

THE HISTORICAL SETTING
OF THE SECOND AND THIRD EPISTLES
OF ST JOHN.

II.

§ 4. *The Second Epistle. Who was the Elect Lady?*

DR. WESTCOTT has said that 'it is, on the whole, best to recognize that the problem of the address is insoluble with our present knowledge'. It seems to me far preferable to attempt still to discover a solution. If others disagree with my results, I trust they will continue the search for a better.

'The Elder to one who is an elect lady and her children, whom I love in Truth; and not I only, but also all they that know the Truth.'

She must be indeed a very important lady, for all they that know the truth love her.

So celebrated a personage can hardly be hidden from our view even by the thick mists which cover the first century. Was it one of the daughters of Philip (the deacon or the Apostle, no matter which)? They lived at Hierapolis, and Clement tells us that their father gave them in marriage. One of them is said to have died at Ephesus; hence the words: 'The children of thine elect sister salute thee'; for St John is writing from Ephesus to Hierapolis.

More important, surely, would be Tryphaena, the Queen-dowager, who protected Thecla at Ephesus. She may have been beloved by all [in Asia] who knew the Truth. But who was her elect sister? Tryphosa? Or are not the Tryphaena and Tryphosa of Rom. xvi 12 Roman ladies? And who were her children? It is hardly likely that the ex-Queen of Pontus had Christian children.

If we look elsewhere, in Palestine we might think of the mother of John Mark, whose house was once the meeting-place of the faithful, or the wife of Peter who was (so Dr Bigg assures us) a most important personage in early Church life. I do not think it would be easy to support such suggestions.

If we turn to Rome, Pomponia Graecina may have been dead, but St Flavia Domitilla, niece of Vespasian, and exiled by Domitian, might arrest our fancy. She must surely have disposed of great wealth, and her alms to distant churches (if she gave any) might be the ground for the statement of Dionysius of Corinth that it was the custom of the Romans 'from the beginning' (ἐξ ἀρχῆς, ἀρχῆθεν, πατροπαράδοτον ἔθος διαφυλάττοντες, *Eus. H. E.* iv 23) to show generosity to the rest of the churches. This would have caused her to be loved 'by all them that know the Truth'. But we have no record of any such thing. And who were her 'children'? Her freedmen Nereus and Achilleus? or her cousin or freedman, Clement of Rome? And can she have had Christian nephews and nieces living at Ephesus?

It seems to me quite clear that the problem is really insoluble on such lines as these. We can never find a lady beloved in all the churches, who had children with her, and who had also sister's children at Ephesus, and whom St John intended shortly to visit. And if such a lady existed, we shall never guess why St John should have written her a little letter recommending the practice of charity and the avoidance of heresy in very general terms. It is neither the letter of a friend nor that of a spiritual director. Some special meaning must lurk under these generalities, else one cannot see why such an epistle should be sent at all.

§ 5. *The Elect Lady is a Church.*

The word ἐκλεκτός is once applied to an individual in the New Testament, 'Ρούφον τὸν ἐκλεκτὸν ἐν Κυρίῳ' (*Rom.* xvi 13). St Clement (*ad Cor.* 52 2) applies the adjective to David, and St Ignatius to his companion Rheus Agathopous (*Philad.* xi 1). But the common use of the word was in the expression ἐκλεκτοὶ τοῦ Θεοῦ, so frequent in St Paul, St Clement, and Hermas. A Church consisting of the 'elect of God' receives the same attribute. St Peter speaks of ἡ ἐν Βαβυλῶνι συνεκλεκτή (1 Pet.

v 13), and St Ignatius calls the Trallian Church *ἐκλεκτὴ καὶ ἀξιόθεος*. But St John, who employs the word twice in this epistle, uses it nowhere else except in a single place of the Apocalypse (xvii 14), *κληροὶ καὶ ἐκλεκτοὶ καὶ πιστοί*, said of those who are with the Lamb. It is therefore not a Johannine word.

The idea that it is a proper name is sufficiently refuted by the observation that there must in that case have been two sisters with the same name 'Electa'.

Let us assume that a Church is intended. The advice given becomes much more suitable, and the messages more comprehensible.

§ 6. *The Internal Evidence of the Second Epistle.*

'The Elder to one who is an elect lady, and her children, whom I love in Truth; and not I only, but also all they that know the Truth; for the Truth's sake which abideth in us—and it shall be with us for ever: grace, mercy, peace, shall be with us from God the Father, and from Jesus Christ the Son of the Father, in truth and love.'

The children of the Church need no explanation. It is a Church which St John loves, and a famous Church, for it is loved by all that know the Truth.

The greeting is very noticeable. All the epistles to Churches in the New Testament (nine of St Paul, viz. Rom., 1 and 2 Cor., Gal., Eph., Phil., Col., 1 and 2 Thess., and two of St Peter), have the greeting 'grace and peace'. But in both the letters to Timothy and in that to Titus, St Paul says, 'grace, mercy, and peace', as does St John to the elect lady¹. Shall we argue from this that a lady is really meant, because this was the recognized form of address for private letters? If any one could be satisfied with such an argument, he might be refuted with the awkward fact that St Paul writes to Philemon simply 'grace and peace', while St John says nothing of the sort to Gaius. The simple explanation is that in his ten earlier epistles St Paul used *χάρις καὶ εἰρήνη*, and that the addition of *ἐλεος* is peculiar to his three latest greetings. The connexion of 3 John with the Pastoral epistles will come before us presently.

¹ The only other parallel is Jude, 'mercy unto you, and peace and charity be multiplied', but here 'grace' is omitted, and 'charity' inserted, against all precedent.

'I rejoice greatly that I have found of thy children walking in Truth, even as we received commandment from the Father.'

St John has found some of the Church's children walking in truth. This does not mean that they believed rightly; it would be a poor praise to say that *some* of the Christians in a Church are found to be orthodox. The same phrase twice used in the third epistle we found to mean that Gaius had been doing a good action. Here the meaning is plainly: 'I rejoiced greatly when I heard that some of your children had practised some remarkable virtue, according to the Father's commandment.'¹ What was this particular act of virtue? It was not brotherly love, ἀγάπη, as in the case of Gaius, for that was the 'new command' of Jesus Christ, and would hardly be called a command of the Father, and St John gives it immediately afterwards. Nor are any of the Commandments of the old law meant: it is a command which 'we', that is Christians, have received. St John has a way of referring back from one passage to another by the use of certain catchwords. This is above all noticeable in his first epistle, a careful study of which reveals a system of continual reference to words of our Lord reported in the Gospel. But then the first epistle is without doubt (as Lightfoot, amongst others, has pointed out, *Essays on Sup. Rel.* pp. 187, 188), an introduction or *envoi* to the Gospel. Yet, even here, in the second epistle, we may venture to interpret St John by St John. In the Gospel our Lord says: 'Therefore doth the Father love Me: because I lay down my life that I may take it again. No man taketh it from Me; but I lay it down of Myself, and I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. This commandment have I received of My Father' (x 17, 18). Ταύτην τὴν ἐντολὴν ἔλαβον παρὰ τοῦ Πατρὸς μου: this is nearly the same as our καθὼς ἐντολὴν ἐλάβομεν παρὰ τοῦ Πατρὸς. For the command is to all Christians, upon occasion, as well as to Christ: 'In this we have known the charity of God, in that He hath laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down

¹ It is only in 2 and 3 John that περιπατεῖν ἐν ἀληθείᾳ occurs, but it is parallel to the walking in light or darkness of the first Epistle (i 6, 7, ii 11), of the Gospel (viii 12, xii 35), and perhaps of the Apocalypse (xxi 24). It certainly refers to right conduct according to right teaching, and not to right belief. The Hebraistic metaphor περιπατεῖν is used more variously and freely by St Paul than by St John.

our lives for the brethren.' It is, then, a possible hypothesis that St John had rejoiced in hearing of the glorious martyrdom of some of the sons of the Church to which he writes.

'And now I pray thee, Lady, not as writing a new commandment to thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another. And this is love, that we should walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, even as ye heard from the beginning, that ye should walk in it (love).'

That St John (who in his old age, according to St Jerome¹, could say nothing to his children but 'love one another', when carried to the Church to address them), should mention the 'new commandment', is of no special significance. But it would surely be unnecessary to tell a mother and her children to love one another, unless family quarrels were anticipated or had occurred, while it can never be supererogatory to remind a Church of the command of the Lord which, *si solum fiat, sufficit*.

'Which we had from the beginning', 'as ye heard from the beginning'. This can hardly mean 'the time when the Church was founded', on account of the 'we'². It appears to imply that this Church was founded 'in the beginning', that is, either on the day of Pentecost (in which case only Jerusalem could be meant), or at least at the dispersion of the Apostles, twelve years later, which might be looked upon as practically 'the beginning'. Then, of the great churches, Antioch and Rome come into competition. There are reasons for thinking that the Roman tradition in 160-70 placed the coming of Peter in the twelfth year after the Passion, and the death of Peter and Paul twenty-five years later³. If this tradition was true, it is not a mere coincidence that St Irenaeus, with the (dated) list of Roman

¹ *Comm. in Gal.* vi 11, Bk. iii vol. vii p. 529.

² 'Which we had from the beginning' would naturally mean 'which we Apostles heard from Christ'; and 'as ye heard from the beginning' would mean 'which you heard when the Gospel was first preached to you'. But by this we get two different meanings for 'from the beginning', and further, it is not easy to exclude the elect lady from the 'we'. I therefore prefer the view in the text, that the writer, about A. D. 90-5, can look back to the years 29 and 41 as 'the beginning'.

³ I urged this in the *Revue Bénédictine*, 1901-2, on the chronology of the Roman catalogues. When I wrote the first of the three articles, I was strongly prejudiced against both of these dates, and against the twenty-five years' episcopate. In the second article I gave the reasons which changed my opinion, and they may convince others also.

bishops before him, calls the Roman Church *antiquissima* (*Har.* iii 3). Anyhow, it had been founded many years when St Paul wrote to the Romans, and was already famous for its faith.

‘Because many deceivers are gone out¹ into the world, even they that confess not Jesus Christ coming in flesh: this is the deceiver and the antichrist.’

The same heresy is denounced as in 1 John iv 2 (cf. John i 14). It is the Docetism of Cerinthus, which was still the main danger in Asia in the time of St Ignatius, just after the death of St John. The false teachers had been members of the Asiatic churches, but they left their brethren and ‘went forth into the world’. Elsewhere St John describes their apostasy more fully: ‘They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but it was in order that it might be made plain that they were not of us, all of them’ (1 John ii 19). Having no more footing in the Asiatic churches, they had evidently turned their attention elsewhere, and St John expects them to make an attempt to get from another important Church that recognition which they had been refused at Ephesus.

‘Look to yourselves, that you may not lose (destroy) the things which you have wrought², but may receive a full reward. Every one that goeth forward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ hath not God; he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son. If any one cometh unto you, and beareth not this teaching, receive him not into your house, and give him no greeting; for he that giveth him greeting hath fellowship with his evil works.’

The Church is warned not to receive the heretics if they come. ‘Into your house’ has a mystical sense, and so has ‘give him no greeting’. They are not to be received to Church membership, to the kiss of peace and to Communion, else the Church herself will be answerable for their heresy, and defiled therewith.

‘Though I have many things to write to you, I would not with paper and ink; but I hope to be present with you, and to speak face to face, that your joy may be fulfilled. The children of thine elect sister greet thee.’

¹ Reading *ἐξῆλθαν*, with NAB. Iren. *Lucif.*

² Reading *εἰργάσασθε* with NA. What they had wrought was the ‘walking in truth’.

The elect sister will be the Church of Ephesus. Perhaps St John would have given the names of the heretics, if he had not been afraid of his letter getting into wrong hands.

We have arrived so far at the result that the letter has two objects—to congratulate a Church on the virtue (martyrdom?) of some of her children, and to warn her against receiving certain heretics who were thought to have left Asia for the purpose of gaining her to their views.

§ 7. *The close connexion between the Second and Third Epistles, and of both with 2 Tim. and 1 Peter.*

The second and third epistles have a close likeness to the first, but their connexion with one another is closer still.

2 John

1. ὁ πρεσβύτερος . . . οὗς ἐγὼ ἀγαπῶ ἐν ἀληθείᾳ.

4. ἐχάρην λίαν (ὅτι εὑρηκα . . .) περιπατοῦντας ἐν ἀληθείᾳ.

12. Πολλὰ ἔχων ὑμῖν γράφειν οὐκ ἐβουλήθην διὰ χάριτος καὶ μέλανος· ἀλλὰ ἐλπίζω γενέσθαι πρὸς ὑμᾶς, καὶ στόμα πρὸς στόμα λαλήσαι. Ἀσπάζεται σε (τὰ τέκνα . . .).

3 John

1. ὁ πρεσβύτερος . . . ὃν ἐγὼ ἀγαπῶ ἐν ἀληθείᾳ.

3. ἐχάρην γὰρ λίαν . . . καθὼς σὺ ἐν ἀληθείᾳ περιπατεῖς.

13. Πολλὰ εἶχον γράφαι σοι, ἀλλ' οὐ θέλω διὰ μέλανος καὶ καλάμου σοι γράφειν· ἐλπίζω δὲ εὐθέως σε ἰδεῖν, καὶ στόμα πρὸς στόμα λαλήσομεν. Ἀσπάζονται σε (οἱ φίλοι).

The subject-matter which forms the body of the epistles is different, but the commencement and the conclusion of each letter have a remarkable coincidence of formulas. The habit of writing just in this way would surely not last for years, in one who probably did not write a great quantity of letters. I think we may presume that the two letters are separated by no great distance of time.

There is another curious coincidence. We have seen that the emphasis of the testimony to Demetrius was occasioned by a contrary estimate of him in 2 Timothy. In the second epistle we find another connexion with the Pastoral epistles in the formula 'grace, mercy, truth'.

Yet another coincidence:—there is a manifest reluctance to mention the place whence Demas 'went out for the Name's

sake', and we have seen that Rome was intended. In the second epistle there is equally a determination not to mention its destination or the name of the 'elect lady'.

And another:—the ἐκλεκτὴ Κυρία cannot but remind us of ἡ ἐν Βαβυλῶνι συνεκλεκτὴ of 1 Peter; is not there a reminiscence of this passage in 2 John? At all events 3 John has another remarkable coincidence with 1 Peter, which needs some explanation.

St Peter writes to the Christians of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. We may understand by 'Galatia' those churches which St Paul thus named according to the 'South Galatian theory'. The description is thus intended to include practically the whole of the Roman part of the peninsula. The southern and western parts had been evangelized by St Paul himself, the northern parts probably by his disciples, for that St Peter had ever been there is only a guess of Origen's. Perhaps Silvanus, who carries the letter, is the Silvanus of 2 Cor. and 1 and 2 Thess., and the Silas of Acts; and he may have been engaged on this missionary work ever since he disappears from view in Acts xviii.

Now St Paul had, during his first imprisonment, sent to Asia a circular letter of advice and consolation. St Peter writes to the same churches and to those that had since grown up, and we are not surprised to find that he has consulted the former letter of St Paul, to see what the founder of the churches had considered to be suitable admonition¹; for St Peter probably knew but little of them personally, and had possibly never been in Asia. This is the obvious explanation of the extraordinary resemblances between St Paul's circular letter to the Ephesians and other churches, and that of St Peter to the same address.

But what moved St Peter to write? It is very important to notice that *he does not console them in a time of persecution, but rather he encourages them to endure under a persecution*

¹ Dr. Bigg writes: 'It is not necessary to think of St Peter as settled in Rome, holding in his hands all the strings of a great organization, and receiving constant reports from his lieutenants. But is it possible to believe that one apostle knew nothing about another, or that he did not care what his brethren were doing or saying? There was nothing to prevent his getting every epistle that circulated in the Church within a month or two of its publication', &c. *Internat. Critical Comm., Peter and Jude* p. 241. This seems to be common sense.

I cannot, of course, spare space here to justify the date (64-5) I have assigned to 1 Peter.

which appears to be impending. There is nothing to shew that the Asiatics had suffered at all, up till now, but there is much said to brace them up to bear what they may have reason to expect.

I have already said that I do not think that St Peter and St Paul were martyred in 64 during the first fury of the Neronian persecution. But I believe (with Mommsen and most of the chief authorities, against Ramsay) that the name of Christian was made a legal crime from that year onwards. The persecution of 64 raged at Rome only; but it endangered the Christians throughout the world. Peter was very likely not in Rome in 64, but the persecution brought him back, and Mark came also (1 Peter v 13) having been brought by Timothy from Ephesus, as St Paul requested (2 Tim. iv 11). St Paul may also have hurried to Rome at the news of the awful horrors wrought by Nero after the fire. Perhaps he arrived before St Peter, and for this reason does not mention him in his epistles¹.

Titus and 1 Tim. were no doubt written before the persecution, so that St Paul may have been in Rome all the time. If 2 Tim. was written as early as 64, there is no difficulty in supposing that St Paul was mistaken in expecting the crown of martyrdom at once. He had been mistaken on a former occasion when he supposed at Miletus (Acts xx) that the Ephesians would see him no more, for in 2 Tim. iv 21 we find he has been again to Miletus.

St Peter, believing that the persecution would spread, wrote a long letter to the Churches of Asia, whose Christian population probably greatly outnumbered that of the whole of the rest of the Roman world. The 'Christian name' was now forbidden, as it was in Pliny's time, who asks Trajan whether '*nomen ipsum si flagitiis careat*' is really to be punished, or whether '*flagitia cohaerentia nomini*' are not rather intended. Trajan's answer makes it plain that the name itself was legally a sufficient crime.

¹ We might also interpret his silence as the earliest example of prudent care which arose from the danger of Peter, who must have been known to the government by name. (The persons mentioned by St Paul were in less danger, being, like himself, Roman citizens, and perhaps of high rank.) But such an assumption would be very precarious.

This throws a brighter light on 1 Peter iv 14, 16: 'If you be reproached for the Name of Christ, you shall be blessed . . . but if (he suffer) as a Christian, let him not be ashamed.' The whole accusation would be 'he is a Christian'. And the passage in 3 John becomes actually a case in point: 'They went out for the Name's sake' from Rome, under the persecution of Nero. We are not so much to understand 'for the name of Christ' (as in so many passages of the Gospels 'for My Name's sake') but 'for the name of Christian'.

Now it is impossible that a circular letter of St Peter to the Churches of Asia should be unknown to St John, when he lived at Ephesus as the ruler of those churches. If he wrote to Rome, it would naturally come into his head to think of the letter once sent from Rome to Asia, and to recollect the way in which St Peter had avoided mentioning the place from which he wrote. St John also knew that he must name no names, and he takes up St Peter's idea and plays with it: 'The fellow-elect in Babylon greets us, does she? I have to write to her,—I will greet the elect lady and her children, and send her the salutation of her elect sister in Ephesus.'

This seems to give the clue we need in a very simple fashion. In 1 Peter there is no doubt as to the meaning of 'the fellow-elect'. He is writing to churches, and 'that which is elect also with them' is not a lady but a church; the recipients of the epistle could make no mistake. Further, they knew where St Peter was, and this would interpret the mystery of 'Babylon'. Besides (as Dr. Bigg has pointed out) Silvanus was not deaf and dumb.

But St John's letter presents an enigma, and without a key it could hardly be guessed; the bearer would have to explain the whole, and the metaphor would fall rather flat.

If we imagine that it is sent to those who knew well St Peter's earlier epistle¹, and who were aware that 'the fellow-elect in Babylon' referred to themselves, they had the key in their hands, and misinterpretation would be impossible.

And now comes in as a confirmation a remark already made:

¹ 1 Peter was known to Clement of Rome and Hermas of Rome; while its citation by Papias (Euseb. *H. E.* iii 39) will answer for its circulation in the Johannine circle.

ἐκλεκτός is not a Johannine word. St John's vocabulary in the gospels and the three epistles is strangely limited. This word occurs nowhere else in them. There must be some special reason for its use. It is borrowed. It can be borrowed only from the one similar passage, that of St Peter.

It need not follow that the reply was sent soon. The longer the interval, the better known would be the epistle of Peter. It was still ringing in St John's ears in Patmos, when he saw Rome as Babylon, according to the mystical language suggested by St Peter: 'A mystery; Babylon the great, the mother of the fornications, and the abominations of the earth. And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus' (Apoc. xvii 5). 'Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath judged your judgement upon her' (*ib.* xviii 20). The holy apostles are, of course, St Peter and St Paul, martyred in Rome thirty years previously. What was their judgement against her? I think 1 Peter v 13 suggests part of the reply. In calling Rome Babylon (as the Jews had often done) the Apostle had suggested the application to her not merely of the character of Babylon, but of the doom of Babylon, as foretold by Isaiah, and St John works out the idea (in language inspired by Isaiah and by Ezekiel's prophecy against Tyre) in his vivid xviiith chapter of the Apocalypse.

We may now turn to the coincidences with 2 Tim. If 2 and 3 John were written about the same time, St John will have been forced to look for a copy of 2 Tim., to see what St Paul had said against Demetrius, nay, the enemies of Demetrius will have thrust it upon his notice. Here was another letter from Rome to Ephesus. Just as he had returned the greeting of the 'fellow-elect' by saluting her back as the 'elect lady', so he repeats the peculiar greeting of St Paul to Timothy, 'grace, *mercy*, peace'. Is this too far-fetched and fanciful? Was it not perhaps a mere coincidence that St John adds 'mercy' to the familiar 'grace and peace'? The reply is rather startling. Ἐλεος is again a ἀπαξ λεγόμενον in St John, though it is fairly common in Matthew, Luke, Paul, and James. Why should St John use so unaccustomed a word (he never uses ἐλεέω; ἐλεινός occurs only once, and that in the Apocalypse, which has a different vocabulary), unless he was borrowing?

To sum up. There are remarkable coincidences between 2 John and 3 John in the epistolary formulas; the expression *περιπατεῖν ἐν ἀληθείᾳ* is peculiar to these epistles; each of them has subtle coincidences or connexions with 2 Tim., and with 1 Peter. All this confirms in a remarkable way the contention of Dr Zahn, that the two letters were written by the Apostle on the same day, and sent by the same messenger¹. We have seen that Demas and his companion or companions were travelling towards the West. They were to stop a night at Thessalonica, and Gaius would speed them on the journey along the Egnatian way to Rome, where they would deliver 3 John to St Clement. It will not be, then, a mere accident that these two letters have survived together. Demetrius, of course, kept a copy of the valuable testimonial he had obtained, and the companion letter was naturally preserved with it. The letter to a Church took rank as no. 2, before that to an individual.

The two visits promised by St John, 'that we may speak mouth to mouth', were evidently to be realized in a single journey. Diotrophes had not expected St John to interfere in Macedonia; but he was unaware that the Apostle wished, like St Paul, 'to see Rome', and that he intended to take Thessalonica on the way.

§ 8. *Clement of Alexandria interpreted the 'Elect Lady' as the Church of Rome.*

The oldest interpretation of our epistle is that preserved in the Latin *Adumbrationes* of Clement of Alexandria, and he appears most certainly to understand the epistle as addressed to the Church of Rome.

'Secunda Ioannis Epistola quae ad virgines scripta est simplicissima. Scripta vero est ad quamdam Babyloniam Electam nomine, significat autem electionem Ecclesiae sanctae.'

Now there is no mention of Babylon in St John's epistle. Is, therefore, Clement confusing it with 1 Peter? I think it impos-

¹ *Einleitung* ii p. 581. Zahn has further supposed that 2 John is actually referred to in 3 John 9: 'I wrote a few words to the Church.' We have, however, seen in analysing 3 John that this certainly refers to the letter of introduction which Demetrius had taken to Thessalonica on his former visit, and which Diotrophes had spurned.

sible to suspect him of such stupidity. In the *Adumbratio* on 1 Peter there is no comment on the words ἀσπάζεταιται ὑμᾶς ἢ ἐν Βαβυλῶνι συνεκλεκτή, but only on the words which follow καὶ Μάρκος ὁ υἱός μου: 'Salutat vos Marcus filius meus', and on this Clement says that Mark was persuaded by the Romans to commit to writing what Peter preached. Either this must be taken to imply the explanation that ἡ συνεκλεκτή is the Church of Rome or else some definite statement to the same effect had preceded in the original Greek, of which the Latin may here be an abbreviation.

For *ad virgines* we should certainly read *ad virginem*. This was later corrupted not merely into παρθένους, but into Πάρθους; hence the *ad Parthos* of St Augustine and others¹.

Why *ad virginem*, since the elect lady has children? Clearly because Clement is about to explain that a church is meant.

The translation, or paraphrase, is inaccurate or corrupt, and we may perhaps make another correction, by placing a comma after *Electam*, and reading 'nomine autem significat'. The sense will be:

'The second epistle of John, which is addressed to a virgin, is most easy to understand. It is written to a certain Electa of Babylon, and by this name he signifies the election of the holy Church [there]';

and the Greek may have been: Ἡ τοῦ Ἰωάννου δευτέρα ἐπιστολὴ πρὸς παρθενον γραφεῖσα ἀπλοτάτη (or ἀπλουστάτη) ἐστίν. Ἐγράφη μὲν οὖν πρὸς τινα Βαβυλωνίδα Ἐκλεκτήν· τῷ δὲ ὀνόματι σημαίνει τὴν τῆς ἁγίας ἐκκλησίας ἐκλογὴν. The Latin is probably servilely literal, giving even the order of the words of the Greek. The awkwardness of *nomine* for *hoc nomine* is explained if the Greek had simply the article without τούτῳ.

Clement says Babylon, not Rome, because he is naturally thinking of the similar passage of St Peter. But he knows that his readers will be aware that Rome is meant, for either he has just stated, in commenting on 1 Peter, that Babylon means Rome, or else (if nothing has dropped out there in the Latin) he

¹ In his third vol. of *Forschungen*, pp. 100–103, Zahn takes the converse view, that παρθένους is a corruption of Πάρθους. But his explanation of Πάρθους is impossible, since Clement certainly identified the συνεκλεκτή of 1 Peter with the Church of Rome. See Bardenhewer *Gesch. der altkirch. Litt.* vol. 2 pp. 47, 48, note, who however renounces the task of explaining *ad Babyloniam electam nomine*.

had assumed in that place also that the reader would need no interpretation, and had mentioned what Mark did at Rome without explaining the connexion¹.

§ 9. *The silence about the Roman Church.*

In commenting on the third epistle I have already stated that there is a conspiracy of silence with regard to the Roman Church from the persecution of Nero in 64 until the rescript of Hadrian to Minucius Fundanus, which, while not rescinding the established principle, inaugurated a period of comparative toleration (between 117 and 138). It is true that Hermas mentions St Clement, and the early part of his work in which the mention occurs may conceivably have been written in the episcopate of Clement², for Hermas was evidently a young man at the time, with small children. But his book as a whole was published later.

It was not unnatural that greater precautions should be needed in the capital than elsewhere. There are other instances of catacombs (as Syracuse, Padua, &c.), but the extraordinary developement of these underground labyrinths at Rome is unparalleled, and would be incredible if we merely knew of it from ancient writers and not by ocular demonstration³. Every decree which emanated from Rome would be put in force there first, and more energetically than elsewhere. We see the results in the mystery to which Tacitus is witness as surrounding the

¹ A confirmation of this suggestion that something has dropped out is to be found in Euseb. *H. E.* ii 15, who gives a traditional account of St Mark's Gospel, which he has made up from this passage of Clement and from the passage of Papias which he quotes, iii 39. He states that 'they say' that St Peter meant Rome by the name Babylon. This does not necessarily mean that Clement and Papias said so; but it is natural to suppose that this piece of information, which he gives as an afterthought, came from one of the sources he had just quoted, viz. from the Hypotyposes of Clement. Harnack has taken a view somewhat adverse to this suggestion (though he speaks of Papias, not of Clement) in the *Zeitschrift für die N. T. Wissensch.* 1902, 2 'Pseudopapianisches'.

² So Harnack thinks. The young slave may have persuaded Grapte to read his vision to the old women, but the presiding presbyters are not likely to have consented to listen to him, nor will Clement have actually sent his volume to the other churches! (see *Revue Bénédict.* 1902, p. 155).

³ Though not primarily intended for hiding-places, they were certainly used for the concealment of Christian rites.

Christians. In 115-17 he writes that Christianity is an 'exitiabilis superstitio', numbered among things 'atrocia aut pudenda', that Christians were convicted of 'odium humani generis', they were 'sontes, et novissima exempla meriti'. The great and careful historian thinks he knows all about them, yet he knows nothing. How different things were in Bithynia and Pontus, we learn from Pliny, the intimate friend of Tacitus, writing a few years earlier under the same emperor. The numbers of the Christians were there so great that the temples were becoming deserted, and the solemnities had been discontinued. Pliny says it would be an impossibility to punish such a multitude, and besides they appeared to be harmless. He knows of their early meetings for the 'sacrament' (which he naturally supposed to be an oath), and their high moral teaching. But another friend of Pliny, Suetonius, not in Asia but at Rome, thinks that 'Chrestus' was the leader of the Jews whom Claudius banished from Rome, that the Christians under Nero practised magic ('superstitutionis novae ac maleficae'). It may or may not be true that Seneca, before the persecution of Nero, had made the acquaintance of St Paul; but it is evident that under Trajan the Christians were an obscure sect in Rome, and that the great and the learned in the capital knew nothing of their religion. Their numbers were also probably not enough to make them formidable, though there must have been many more Christians in the capital than the heathens had any idea of.

There are other instances of this secrecy. The sin of the children of Hermas, for which he ought to have punished them, was apparently that they got under the influence of some pagans, used some bad words, betrayed the fact that their parents were Christians¹, and joined with heathen children in vicious practices. This is represented as taking place in the time of Clement, who died in 99. Again, apart from the letter of Clement, we know absolutely nothing of the Roman bishops of this period, except their dates,—of Linus, Anencletus, Clement, Evaristus, Alexander,

¹ *Vis.* ii 2, 2 Τὸ σπέρμα σου, Ἑρμᾶ, ἤθετήσαν εἰς τὸν Θεόν, καὶ ἐβλασφήμησαν εἰς τὸν κύριον καὶ προέδωκαν τοὺς γονεῖς αὐτῶν ἐν πονηρίᾳ μεγάλῃ καὶ ἤκουσαν προδῶται γονεῶν καὶ προδόντες οὐκ ἀφελήθησαν, κ.τ.λ. Perhaps the fault of Hermas's wife (οὐκ ἀπέχεται τῆς γλώσσης) is also that she was in danger of betraying her faith. Ἐκουσαν προδῶται probably means 'got the reputation of traitors' with the Christians.

Sixtus¹. The latter succeeded in the first year of Hadrian, and emerges from the mist in the mention of him by St Irenaeus (Fragm. of Ep. to Victor, ap. Euseb. *H. E.* v 24), with regard to the Paschal question.

In connexion with this secret character of the persecuted Roman Church, we must notice the following remarkable examples of silence:

1. When St Ignatius wrote to the Romans, he took care to mention no names, not even that of the bishop, which he must have known² (before 117).

2. When St Clement wrote to the Corinthians he wrote in the name of his Church, but suppressed his own name (c. 95).

3. When St John wrote his Apocalypse he gave to Rome the mystic name of Babylon (c. 95)³.

4. In the third epistle of St John there is a careful avoidance of the name of Rome, and a very guarded reference to the persecution there.

5. While 1 Peter gives the names of the churches to which it is sent, the place from which it is sent is 'Babylon' (c. 67?).

6. It is natural to quote 2 John as a sixth instance of the avoidance of the name of Rome, and to see in the 'Elect Lady' the Roman Church.

§ 10. *Additional Considerations.*

1. Caspari has given a very full list of heretics, who went to Rome in the course of the second century and the first years of the third, to make converts and to get recognition⁴. It is

¹ Yet the mention in the Canon of the Mass, of Linus, Cletus, Clement (I believe this order to imply a date earlier than Hippolytus), suggests that all this careful secrecy did not prevent these three at least from becoming martyrs.

² Of course there was one, as I have more than once argued elsewhere against Harnack; for St Ignatius says that without a bishop and priests *ἐκκλησία οὐ καλεῖται* (*Trall.* iii 1).

³ The Apocalypse is written in exile, before the death of Domitian. The writer is consequently so guarded in his language that he mentions no single Christian by name except Antipas, who was no doubt dead. He avoids the names of the bishops of the churches, of the altar of Augustus and Rome at Pergamus, of 'that woman Jezebel', of Peter and Paul, slain at Rome, &c., &c. So at the very beginning of the Decian persecution, the Roman priests and deacons sent a letter to the Church of Carthage without address or salutation—a letter which they were possibly ashamed afterwards to own as theirs (Cyprian, *Ep.* 8).

⁴ *Quellen zur Gesch. des Taufsymbols* vol. iii p. 310 sqq.

curious that nearly all of them began in Asia Minor. If the foregoing conjectures are right, one more item will be added to the long catalogue, and somewhat earlier than any of the others ; it will be seen that the Cerinthians, like the heresies which succeeded them, started among the populous and prosperous Christian communities of Asia, and when they had gained a party on the one hand, and yet had failed on the other to infect the main body of Christians, they migrated to the capital, to try their fortune there.

2. 'The Elect Lady, whom I love in the truth, and also all they that have known the Truth.' If these words apply to Rome, which St John had doubtless never visited, they are a curious parallel to the affection expressed long before by St Paul for the Church in the capital, which he had never seen : 'I must also see Rome' (Acts xix 21), 'Your faith is spoken of in the whole world', 'God is my witness . . . that without ceasing I make a commemoration of you always in my prayers . . .' (Rom. i 8-9). Here we have both the personal love of the Apostle, and that of the whole world. Again St John writes : 'For I hope that I shall be with you, and speak face to face, *that your joy may be full*'. How like St Paul's : 'If by any means now at length I may have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you ; for I long to see you, *that I may impart unto you some spiritual grace to strengthen you*' (Rom. i 10-11) ; and again ; 'I hope that as I pass I shall see you . . . and I know that when I come to you, I shall come in the abundance of the blessing of the gospel of Jesus Christ'.

3. These exact parallels (which I give for curiosity, not for argument) are remarkable enough. But the sequel is stranger still. St Paul did indeed see his desire fulfilled. He went to Rome, but in bonds. And St John, if we follow the story of Tertullian, also saw his wish accomplished. He was sent for by the tyrant Domitian, as the only surviving disciple of Jesus Christ, and he too went on the desired journey at the will of the emperor. Truly man proposes, and God disposes. The 'spiritual gift' and 'abundant blessing' which Paul gave, were his martyr's death ; and that the joy of the Romans 'might be full', not only the Princes of the Apostles, but also the beloved Disciple, were to bear witness to the faith before her rulers.

4. The date of these two epistles will be before St John's trial before Domitian, that is to say, not later than 95, and probably earlier. The martyrs (if martyrs are referred to) may have been the earliest martyrs under Domitian, or they may have been unknown martyrs of an earlier date, or even simply those of the Neronian persecution.

JOHN CHAPMAN.