Some patristic testimonia from Irenaeus, Athanasius, and Dionysius of Alexandria

Timothy Aelurus (d. AD 477)

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THE PATRISTIC TESTIMONIA OF TIMOTHEUS AELURUS.
(IRENAEUS, ATHANASIUS, DIONYSIUS.)

I. *

In the following pages I discuss certain pieces which occur in what we may call the Patristic dossier of the patriarch of Alexandria Timotheus, nicknamed Aelurus or the Cat. Next to nothing remains in Greek of his works, because he was in conflict with the form of belief which triumphed in the great churches of the west and the east at the Council of Chalcedon. Four years ago, however, there was published at Leipzig a lengthy treatise of Timotheus in old Armenian by two archimandrites of Edschmiadsin. It is a work which seems to have been written by him when he was banished to Gangra in the year 460; his method in it is to state his own views, together with those of his opponents, and then to give select passages from fathers whose orthodoxy was considered above doubt and dispute, to shew that his opinion was old and catholic; and these are followed by passages from recognized heretics like Paul of Samosata, Nestorius, and Theodoret, and it is argued that the decisions of the Council of Chalcedon were in agreement with the latter. We should expect a patriarch of Alexandria writing in the middle of the fifth century to preserve to us passages from many Christian authors now lost; and this expectation is not wholly disappointed when |433 we come to examine the Armenian text, which was made from the original Greek between the years 550 and 600. We find, however, many more testimonia from writers of the third and fourth century than we do from that of the second century, and Irenaeus is the only really early writer whom Timotheus had in his hands. It is also to be doubted whether he had his works entire, and did not rather derive his citations from some book of selections made for the use of the fathers who assembled at Ephesus to condemn Nestorius.

(a) Irenaeus. The passages which he quotes from Irenaeus are as follows:---- 1. Title: Of the blessed Irenaeus, a successor of the apostles and Bishop of Lugdunum, who was celebrated for his knowledge of the lore of philosophers.

'The law and the prophets and the gospels have proclaimed that Christ was born of a virgin and passible upon the cross, and visible from among the dead, and that He ascended into the heavens, and was glorified by the Father and is King for ever. Also that He is perfect mind, the Word of God, who before the Daystar was born, co-creator of all, fashioner of man, who became all in all: patriarch among patriarchs, law among laws, high priest among priests, among kings ruler and leader, among prophets a prophet, among angels an angel, among men a man, in the Father Son, in God God, Eternal Ruler. He it is who steered Noah in his ship, and guided Abraham, with Isaac was He bound, and together with Jacob He sojourned in a strange land; together with Joseph He Was sold, and with Moses He led the host; to the people He gave laws, and with Joshua the son of Nave He uttered dooms. In David He was a singer, and among the prophets He proclaimed His own passion. In the virgin He was made flesh, and in Bethlehem was born, in a manger He was wrapt in swaddling clothes, and was beheld by the shepherds. By the angels He was glorified, and by the Magi worshipped, was welcomed by John and was baptized in the Jordan, was tempted in the wilderness and was found to be Lord.

He gathered round Him disciples, and preached the kingdom, He healed the halt and cleansed the lepers, He illuminated the blind, and raised the dead. He appeared in the temple, and was not believed in by the people, He was betrayed by the Jews and taken prisoner by the high priest, was brought before Herod and judged in the presence of Pilate. In His flesh He was nailed, and hung upon the tree, in the earth He was buried, and He rose again from the dead, He appeared to the disciples and was raised up to heaven; on the right hand of the Father He sat down and was glorified by Him. As He is the Resurrection of those who are buried, so He is the salvation of the |434 lost, the illumination of them that are in darkness, and the ransom of those who are exiled, guide of those gone astray and refuge of the afflicted, Shepherd of the saved and Bridegroom of the Church, the charioteer of the cherubs and captain of the angels, God of God, Son from the Father, Jesus Christ, King unto the ages, Amen.'

The above passage has already been published in Armenian by Cardinal Pitra, in vol. i ch. 4 of his Spicilegium, from a recently written Codex in the library of the Convent of San Lazaro at Venice. W. W. Harvey, the Cambridge editor of Irenaeus, remarks that it represents the same original as a Syriac fragment which he publishes, but with certain interpolations, which he brackets as such in his Latin translation. The passages bracketed at least double the length of the extract; and the text, as we have given it above from the work of Timotheus, not only contains

several phrases which are not found in the Armenian MS of Venice, but is in general more correct. There is no reason to suppose that the additional matter of Timotheus is an interpolation. In antiquity his text of Irenaeus goes far behind any other sources; and there is no reason to suppose that its tradition has been tampered with. It may be remarked that the Armenian text of Timotheus is published from a very ancient uncial MS written on parchment, of which the editors 'give a couple of facsimiles. It is in a very archaic style of writing, certainly not later than the twelfth century, and perhaps as early as the tenth.

2. The next fragment of Irenaeus also exists in Syriac, and is given in Harvey's edition on page 458 of the second volume. It had already been printed by Cardinal Pitra in the first volume of his Spicilegium in a Syriac form with a Latin translation. It is as follows in the text of Timotheus:----

'The Holy Scriptures recognize that Christ as He was Man, so likewise He was not man; and that as He was flesh, so also spirit, and Word of God, and God. And as in the last times born of Mary, so also first-born of all creation, come forth from God; and as hungering, so also as satisfying His appetite, and as thirsting, so also they state that He long ago gave to the Jews to drink, when He was the rock Christ ; so now to the faithful, Jesus gives spiritual water to drink, welling forth to life eternal. And as He felt weariness, so He gives rest to those who are weary and heavy-laden; and as He was Son of David, so also that He is David's Lord; and as He is descended from Abraham, that so He was before Abraham. And as He was a servant of God, so also that He was Son of God and Lord of all. And as He was spat upon in ignominy, so also that He breathed His Spirit into His disciples; |435 and as He sorrowed, so is giver of joy to His people. And as He was susceptible to capture and to handling, so again He passed into the midst of those who thought to do Him harm, yet was not taken by them, and through closed doors He entered in, yet was not confined by them. And as He slept, so also He gave command to sea and winds and spirits;

and as He suffered, so also He is alive, and redeemer, and heals from every sickness. And as He died, so also is He the Resurrection of the dead; on earth without honour, yet in the heavens greater than all honour and glory. Crucified indeed He was because of infirmity, yet He lives by dint of divine potency. Into the lowest parts of earth He descended, yet ascended above the heavens. He found sufficient for Himself the manger, yet fills everything. He became dead, and was made alive for ever and ever, Amen.'

3. A third passage which survives in the citation of Timotheus is Book I, ch. ii, of the work against Heresies. It is a passage of which Epiphanius discerned the importance and accordingly cited it in his. work on Heresies, Book XXXI, ch. xxx. In the Armenian we have a fresh testimony to the text of it, as follows:----

Holy Church, although it extends over the whole world, being sown like seed to the limits of the earth, from the Apostles and from their disciples has received the faith in one God, Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, of the sea and all that is in them; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, who was made flesh for our salvation; and in the Holy Spirit, who by means of the prophets was preacher of the dispensations of God and of the advent and of the birth from a virgin, and of the passion and the resurrection from the dead and the bodily ascension into heaven, of the loved son Christ Jesus, our Lord, and of His advent from the heavens in the glory of the Father in order to recapitulate all things, and raise all flesh of all mankind; in order that to Jesus Christ, our Lord and God and Saviour and King, in accordance with the will of the Father unseen, every knee may be bent, of beings in heaven and on earth and under the earth; and that every tongue may fully confess to Him; and that He may fulfil judgement of righteousness upon all, and may send into eternal fire the spiritual powers of evil and the transgressing angels, and those that became apostates, and the impious and the unjust and the lawless and the blasphemers among men; but that bestowing life He may make ready incorruption and glory for the holy and righteous, and for those who kept His commandments, and did abide in His love, some from the beginning, but some by way of repentance.

This preaching the Church received, and this faith, as we said above; |436 and although she is sown like seed over all the earth, she carefully guards it, as dwelling in a single house; and in the same way she believes in the above, as having one soul, and the same heart, and concordantly she preaches these things and teaches them and hands them down, as possessed of one mouth. (b) Athanasius. From Athanasius Timotheus derived many pieces of his dossier, some of them not extant in Greek. The texts used by Timotheus were many centuries earlier than any of our MSS of Athanasius, and must have been those which were preserved in the archives of the Alexandrine patriarchate. The Armenian version is therefore of some value for the text of the excerpts, but in some cases they appear to be abridged from the original. Three passages are cited from the Discourse on the Holy Spirit which are not found in the Latin version: we may perhaps infer that the Latin text is an abridgement of the lost Greek original. Several passages are cited as from Athanasius which are from works to-day ascribed by critics to Apollinaris of Laodicea. The De incarnatione Dei Verbi is an example. Timotheus gives it in full among his testimonia, just as his predecessor Cyril cited it at some length in his Epistle to the Princesses. Leontius of Byzantium under Justinian surmised that the citation had been interpolated in Cyril's letter, but the reappearance of the entire piece in Timotheus does not confirm such an hypothesis; and it is possible after all that at one time of his life Athanasius may have written passages which a hundred years later the adversaries of the Council of Chalcedon found useful.

(c) Dionysius. Among the existing Greek fragments of Dionysius, Patriarch of Alexandria (died a.d. 264-265), is a letter to Basilides, Bishop of the churches

in the Pentapolis, on the great Sabbath. It deals with the question of what is the right hour at which to break the Easter Fast, and was printed in vol. iii of Routh's Reliquiae Sacrae, in Beverege's Synodicum, in Mansi's Concilia, and other collections of the kind. Now in the same uncial MS which contains the work of Timothy Aelurus f. 306 r° we find a long excerpt from Dionysius bearing the following title: 'Of the Blessed Dionysius, Archbishop of Alexandria, from the Epistle to the Queen, an examination of the evidence of the Resurrection after three days of the Lord, shewing that the Lord is true.' I conjecture that the Armenian word thaguhin, 'queen', here renders basi/lissan in a Greek original, and that this was a corruption of |437 βασιλίδην; for we know from Eusebius that Dionysius wrote to him not only the epistle above mentioned, but several others. An alternative view is that the Queen in question was Zenobia, the patroness of Paul of Samosata. The Epistle of Dionysius against the latter proves that he was interested in churches which were under Zenobia's jurisdiction. If she was as favourably inclined to Christianity as she is reported to have been, she may well have sought information on the points with which this letter deals from the head of a church so celebrated as was that of Alexandria for skill and accuracy in respect of calendarial calculations.

Here are the passages of this letter preserved by Timotheus or by the Armenian who translated his book against the Decisions of Chalcedon. In the MS they follow that book without any break:---- 306 r°. 'And the evening and the morning were one day' (Gen. i 5). And they ask which was first, day or night? Now thou hast rightly reckoned that which lies immediately at hand and has been made clear in advance, that the day seems to be previous to the night. In common parlance anyhow we say that the day is fulfilled at eventide and that the dawn is the completion of the night. And for this reason perhaps Job, anxious because of his excessive agony for the divisions of time to pass by, says: 'If I fall asleep, I say, When is the day? But if I wake up, again I say, When is evening?' Signifying the evening to be as it were the limit of the day, and that the night ceases when the day, that is the dawn, appears.

And, mark this, a similar conclusion appears to be in accordance with convention. For after God had said, Let there be light, and after the light was first created and called by him Day, just as later on the darkness was called Night, he added----as if the day was fulfilled----that, 'There was the evening and there was the dawn.' And straightway comprising the two at once, he fulfilled one day. For, says some one, it is meet for the time of working to be called Day, but for what remains and is a cessation from work to be called Night. Even as our Lord said: It is needful for you to do the work of him that sent you, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work. And after a little:---- For the day is always mentioned first, as God foretold to Noe: 'By day and by night thou shalt not pause'; or the Sun makes the beginning of his revolution from the West and concludes it at the East, and then pursues his return, as the Psalmist foretold: ' The Sun knew |438 his setting. Thou didst set the darkness, and it was night; but thereafter the Sun arose and beamed.'

But if persuaded by the above arguments we believe that the day precedes night, then a doubt, as thou hast written, assails the argument; I mean that you call in question, in respect of the three days, the mystery of the resurrection of the Beloved. For it is no longer on the third day, but on the second, that he must be reckoned first to have risen from the dead; for if he died on the Paraskevé (i. e. Friday) and rose on the next day, on the Sabbath, (that was) after the same (day's) night, this being reckoned therewith. And after a little:---- Now, if one begins at this point, he contradicts all that was said before; and we all affirm----I mean that the entire Church of God beginning from the holy apostles bears witness----that the night was part not of the day which had passed away, but of that which was approaching; and was divided from what preceded it, but associated with what succeeds itself. For when does he minister and to whom, as to one dissatisfied, does he present his work? If he really refers his work first to the past, then it were meet for us to feast the Sabbath, as if the Lord had risen thereon. For he rose on the night of it, if on the night following it. But as it is, we have left this to Jews, and the eyewitnesses and those who themselves heard the Lord, have handed down to us the tradition of feasting on the first of the week. For they have related to us that our Lord arose unto it and on it; and so they honoured the day with a glorious epithet, naming it Kyriaké, which means Dominical.

And after a little:---- So at least the Jews, when the sun sets on Paraskevé, say that the Sabbath is come and first enforce Sabbatical inactivity during the repose of night; for it is forbidden them to light a fire on the Sabbath day. But the day belonging to the preceding night they exclude, (the day) |439 which is ushered in by the evening before it. For their repose is abrogated, having become general mourning in connexion with the feast, in that the Lord was hidden from that (day) forth, having remained wholly in the heart of the earth without arising thereon, in order to establish for us as a more Dominical and truer feast the first of the week dawning on us. And, indeed, all men associate the preceding nights with the morrows to come, and regulate their nocturnal proceedings to suit the days which immediately follow. In this manner do they celebrate birthdays, in this annual commemorations of deaths, in this those of festal occasions.

308 r°. Why in confirmation of this do we further appeal to the general procedure of Gentiles and to the traditional usage of the ancestors of the Jews? Not only so, but sufficient for us, as teaching this, is the Healer of God Moses, so far forth as he has revealed to us the creation of the world; for with all clearness he indicated to us that the compass of day extends from evening to evening, in the passage in which he enacts concerning the Pascha as follows:---- 'For at the commencement, on the 14th day of the first month, from even (ye are) to eat unleavened bread until the 21st day of the month at even. For seven days leaven shall not be found in your houses.' But the seven days are from the 15th to the 20th. It is clear, therefore, that the 15th began with the 14th evening, while the 21st ended on the following

day before the night of the next evening. And the 14th day was not one of the days of unleavened bread; but the lamb was slain on it, not at even, for the evening was not thereof, but when the evening was advanced, as it is written :----

'And they shall slay it, all the multitude of the congregation of the children of Israel, towards even.' Then, anyway after a sufficient interval had taken place, during which they were laying the blood on the door-posts and lintels, were also skinning and preparing it, and as the Scripture adds:----- 'They shall eat the flesh on that night roasted with fire, with unleavened bread upon bitter herbs shall they consume it.' So then the first day of unleavened bread was the 15th, beginning with eventide and night, as he again says :---- 'Seven days ye shall eat unleavened bread, and from the first day ye shall hide away leaven out of your houses.' And after a little from Leviticus :---- 'In the first month on the 14th of the month, in the middle of the |440 evening is the Pascha of the Lord. And from the 15th of this month is the feast of unleavened bread of the Lord. Seven days ye shall eat unleavened bread.'

And as he said in Exodus:---- 'They shall slay it towards even.' So in this passage he modifies his expression to 'in the middle of the evening', because not at the completion nor on the verge of even, but in the middle of the term, the passover was to be slain, in order that on that account the 15th might be called the feast of unleavened bread and it might be consumed just at nightfall. And after other matter:---- 'But if any one imagine that eventide is end and last portion of the day, because the Pascha is declared to be the seventh until evening, let him reflect that the first day was declared (to begin) from the evening, as if the evening were the first limit of the day; and it is necessary that all the days compounded of days and nights should be uniform and commensurate one with the other; and their common beginnings must be one, and their completion must be the same in transmission, while the definite periods comprised in them must be invariable one from the other. One eventide, therefore, and one dawn, and one mid-day, and one mid-night is included in each.

And after other matter:---- For the three days' mystery of our Lord's Resurrection is to be computed thus: He instructed his disciples beforehand that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders and high priests and scribes, and die, and on the third day rise from the dead. Now after the ninth hour----in which he died----what remained of Paraskevé was one day, but the day-night of the Sabbath totalled a second; but the evening of the Sabbath, as Matthew says, was 'beginning to dawn for the first of the week', and in these words he signified as a manner of its imminence that the night was being illumined, but not that the day was being darkened by the night's overtaking it. From the verge of night was the third day, on which, according to his prediction, our Lord arose.

Some one argues from there having been darkness from the sixth to the ninth hour, taking (this) for a night, that the three days and three nights (so) came to pass, and reckons this fraction too (as belonging) to the days in order to complete the days; for he divides off the Paraskevé up to the sixth hour and puts it aside as then entirely completed; but from the ninth hour on as the second day, both what |441 of these (hours) is Paraskevé and what is Sabbath. Now two days in one do not constitute a Paraskevé, nor two Sabbaths. And he recognizes one true night, but adds the other that never was. For the darkness in question was in a way a symbolic passion and mourning, as it were, of the day, the sun having all but hidden himself and subsided into blackness at what was taking place. But a night was not (therefore) to be added in the reckoning; nay, even if it be called exceptional and excessive night, it was yet moonless and starless, and for that reason is not to be reckoned on a level with other nights. If, however, Sabbath follows Paraskevé and after it the first day of the week is completed, it is clear, if the Paraskevé on that occasion lasted until the sixth hour, while the Sabbath came after the ninth, then the Sabbath was turned into the first of the week, and the first of the week trenched on the second. And as we still feast it as dominical, both number and order of the days have obviously been confused, an extra day having been intercalated.

But such views are most unreasonable. Why should we not equally entitle nights all eclipses of the sun? For although on that occasion, the moon being at its full, and the month only half expired, the eclipse was most incongruous and miraculous, for it is (under such circumstances) impossible, as experts in these matters declare it to be. For they say this never occurs except in the usual intercrossing of their paths and directions, by reason of the moon's intrusion and of its turning the rays into shadow relatively to us. And although this (eclipse) was a longish one, extending over three hours as it did, and though in its case the darkness was very profound, nevertheless some other eclipses have been longer in duration, and during them both the atmosphere has been darkened and the stars have shone out as at night, yet they;have never been intercalated as forming a single night. And that the day was single, and that the darkness as well as its light was included in it, had been prophesied by Zachariah : 'On that day there shall not jbe light, and cold and frost shall there be, the one day, and that day known unto the Lord, neither day nor night, but toward evening there shall be light.'

And that the darkness was altogether (equivalent to) three days' death is not true, for the darkness took place while he was still alive upon the tree; for he was nailed up at the third hour, as Mark assures us: 'It was now the third hour and they crucified him.' But the three evangelists are also concordant in declaring that the darkness lasted from the sixth hour to the ninth, and that then the Lord with a cry gave up the ghost. |442 And after a little:----

In spite of this uncertainty, we must recognize which (were) the three days: we have clearly the Sabbath fully composed of a night and a day. For as we said above, it was in order to refute and cast opprobrium on the Jews, that he enacted that their festival should become wholly a day of mourning. At least he associated death with each of the days, and accepted for one complete day part of a day, and for another part of a night, indicating that the night in importance pre(cedes) day and that the day is to be (dated) by the night. For the part is in (the whole) and the whole is often named from the part. For a man has only to pass inside a city's gates, and he is said to have entered the city; and another to have gone aboard a ship, if he only sets foot on the gangway (or ? bows); and one who transgresses a single rule, is a transgressor of the law. Again, a man is born in a single hour, yet we keep his birth-day, and pretend that what took place in a moment was done on that day. In the same way as we say that the passover is slain on the 14th, when it is only slain at its close, nights and days in a way passing into one another and along with one another,----So we say that the Lord fulfilled the type of Jonah by passing three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

F. C. CONYBEARE. [Footnotes renumbered and moved to the end.] * Note to the online edition. The text has been indented to highlight the quotations, but it is not quite clear whether 'And after a little' is a statement by Conybeare or Timothy. I have indented as if the latter. The quotation marks are as in the original: i.e. apparently random. The 'I' that appears at the top of the article suggests that further articles were intended. However in Louis Mariès, Frederick Cornwallis Conybeare (1856-1924) : Notice Biographique et Bibliographique (1926: New York reprint 1970, ISBN 0-8337-22158) , p.261, we are told that the bibliographer could find no trace of any such continuation. 1. 1 Cor. x 4. 2. 2 Cor. xiii 4. 3. Eph. iv 9, 10. 4. Reading geradsavotzn for the vox nihili garadsotsn in the Arm. text. 5. Job vii 4. 6. Gen. i 3-5. 7. John ix 4 (the ordinary text read us or me for you).

8. Gen. viii 23. 9. Ps. ciii 19, 20. 10. i.e. ἀγαπητός. 11. i. e. From Friday 6 p.m. to Saturday 6 p.m. is one day; from Saturday 6 p.m. to Sunday 6 p.m. is a second day; therefore if Jesus died on Friday afternoon and rose on Sunday at dawn, he rose on the second day, not on the third. 12. i. e. of the Sabbath or on Saturday night. Perhaps this sentence is the lemma of one whom Dionysius controverts. The meaning of the sentences which precede: For when, &c, is obscure, though the Armenian text is straightforward. Perhaps for djkhoyi----'one dissatisfied' should be read dshkhoyi='a Queen', viz., the Christian Church. 13. i. e. the feasting of the Sabbath. 14. Friday. 15. i. e. our Friday 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. 16. i. e. our Thursday night. 17. i. e. our Thursday evening. 18. i. e. of the Jews.

19. ἐπιφώσκουσαν. 20. i.e. the eves of festivals. 21. Exod. xii 18-19. 22. Or 'added'. 23. Exod. xii 8. 24. Exod. xii 15. 25. Levit. xxiii 5-6. 26. Matt. xx 18. 27. ἡμερονύκτιον. 28. Matt. xxviii 1. 29. The next few words are to me unintelligible.

30. xiv 6-7. 31. Owing to lacunae in text the reading is not certain. 32. xv 25. 33. The brackets represent lacunae in the text and the sense is not quite clear.

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