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THE ONENESS OF THE TABERNACLE.

**I**N the sixth verse of the twenty-sixth chapter of Exodus occurs the significant sentence, "And it shall be one tabernacle." Being a work, the tabernacle must, like every other work, have been designed as well as executed. Scripture presents to us this twofold view of it; shows it to us in plan and in progress. We are taken up with Moses into the Mount, and there we see unfolded before us the pattern as it existed in the Divine mind. This architectural plan is a grand whole. Notwithstanding the many separate parts of which it is composed, it exhibits the most complete structural harmony—the most perfect mutual consistency. It is to be *one* tabernacle—not in the sense of singleness and uniqueness, as if God had forbidden more than one tabernacle to be constructed for His service—but in the sense of a real and profound unity. By the golden taches or clasps binding together the curtains which covered it, the whole structure was made one tent or tabernacle, and all its parts and objects were united. Unity is the hall-mark which God stamps upon all His works. It is His autograph written in the stars of heaven and in the flowers of the field, attesting that they all proceed from the same Mind. The universe is a great kaleidoscope which He is perpetually turning round, in which a few simple elements are exhibited in endless diversity, in which the variety is not more wonderful than the unity.

I.

In unfolding this sublime lesson, let us look, in the first place, at the illustration of it which the tabernacle itself afforded. This remarkable structure was one in regard to its parts. It was divided into two rooms, the holy place and the most holy, by a veil that hung between them. Only one man was permitted to enter the inner compartment—viz., the high priest; and he only once a year, on the great day of atonement. The outer sanctuary was daily frequented by the priests, who, barefooted and clothed in their linen garments, there accomplished their ordinary ministrations. But although thus separated, the two divisions were essentially one. The same boards of shittim wood enclosed them;

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spiritual ministry, and transfiguring them both, He has abolished the distinction between secular and sacred, and restored a real unity to human existence. Order, beauty, harmony, life, joy, are all brought back by Him. What a wonderful grandeur of meaning do the revelations of science in regard to the chain of life, from the lowest monad up to man, give to the old words which we usually read with so little apprehension of their significance: "A body hast thou *prepared* for me!" Looking back from the incarnation through the long dim vista of the world's development, we see how God was slowly and gradually preparing a tabernacle in which creation and the Creator should meet, not in semblance but in reality. "In Him all things *consist*;" or, as the idea contained in the Greek word thus translated might be conveyed, He is the key-stone that binds together and rounds to perfection the glorious arch of the universe. "For it hath pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell," the fulness of the creature and the fulness of the Godhead; "and having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven."

HUGH MACMILLAN.

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## ST. JOHN.

*"Volat avis sine meta  
Quo nec vates nec propheta  
Evolavit altius:  
Tam implenda quam impleta—  
Nunquam vidit tot secreta  
Purus homo purius."*—ADAM of St. Victor.

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

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

Epistle); but all the more has he to say of the spiritual and eternal substance, the vital union of believers with Christ, and the brotherly communion of believers among themselves. He is at once the apostle, the evangelist, and the seer of the new covenant. He lived to the commencement of the second century, that he might erect on the foundation and superstructure of the apostolic age a majestic dome gilded by the light of the new heaven.

He had to wait in silent meditation till the Church was ripe for his sublime teaching. This is intimated by the mysterious word of our Lord to Peter with reference to John: "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" No doubt the Lord did come in the terrible judgment of Jerusalem. John outlived it personally, and his type of doctrine and character will outlive the earlier stages of Church history till the final coming of the Lord. In that wider sense he carries even till now; and his writings, with their unexplored depths and heights, still wait for the proper interpreter. The best comes last. In the vision of Elijah on Mount Horeb, the strong wind that rent the mountains and brake in pieces the rocks, and the earthquake and the fire preceded the still small voice of Jehovah. The owl of Minerva, the goddess of wisdom, begins his flight at twilight. The storm of battle prepares the way for the feast of peace. The great warrior of the apostolic age had already sounded the key-note of love which was to harmonise the two sections of Christendom; and John only responded to Paul when he revealed the inmost heart of the Supreme Being by the profoundest of all definitions—"God is love."

#### JOHN'S TRAINING AND CHARACTER.

John was the son (probably the younger son) of Zebedee and Salome, and the brother of the elder James, who became the proto-martyr of the apostles. He may have been about ten years younger than Jesus; and as, according to the unanimous testimony of antiquity, he lived to the reign of Trajan—*i.e.*, till after 98—he must have attained an age of over ninety years. Like Peter, Andrew, and Philip, he was a fisherman by occupation, probably of Bethsaida, in Galilee. His parents seem to have been in comfortable circumstances. His father kept hired servants; his mother belonged to the noble band of women who followed Jesus, and supported Him with their means; who purchased spices to embalm Him; who were the last at the cross, and the first at the open tomb. John himself was acquainted with the high priest, and owned a house in Jerusalem or Galilee, into which he received the mother of our Lord.

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

He had no rabbinical training, like Paul; and in the eyes of the

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Jewish scholars, like Peter and the other Galilean disciples, he was an "unlearned and ignorant man." But he passed through the preparatory school of John the Baptist, who summed up his prophetic mission in the testimony to Jesus as the "Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world,"—a testimony which he afterwards expanded in his own writings. It was this testimony which led him to Jesus on the banks of the Jordan, in that memorable interview of which, half-a-century afterwards, he remembered the very hour. He was not only one of the Twelve, but the chosen of the chosen Three. Before the public, Peter stood out more prominently as the friend of the Messiah. John was known in the private circle as the friend of Jesus. Peter always looked at the official character of Christ, and asked what he and the other apostles should do; John gazed steadily at the person of Jesus, and was intent to learn what the Master said. They differed as the busy Martha, anxious to serve, and the pensive Mary, contented to learn. John alone, with Peter and his brother James, witnessed the scenes of the transfiguration and of Gethsemane—the highest exaltation and the deepest humiliation in the earthly life of our Lord. He leaned on His breast at the last supper, and treasured in his heart for future use those wonderful farewell discourses. He followed Him to the court of Caiaphas. He alone of all the disciples was present at the crucifixion, and was entrusted by the dying Saviour with the care of His mother. This commitment was a scene of unique delicacy and tenderness: the *mater dolorosa* and the beloved disciple gazing at the cross; the dying Son and Lord uniting them in maternal and filial love. The scene furnishes the type of those heaven-born spiritual relationships which are deeper and stronger than any of blood and interest. As he was the last at the cross, so, outrunning even Peter, he was also, next to Mary Magdalene, the first of the disciples who looked into the open tomb on the resurrection morning; and he was the first to recognise the risen Lord when He appeared to the disciples on the shore of the Lake of Galilee.

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

There are no violent changes reported in John's history. He grew silently and imperceptibly into communion with his Lord and conformity to His example. He was in this respect the antithesis of Paul. He heard more and saw more, but spoke less than the other disciples. He absorbed Christ's deepest sayings, which escaped the attention of

others ; and although he himself did not understand them at first, he pondered them in his heart till the Holy Spirit illuminated them. His intimacy with Mary also must have aided him in gaining an inside view of the mind and heart of his Lord. He appears throughout as the beloved disciple, in closest intimacy and in fullest sympathy with the Lord.

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

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

In their early history the sons of Zebedee misunderstood the difference between the law and the gospel, when in an outburst of holy indignation against a Samaritan village which refused to receive Jesus, they were ready, like Elijah of old, to call consuming fire from heaven. But when, some years afterwards, John went to Samaria to confirm the new converts, he called down upon them the fire of Divine life and light, the gift of the Holy Spirit. The same mistaken zeal for his Master was at the bottom of his intolerance towards those who performed a good work in the name of Christ, but outside of the apostolic circle. The desire of the two brothers, in which their mother shared, for the highest positions in the Messianic kingdom, likewise reveals both their strength and their weakness : a noble ambition to be near Christ, though it might be near the fire and the sword ; yet an ambition that was not free from selfishness and pride, deserving the rebuke of our Lord, who held up before them the prospect of the baptism of blood.

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

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though he was moved in the depths rather than on the surface. In the Apocalypse, the thunder rolls loud and mighty against the enemies of Christ and His kingdom ; while, on the other hand, there are in the same book episodes of rest, and anthems of peace and joy, and a description of the heavenly Jerusalem which could have proceeded only from the loved disciple. In the Gospel and the Epistles of John, we feel the same power, only subdued and restrained. He reports the severest as well as the sweetest discourses of the Saviour, according as he spoke to the enemies of the truth, or in the circle of the disciples. No other evangelist gives us such a profound inside-view of the antagonism between Christ and the Jewish hierarchy, and of the growing intensity of that hatred which culminated in the bloody counsel ; no apostle draws a sharper line of demarcation between light and darkness, truth and falsehood, Christ and Antichrist. His Gospel and Epistles move in these irreconcilable antagonisms. He knows no compromise between God and Baal. With what holy horror does he speak of the traitor, and the rising rage of the Pharisees against the Messiah ! How severely does he, in the words of the Lord, denounce the unbelieving Jews with their murderous designs, as children of the devil ! And, in his Epistles, he terms every one who dishonours his Christian profession, a liar ; every one who hates his brother, a murderer ; every one who wilfully sins, a child of the devil ; and he earnestly warns against teachers who deny the mystery of the incarnation, as Antichrists, and forbids even to salute them. The measure of his love of Christ was the measure of his hatred of Antichrist. For hatred is inverted love. Love and hatred are one and the same passion, only revealed in opposite directions. The same sun gives light and heat to the living, and hastens the decay of the dead.

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

A proper appreciation of John's character as thus set forth removes the chief difficulty of ascribing the Apocalypse and the fourth Gospel to one and the same writer. The temper is the same in both : a noble, enthusiastic nature, capable of intense emotion, of love and hatred ; but with the difference of vigorous manhood and ripe old age, between the roar of battle and the repose of peace. The theology is the same, including the most characteristic features of Christology and soteriology. Even the difference of style, which is startling at first sight, disappears on closer inspection. The Greek of the Apocalypse is the most Hebraising of all the books of the New Testament, but this might be expected from its close affinity with Hebrew prophecy, to which the classical Greek furnished no parallel ; while the Greek of the fourth Gospel is pure, and free from irregularities ; yet, after all, John the Evangelist also shows the greatest familiarity with, and the deepest

insight into, the Hebrew religion, and preserves its purest and noblest elements; even his style has a childlike simplicity and sententious brevity as of the Old Testament; it is only a Greek body inspired by a Hebrew soul.

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

#### THE APOSTOLIC LABOURS OF JOHN.

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

In the earlier chapters of the Acts he appears, next to Peter, as the chief apostle of the new religion; he heals with him the cripple at the gate of the temple; he is brought with him before the Sanhedrin to bear witness to Christ; he is sent with him by the apostles from Jerusalem to Samaria to confirm the Christian converts by imparting to them the Holy Spirit; and he returns with him to Jerusalem. But Peter is always named first, and takes the lead in word and act; John follows in mysterious silence, and makes the impression of a reserved force which will manifest itself at some future time. He must have been present at the conference of the apostles in Jerusalem, A.D. 50, but he made no speech, and took no active part in the great discussion about circumcision and the terms of Church membership. All this is in entire keeping with the character of modest and silent prominence given to him in the Gospels.

After the year 50 he seems to have left Jerusalem. The Acts make no more mention either of him or Peter. When Paul made his fifth and last visit to the holy city (A.D. 58) he met James, but none of the apostles.

The later and most important labours of John are contained in his

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

We do not know when he removed to Asia Minor, but he cannot have done so before the year 63. For in his valedictory address to the Ephesian elders, and in his Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians, and the second to Timothy, Paul makes no allusion to John, and speaks with the authority of a superintendent of the churches of Asia Minor. It was probably the martyrdom of Peter and Paul that induced John to take charge of the orphan churches, exposed to serious dangers and trials.

Ephesus, the capital of proconsular Asia, was a centre of Grecian culture, commerce, and religion; famous of old for the songs of Homer, Anacreon, and Mimnerus; the philosophy of Thales, Anaximenes, and Anaximander; the worship and wonderful temple of Diana. There Paul had laboured three years (54-57), and established an influential church, a beacon-light in the surrounding darkness of heathenism. From that point he could best commune with the numerous churches he had planted in the provinces. There he experienced peculiar joys and trials, and foresaw great dangers of heresies that should spring from within. All the forces of orthodox and heretical Christianity were collected there. Jerusalem was approaching its downfall; Rome was not yet a second Jerusalem. Ephesus, by the labours of Paul and of John, became the chief theatre of Church history in the second half of the first, and during the greater part of the second century. Polycarp, the patriarchal martyr, and Irenæus, the leading theologian in the conflict with Gnosticism, best represent the spirit of John, and bear testimony to his influence. He alone could complete the work of Paul and Peter, and give the Church that compact unity which it needed for her self-preservation against persecution from without, and heresy and corruption from within.

If it were not for the writings of John, the last thirty years of the first century would be almost an entire blank. They resemble that mysterious period of forty days between the resurrection and ascension, when the Lord hovered, as it were, between heaven and earth, barely touching the earth beneath, and appearing to the disciples like a spirit from the other world. But the theology of the second and third centuries evidently presupposes the writings of John, and starts from his Christology rather than from Paul's anthropology and soteriology, which were buried out of sight until the fourth century, when Augustine in Africa revived them.



## JOHN AT PATMOS.

According to the unanimous testimony of the ancient Church, John was banished to the solitary, rocky, and barren island of Patmos (now Patmo or Palmosa), in the *Ægean* Sea, south-west of Ephesus. This tradition rests on the testimony of the Apocalypse, i. 9, as usually understood—"I, John, your brother, and partaker with you in the tribulation and kingdom and patience in Jesus, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for (on account of) the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus." Some modern writers (Bleek, De Wette, Düsterdieck) explain this to mean simply that the author of the Apocalypse, whoever he was, was carried (in a vision) to Patmos to receive the revelation there, and they trace the tradition of the exile to a misunderstanding of this passage. But the mention of the "tribulation" and "patience" in the same connection, and the usual meaning of "testimony," which is not equivalent to revelation, as well as the parallel passages, chaps. vi. 9; xx. 4, confirm the traditional exegesis. In Patmos, John received, while "in the spirit, on the Lord's day," those wonderful revelations concerning the struggles and victories of Christianity which are recorded in that mysterious book—the Apocalypse.

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

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

The prevailing, we may say the only distinct tradition, beginning with so respectable a witness as Irenæus about 170, assigns the exile to the end of the reign of Domitian, who ruled from 81 to 96. He was the second Roman emperor who persecuted Christianity, and banishment was one of his favourite modes of punishment. Both facts give support to this tradition. After a promising beginning he became as cruel and bloodthirsty as Nero, and surpassed him in hypocrisy and blasphemous self-deification. He began his letters, "Our Lord and God commands," and required his subjects to address him so. He ordered gold and silver statues of himself to be placed in the holiest place of the temples. When he seemed most friendly, he was most dangerous. He spared neither senators nor consuls when they fell under his dark suspicion, or stood in the way of his ambition. He searched for the descendants of David and the kinsmen of Jesus, fearing their aspirations, but found that they were poor and innocent persons. Many Christians suffered martyrdom under his reign, on the charge of atheism—among them his own cousin, Flavius Clemens, of consular dignity, who was put

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to death, and his wife Domitilla, who was banished to the island of Pandateria, near Naples. In favour of the traditional date may also be urged an intrinsic propriety that the book which closes the canon, and treats of the last things till the final consummation, should have been written last.

Nevertheless, the internal evidence of the Apocalypse itself, and a comparison with the fourth Gospel, favour an earlier date, before the destruction of Jerusalem, and during the interregnum which followed the death of Nero (68), when the beast—that is, the Roman Empire—was wounded, but was soon to be revived (by the accession of Vespasian). If there is some foundation for the early tradition of the intended oil-martyrdom of John at Rome or at Ephesus, it would naturally point to the Neronian persecution, in which Christians were covered with inflammable material, and burned as torches. The unmistakable allusions to imperial persecutions apply much better to Nero than to Domitian. The difference between the Hebrew colouring and fiery vigour of the Apocalypse, and the pure Greek and calm repose of the fourth Gospel, to which we have already alluded, is more easily explained if the former was written some twenty years earlier. This view has some slight support in ancient tradition, and has been adopted by the majority of modern critical historians and commentators.

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

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

#### TRADITIONS RESPECTING JOHN.

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

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

Irenæus bears testimony to his character as "the son of thunder," when he relates, as from the lips of Polycarp, that, on meeting in a

public bath at Ephesus the Gnostic heretic Cerinthus, who denied the incarnation of our Lord, John refused to remain under the same roof, lest it might fall down. This reminds one of the incident recorded in Luke ix. 49, and the apostle's severe warning in 2 John 10 and 11. The story exemplifies the possibility of uniting the deepest love of truth with sternest denunciation of error and moral evil.

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

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

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

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

The same Polycrates of Ephesus describes John as wearing the plate or diadem of the Jewish high priest (Exod. xxviii. 36, 37; xxxix. 30, 31). It is probably a figurative expression of priestly holiness which John attaches to all true believers (Comp. Rev. ii. 17), but in which he excelled as the patriarch.

From a misunderstanding of the enigmatical word of Jesus (John xxi. 22), arose the legend that John was only asleep in his grave, gently moving the mound as he breathed, and awaiting the final advent of the Lord. According to another form of the legend, he died, but was immediately raised and translated to heaven, like Elijah, to return with him as the herald of the second advent of Christ.

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