Millenarian belief took its rise in a coalescence of various strands.* It emerged first about 100 A.D. in Christian circles in Asia Minor. Judaism provided the notion of a future period of blessedness in which the Messiah would reign on earth with his righteous before the final consummation of all things and the definitive manifestation of heavenly peace and bliss everlasting.¹ Mazdean apocalyptic contributed to fix the duration of this interim at a thousand years.² In addition, however, the concept of the thousand-year period of terrestrial blessedness was occasionally connected with originally Greek ideas concerning the happy life enjoyed long ago under the reign of Kronos (ὁ ἐπὶ Κρόνου βίος). The present paper aims to indicate traces of this Greek myth in the chiliastic apocalypse transmitted by Papias of Hierapolis.

Papias, a Christian of Hierapolis in Phrygia, wrote his five books entitled Exposition of the Sayings of the Lord (Λογίων κυριακῶν ἔξηγησις) sometime in the first half of the second century A.D. Only a few scanty fragments of the work have survived in the form of quotations in the writings of later authors.³ Irenaeus (Adv. Haer. V 33, 3-4) quotes from Papias’ fourth book a prophecy allegedly pro-

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³ The best edition of the fragments is O. de Gebhardt and A. Harnack, ed., Barnabae Epistula, Lipsiae 1878, Appendix pp. 87-104. But see n. 5 below.
nounced by Jesus, describing the luxuriance of nature in the millennium. According to Irenaeus, it had been handed down orally by John, a pupil of Jesus, and subsequently by Elders who had seen John. Papias himself indeed intimated in the proem to his Exposition, quoted by Eusebius (H.E. III 39), that he intended inter alia to illustrate his commentary on Jesus’ words by quoting oral traditions which had passed through the following stages of transmission: Jesus → Jesus’ disciples, among them the Elder John → hearers of John → Papias.  

Jesus’ apocalypse on the millennium, as quoted by Irenaeus from Papias, runs as follows:  

“The days shall come wherein vines shall grow each having ten thousand branches, and on every branch ten thousand shoots, and on every shoot ten thousand clusters, and in every cluster ten thousand grapes, and every grape when it is pressed shall yield five and twenty measures (metrētes) of wine. And when any of the saints taketh hold of one of the clusters, another will cry out: I am a better cluster, take me, through me bless thou the Lord. Likewise also [Jesus said] that a grain of wheat shall bring forth ten thousand ears, and every ear shall have ten thousand grains, and every grain shall yield five double pounds of clean flour; and all other fruits and seeds and plants according to the agreement that followeth with them [sc. in the same proportion]; and all animals using those foods which are got from the earth shall be peaceable and in accord one with another, subject unto men with all obedience”.

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4 I cannot go here into the numerous problems connected with the interpretation of this proem, but in my opinion it cannot be concluded from the words of this preface that Papias was personally acquainted with the Elder John.
