

**PAPIAS AND HIS  
CONTEMPORARIES; A STUDY  
OF RELIGIOUS THOUGHT  
IN THE SECOND CENTURY**

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Papias and His Contemporaries; A Study of Religious Thought in the Second Century by  
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**EDWARD H. HALL**

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BY  
EDWARD H. HALL



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## CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
I. AN EARLY INVESTIGATOR . . . . .	1
II. PRIMITIVE CHRISTIAN LITERATURE . . . . .	21
III. TWO LEARNED DOCTORS . . . . .	63
IV. THE MILLENNIAL REIGN . . . . .	106
V. THEOLOGICAL SPECULATIONS . . . . .	138
VI. THE MYSTIC GOSPEL . . . . .	199
VII. APPENDIX . . . . .	241
INDEX . . . . .	315





# PAPIAS

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## CHAPTER I

### AN EARLY INVESTIGATOR

THE reader of the Christian Scriptures finds many unsolved problems still remaining to perplex him. Even the unpracticed eye detects in them tokens of varied sources and successive stages of growth. Not only are they confessedly by different authors and written at different periods, but each book by itself often shows signs of a composite character. Whence came these several layers ; when and how ?

The easiest questions to ask are sometimes the hardest to answer, especially where religions are concerned, whose infancy is so sure to be obscure and unrecorded, and which conceal so carefully the secrets of their early growth, — not intentionally, of course, but of necessity. Before the world has awoken to their significance, or the actors themselves become aware of the rôle they are filling, the incidents that attended their birth have already been lost, and

it is impossible to recover them. In the case of Christianity, more than a century passed before it gained that consciousness of itself or sense of individuality which made its early hours sacred to its thought, or bade it treasure its primitive records, or even the story of its founders. Then it was too late; too late, that is, to recall with any vividness such far-away occurrences, or the personalities engaged in them. Even the twelve Apostles, with two or three exceptions, are mere names to us; still more the obscure chroniclers who so laboriously gathered for us, here and there, whatever had survived from distant and half-forgotten times.

To trace these several compilations back, one by one, to their original sources is an endless and dispiriting task, as the mass of scholarly commentaries, with their conflicting hypotheses, abundantly show. But suppose we try a more modest experiment: place ourselves midway in the process, and see what story that single moment tells. Let us take the first writer of distinction after the apostolic times, and learn from him what we can of the state of the Christian Scriptures, and the attitude of Christian thought, with which he and his contemporaries were familiar. There are so few

living personalities emerging from those eventful hours that we are in duty bound to make the most of any who can be found.

Such a character was Papias, bishop of Hierapolis in Phrygia; not indeed the very first of whom we hear, but the first after the death of the Apostle Paul to present any marked individuality. With our modern associations, we might not look for such a personage in Phrygia. Christianity has so entirely lost its hold upon Asia Minor that it requires some mental effort to remember that it was in that direction that Paul first turned as the best field for his missionary effort; or that before the end of the first century a more numerous circle of Christian churches had appeared in the western section of Asia Minor than in any other region of equal size.<sup>1</sup> In point of fact, for two centuries at least Ephesus, with its neighboring communities, held its own with Jerusalem, Rome, and Alexandria, as an important Christian centre, with more individuality of its own than either.

<sup>1</sup> Rev. i. 11; ii.; iii. Hierapolis does not appear among the "seven churches," but it lay within a few miles of Colosse and Laodicea, and evidently stood in some personal relations with the Apostle Paul. (Col. iv. 13.) For full accounts of this interesting region, see Lightfoot's *Introduc. to St. Paul's Epis. to Col. and Philem.*, pp. 1-72; Kenan's *Hist. des Origines*, iii. 126-130, 351-360; Ramsay's *Cities of Phrygia*, i. ch. iii., xii.