martyrdom shall be held to be determined by modern researches to be A.D. 155. Now this is "the 17th year of Antoninus," but "Antoninus Pius," not "Antoninus Verus." Hence, recurring to the statement in the *History*, we adopt it, as giving *the right year but the wrong Antoninus*. We then show how easily the wrong Antoninus could have been substituted for the right one; and lastly, how the right one harmonizes with the internal evidence derivable from the Gallican Epistle, with the general history of Christian persecutions, and with the language of Eusebius and Irenæus, not to speak of a considerable mass of historical detail.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Since writing this article, I have seen Mr. Bryant's useful work, *The Reign of Antoninus Pius* (Pitt Press, 1895). Indirectly, it affords evidence for the earlier date of the Gallican Epistle by showing that (1) a dedication at Delphi A.D. 150 in honour of Antoninus Pius combines with a number of coins and inscriptions to show that at this time a religious revival was going on; (2) a disastrous and wide-spread earthquake occurred A.D. 152, and this might intensify religious feeling against the Christians for several years to come; (3) Antoninus, A.D. 155, was visiting the East, so that popular outbursts against the Christians might more easily break out, contrary to the emperor's previous procedure, and yet unchecked, because he was not at hand to check them.