PAPIAS

AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES

A

STUDY OF RELIGIOUS THOUGHT IN THE SECOND CENTURY

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PAPIAS' LIFE.

THE only reliable sources from which we derive information with regard to Papias are the works of Irenaeus and Eusebius. Irenaeus mentions him as "a hearer of John", "a companion of Polycarp", and calls him "an ancient man". There has been much dispute as to whether the John here mentioned was the apostle John; for Eusebius is decidedly of opinion that he was not a hearer of John the apostle. The historian has supplied us with his evidence. He appeals to a passage at the commencement of the work of Papias which runs thus : "But I shall not be slow to put down along with my interpretations those things which I learned well from the elders and remembered well, assuring you of the truth with regard to them. For I did not, like the many, delight in those who spoke much, but in those who taught the truth; not in those who rehearsed the commands of others, but in those who rehearsed the commands given by the Lord to faith, and proceeding from truth itself. If then anyone who had attended on the elders came, I inquired diligently as to the words of the elders; what Andrew or what Peter said, or Philip or Thomas, or James, or John, or Matthew, or any other of the disciples of the Lord; and what things Aristion and the elder John, the disciples of the Lord, say. For I was of opinion that what could be got in books would not profit me so much as what I could get from the living and abiding voice".

Eusebius infers from the double mention of the name of John that two Johns existed, and that the latter mentioned John, called the elder or presbyter, was the instructor of Papias. We think Eusebius is right in his inference. As Eusebius well remarks, Papias makes a clear distinction between what Peter and John and the other apostles said, and what Aristion and the elder or presbyter John were still saying. He plainly confessed too that his information was derived not from the apostles themselves, but from those who had been in the company of the apostles. And Eusebius further informs us that Papias made frequent mention of Aristion and John the elder in his work, quoting their traditions. We scarcely think that Eusebius could have been mistaken on such a point as this, for the traditions of John the elder must have been easily distinguishable from those of the apostle. At the same time we are inclined to think that Irenaeus meant the apostle John in his statement, but even this is by no means certain. For in mentioning John before, he simply calls him a disciple of the Lord, which John the presbyter was; while, if he had meant the apostle John, he would probably have called him apostle.

Besides, there is nothing impossible in the supposition that Papias should in his boyhood have listened to the Christian veteran, have failed to remember much of his discourse, and been therefore dependent on those who were older than himself. In fact, if he had met many of those who had conversed with the other apostles, who all left this world a considerable time before John, he must have been born before the death of John.

Of his life and death we know nothing on good authority, except that he was overseer of the church sojourning in Hierapolis, a city of Phrygia and the birthplace of the great Stoic philosopher Epictetus. Later writers have described his martyrdom; some saying that he suffered with Onesimus at Rome, others that Pergamus was the scene of his death, and that the event happened at the same time as the martyrdom of Polycarp.

WRITINGS AND TEACHING.

Irenaeus mentions that Papias wrote five books, and Eusebius informs us that the name of the book was “An Exposition of the Lord’s sayings”. Of the nature of this work we can form no exact idea, as all the extracts, except one, which have come down to us are of an historical nature. This much we know from the passage already quoted, that it was based on unwritten tradition, and Eusebius also asserts that it contained some strange parables and teachings of the Lord and other things of a somewhat fabulous nature. Eusebius describes Papias as a man “most learned in all things, and well acquainted with the Scriptures”. In another place, however, he estimates him from his work as having an exceedingly small mind. Various efforts have been made to reconcile these apparently discrepant statements, and some have entirely rejected the first, partly on account of the supposed discrepancy, and partly because the passage is not found in several manuscripts. It seems to me most likely that there is a real discrepancy, but that that discrepancy existed in the original work of Eusebius; that when mentioning him first in company with others he spoke of him as he ought to have done, but in coming suddenly upon a dogma which he disliked, he rashly pronounced the propounder of it a man of small capacity. At the same time there can be no doubt that the praise and the blame might justly fall on the same man; that a man might be *logiotátos*, a very great reader, and yet a very poor thinker.

The only point of doctrine on which we have the opinion of Papias is that of the millennium. He held, according to Eusebius, “that there would be some millennium after the resurrection of the dead, when the personal reign of Christ would be established upon this earth”. Eusebius was probably mistaken. Papias and most, perhaps all, early Christians believed, if they had a belief on the matter, that after the resurrection the just would dwell upon this earth renewed and beautified. It is likely that Eusebius identified this opinion with the belief in a millennium. Even modern critics have found a reference to the millennium in a speech which Papias set down as Christ's on the authority of the elders. We get our information from Irenaeus, who says that the "elders who had seen John, the disciple of Christ, remembered that they heard from him how the Lord taught with regard to those days, and said, “The days will come in which vines shall grow having each ten thousand branches, and in each branch ten thousand twigs, and in each real twig ten thousand shoots, and in each shoot ten thousand clusters, and in each cluster ten thousand grapes, and each grape when pressed will give five-and-twenty metretes of wine. And when one of the saints shall lay hold of a cluster, another shall cry out, ‘I am a better cluster, take me, bless the Lord through me’. In like manner he said that a grain of wheat would produce ten thousand ears, and each ear would have ten thousand grains, and each grain would yield ten pounds of clear, pure, fine flour; and that apples, and seeds, and grass would produce in similar proportions; and that all animals using as food what is received from the earth would become peaceable and harmonious, being subject to men in all subjection”. Irenaeus says that these words of Christ were given in the fourth book of Papias. “And he [Papias] added, saying, ‘These things can be believed by those who believe’. And Judas the traitor not believing and asking, how shall such growths be accomplished by the Lord? the Lord said, They shall see who shall come to them”. There is nothing improbable in the statement that the Lord spoke in some such way, and it is not at all improbable that Papias took literally what was meant for allegory. We have no express quotation from Papias which showed that he referred these statements to a millennium, or that he took them literally. Irenaeus unquestionably did both.

The most important of the traditions of Papias which have reached us is that which relates to Matthew and Mark. With regard to Matthew he says that “he wrote the sayings in the Hebrew language, and each one interpreted them as best he could”. The word logia, “sayings”, is, as Schleiermacher has shown, applied to oracular utterances, words of divine origin; but considerable discussion has taken place as to whether it can mean here only the sayings of Christ or whether it might not include such narrative as we have in Matthew. The natural force of the word would unquestionably confine it to the 'sayings', but it would be rash to base upon this the assertion that Papias meant to say that Matthew gave no connecting narratives. How did Papias get this information? He has already told us the general sources of his information. In this instance we cannot be far wrong in ascribing it to John the elder, as in the information with regard to Mark, John is expressly quoted. The extract runs thus : “And the elder said this. Mark having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote accurately what things he remembered. He did not, however, relate in exact order the things which were spoken or done by Christ. For he neither heard the Lord nor accompanied him. But afterwards, as I said, he accompanied Peter, who gave forth his teaching's to suit the wants of the people, and not as putting together a full account of the sayings of the Lord; so that Mark, thus writing some things just as he himself recollected them, made no mistake. For of this one thing he took especial care, to omit nothing of what he heard or to put nothing fictitious into them”. Eusebius also informs us that he made quotations from the first Epistle of John and the first Epistle of Peter, and that he gave another story, that of a woman who was accused of many sins before the Lord; “which story”, he adds, “is now contained in the gospel according to the Hebrews”. This is, no doubt, the story which found its way into many manuscripts of John’s gospel; though the expression 'another story' makes it perfectly possible that Papias gave a different version, or rather additional particulars, with regard to the woman there mentioned.

The other traditions of Papias have no dogmatic reference. He relates two miracles. The first of these was the resurrection of a dead man. The words of Papias do not imply that this was a miracle wrought by a man, but simply that it took place in the time of the apostle Philip, whose daughters were under the pastoral charge of Papias and told him the story. The other story seems also to have been authenticated by them. It was that Justus, surnamed Barsabas, mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles, drank deadly poison without being in the least injured. There are other two fragments, which have been attributed to Papias. One, as quoted by Ecumenius, relates that the death of Judas was caused by a carriage running over him and crushing out his intestines. Theophylact adds many absurd particulars to this statement, apparently as if he had found them in the work of Papias, but the best critics regard them as the fabrications of a later age. The other gives an account of the four Maries mentioned in the New Testament. It runs thus — “Mary, the mother of the Lord; Mary, the wife of Cleophas or Alpheus, who was the mother of James, overseer and apostle, and of Simon and Thaddeus and of one Joseph; Mary Salome, the wife of Zebedee, mother of John the evangelist and of James; and Mary Magdalene. These four are found in the Gospel. James and Judas and Joseph were sons of the aunt of the Lord. James also and John were sons of the other aunt of the Lord. Mary, the mother of James the Less and Joseph, wife of Alpheus, was the sister of Mary the mother of the Lord, whom John names Cleophae, either from the father or the family of the clan or some other cause. Mary Salome is called Salome either from her husband or her village; some say that she was the same as the wife of Cleophas, because she had two husbands”. The information of this fragment, first published by Grabe, is interesting, if we could but depend on it. Unfortunately, there is no testimony to its genuineness but the inscription “Papia”. The statements made here, as Routh remarks, differ from those

of Epiphanius, Heeres. 78. num. et 8, and the Chronicle of Hippolytus Thebanus in a Bodleian MS.

The collectors of the fragments of Papias adduce several other very questionable quotations from Papias—one especially from Andreas Caesariensis, who says that Papias knew the Revelation of John. The date of this Andreas is unknown : Pearson supposes him to have flourished in the fifth century; but even were he better known, his assertion is not to be relied on, though not unlikely in itself.

Many scholars have thought that Papias was often the source from which Irenaeus derived the sayings of elders which he quotes anonymously. Nothing positive can be made of such a guess, and the matter, besides, belongs more to our discussion of Irenaeus than of Papias.

There is nothing in the fragments of Papias to enable us to speak with regard to his theology. He may have been a Jewish-Christian, but there is not the slightest proof. The only two circumstances which can be adduced to give a colour to this supposition are, that he concerns himself with the details of Christ's earthly life, and that he does not seem to have mentioned Paul's writings. He may, however, have quoted Paul for all that we know, and even if he did not, his subject was Christ's sayings. And surely it was no mean curiosity that concentrated itself on the truths to which the Son of God had given utterance. Nor would it be any disparagement to Papias if he had deemed them of far greater importance than those of Paul.

The work of Papias was extant in the time of Jerome. Perhaps it may yet be recovered, for some work with the name of Papias is mentioned thrice in the Catalogue of the Library of the Benedictine Monastery of Christ Church, Canterbury, contained in a Cottonian MS. written in the end of the thirteenth or beginning of the fourteenth century; and, according to Menard, the words, "I found the book of Papias on the Words of the Lord" are contained in an inventory of the property of the Church of Nimes, prepared about 1218.

The fragments of Papias are given in Halloix, Grabe, Gallandi, Migne, and Routh.

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 awoke to their significance, or the actors themselves become aware of the role 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. 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 center, with more individuality of its own than either.

Hardly one of the great movements which agitated the life and thought of Christendom during that period had not intimate relations with Asia Minor, even if it did not find its birth there. To study the life of a Phrygian bishop of the second century, therefore, is to get an inner view, in so far as the annals of the time can be recovered at all, of whatever was most important or serious in the early growth of our faith.

Papias was born probably towards the end of the first century of our era, and lived far into the second. If we think of him as in advancing years but full activity about the middle of the century, we shall come as near to chronological accuracy as the misty data of that epoch allow. We must not attempt to extort from the meager records at our disposal too realistic details of the life of a bishop at a time when that title had assumed so little of its later dignity, but the few facts that are given have a peculiar interest for us. He was almost the first church official, apparently, to occupy himself in studying or collecting the records of the past. He shows himself an indefatigable investigator, letting no chance go by which would acquaint him with the sacred hours when Jesus himself was still walking with his disciples, or the hours only less sacred when those disciples were yet living to repeat the sayings of the Master. The result of these inquiries seems to have been a work in five volumes, entitled “Interpretations of the Lord’s Sayings”. It is difficult to estimate the help we should have towards an understanding of our Gospels and the conditions of their composition, if this treatise still survived. Unfortunately, it has been lost, but the few extracts from it which later writers and historians have preserved are of quite incomparable interest. In his search for materials Papias seems to have found no written documents which covered the ground, or none at least that carried official weight; and he turns accordingly to such living men as could still recall, even at second hand, any reminiscences of the Lord or his disciples. How he went to work for this purpose he tells us with delightful simplicity.

He addresses his work to some unknown friend, and in his Preface, apparently after some account of the sources from which he has gathered his information, he adds: “Nor shall I hesitate to relate to you, in addition to my expositions, whatever I have at any time learned from the Presbyters, having entrusted it carefully to my memory, and vouching for its truth. For I did not care, as many do, for those who have much to say, but rather for such as have actual facts to give us; nor yet for the retailers of strange doctrines, but for those precepts only which the Lord has committed to believers, and which emanate therefore from the truth itself. So whenever any follower of the Presbyters came along, I got from him the very words of the Presbyters; what Andrew or Peter said, what Philip or Thomas said, or James or John or Matthew, or any other disciple of the Lord; or what Aristion and John the Presbyter, disciples of the Lord, have to say. For I never felt that I got so much from the written page as from the living and unforgotten voice”.

Now could there be a healthier breeze over the dry wastes of church history than reaches us through these old-time sentences? They breathe of fresh woods and pastures, where the garnering has till now been slight, and the laborers are still but few. We are in the creative epoch, it seems, within the echo of living voices; standing at the beginning of things, when the Christian Scriptures are not made but making. The first generations have gone, it is true, but their followers are still lingering on the stage, and have many things to tell which no written document has yet reported. Here is one reverent inquirer at least who knows their worth, and is determined that these precious memories shall not be lost. He did not succeed as he would have wished. The church in later times showed slight appreciation of his work, or at least took little pains to preserve it. All the more gratitude is due, then, for these scanty fragments which have defied neglect and found their way into our hands. They give a vivid idea of the perils through which all the memorials and records of those unlettered days must have passed.

It is not to be understood, of course, that Papias found no Christian literature of importance at his disposal. A full century had passed since the death of Jesus; a very marked century in Roman annals, which must certainly have left some trace in Christian annals as well. Indeed, a familiar passage, written perhaps about this time, assures us that "Many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word". As it happens, we have two or three faint but suggestive clues to the materials which Papias had at his command. "Papias", so Eusebius tells us, "introduced evidence from the First Epistle of John, as well as from that of Peter. He also relates a story found in the Gospel according to the Hebrews of a woman accused before the Lord of many sins". Here is a Gospel, then, and two Epistles. Apparently he made use also of our Revelation or Apocalypse, borrowing from it its predictions of the coming kingdom of Christ. Here also is an instance of the personal traditions which he gathered from apostolic circles, showing that in those uncritical hours credible reports and incredible passed current together. Our chronicler would have been inconceivably in advance of his age had he turned a deaf ear to the supernatural. In those times, it seems, the Apostle Philip, or his surviving daughters, lived in Hierapolis, and Papias got from them many extraordinary tales of that Apostle's experiences. Eusebius records one or two of them. "Papias tells us how, in Philip's time (evidently by Philip's miraculous power), a man was raised from the dead. And another marvelous thing, too, that happened to Justus surnamed Barsabas : how, having drunk a poisonous drug, he experienced no harm from it, through the grace of the Lord".

The Gospel according to the Hebrews, familiar as it seems to have been to both Papias and Eusebius, has long ago disappeared; but two other early Gospels mentioned by Papias have fortunately survived, and any descriptions of them at this formative period are of the highest value. No more instructive passage has come down to us than that in which Papias gives us his impressions of Mark and Matthew. He speaks first of Mark, repeating what had been told him on this subject by the Presbyter John. "This, too", writes Papias, "the Presbyter said : Mark, acting as interpreter of Peter, wrote down carefully whatever he remembered of the sayings or doings of Christ, yet not with any system. For he had never heard the Lord himself, nor was he even his follower, but became later, as I have said, a follower of Peter; and as Peter was in the habit of discoursing as occasion arose with no view to orderly arrangement of the Lord's words, Mark cannot well be blamed for simply recording what things he remembered, however few. For his one care was, not to omit anything he had heard, and to falsify nothing".

Once more we seem to stand on the very threshold of Christian literature, watching its earliest stages of growth. Papias is evidently defending Mark against certain charges. The critics of the day find his narrative ill arranged and fragmentary. But why should Mark be blamed for this? asks Papias; Peter followed no methodical plan, why then should Mark, who was simply reporting from memory the occasional discourses of the Apostle? Mark was careful and honest; what more could be asked?

But what is it that Papias is describing? we cannot help asking ourselves. The Gospel of Mark, as we have it today, certainly does not read like a collection of discourses by Peter; nor is it noticeably lacking in "orderly arrangement". On the contrary, it gives all the method or system that we have in these early records, and, though shorter than the other narratives, is no less chronological or consecutive than they. Indeed, it has become the fashion among the latest biblical critics to regard Mark as affording on the whole, in its very simplicity and clearness, the most intelligible account of the Lord's ministry that has come down to us. No doubt if we were bound to prove, or chose to assume beforehand, that Papias had Mark's Gospel in its present form before him, it

would be possible, by a little straining of language, to make this appear. As we feel no such necessity, however, but are only trying to put ourselves in our author's place, let us pause and look a little farther into the matter. Can it be that the document of which Papias speaks, though already bearing the name of Mark, is simply the first rude collection out of which in due time the completed Gospel is to grow? Nothing is said of a Gospel, it must be noticed. It is not even an arrangement. It is a memorizer report of fragmentary conversations or addresses of the Apostle Peter. As an account of such a primitive document Papias' description would be perfect, and we should then have the supreme satisfaction of catching a furtive glimpse of the hidden processes of Scripture composition. This would be one of the layers for which we are searching. It is not worth our while to pass any hasty judgment on this point; for the extract which Eusebius gives is short and enigmatic at best, and it is important for us to lose no early confirmation of our New Testament Scriptures. At the same time, it is more important still for us to get at the true spirit of these creative hours, and see things as they really were. In any other case, where an ordinary historic question was at issue, we should certainly suspend our judgment on such evidence till further testimony was found. Let us do so now.

As it happens, the testimony accumulates at once. Papias, as I have said, has information to give also regarding the Gospel of Matthew, which, though much less detailed than his account of Mark, is none the less interesting. We must remember that these are the earliest traditions known to history concerning the origin of our Gospels, and the first allusions to either Matthew or Mark as a Gospel writer; they are therefore of importance far beyond their actual length. "Matthew", says Papias, "transcribed the Sayings in the Hebrew dialect, and each one interpreted them as best he could".

This is all; but how curious a situation this brief passage suggests. Again Papias says nothing of a Gospel. The Gospel of Matthew, as we know it, is by no means a mere collection of the Lord's Sayings, although possibly based on such collections; but is a methodical composition, fashioned on a more artistic scheme than either Mark or Luke. It is not written in Hebrew; it is written in Greek. It cannot even be considered a translation from a Hebrew original, as it shows none of the usual characteristics of a translation, and makes its Old Testament citations as a rule from the Greek rather than the Hebrew versions. In a word, the description before us bears even less resemblance to our Matthew than the previous description to our Mark. No doubt if we were obliged to assume that the Gospel of Matthew existed in its present form in the time of Papias, we might explain his silence by saying that he did not think it worthwhile to mention a fact so familiar. As we are under no such obligation, however, it is far more to the purpose to take the words in their obvious meaning and let them tell their own story.

We seem to be standing midway between a primitive collection of the Lord's Sayings, in their original tongue, for use in Hebrew churches, and the Greek Gospel of Matthew composed for Greek-speaking communities. Whether Papias had ever seen the Hebrew document of which he speaks does not appear. Possibly he knew of it only by hearsay, or at best only in the form of various independent translations, such as he here seems to speak of, for the service of non-Jewish congregations. Had there been an authorized translation, such varieties would certainly not have been in vogue; but our author's expression, "each one interpreted as best he could", puts the primitive condition of things very naturally before us. It opens the way for countless surmises. Were there, then, a Hebrew and a Greek Matthew in use at the same time in different Christian churches, quite independent of each other, and both original documents? And if so, what became of the Hebrew Gospel? Or was the primitive Hebrew primer to be absorbed finally into an elaborated Gospel, losing its original identity, but leaving behind the tradition of its source?

But this is sheer conjecture, as neither Papias, nor Eusebius his historian, gives us the information needed to connect these earlier records positively with the later Gospels with which we are familiar. We must be content with what we have, not pretending to certainty where there is none. All we can say with confidence is that at the time of which we are speaking, so far as Papias informs us, the only writings directly ascribed to Matthew are certain discourses of Jesus in the Hebrew tongue; the only ones ascribed to Mark are certain informal discourses of Peter concerning the life of Jesus; while Luke and John are not mentioned at all.

I have no desire whatever to force these facts into undue prominence, or to base exaggerated conclusions upon them. It must not be forgotten, in the case of Papias, that the description of him in Eusebius is brief at best, and that our knowledge of his writings from other sources is of the scantiest kind. Three or four pages out of five books might not seem enough to warrant even the guarded inferences ventured upon above, as Papias may have made allusions elsewhere to Matthew or Mark which Eusebius overlooked or thought unimportant. Papias does not mention Paul's Epistles, which he must have known something about; why then, it will be asked, deduce more from his silence about the Gospels than from his silence about Paul? All this must be taken into account, and it would be foolish to disparage it. At the same time it must be borne in mind that Eusebius, writing at a time when the Christian annals have assumed suddenly a worldwide importance, makes it a point to gather from earlier writers all the testimony he can on this very point of the composition and genuineness of the Christian Scriptures. He devotes various chapters to this all-important question. He also says quite explicitly, as he takes up the apostolic writings : "As my history progresses, I shall take pains to show what disputed books have been used from time to time by ecclesiastical writers, and what opinions they have expressed either upon the canonical and genuine Scriptures, or upon those not so regarded".

It seems altogether unlikely, therefore, that if Papias had made any more specific statements about Matthew and Mark, or had mentioned the other two Evangelists at all, Eusebius would have overlooked such important testimony, or failed to emphasize it. However this may be, there is no question that the language of Papias, on its face, applies far better to floating Gospel traditions in early process of formation, than to authenticated records, already sifted and edited. This sifting process is the very work in which our bishop is engaged; and there is no good reason why we should deny ourselves this picturesque glimpse of himself which he gives us. The value of an ancient story for Papias is not that it is contained in official records, but that it comes to him from the lips of venerable men. Whatever documents he has before him, he takes the liberty to prefer his oral reminiscences to them all. We may wish that he told us more, or had been quoted more fully; but, meantime, it is certainly no loss to stand for a moment where this constructive process is going on, and to catch this passing view of the literary methods of the time.

CHAPTER II

PRIMITIVE CHRISTIAN LITERATURE

If our brief account of Papias seems too slight a basis for any serious theory of the formation of the Christian Scriptures, let us see how far this first impression is borne out by other writings of the same period. Although Papias was the first to undertake anything like Scripture research, yet other authors there were who will help us in picturing to ourselves these early processes of growth. In any case, an examination of their works is sure to throw some light upon our problem, and cannot be wholly out of place even in so unprofessional a treatise as the present volume.

Let us turn for a moment to the church at Rome. One of the earliest leaders of that church was a certain Clement, who was for a long time considered the same as the Clement mentioned by Paul in his Epistle to the Philippians, but of whom we really know nothing beside the writings he has left. In later chronicles, when ecclesiastical organizations became more complete, he figured as third or fourth in the list of bishops of Rome, and was, in any case, a man of marked influence, whose name was honorably remembered, and whose personal authority seems to have been felt in the surrounding churches. An anonymous Epistle from "the Church of God which is at Rome to the Church of God which is at Corinth" has come down to us, which was ascribed to Clement from very early times, and may with good reason be considered genuine. If so, it must have been written about AD 95, and is, therefore, the first document that has survived from the times immediately following the apostolic age. Violent strife had arisen at Corinth, it seems, in the course of which certain priests had been forcibly ejected from office by an opposing faction in the church. Whether this was a later outbreak there of the same sort of jealousies which Paul had himself had occasion to reprimand so sharply, or some uprising of the laity against the growing claims of the clergy, or simply a revolt of the younger and more heady members of the community against their elders, we can only guess, but in any case it was a serious affair, which revealed plainly the loose organization of Christian communities at that formative epoch. It should be noted that the Roman church addresses that at Corinth in this instance, not at all as a superior, but merely as a counselor, with such authority only as was given it by the personal dignity of its bishop. Clement insists, indeed, upon submission to the elders, but not in the tone of the later church, rather in fatherly exhortation, giving the best of advice and recognizing frankly the ultimate authority of the community. "It is a shame, my beloved", he writes, "an exceeding shame, unworthy the Christian calling, this report that the most steadfast and ancient church of Corinth has been led, by two or three men, into revolt against its elders". "Who is high-minded among you, who is compassionate, who abounding in love? Let him say; if this sedition, this strife, these schisms be on my account, I will depart, I will do whatsoever is commanded me by the people: only let the flock of Christ, with the elders that are over it, be at peace".

Questioning this Epistle for its acquaintance with the New Testament, we find it abounding in Scripture quotations from beginning to end. Its precepts, exhortations, examples, are all in the language of Holy Writ, and enforced as the teachings of the divine spirit. To our surprise, however, they are from the Old Testament exclusively. "Let us

take Enoch for our example; Noah, being proved to be faithful, did by his ministry preach regeneration to the world; Abraham, called the friend, was found faithful in that he was obedient to the words of God. Let us be followers of those who went about in goatskins and sheepskins, teaching the coming of Christ; we mean Elijah and Elisha and Ezekiel the prophets". Indeed, as we read these pages we become aware that the Old Testament is the only book which our author accepts, or is accustomed to think of, as "Scripture". Once or twice, indeed, Christ is introduced as speaking, but singularly enough it is always Old Testament language that he uses. It is through the Psalms or Pentateuch that Christ is regarded as addressing his church. "All these things faith in Christ doth confirm; for he himself, through the Holy Spirit, doth thus invite us: Come, ye children, hearken unto me, I will teach you the fear of the Lord". Again, he himself (Christ) saith: "I am a worm and no man, a reproach of men and despised of the people". Some of these passages are from Scriptures quite unknown to us, sometimes the original text is plainly different from either our Hebrew or our Greek version of the Old Testament; but for the most part they are familiar passages quoted somewhat loosely, as was the fashion of the day.

It requires no little effort to adjust ourselves to this novel position. I do not mean to imply that Clement shows no familiarity whatever with Christian writings, for there are several passages which suggest more or less vividly our Gospels or Epistles. But in no case are these introduced as "Scripture" passages. That term, and the various designations associated with it, is reserved exclusively, as has been said, for the Jewish Scriptures. These alone are the "Holy Scriptures". The phrases "The Lord saith", "The Holy Spirit saith", "He saith", "It is written", "Wisdom saith", "The elect David saith", are constantly recurring, but always as referring to Prophets, Law, or Psalms. On two occasions we find the expression, "Remember the words of the Lord Jesus", showing that the Sayings of the Master were held in high authority among the churches, and were already in vogue side by side with the more ancient writings, but not yet admitted to their sacred company. They are not "Scriptures", nor do they come so readily to the disciple's lips or the writer's pen. Out of 120 possible Scripture citations, only 12 can by any ingenuity be referred to our New Testament.

Here is one passage, for instance, which suggests the Epistle to the Hebrews; not quoted as such, indeed, nor exactly in the language of our present text, yet unmistakably related to that writing : "Through him the Lord would have us taste the immortal knowledge; who, being the brightness of his majesty, is so much greater than the angels as he hath inherited a more excellent name". Indeed, there is more tinge of the Hebrews in this Epistle of Clement than of any other New Testament writing; as though the writer were especially fond of that particular letter, or especially familiar with it; or as though perhaps the two Epistles were written at about the same time, when this special phraseology was current. As Clement introduces this passage in his own language, giving no credit to an outside source, and as neither writer betrays any knowledge of the other, it is not quite certain which of the two is the borrower, if either, and which the lender.

Our author knows the Apostle Paul and his writings, and gives us pieces of information concerning him quite startling to those who know Paul only from the pages of the New Testament. "So, having taught the whole world righteousness, and journeying to the utmost bounds of the west, when he had borne his testimony before the rulers, he departed from the world and went unto the holy place". But although Clement is addressing the Corinthians, he alludes to Paul's Epistles to that church but once by name, leaving us in other cases to conjecture his acquaintance with that or other Epistles only by vague resemblances. Here is perhaps the most direct quotation, though even in this case not given as a quotation : "Let us take our body; the head without the feet is nothing,

so the feet without the head are nothing, but the smallest members of our body are necessary and useful to the whole body".

Still more striking are Clement's references to the words of Jesus himself, which might be supposed to afford as many practical precepts as those of Moses or David. They are not given as "Scripture", yet are introduced as if familiar to his readers, whether from oral repetition, or from chance collections of the Master's precepts already current. Here is the most definite and unmistakable : "Above all remembering the words of the Lord Jesus which he spoke teaching clemency and long-suffering. For thus he said: Be ye merciful, that ye may obtain mercy, forgive that it may be forgiven unto you, as ye do so shall it be done unto you, as ye give so shall it be given unto you, as ye judge so shall ye be judged, as ye are kind so shall kindness be shown unto you, with what measure ye mete with the same shall it be measured unto you". How strangely familiar yet unfamiliar this sounds. One is quite bewildered by it; turning first to Matthew V. 7, then to VI. 12-15, but finding it necessary to piece out the extract with VII. 2, or Luke vi. 36-38, and even then leaving one precept quite unaccounted for, unless it be a faint reminiscence of 1 Cor. XIII. 4. Quite the same is the effect of the only other reference to the words of Jesus which this Epistle contains : "Remember the words of our Lord Jesus : Woe to that man; it were good for him that he had not been born, rather than to offend one of my elect; it were better for him that a millstone be hanged about him and he be cast into the sea, than that he should pervert one of my elect". Here again we must turn to Matthew XVIII. 6, 7; XXVI. 24; Mark XIV. 21; IX. 42 ; Luke XVII. 1, 2; XXII. 22, to find all the fragments here put together, and we ask ourselves where Clement could have discovered the passage. Is he quoting from memory, as would be natural enough, and as is apparently the case with some of his Old Testament citations; or from oral traditions simply; or has he before him some collection of the Lord's Sayings which has been long ago forgotten? One of these guesses is as good as the other; the only thing of which we are sure being that he is not quoting from either of our four Gospels. Nor does it seem altogether natural that this leader of the churches should have had those Gospels in full form before him, without once appealing to them to reinforce his own authority. Whatever our judgment on this point, it is worth our while to remember this attitude of the early church towards its written Scriptures. One Bible was enough for the church of this period, it would seem. They had Moses and the Prophets; what need of more? Those ancient books which had come down from earliest time, through which Christ himself had spoken to patriarchs and prophets, and which contained, for those who understood, the promise and prophecy of the Messiah's coming, possessed a sanctity to which nothing else at first could aspire. Thus far, at least, the churches could find a place for no other Scripture.

Turning once more to the East; in the ninth year of the reign of Trajan, that emperor, so says an ancient chronicle, visited the city of Antioch on his way to Parthia, and while there tried to force the Christians to sacrifice to the Roman gods. Their bishop, Ignatius by name, having scorned this summons, and urged others to do the same, was brought before the emperor and boldly declared : "Thou art in error when thou callest the evil spirits of the heathen gods. For there is but one God, who made heaven and earth, ... and one Jesus Christ, his only begotten son; whose kingdom may I enjoy". "Whereupon", so says our chronicle, "Trajan pronounced this sentence against him; Forasmuch as Ignatius has confessed that he carries about within himself Him that was crucified, we command that he be carried bound with soldiers to great Rome, there to be thrown to the beasts for the entertainment of the people". Ignatius was then carried to Rome, passing through Asia Minor on the way, and scattering letters as he went among the churches of the East. About fifteen epistles, claiming to have come from this source, have survived, together with a detailed account of his martyrdom in Rome.

The whole narrative has a somewhat mythical air, and as it accords poorly with the historical facts of Trajan's reign, and as, moreover, no mention of our chronicle can be found till two or three centuries later, we have every reason to question its authenticity. The letters themselves, however, have the value of ancient documents, by whomsoever written; and seven of them have internal evidence in their favor, and belong certainly to the first half of the century.

Looking at these seven Epistles, we find a writer who was evidently less familiar with the Scriptures, or cared less for their authority, than Clement, as he makes slight allusion to either Old Testament or New, never citing either by name, and leaving us to guess his acquaintance with them by similarities of expression. This in itself has no special significance, as quotations in the style of today are not to be looked for in the writings of that period, and if these letters were really written on his last journey to Rome, exact citations could not be expected in any case. Nor does the writer fail to declare again and again the authority of the doctrines and teachings of Jesus Christ. At the same time, the absence of all New Testament coloring on the part of a bishop addressing neighbor communities is certainly noteworthy, and is now and then very pointed. In speaking of his fellow Christians of Antioch, for instance, he applies to himself the very expression used by Paul, — "being the least among them, as one born out of due time"; yet without the slightest allusion to Paul, but as though the language were his own. Or again, take these passages which may be selected out of all the Epistles as the most exact references to the New Testament. In neither case are they given as quotations, nor is any Gospel writer mentioned.

In his Epistle to the Ephesians he says : "If the prayer of one and another hath such power, how much more that of the bishop and the whole church". This shows pretty clearly that the writer has some familiar saying in mind, and if it be any passage from our Scriptures we might guess that it was "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven". Again he says: "The tree is manifest by its fruit; so they who profess to be Christ's shall be known by what they do". This suggests of course Matthew XII. 33, but the dissimilarity in phrase is as marked as the similarity of thought. Once more, in writing to the Philadelphians, he says: "The spirit being from God is not deceived; for it knows whence it comes and whither it goes, and it searches out all hidden things". Possibly he has John III. 8 in mind, though, singularly enough, the point of the expression in the one case is that the ways of the spirit are not known, in the other that they are known. Finally, let us turn to Ignatius's Epistle to Poly carp, where we come at last upon a single clause, sufficiently brief to be sure, which but for its surprising juxtaposition might be taken directly from our Gospels : "Not every hurt is healed by the same plaster. Soothe paroxysms with embrocations. Be thou wise as the serpent in all things, and harmless as the dove".

It is hardly worthwhile to give further extracts, where they all tell the same story; but from these alone we can see clearly that whatever familiarity with our Gospels or Epistles Ignatius may have had, he finds little occasion to show it, and can hardly be thought of as having canonical documents in his hands. This may seem very little light to gain from so renowned a source; yet it is worth our while to have gleaned at least so much from the most voluminous of all the earlier contributions to our Christian literature.

Among the places visited by Ignatius on his way to Rome was the seaport city of Smyrna, whose little church was presided over at that time by Polycarp, a man affectionately remembered a generation later as one who liked to tell of his "intimate personal familiarity with John, and with others too who had seen the Lord". He was still

better known in after times as one of the first of the long line of Christian martyrs. A circular epistle from the church at Smyrna, written probably long afterwards, gives touching details of the martyrdom; telling also how reverently the bones of the martyr were gathered up, and how the fire "making a kind of arch, like the sail of a ship filled with the wind, encompassed as in a circle the body of the holy martyr. Who stood in the midst of it, not as if his flesh were burnt, but as bread that is baked, or as gold or silver glowing in the furnace. Moreover, so sweet a smell came from it as if frankincense or some rich spices had been smoking there". The age of miracles had not yet passed.

Polycarp appears in the annals of the church as a stout advocate of sound doctrine and stern foe to all dissenters; but leaves behind him only a single epistle, written after the death of Ignatius to the church at Philippi. There are the usual difficulties in the way of a hearty acceptance of this epistle; reminding us how few of the best-attested writings of the period can have reached us in quite their original form. In one chapter Ignatius appears as still living, and Polycarp asks for further information about him; in another he has already died, and has become a saint. But we learn not to be too exacting as to a period whose records, in the nature of the case, cannot have been solicitously watched over; and are willing to accept such as give reasonable proof of their genuineness.

In this epistle we find little of the ecclesiastic instinct which marked the writings of Ignatius. Not a bishop is mentioned throughout, though presbyters and deacons hold a high place. On the other hand the Holy Scriptures, and still more the teaching of the Lord, occupy his thoughts greatly, as do also the letters of Paul, whom he is one of the first to honor, and much of whose phraseology is familiar to him. In fact, there are more suggestions of the New Testament in this one short epistle, though but dim and distant echoes at best, than in all the writings of Ignatius put together. "Remember", he writes, "what things the Lord taught, saying: Judge not that ye be not judged; forgive, and it shall be forgiven to you; be ye merciful that ye may receive mercy; with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again. Also, Blessed are the poor and they that are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of God". This unfamiliar collocation of familiar sayings reminds us at once of Clement, and as in that case carries us from Matt. VII. I, 2 to Luke VI. 36-38, and back to Matt. V. 3, 7, 10, before we discover all the fragments. Another passage presents in new guise one of the practical maxims of the Epistle to Timothy : "The beginning of all troubles is the love of money. Knowing therefore that we brought nothing into the world, yet have nothing to carry out, let us arm ourselves with the armor of righteousness". Here again is a verse which puts tentatively what in our version of the Lord's Prayer appears quite unequivocally; adding a clause as if from Paul's Epistle to the Romans : "If then we beseech the Lord to forgive us, we ought also to forgive; for we are in the sight of our Lord and God, and must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, and each one give an account of himself". In the following verse we recognize another passage from the Lord's Prayer, though given in the writer's own language, and introducing an unconnected saying of the Lord Jesus : "Beseeching the all-seeing God with entreaties not to lead us into temptation; as the Lord said; The spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak".

The above are the most obvious allusions in this Epistle to our Christian Scriptures; much more valuable, it will be seen, as showing how the bishops of those days dealt with the records, and in what condition they found them, than as citations of any exact passages. Here is a writer who draws reverently from such words of the Lord, or letters of Paul, as are already current, without associating them for a moment with the sacred Scriptures. It does not occur to him, more than to the other writers mentioned above, to call either Gospel by name, or to quote definitely from any; leaving us to conjecture whether this is owing simply to the habits of the time, or to the fact that the materials of

those Gospels are still floating from church to church, as uncollected and unsystematized memoranda of a holy past. There is a great charm in lingering over a period marked by this easy and unquestioning acceptance of the present, undisturbed by anxiety about records or texts.

Another interesting relic from this period is the so-called Epistle of Barnabas. That it was really written by Barnabas, the companion of Paul, there is little internal or external evidence to prove; but as many writings of doubtful authorship and many claimants for apostolic authority were current in those days, this does not show that it was not a genuinely ancient document. It may safely be accepted as from an unknown author of the early part of the century.

This Epistle introduces us into a new religious atmosphere. The burning question of the relation of Christianity to Judaism was in the air, and the author is at pains to vindicate the right of Christianity to stand alone. But singularly enough he draws his proof of the supremacy of the new faith not from the Christian Scriptures, but from the Jewish; not from the life or teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, but from Abraham, Moses, and the Prophets. The Jews had the Old Testament indeed, and supposed that it was their own, but they were mistaken. They had found in it only its external historical sense, which was false and a deception of the devil. The true sense of the Scriptures is the spiritual sense, intended from the first by Moses, but obscure to the Jews and meant to be so. Thus they are ours alone, for we first see their meaning. “The Prophets, having received from him [Jesus] their gift of [prophecy] prophesied of him”. When Moses said, “Enter into the good land which the Lord swore unto Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and inherit it, a land flowing with milk and honey”, this had only a figurative meaning. “For what says Gnosis? Learn. Put your hope, it says, in him who is to be manifested to you in the flesh, even Jesus”. The high priest is ordered to take two goats, one for a burnt offering, the other to be accursed. It is a type of Jesus “spit upon and pricked and cast forth into the wilderness”. What was the meaning of circumcision? It was not of the flesh. In it lay a profound mystery, known only to Abraham. “Understand these things perfectly, children of love; how Abraham, who was the first to circumcise, was looking forward in spirit unto Jesus when he circumcised, having received the ordinances of three letters”. These letters were the 318 men whom Abraham had circumcised, and under 318 were hidden Jesus and the Cross. Beneath these successive symbols, we are to understand, lie all the doctrines of Christianity.

In such a writing we shall look of course for little of the New Testament. I can find but two or three passages which can with any probability be considered as drawn from Gospel or Epistle. But one of these is curious enough to be quoted, as showing the various and unexpected connections in which the same words may appear in days when literature is forming. It gives also an entirely original tradition about the Apostles. “When he chose his own apostles, who were to preach his gospel, he took men who were sinful beyond all account; that he might show that he did not come to call the righteous but sinners. So he manifested himself to be the son of God”. This sounds familiar in a way; but if we ask ourselves where the author could have found it, the last place we should guess, I think, considering the connection, would be Matthew IX. 13.

Among the writings of this period, the “Shepherd of Hermas” must not be forgotten. It is little known today, yet at the time of which we are speaking it was in great vogue, and held by many as divinely inspired. Its history was unique, and shows how loosely the canonical lines were drawn at that period. In the Roman church it was refused a place among holy books on the ground that the ranks of the prophets and apostles were already closed, and also that its author was perfectly well known, while in other quarters

it was freely quoted as an inspired work, and classed as Scripture. While one eminent father declared it out and out an immoral writing, another of still ampler learning cited it with profound respect, as if on a level with apostolic writings. A century later it was still "publicly read in the churches", and still under dispute as a canonical book. In the end, it seems to have passed wholly out of ecclesiastical use, and would certainly be regarded as of slight religious worth today, however serviceable as revealing the tastes as well as the religious conditions of the times.

It was one of the allegorical treatises of the hour, and enforced practical precepts through an endless series of Visions, Mandates, and Similitudes. These revelations were made to Hermas by a mysterious personage in the costume of a shepherd, and were aimed at the evils from which the infant church was then suffering,—love of the world, blasphemy, betrayal of the Lord's servants, denial of Christ, false prophecy.

In a treatise of this prophetic stamp, claiming itself to be the direct mouthpiece of the Holy Spirit, we cannot look for many scriptural passages; hardly more, indeed, than in the Acts or the Epistle to the Hebrews. There are two or three, however, which are worth quoting as showing at least some familiarity with our New Testament phraseology. "I, the angel of repentance, esteem you happy, whosoever are innocent as little children, since your portion is good and honorable before God". "Now the rich find it hard to consort with the servants of God, fearing lest these should ask something of them. Such then shall hardly enter into the kingdom of God". On the other hand, this precept, however fine in itself, would hardly imply an acquaintance with the Sermon on the Mount: "The day on which thou fastest thou shalt taste nothing but bread and water; and having reckoned the amount thou wouldst have spent upon the food thou wouldst have eaten on that day, thou shalt give it to the widow, the orphan, the one in want"

The spiritual needs of generations differ. This strange composition which won the hearts of the best and highest of their time, which was read in their churches with Gospels and Prophets, and almost secured for itself a place in Holy Writ, has been long ago forgotten, and we try in vain to revive the religious needs or longings which could once have given it worth.

Less important than the preceding, yet quite worthy of our notice, is the little fragment which, for some unknown reason, has always borne the name of the Second Epistle of Clement. The first ecclesiastical writer to mention it himself questions its authenticity, and the closing paragraphs, very recently discovered, indicate plainly that it was no letter at all, but rather a specimen of the exhortations or homilies used at the Sunday gatherings of the young churches. Judging from internal evidence the writing seems to belong to about AD140 or 150; in which case it is the earliest example that we possess of the ancient Christian sermon.

The Gospel quotations given by this writer are peculiar. They are taken from what he calls "the Gospel", and are cited with the same respect as though found in the Jewish Scriptures. In distinguishing the two, however, he does not seem familiar with the terms Old and New, but speaks of the "Books" and the "Apostles". Nor do the extracts themselves correspond altogether with any in our Gospels, but are obviously taken from some primitive collection of Christ's Sayings no longer extant. One of them sounds like a distant echo of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, though with the same chaotic arrangement which we have found so often before : "Saith the Lord : no servant can serve two masters; if we wish to serve both God and Mammon, it is of no advantage to us; for what profit is there if one gain the whole world and lose his soul?" The following extracts are still more bizarre: "For the Lord saith : Ye shall be as lambs in the midst of wolves. But Peter answered and said to him; What then if the wolves shall tear the lambs in pieces? Jesus

said unto Peter : Let not the lambs fear the wolves after they have died; and ye too, fear not them that kill you and can do nothing to you; but fear ye Him that after ye have died hath power over soul and body to cast them into the gehenna of fire". And this : "For the Lord himself, when asked by a certain person when his kingdom would come, said : When two shall be one, and that without as that within, and the male with the female, neither male nor female".

As this last passage is known to have belonged to the Gospel of the Egyptians, the natural inference is that all the writer's citations are from that apocryphal source. This is what he calls "the Gospel", and is apparently the only Gospel he knows.

Our knowledge of this period has been unexpectedly added to in our own time by the discovery of one of the manuals of practical instruction which were known to have been current in the early church, but of which no specimen so complete had been found before. This is called the "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles", and was found in the Library of the Holy Sepulcher in Constantinople in 1873, and published in 1883. It is hardly time as yet to assign it its exact place in Christian literature, but there seems little doubt that it belongs to the first half of the second century, and in any case it gives a picture of a very primitive condition of the Christian church. It was a time when there was as yet no established episcopate, when itinerant preachers, under the name of apostles, prophets, or teachers, were to be received and honored as the Lord, unless they showed themselves too exorbitant or self-seeking, when the Eucharist was still in the form of an actual meal, and when the ultimate power rested in the hands of the congregation. Bishops and Deacons, equal in rank, were to be appointed by the people for administrative functions, and were not to be despised, but were quite subordinate to the divinely instructed Prophet, the High Priest, who is taught by God, and who is to receive the first fruits of "winepress and threshing-floor, of oxen and sheep".

These "Teachings of the Lord", claiming to emanate from his Apostles, were drawn in large part, we may suppose, from the same oral sources to which Papias looked for his best traditions, partly also from written records unknown to us, but in part from a document evidently familiar to both writer and readers called "the Gospel". As this is the second time that we have come upon this title, we are interested of course in knowing what this Gospel may have been. The only direct quotation taken from it is the Lord's Prayer, given almost exactly as we find it in Matthew, and prescribed to be repeated three times in the day. Did he, then, call Matthew "the Gospel", thinking it more authoritative than the others, or possibly not knowing any other; or does he apply the term to all Gospel writings in general, not troubling himself to discriminate between one Evangelist and another? We can judge only from other passages of the manual, where, though there is no reference to the Gospels, yet the language of the New Testament, or language closely corresponding with it, is freely used. At the very opening of the "Teaching", for instance, occurs this clause: "The way of life is this : First, thou shalt love the God that made thee; secondly, thy neighbor as thyself; and all things whatsoever thou wouldst not have happen unto thee neither do thou unto another. Now of these words the doctrine is this: Bless them that curse you, and pray for your enemies, but fast for them that persecute you. For what thank have ye if ye love them that love you? do not even the Gentiles the same? But love them that hate you, and ye shall have no enemy. Abstain from fleshly and worldly lusts. If anyone give thee a blow on thy right cheek turn to him the other also, and thou shalt be perfect; if any one compel thee to go a mile go with him twain; if anyone take away thy cloke let him have thy coat also; if anyone take from thee what is thine, ask it not back again; for indeed thou canst not". Again, somewhat later, at the close of a chapter upon the Eucharist, occurs this startling passage, which might well have startled Matthew himself: "Let no one eat nor drink of your Eucharist but those that are baptized

into the name of the Lord; for of this very thing the Lord hath said, Give not that which is holy unto the dogs". Finally, in the closing chapter, describing the Lord's coming to judgment, are the words : "Watch for your life's sake; let not your lamps go out nor your loins be loosed, but be ye ready; for ye know not the hour in which your Lord cometh".

In listening to these surprising passages, it seems impossible to imagine that the writer had any of our four Gospels in their present form before him. If we must assume that it is either, a careful examination of the text shows rather more reminiscences of Matthew than of the others; yet if that Gospel is in his hands, he is certainly treating Matthew with greater nonchalance than would be allowable in these later and less reverent days. If it be memory-work, then the memory was less to be trusted in those days than now; nor is it easy to suppose that in preparing a manual for so serious a service, a writer would draw upon memory alone, if the sacred books were close at hand. But why create for ourselves difficulties which do not exist, or forbid these ancient records to tell their own simple story? Our author is familiar with a writing which he as well as his readers knows as "the Gospel". More than once he refers to it, in terms as obvious to them, we must suppose, as perplexing to us. "Reprove one another", he says, "not in anger but in peace, as ye have it in the Gospel ... But your prayers and your alms and all your deeds do ye as ye have it in the Gospel of our Lord". It is a Gospel differing from any now known to us. But if only four Gospels survived out of the many writings then in circulation, many must have perished, or have been absorbed into the few that were destined to live. Why should we be surprised to come upon the traces of such provisional forms? The early annals of our own modern communities pass through various unconscious shapes before assuming their final historic character; why expect the process to have been less gradual seventeen or eighteen centuries ago? If the "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles" helps the Christian world to a more intelligent understanding of its early records, it will serve a far higher purpose than the study of its doctrines is likely to accomplish.

A still more startling discovery of these later years was made upon the Nile in 1886. However little light Egyptian archaeological explorations have thrown upon the Old Testament, they have succeeded, in this instance at least, in giving most unexpected additions to our slender materials concerning the New. In unearthing old Coptic graves at Akhmim on the east bank of the Nile, not far from Girgeh, the French came upon an eighth or ninth century manuscript containing, among other Christian writings, a fragmentary narrative of the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. It was apparently a piece of a larger document, and has properly neither beginning nor end, but closes in this abrupt way: "But I Simon Peter, and Andrew my brother, taking our nets departed to the Sea, and with us was Levi the son of Alphaeus whom the Lord" ... It claims, then, to have been written by the Apostle Peter; an interesting promise in itself, but still more so as there are ancient allusions to a Gospel of Peter which have hitherto excited great curiosity without affording any definite clue to the writing itself.

It is hardly time as yet for the New Testament scholars, who alone are competent to pass judgment here, to have reached very confident conclusions on all the points started by this discovery; but they agree apparently in regarding our fragment as the closing passages of the lost "Gospel according to Peter", and ascribe it pretty unanimously to the early part of the second century. It seems a strange freak of fortune which enabled an obscure Coptic monk of the eighth century to hand down to us a gospel record of which every trace had been lost to the learned world since the earliest times.

At last, then, we have a Gospel; and one which, though superseded in the end, was at one time unhesitatingly used in Christian churches of the East. About AD 200, for

instance, Serapion, the Bishop of Antioch, in visiting a Cilician church of his diocese, found the Gospel of Peter in use there. At first he gave himself no trouble about it, but afterwards, on finding that it was creating some agitation in the community, satisfied himself that it contained a few doubtful doctrines, and forbade its further circulation. I will give full citations from this Gospel to show its character as compared with those more familiar to us. It is a short fragment at best, and begins apparently in the midst of some such scene as is depicted in Matthew XXVII. 24. Pilate has probably just washed his hands as our narrative begins.

"But of the Jews not one washed his hands, neither did Herod, nor one of his judges. And as they refused to wash their hands, Pilate arose; and at once Herod the king commands them to seize the Lord, saying to them, what I have ordered you to do to him, that do. Now there was present there Joseph the friend of Pilate and of the Lord, and as he saw that they were about to crucify him, he came to Pilate and besought the body of the Lord for burial. And Pilate sent to Herod and begged for the body, and Herod said : Even if no one had asked for it, we should have buried him before the first day of Unleavened Bread, their feast (for the Sabbath was already dawning, and it is written in the Law, that the sun shall not go down upon one that is slain). Then they seizing the Lord dragged him off upon the run, saying; Let us hale the Son of God now we have him in our power" ... "And they brought two malefactors, and crucified the Lord between them, and he remained silent, as one who suffered no pain"... "But one of the malefactors rebuked them (the soldiers) saying: We are suffering for the evil we have done, but this, the Saviour of men, what wrong has he done you? And they were wroth with the malefactor, and ordered that his bones be not broken, that he might die in torture. Now it was noonday and darkness covered the whole of Judaea, and they were troubled and distressed lest the sun had gone down while he still lived" ... "And many went about with torches thinking it was night and fell down. And the Lord cried aloud saying : My Power, my Power, thou hast forsaken me; and as he said this he was taken up" ... "Then the Jews and the elders and the priests saw what evil they had brought upon themselves, and began to beat their breasts and say : Woe upon us for our sins, the judgment is drawing near and the end of Jerusalem. But I and my companions, troubled and sick at heart, hid ourselves, for they pursued us as malefactors, thinking we would burn the temple. And after all these things we fasted and sat night and day groaning and lamenting until the Sabbath"... "And Pilate gave them Petronius the centurion with soldiers to guard the grave, and with them came elders and scribes to the sepulcher; and when they had all, soldiers and centurion together, rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulcher, they set it there and placed upon it seven seals, and pitching there their tent they kept watch. And as the Sabbath dawned a great multitude came from Jerusalem and round about to see the sepulcher that was sealed. And in the night as the Lord's day broke, as the soldiers kept watch by two and two, came a loud voice from heaven, and they saw the heavens open and two men descend in dazzling light and draw near the sepulcher. Then that stone which had been set at the door rolled aside and gave way of itself, and the grave opened and the two young men entered. But when the soldiers saw this they aroused the centurion and elders who had been watching with them, and as they told them what they had seen, again they behold three men coming out from the grave two of them supporting one, and following them a cross; and the heads of the two reached up to the heavens, and the head of him whom they supported towered above the heavens; and they heard a voice from heaven saying, Hast thou preached unto them that sleep? and from the cross came the answer, Yes. And they debated with each other whether they should go unto Pilate and announce these things, and even as they meditate, again the heavens are opened and a man descends and enters into the sepulcher".

It will hardly be claimed that this curious fragment lends much pathos or impressiveness to these tragic hours; but it shows as nothing else could the fantastic handling to which the historic facts were subjected, and the varied streams of tradition through which they have come down to us. However mythical and extravagant this Gospel may appear to us, it found a ready hearing, it seems, in those uncritical days. Its exact relation to our four Gospels we must leave to professional scholars in due time to determine, supposing it to be a determinable question. If the author writes with our Gospels before him, he shows singular disregard of their authority, and readiness to follow independent traditions. Yet after all he can hardly differ more from them than they differ from each other; and we may well content ourselves with taking the Gospel upon its merits, as one more token of the character of the Christian literature of the century, and the kind of apostolic narratives which were then contending for acceptance as authentic records of Jesus' ministry.

CHAPTER III

TWO LEARNED DOCTORS

After these prolonged antiquarian researches, somewhat fatiguing to the reader no doubt, it is refreshing to come at last upon two living personalities. We have returned once more to the times of Papias, and as it happens, to his own land of Asia Minor.

The first of the two is Justin, known to Christian history, because of his violent death, as Justin the Martyr. He tells us that he was born in Neapolis in Samaria, the Shechem of the Old Testament, familiar to modern travelers as Nablous. Having philosophical tastes, he went about from school to school, and our first glimpse of him is at Ephesus in the colonnades of the gymnasium, where he is recognized by his professional garb, and accosted by a stranger with the words, “Hail, O Philosopher”. The stranger proves to be the Jew Trypho, against whom Justin, who has just become a convert to Christianity, defends his new faith. In due time his zeal for that faith made him its most famous champion before the pagan world, and led him even to address the emperors Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius, urging them as lovers of the truth to investigate for themselves the claims of Christianity. Whether his appeal ever actually reached the hands of the emperors, or was noticed by them, is more than doubtful; but fortunately it has reached our hands, and is one of our most precious legacies from the past. It is from his two so-called “Apologies”, and his “Dialogue with Trypho”, that we get not only our knowledge of Justin himself, but also our best picture of the state of Christianity towards the middle of the second century.

As this is our first opportunity to observe the mental processes by which in those times educated pagans became converts to Christianity, we turn to Justin’s words with great curiosity. And not in vain: he meets us with the engaging frankness characteristic of earlier hours, and tells us all that we wish to know. After turning from Stoic to Peripatetic, he says, from Peripatetic to Pythagorean, and finally from Pythagorean to Platonist, he met unexpectedly an ancient man, meek and venerable in bearing, who proved to him, by a few Socratic questions, that his whole preceding search for the truth was vain. “Long ago”, said this stranger, “there existed a class of men more ancient than any of these who are regarded as philosophers, blessed men, righteous, and beloved of God, who spoke by the holy spirit, and predicted things to come, which are now happening. These are called Prophets. They alone discovered the truth and disclosed it to men, holding no man in reverence nor fearing any, nor desirous of glory, but speaking those things alone which they had heard and seen; filled by the holy spirit” ... “And at once a fire was kindled in my soul”, says Justin, “and love of the Prophets seized me, and of those men who are friends of Christ. And revolving in my mind his words, I found this philosophy alone to be safe and profitable”. These Prophets are of course the Old Testament Prophets, and it is their testimony which wins Justin to the new philosophy and the new faith. “For with what reason”, he adds in another place, “can we believe that a crucified man is the first-born of the unbegotten God, and is himself to hold judgment upon the whole human race, unless before he came and became man, we find predictions of his coming, and see these prophecies actually fulfilled?”

This is not quite what we had expected. We are so accustomed to find the evidence of Christianity in its own lofty precepts and the character of its founder, that it is hard to put ourselves in the place of one who accepts it solely because Moses or Isaiah, centuries before, had formally predicted it. Not that Justin failed to feel the moral force of the new faith. He bears full witness to this, and it may well be that it was this which first attracted his attention. "I could wish", he says, "that all might be of the same mind with myself, and no longer depart from the words of the Saviour; for they have in them something to inspire awe, and put to shame those who stray from the right path, and to those who practice them bring the sweetest peace". But for the convincing proof of the claims of Christianity he has to look elsewhere. He believes that the babe born of Mary was the Christ, because Isaiah said: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son". When Micah said, "But thou, Bethlehem, though thou be little ... yet out of thee shall he come that is to be ruler of Israel", he clearly prophesied the place of the Messiah's birth. When the Psalmist , wrote, "They pierced my hands and my feet", he foretold the crucifixion. "And that which was narrated by Moses, and prophesied by the Patriarch Jacob, 'He washed his garments in wine, and his vesture in the blood of grapes', signified that he would wash with his own blood those that believed in him". The words, "I gave my back to the smiters" announced Christ's scourging. "They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, they part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture", predicted the scoffings of the Jews, and the parting of the garments at the cross. The twelve Apostles were clearly foretold in the twelve bells on the robe of the high priest; the Christian rite of baptism received its sanction from the words of Isaiah, "Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings".

Even the Eucharist was sacred because foretold in the fine flour of the Jewish sacrifice, and in Malachi's denunciation of those who profane the Lord's table.

To us this torturing of ancient texts seems a weary and futile task. It robs the old Scriptures of their freshness and grace, to force them into an unwilling service. It spoils good history and good poetry, to make poor prophecy. But the temper of those earlier days was not the temper of ours. The New Testament itself has some startling illustrations of this same practice. There were other Christian Fathers beside Justin ready to declare that Christ could never have been known, not even in his miracles, but for a previous announcement by the Prophets. One convert from paganism makes no mention of Jesus at all in commending his new faith; resting all upon Old Testament prophecy. Justin is not alone, therefore, in discovering the supreme test of Christianity in the Jewish Scriptures.

For the rest, this first encounter between Christianity and the world's philosophy is a sufficiently friendly one. Justin finds no reason for ruling out all other wisdom because he has found the highest. Socrates, he claims, differed from Jesus in this: he had his share of the divine Word; Jesus was that Word. "The teachings of Plato are not different from those of Christ, only they are not altogether the same; and so with the others, Stoics, poets, and historians. For each one, having a share of the pregnant divine word, caught what was peculiar to himself, and spoke it". Thus Justin saved for his new faith all that he most prized in the old, and declared, with a generous rhetorical sweep, "Whatever has been said well by any one belongs to us Christians". Indeed, he quite convinced himself that Plato and his fellows borrowed all their doctrines from Moses. Meantime, however, with the best purpose in the world, he found it impossible to free himself from all his pagan notions at a stroke. Like so many others of his time, he still breathed a polytheistic atmosphere, after he supposed himself converted to monotheism. His devils, as evil spirits, play a formidable role, and are quite as genuine gods as the Jupiters and Mercurys whom he renounced.

We are prepared from the above account to find the Jewish Scriptures fully represented on Justin's pages. In fact, few Old Testament writers of importance remain unmentioned, and the quotations, though given with the looseness characteristic of that period, show a greater familiarity with Hebrew literature than would be expected from a non-Jewish author. They are his only "Scriptures". With the New Testament, on the contrary, he shows himself much less concerned; even though defending his faith against pagan and Jew. Take out two chapters from the "First Apology" and eight from the "Dialogue with Trypho", and we should learn very little from Justin about the Christian Scriptures. Nor does he think it worthwhile to attach any names to his citations, and never speaks of them as Scripture. At the same time his reverence for the teachings of Jesus is profound, as we have seen, and in defending the Christian mode of life, he urges upon the attention of the emperors, as his best illustration, the words of Christ himself. These extracts are quite worthy our attention. He introduces them with these words : "Lest we should seem to you to be playing the sophist, we think it well, before entering upon our treatise, to cite a few of the teachings of Christ himself. Brief and concise words were his; for he was no sophist, but his word was the power of God". Then come these passages : "Now concerning chastity, he spoke thus: Whosoever looketh upon a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery already in his heart before God. And, If thy right eye offend thee, cut it out; for it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of heaven with one eye, than with two to be cast into eternal fire. And, Whosoever marrieth her that is divorced from another man committeth adultery. And, There are some who have been made eunuchs of men, and there are some who have been born eunuchs, and there are some who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. But not all receive this". "And in regard to loving all, he taught as follows : If ye love them that love you, what new thing do ye? for even the fornicators do this. But I say unto you, pray for your enemies, and love those that hate you, and bless them that curse you, and pray for them that despitefully use you. But as to sharing with the needy, and doing nothing for glory, he said these things : Give to everyone that asketh, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away. For if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what new thing do ye? even the publicans do this. Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt and robbers break through; but lay up for yourselves treasures in the heavens, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt. For what is a man profited if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall he give in exchange for it? Lay up treasures therefore in the heavens, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt. And, Be ye kind and merciful, as your Father also is kind and merciful, and maketh his sun to rise upon sinners and just men and wicked. Take no thought what ye eat or what ye shall put on; are ye not better than the birds and the beasts? And God feedeth them. Take no thought therefore what ye eat or what ye shall put on; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But seek ye the kingdom of heaven and all these things shall be added unto you. For where the treasure is, there is also the mind of the man. And, Do not these things to be seen of men, otherwise ye have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. And concerning our being forbearing and ready to serve, what he said was this: To him that smiteth thee on the one cheek, offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloak or coat, forbid not. And whosoever is angry is in danger of the fire. And every one that compelleth thee to go with him a mile, follow him two. And let your good works shine before men, that they seeing them may reverence your Father which is in heaven" ... "Swear not at all; but let your yea be yea, and your nay nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil"... "The greatest commandment is, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and him only shalt thou serve with all thy heart and with all thy strength; the Lord God that made thee" ... "And many will say unto me, Lord, Lord, have we not eaten and drunk in thy name, and done mighty

works? And then will I say unto them, Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity. Then shall there be wailing and gnashing of teeth, when the righteous shall shine as the sun, and the wicked are sent into everlasting fire. For many shall come in my name, clothed outwardly in sheep's skins, but inwardly being ravening wolves. By their works ye shall know them. And every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire". It will be seen from the above that we are not yet on familiar Gospel ground. Though these passages sound more like our New Testament than anything previously cited, yet the collocations are still quite as unexpected, and single phrases, when compared with our four Gospels, as inexact. Moreover, as in previous cases, other writings wholly unknown today are used side by side with the rest as of equal authority. One of these is mentioned by name: the "Acts of Pilate", a document which seems to have been of importance then, but of which we now know nothing. But where are we to look for such Gospel passages as this? "Then when Jesus had gone to the river Jordan, as he stepped into the river, a fire was kindled in the Jordan; ... so wrote the Apostles of this very Christ of ours". Or as this? "Again he said; I will give you power to trample under foot serpents and scorpions and scolopendras, and all the might of the enemy". Or this? "For when among men, Christ worked as a carpenter, making ploughs and yokes, thus teaching the symbols of righteousness and an active life". And what a primitive condition of things it must have been when Jesus could be represented in the same passage as speaking through the Gospels and speaking through the Psalms : "When on earth ... he answered one who called him Good Master, Why callest thou me good? But when he says, I am a worm and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people, he was prophesying things which are now coming to pass and happening to him".

Shall we not say, then, as we have been tempted to do in previous cases, that Justin must have been quoting from memory; introducing passages from our four Gospels, together with many from other sources, and not always remembering exactly where they belonged? It cannot be denied that this would be a very natural habit in days when written documents were so much rarer than now; indeed, his citations from the Old Testament seem often of this character, though the Jewish Scriptures unquestionably existed in written form, and are cited generally by name. No doubt, therefore, many of these Gospel quotations are also from memory. That they cannot all be so, however, appears from the fact that what at first seem quite arbitrary dislocations of familiar passages recur in the same order more than once, and are found also in other contemporary writers; indicating the existence of some collection of Gospel incidents and sayings at present quite unknown.

A little light is thrown upon this puzzling problem by Justin's own language. Although he never quotes from a New Testament writer by name, yet in a few cases he introduces his citation with the words : "This is recorded in the Memoirs of the Apostles". In one case he says: "For the Apostles in the Memoirs which have come from them, which are called Gospels, have delivered unto us thus what was enjoined upon them". Another expression is, "In the Gospel it is written".

It is evident, therefore, that Justin has some document or documents before him which he calls indiscriminately Memoirs, Gospels, Gospel, or Teachings; as though these terms were of like import, or as if the title Gospel were just coming into use in Christian circles, as applied to the written word. Whether it is one writing or several, or simply a general collection of whatever bore upon the life and words of Jesus, there is nothing in his language to show; but as he speaks later of its being read regularly at the Sunday gatherings, we may infer that it is some recognized collection, and that the Christian records are at last beginning to claim their place beside the older Scriptures. It would solve many riddles, had Justin guessed what interest these citations would have for

distant generations, and given us his documents in full. This was far from his thought, however, and we are left to bald conjecture, based on the few hints he has afforded us. That these documents can be our four Gospels in the form in which we have them seems altogether improbable; not only because he rarely follows the text of the Gospels exactly, but because it is difficult to understand why, if he had such universally recognized works in his hands, he should never once have mentioned their names, nor claimed their authority. If it be urged that in addressing pagan emperors it was little to the purpose to mention names unknown to them, it must be remembered that the Jewish Prophets were equally unknown and unhonored by pagan emperors; yet while Justin brings forward with much circumstance Moses, Isaiah, Micah, and David, it never occurs to him to mention Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John. Nor does it occur to him, when introducing quite foreign and extraordinary material, unknown to these Evangelists, to inform us that he is quoting from uncanonical authorities. If we were to judge from the character of the passages above given, which form the larger part of Justin's citations, we should surmise that Matthew's was more likely to be his Gospel than either of the others; unless, indeed, he is using a primitive collection of the precepts of Jesus which was afterwards fashioned into the Sermon on the Mount. These intermediate stages of literary growth are of the highest interest to the student of Christian history, and one feels little desire to minimize or belittle their evidence. One case of this kind, showing how ideas or even phrases may be in the air, or on men's lips, before assuming their final historic form, is quite too curious to be omitted. After describing to his imperial readers the rite of Christian baptism, he illustrates the meaning of that rite by words from Christ and the prophet Isaiah. Those of Christ are given as follows: "Then they are brought by us where there is water, and are regenerated (born anew) in the same way in which we were regenerated ... For Christ also said: Except ye be regenerated, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Now that it is impossible for those once born to enter the wombs of those that bore them, is plain to all". No one can read this without being reminded of the Nicodemus episode in the Fourth Gospel. The turn of expression, as well as the connection of ideas, is altogether too peculiar to suppose a mere coincidence. At the same time, the variations of phrase are too marked to suppose one writer copying from the other. Least of all is it supposable that Justin would quote such a passage from John, the beloved disciple of the Lord, without acknowledging his authority, and should even introduce as his own comment upon Christ's words what was really a portion of the language of the Apostle. But such verbal resemblances, or apparent plagiarisms, are not so uncommon in literature that we need be astonished at them here, or waste our ingenuity in useless conjecture. The cases of Tennyson and Shelley, or of Shakespeare and Montaigne, or a hundred other historic instances, help us easily to understand how Justin and John also might draw unconsciously from each other's material, or both together employ a current phrase which had not yet been appropriated by any accepted Gospel. However understood, this passage, with the others already given, even if leaving us in some perplexity, throws welcome light upon the hidden processes by which the crude materials of Gospel and Epistle were gradually shaping themselves into the Christian Scriptures.

Let me close this account of Justin by quoting the following pleasant description of the Sunday observances of that period, the first that has come down to us. It shows that some apostolic writings were beginning at this time to share with the Jewish Prophets the honor of being publicly read in the churches, an honor granted also to letters of eminent pastors, sent from church to church. "On the day called the day of the sun, there is a gathering in one place of all those who live in city or field, and the memoirs of the Apostles or the writings of the Prophets are read aloud so long as there is time. Then when the reader ceases, the president speaks, calling attention to these excellent things

and exhorting to an imitation of them. Then we all rise together and offer prayers; and when the prayer is over, bread is brought and wine and water, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings, to the best of his ability, and the people shout their assent, saying Amen; and there is a distribution of the things for which thanks have been given, and each one participates in them; and to those not present a portion is sent by the deacons".

By far the most striking figure of this period is Marcion, an exact contemporary of both Justin and Papias, whom we find exciting great commotion in Rome about AD 150. He was a native of Pontus on the Black Sea, a region even more remote from our associations with Christianity than either Hierapolis or Ephesus. As his opponents rally him as a "shipmaster", this may have been his first occupation, though if so, it was soon abandoned, and Marcion gave himself to more serious pursuits. Christian missionaries had been in those parts in the first century, and Marcion's father is said to have been himself bishop of a church there. It is possible, therefore, that Marcion was born in the faith; but whether so or not, he regarded the new doctrines in a very different light from that in which they appeared to Justin, and approached them from a far more individual standpoint. According to one account, his father expelled him from the church for his discordant views.

No doubt Marcion was inclined from the first to independent notions of his own, and whether driven from the church or not, sought larger opportunities than Pontus could afford, and naturally turned his steps to the great center which was drawing to itself so many of the restless spirits of the age. His first appearance in Rome, if we may trust a later historian, was sufficiently dramatic. Entering for the first time an assembly of Roman presbyters, he asked them abruptly: "Tell me, what does this mean? Neither do men put new wine into old bottles; else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish; but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved". In those days many points which seem to us to have been settled from the beginning were still open; and this momentous question of the new wine in old bottles was evidently forcing itself on the church just now for an explicit answer. The new wine was Christianity; the old bottles were the Jewish Scriptures. This was by no means the first time that the inconsistency of a young faith wearing still the livery of a past belief had dawned on the Christian mind. But the times had been unpropitious before, and the ancient Scriptures, as we have seen, had held their place, generation after generation, unchallenged. Up to this hour, in many quarters the Christian Church was hardly aware that it was not still a synagogue.

This time-honored view Marcion takes the liberty to resent. To him Paul, half-forgotten as he was, was a truer teacher than the older Apostles whom the church had followed so slavishly. Paul, in fact, was the only true Apostle, setting himself at the outset once for all against Peter and his kind. From him came the unadulterated Gospel, which all the old chronicles, claiming to be apostolic, had persistently corrupted. Had not Paul carried the Gospel to the Gentiles, had he not denounced circumcision and the Law as beggarly elements? Who so worthy an interpreter of Christianity as Paul? That these views regarding Paul were not acceptable to all, we can readily conceive. "Wherefore, O shipmaster of Pontus", says one of Marcion's best haters, "if you take no stolen or contraband goods into your craft, if you have never smuggled your cargo or used false invoices, will you not be even more conscientious and faithful in divine affairs? Tell us then, under what head you took the Apostle Paul on board, who stamped or labeled him, who forwarded him to you, who embarked him; that you may boldly land him, and not find him claimed as property by the one who furnished him with all his apostolic apparatus". This is sharp language. But as the worthy Father who uses it has unwittingly

preserved for us all that we have of the writings of Marcion, we must forgive him his wrath. It is good jesting after all, and no doubt Marcion, like most reformers, went farther in his zeal than was necessary.

And indeed Marcion was not a man to stop halfway. Having once declared the Jewish Scriptures no genuine Scriptures, he pushed on and pronounced the Jewish Jehovah, with his sacrificial worship and cruel rites, no true God. The old dispensation was at best but a preliminary and baser phase of religious development, which Christianity came to displace. In these days the magic term "evolution" might have offered itself as a solution of the hard problem; but no such phrase was then at hand, and the pitfall of dualism lay on the edges of every such dispute. Marcion did not wholly avoid it. To his thought, either Judaism was one with Christianity, or it was not. Certainly, then, it was not. It was a stern, unpitying code, which stood in sharpest contrast with the tender Gospel of Christ. Christianity was not its fulfillment, it was its abrogation. Judaism stood at best for justice simply, untempered by mercy. Jehovah was the incarnation of austerity. Such deeds as the spoiling of the Egyptians, the slaughtering of the Amalekites, the human offerings on Jehovah's altar, were no tokens of a good and loving Deity. Is not a good tree known by its fruits? Nay, does not Jehovah of the Jews himself confess, "I am he that createth evil?". Then the God whom Jesus reveals is not the God of the Old Testament, but another and higher. The one is at best the just God, the other the good. The one was the Creator of the finite universe, ruling over the world, and thinking himself the only God, the other the Supreme Deity, unknown at first, but finally revealed in Christ. The Law of Moses was for the people of this lower God, whose precepts had to be reversed when the true Messiah appeared. The thought of Jehovah as "greater than all gods", "a great king above all gods", had long been familiar to both Jewish and Christian minds. Jehovah was a god in Marcion's heavens in the sense in which all celestial beings were often in those days conceived as gods; as attendants upon Deity, or emanations from the Supreme, to be superseded in due time by a more perfect incarnation. To Marcion Jesus was this fuller embodiment of the divine. To him Jesus was all in all. To him the mission of Jesus was not the culmination of an old epoch, it was the opening and announcement of an epoch absolutely new. The fancied predictions of his coming on which the other Fathers wholly relied, Marcion scorned. The Christ needed no such help. He was his own evidence. Here was a distinct issue between Marcion and his opponents. "If Christianity was to be believed", said they, "it needed to be built upon the foundation of prearrangement and prophecy". "Not so", replied Marcion, "for Christ was to prove himself at once the Son, the Sent, the Christ of God, by his very deeds and the evidence of his works". Christ was the perfect essence of the divine; God revealing himself; the Son of God in highest sense. But if Christ was in any true sense God, so consistent was Marcion, then he could not have been man. His human life could have been only apparently human; a phantom existence; his flesh no real flesh, his sufferings no real sufferings, his death no actual death.1 With no fulminations of future councils or subtilties of later creeds before his eyes, Marcion shrunk from none of these conclusions. He was unpardonably logical.

It will be easily understood that to such a student of the Jewish and Christian revelations, the documents of the early church would be of great concern. Others had treated them as of subordinate worth, holding firmly to Law and Prophets; to him the Christian Scriptures were of the utmost importance. Whatever he finds he subjects to careful scrutiny, claiming that the records were already corrupted, and that they needed restoration. He seems to have been the first to apply to the records of the early faith the tests of accuracy or genuineness. His enemies, when weary of invective, banter him as "so very punctilious an investigator". How searching his critical methods were does not

appear; but it is clear that he accepted little on trust, and exercised a degree of discrimination which in later days, when such questions of the text had been officially passed upon, was considered very reprehensible. As Paul was Marcion's highest authority, and Paul's writings to his mind the most trustworthy record of the primitive faith, we are not surprised to come upon full references to this Apostle's Epistles, from which we are able to judge for the first time of the number then generally accepted. Marcion mentions ten, calling the Ephesians the "Epistle to the Laodicaeans" (quite correctly, perhaps), and wholly omitting Timothy, Titus, and Hebrews. The great apocalyptic vision, or Revelation, which delighted the souls of so many of his contemporaries, had no charm for Marcion, or is wholly unknown to him, as he passes it by unnoticed. The Book of Acts he treats in the same manner.

Applying the same critical temper to such Gospel narratives as were then in circulation, he finds but one that he can accept; or at least mentions no other. This one, so far as we can judge from the description of it given by his opponents, bore a close resemblance to our Gospel of Luke, and must have been very nearly the same. Yet the unlikeness is quite as marked as the likeness, and introduces us to another of the perplexing problems of which these early annals are so full. It had no name; Marcion seems quite unaware that it had any association with Luke. It had none of the opening chapters of our Luke, relating to the birth and childhood of Jesus, or his temptation and connection with John the Baptist, and began abruptly with his entrance into Capernaum. It had nothing to say either of the agony at Gethsemane or the suffering on the cross. To his critics, writing a generation later, and assuming that Marcion had the four Gospels to choose from, all this seemed very suspicious. They charged him with mutilating the Gospel of Luke, expunging at will whatever conflicted with his peculiar notions of God and Christ. Marcion has come down in Christian history as one who "strove to destroy the character of those Gospels which had appeared under the names of Apostles or companions of Apostles, in order to secure for his own Gospel the credit which he took from them".

It cannot be denied that some of the changes which he made, if changes they were, seemed to have a dogmatic purpose. If Christ had really the celestial character which Marcion assigned to him, his human birth or temptation or his human agonies could have had but little meaning. At the same time, it must be remembered that before the New Testament canon was established, many different texts must have been competing for acceptance, and must have been, as they certainly were, very freely handled. How else, indeed, could the Gospel of Matthew, supposing that the author had Mark before him, have sprung out of Mark; or Luke in turn out of its two predecessors? Marcion was at worst a falsifier only in the sense in which Matthew and Luke can be called falsifiers. Everything indicates that he was a conscientious and scrupulous student of the early records, convinced that they were much corrupted, and anxious to purify them. Some later critics go so far as to assume that Marcion's Gospel was really older than Luke's, and may even have been the original from which Luke was drawn; its name being given it at a later day. In any case, it must not be forgotten that if it already bore the name of Luke, Marcion had every inducement to call it so. As Luke was a companion of Paul, Marcion would have been only too glad to claim such authority for the Gospel he was using.

These are points which we must leave to the biblical critics to determine. Meantime, whatever their decision, the whole situation thus revealed is of singular interest. Here is the first serious and competent critic of ancient records whom we have met, and one whose polemic purpose, if he had such purpose, would have been distinctly

served by citing apostolic authority for his doctrines, had he known them, who yet recognizes only one Gospel, and that without a special name.

Our notice of this hardy innovator is not complete until we add that, although he was denounced as a blasphemer, and finally cast out of the special church which he had joined, yet his doctrines obtained wide currency, and his church organization proved strong and effective. In due course of time his reformatory movement, often exaggerated and compromised by his followers, was ruthlessly crushed, and the Christian Church took quite a different direction; but we see it here while fresh and young, convinced that its renunciation of Judaism and literal fidelity to Christ's maxims will prevail, and that the future of Christianity will be its own.

Glancing back now over the ground we have traversed, we find ample reason, do we not, to abide by the first impression gained from Papias. Though our survey of the period, from the scholar's point of view, has been but cursory and superficial, yet we have been able to take account of all writings which appeared before the latter part of the second century, and can gain from them a trustworthy story, so far as it goes, of the condition of the Christian Scriptures at this early date. It would be a great mistake to suppose that, from this or any other retrospect possible today, we know all about the matter. These very authorities, when most critically studied, are but tantalizing witnesses, as the Christian Fathers, unfortunately, had other interests upon their minds than the preservation of ancient records; and we must content ourselves with such dim traces of earlier processes as diligent scholars, at this long range, can detect. The mere absence of mention of Gospels or Epistles cannot pass as positive proof that they did not at that time exist. They might have been quoted loosely, they might have existed in certain localities long before they were known in others, they might have existed for years in inchoate form and under other names, or no names at all, before assuming their final shape. The progress of investigation may be said to have shown less and less token of deliberate or fraudulent manufacture of ancient records, more and more evidence that the private or primitive documents out of which the New Testament sprang date back in some form or other close upon apostolic times. The stamp of high antiquity is discernible through all their changes. But those changes few now attempt to deny; nor in the nature of the case could they well be absent. The value of such a sketch as is here attempted, if value it have, lies not at all in weakening the foundations of a structure which, after all is said, must have its foundations in the distant past, but only in giving some notion of the early stages of its formation. The result may seem a vague one at best; yet let us take hold of whatever definite facts have revealed themselves.

Of three contemporary writers living half through the century, one in Asia Minor, two in Rome, one is acquainted with an elementary Mark, and a Hebrew collection of the Discourses of Jesus under Matthew’s name; a second uses a Gospel closely resembling our Luke, but anonymous; a third cites certain apostolic Memoirs, which bear no name with which we are familiar, but which recall passages from Matthew, intermingled with several from Luke. There is as yet no mention of either of the Gospels by name, nor any apparent familiarity with their contents; no use of them as official Scriptures, and no knowledge of any Scriptures but the Old Testament, except as Marcion is endeavoring to supplant the Jewish Bible by his mysterious Gospel. At the same time we find several Gospels in vogue which no longer survive, and various writings classed as sacred which are now considered fabulous or apocryphal. The name Gospel, hardly heard at first, is slowly coming into use, and certain works, including letters from living bishops, are publicly read on Sunday with the Old Testament Prophets.

Meantime the material of all our three earlier Gospels is already there, and has existed for some time, no doubt, in fluid and transient form, awaiting the necessity, we might almost say the motive, to single out the few from their many fellows, give them final shape, and attach to them official sanction. Marcion's aggressive movement is enough in itself to show that this process must soon begin. Such a challenge could not remain long unnoticed, — unless the earthly mission of Jesus, with all that gave it human reality, was to pass as an ancient myth. But other agitations, hardly less significant than his, were disturbing the churches, and if there was any authoritative word to be spoken against them, some recognized Scripture must be at hand to appeal to.

Whatever may have been the cause or causes, certain church leaders begin at this time to interest themselves in theological controversies, the question of relative worth among Gospels and Epistles begins to be discussed, and the tests of age or apostolic authorship or general use begin to be applied to all documents. No Council meets as yet to decide these knotty points, nor does any assembly of prelates claim power to settle them. The process is a secret one, to be detected by almost invisible traces. The first vague hint of what is happening comes from a half-forgotten writing of about 180, which is found to have spoken of the "Old Testament". But Old suggests New. Is the author using the word only in a general sense, we ask, or have we come at last upon the first token of Christian Scriptures, — of a veritable New Testament? About the same time appears the first list of accepted books, as if the regulation of a Christian canon had actually been taken in hand, apparently in Rome. It is fragmentary, and speaks in anything but an authoritative voice; but it evidently embraced our four Gospels, explaining how it was that a fourth happened to be written at all, and insisting that the four really agree in their doctrines notwithstanding their incongruities. It included also the Acts of all the Apostles; Paul's Epistles, except Hebrews; Jude; two Epistles of John, and the Revelation of John. Several books were evidently still under discussion and appear as if on the margin of the canon, half within and half without. The "Revelation of Peter", for instance, while admitted into this list, is not allowed to be read in certain churches; while the "Shepherd of Hermas" is set down as quite worthy to be read in the churches, but of too recent origin to be placed among inspired books. Plainly, the ideas of what constitutes a Christian canon, or should determine admission to one, are still confused; but a beginning has fairly been made.

Another enterprise at this time is of interest, though of little positive result, — that of Tatian, who tried to reduce to a single form the various Gospel records which had survived. Whether this was for practical convenience simply, or was a serious effort to bring order out of confusion, we cannot tell, as the work exists only in late and doubtful reconstructions; but there is reason to think that he made special use of our four Gospels for his purpose, with perhaps others beside. Fortunately, the several Gospels retained their individuality, and resisted all such endeavors to fuse them into one.

By the last quarter of the century the conflicting practices among the churches led to serious attempts to close the door against further accessions to the Gospel narratives, and establish uniformity in the use of the Christian Scriptures. There were various parties, it seems, under various names,—Montanist, Marcionite, Valentinian, and others, —some using Luke alone, some Matthew only, some claiming that John was heretical, some "boasting to possess more Gospels than there really are".

Against these Irenaeus lays down a new and inviolable law, that four; and four only, is the sacred limit never to be overstepped. His reasons for this are peculiar and though they cannot be called critical, they are certainly characteristic of the age. "It is not possible that the Gospels should be either more in number than they are, nor again fewer.

For, since there are four zones of the world in which we live, and four prevailing winds, so it is fitting that the church, which is scattered over the earth, the Gospel being its pillar and support and the very spirit of its life, should have four pillars, breathing out incorruption on every side and rekindling the life of men. Therefore it is clear why the Logos, the artificer of all things, sitting upon the cherubim and including all things, having manifested himself to men, has given us the Gospel fourfold, but included in one spirit" ... "These things being so, they are vain and unlearned, and daring, too, who disregard the true form of the Gospel, and introduce either more than have been indicated or fewer".

By the end of the century, all the writings included in the present New Testament seem to have been known by name, though by no means all accepted as equally valuable or trustworthy. The name New Testament, though occasionally in use, was nowhere in full vogue before AD 300; nor were the two Scriptures brought into one Bible till long after that. As late as 325 the historian Eusebius attempts, with serious purpose, to define the genuine and accepted Scriptures, but betrays, in the very attempt, the variable and uncritical grounds still relied upon to determine these disputed points.

So at last the Christian Church is provided with its Scriptures. It is not strange that the process was so slow, if slow it can fairly be called. With unformed literary habits to start with, and no motive whatever for gathering or preserving records of events so soon to culminate in the final destruction of the universe, the young church might well demand four or five generations to complete its message to the world. Nor can it be denied that our earlier Gospels, in their artless and fragmentary character, answer singularly to the above theory of their origin. To inveigh against these features, or feign not to see them, or try to better or erase them, is little to the purpose. Far wiser is it, as we have seen, to accept them exactly as they are, and avail ourselves of the help which these ancient Fathers offer. It is an interesting story, which can hardly be improved upon; a story which, if read in the right spirit, discloses plainly the peculiar religious problems they had in hand, and the entirely natural and unpremeditated methods which they followed in meeting them.

CHAPTER IV

THE MILLENNIAL REIGN

Turning now from these scriptural investigations, let us glance for a moment at the state of religious thought at the period we are considering. What themes were uppermost in men's minds? we ask. What were bishops thinking about in those days, or what had they mainly at heart? We should be glad of a fuller answer to these questions than is vouchsafed us in the brief extracts from Papias which remain; yet the little which we find has its significance, and we welcome it with gratitude, however unexpected the picture it discloses.

Says the historian Eusebius, after giving several miraculous incidents narrated by Papias: “This same writer adds other matters too as having come to him from unwritten tradition, several parables and precepts of the Saviour, and some other things quite too mythical. Among other things he declares that after the resurrection of the dead, a thousand years would follow, during which Christ’s kingdom would exist corporeally upon this earth. Which ideas”, adds Eusebius apologetically, “I think were assumptions of his own, misconceiving the apostolic narratives, and not comprehending certain things upon their pages which were spoken mystically. For he seems to have been a man of extremely small intelligence”. On other occasions he speaks of Papias with the greatest respect, calling him once “a man most learned in all matters, and well acquainted with the Scriptures”; but doctrines had changed, it seems, in two hundred years, and the notion of an earthly kingdom had fallen under suspicion when Eusebius wrote. The point remains, however, that this bishop of the second century, whose name is honored throughout Christendom, looked forward confidently to an earthly reign of Christ in Jerusalem for one thousand years.

This is not our conception of the future, it must be confessed. Yet let us go back some eighteen centuries, place ourselves beside Papias for a moment, and see if the notion is as unaccountable on his part as at first sight appears. The Christian Church, we must remember, had hardly passed as yet out of the atmosphere of Jewish belief; out of the grasp of ideas, I mean, which viewed the present world as the scene of both earthly and heavenly functions, and the fit stage even for the awful events of the Day of Judgment. In the splendid symbolism of the Prophets things invisible and visible, imagination and reality, became one. “Blow ye the trumpet in Zion”, says Joel, “sound an alarm in my holy mountain; ... for the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand”. “And it shall come to pass ... that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions”. “So shall ye know that I am the Lord your God dwelling in Zion”. “Behold”, says Isaiah, “the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate”. “I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the Lord of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger”. Out of this terror and woe Israel alone shall be saved. “Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation : ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end”. In those days “the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead

them". "For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind". "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord". When the nation returned from captivity, they came to a land where they were to reign forever, under a prince of the house of David. "And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children's children for ever: and my servant David shall be their prince for ever".

As time went on, and troubles multiplied over Israel, this reign of Jehovah among his people took more definite form. It was to introduce a new aeon into history; the "coming age", the "regeneration". Jewish thoughts fixed themselves on some great deliverer. A Messiah should appear, to reign upon the earth over all the righteous. This reign would be of vast length; four hundred years, said some, as the tribes wandered four hundred years in the wilderness; a thousand years, said others. "Is not one day with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day?" During the century preceding the birth of Jesus this messianic reign of a thousand years had gained firm hold of the Jewish imagination, and the final judgment had been thrust into the far-off background, till that happy period had passed.

These Jewish prophecies, as we have seen, were the unquestioned authorities to which the earlier generations of Christians naturally turned for proof or confirmation of their faith. But even when Christian records appeared at last to take their place beside the ancient Scriptures, were there not intimations of the same kind there also? However skillfully modern exegesis may deal with the New Testament, must we not all confess to the presence of certain verses there which sadly bewilder us, and which we would gladly eliminate from the sacred text? How are we to understand these words: "Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom". Or these: "Then came unto him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him. And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom. And Jesus answered and said ... To sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father". Or, again: "Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore? And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel". Or how interpret what Jesus says to his disciples at the Last Supper : "I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel".

Whatever impression we may receive from these words, or however easy it may be in these days to reduce them to spiritual terms, and make them still pass current, there can be no doubt how the immediate disciples of Jesus understood them. What a startling confession lies in these words : "We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel". Still more incomprehensible the question put to the risen Lord : "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?". Not even the death and final ascension of the Lord could quench this hope of the visible messianic kingdom. If he was taken up into heaven just when his disciples were awaiting his final triumph, it was only to return to the earth, and establish there his throne. Said Peter to the crowds which thronged around him in the Temple: "He shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world

began". So far as the New Testament history carries us, the moment did not come when the Apostles of Jesus renounced this long-inherited expectation. "Therefore judge nothing before the time", says Paul, "until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of hearts". "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come". "Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump : for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed". "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God : and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we be ever with the Lord". In the latter days came a certain disenchantment, as the first expectation remained so long unfulfilled, but there was no surrender of the hope itself : "There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation ... But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day ... But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up ... Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth".

How profoundly this dream had affected the early Christian imagination is shown by the strange speculations current for many generations over the resurrection of the body. Paul's Epistles, as we remember, hint at a controversy on this point which evidently had a more serious and personal import for his readers than it is easy for us to conceive. He had assured his followers from the first, as we have just seen, that those still living when the end came, though entering at once upon the new kingdom, would yet have no precedence or advantage over those who had died in the meantime. Although already in their graves, these would yet be received with the rest. But in what bodies would they come? And in what form would the living themselves enter into the Messiah's realm? Would they retain their former bodies, or be clothed with new? "But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain : but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body ... So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption ... It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body".

The question of the spiritual body and its relation to the actual body long remained a grave one. For more than a century, we discover as we read the discussions of the future life, resurrection always means resurrection of the flesh. The controversy of that period was never with those who denied the future or questioned immortality; it was with those who doubted bodily resurrection. Apart from that condition, the future seems to have had no meaning to the Christian believer. "If you have fallen in with any who are called Christians", said Justin Martyr, a contemporary of Papias, "who yet say that there is no resurrection of the dead, but that their souls are taken up into heaven immediately upon death, do not suppose that they are Christians". "If the Saviour proclaimed salvation to

the soul alone, what new thing did he bring us, beyond what was taught by Pythagoras and Plato, and all their band?" Irenaeus, writing a generation later, is still greatly disturbed by the heretics who claim that the spirit rises to heaven at the moment of death. "Whatsoever all the heretics with the greatest solemnity may have asserted, they come to this at last; they blaspheme the Creator, and deny the salvation of the image of God, which the flesh certainly is". "They deny the power of God,—who fix their thought upon the infirmity of the flesh; and forget his strength who raises it from the dead". "For the heretics, despising the handiwork of God, and not allowing the salvation of their flesh, claim that immediately upon their death they shall pass beyond the heavens". As with Christ, who appeared in bodily form after the resurrection, so will it be with the Christian. "If the Lord tarried until the third day in the lower parts of the earth, afterwards rising in the flesh, — how must they not be put to confusion who declare that the 'lower parts' mean this earth of ours, but that only their inner man, leaving here the body, ascends into the supercelestial place".

If the soul alone is saved, says Tertullian, a little later, man is only half saved. "He is saved only so far as the soul is concerned, but lost as to the flesh, if the flesh does not rise". Does not Paul say, "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body?" But "it will be impossible to be judged for things done in the body, if there is no body". No aspect of this question is too trivial or grotesque to be solemnly discussed, and all objections met. Tertullian quotes Paul triumphantly : "In this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven". But how can we be clothed upon, he asks, unless there be a body to be clothed? "For being found naked, the flesh having been laid aside or worn out, the dead recover it again, so that being reclothed in flesh they may then be clothed upon in immortality; for one cannot be clothed upon, unless already clothed". If the unbeliever asked how it was possible to gather together again the scattered remains of the departed, once dissolved in death, the Christian apologist answered : "Although to men it may appear quite impossible that what has passed into the universe should be separable from it again, yet it is not possible for God to be ignorant either of the limbs themselves, or of the particles of which they consist, or whither each of the dissolved particles passes, or what element has received that which is dissolved and found other affinities". Philosophers might believe in the natural immortality of the soul; but not so the Christian. Oddly enough, the advocates of transmigration were considered as coming nearer the true Christian doctrine than believers in spiritual immortality. They at least showed due respect to the body. "The Pythagoreans and Platonists affirm in a manner quite approaching our own that the soul returns into the body; though not indeed into the same, nor always into human bodies; Homer for instance being supposed to have passed into a peacock ... They at least knocked at the door of truth, although they entered not". It was held that the soul can have no distinct individuality, except as attained through the body; can have neither happiness nor misery, reward nor punishment. "Man cannot be said to exist when the body is dissolved, and scattered abroad, even though the soul continue by itself; it is absolutely necessary that the end of man's being should be reached in a reconstitution of the two, body and soul".

I do not mean that this thought is put always in its grossest form. One writer of the period at least gives it as attractive a guise as such a doctrine is capable of: "Do you think that if anything is withdrawn from our feeble eyes, it perishes to God? Every body, whether dried up into dust, or dissolved into moisture, or compressed into ashes, or attenuated into smoke, is withdrawn from us, but it is reserved for God in the custody of the elements". Indeed, long before this epoch, under Platonic influence no doubt, the great problem had been touched in far nobler mood, and in words which must have been

familiar in some Christian circles. “For the corruptible body presseth down the soul, and the earthy tabernacle weigheth down the mind that museth upon many things”. “God created man to be immortal, and made him to be an image of his own being”. But this, as we see, was not the aspect of the theme which prevailed in the early church. In the next century Origen handles it with freer hand than any before; yet even he recognizes no distinction between the resurrection of the dead and the resurrection of the body. Those who deny the one deny the other.

Such being the prevailing views, it is no longer strange that Papias should believe in a messianic reign upon earth. Indeed, he had grounds for his faith quite independent of the written Scriptures. The oral traditions, on which he so much relied, had something to tell him on this point also. Among them was a conversation of Jesus with his disciples, which he narrates in the Fourth Book of his Interpretations or Commentaries, as follows : “The presbyters who had seen John, the disciple of the Lord, declared that they had heard him tell how the Lord described these times, saying : The days will come when vines shall grow, each one bearing ten thousand branches, and upon each branch ten thousand twigs, and upon each one of the twigs ten thousand shoots, and upon every shoot ten thousand bunches, and upon every bunch ten thousand grapes, and each grape when pressed shall yield twenty-five metres of wine. And when one of the saints takes hold of a cluster, another shall cry out, 'lama better cluster, take me; bless the Lord through me. So, too, the grain of wheat shall produce ten thousand ears, and every ear shall bear ten thousand grains, and every grain shall yield ten pounds of fine flour, clear and pure; and all the other fruit trees and seeds and herbs shall bear fruit in similar proportions; and all animals feeding on the fruits of the earth shall become peaceable and in accord one with the other, being subject to man in all subjection”. This, according to Papias, was spoken by Jesus in the presence of the Twelve, of whom Judas alone proved skeptical. “But Judas the traitor would not believe, but asked how such fruitfulness could be created by the Lord; and the Lord said : They shall see who enter upon that kingdom”.

This extract would certainly not be worth quoting on its own account; nor, it must be confessed, does it increase our esteem for the venerable Fathers, one of whom could solemnly report such tales, as “credible to all believers”, and the other repeat them with full approval. But whatever lets us into the hidden thoughts of this remote period is of distinct value; and nothing could help us better to understand the crude and conflicting beliefs out of which our Christian faith was born, or the heterogeneous traditions from which by slow processes our four Gospels had to be sifted, than this extraordinary prophecy, so long credited without dismay to Jesus himself.

A still higher warrant for his belief, probably well known to Papias, was found in the widely circulated Revelation of St. John, now standing at the close of the New Testament. In this book, which seems like an echo of the ancient Jewish Prophets, and which, apart from its preface and occasional references to “the Lamb”, seems as purely Jewish as those Prophets themselves, the earlier conception of the Messiah’s coming has taken a more definite form. Let us glance at the main features of this singular Apocalypse. The last days are drawing nigh, as the writer believes, and their awful events are revealed to him in vision. When seal after seal has been broken, and woe has followed woe, and the seven angels have brought upon the earth their seven plagues, and Babylon, the Mother of all Abominations, has fallen, the Messiah comes forth through the opening skies, followed by the armies of heaven, to overthrow the kings of the earth, and exterminate all his foes; the old serpent Satan is bound and cast into the bottomless pit; thrones appear, judgment begins, and they who have borne witness to Jesus rise from their graves, to live and reign with Christ a thousand years. The elect are few; on these

death hath no more power; they are priests of God and Christ. This is the first resurrection. When the thousand years have passed, Satan is loosed, the enemies of Israel are gathered, like the sands of the sea, for a last assault upon the beloved city Jerusalem; fire comes down from heaven to destroy them; Satan is cast once for all into the lake of fire and brimstone, to be tormented day and night forever and ever. The second resurrection follows. A great white throne appears, and we behold the last Judgment.

"And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them ... And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them". "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened ... and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works". "And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire". "And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death". Death has been destroyed, and eternal life begins. A new heaven and a new earth take the place of the first heaven and the first earth. "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth : for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God". And the city "had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, ... and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel.... And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it ... And the nations ... shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it ... In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month : and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse : but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him". The splendid vision ends where it began: on earth and in Jerusalem.

This singular book has always seemed strangely out of place in a collection of Christian writings. A vision which concerns itself almost exclusively with Jerusalem, its temple, its elders, its altars, and its worshipers, which reflects throughout the Jewish hatred of Rome and its rulers, which reserves its bitterest scorn for the "synagogues of Satan", those who, while claiming to be Jews, are not worthy of the name, and which has constantly before its eyes Mount Zion and the Twelve Tribes of Israel, would seem to bear its Jewish stamp upon its face. How singular the moment in Christian history when the church could claim such a writing as its own, without a thought of incongruity! One recent critic declares it unequivocally a Jewish prophecy, written during the horrors of the Roman siege, then translated and applied to Christian uses during the persecutions under Domitian. Other commentators, following this idea, point out not two, but three or four different authors, Jewish and Christian. And indeed there seems little reason to doubt that the perplexities which that confused narrative has caused have been largely owing to the fact that it is not a single writing, but a combination of several prophecies of different dates. For our present purposes it matters little whether the Revelation was originally a Christian writing, or a Jewish prophecy accepted and remoulded by the Christian Church. The significant thing is that a book should exist at all which could be called with equal reason Jewish or Christian. In any case it shows how vague was once the dividing line between the two faiths. In any case it shows what vivid expectations of an earthly future were haunting Jewish and Christian minds alike; and what ample

authority Papias had for his millennial dreams. Whatever its origin, there is no doubt of the profound influence which this Apocalypse exerted on the Christian belief of early generations; an influence which did not wholly cease till the year 1000 AD had come and gone.

There is no more delicate problem than for a later generation to interpret to itself the beliefs of an earlier and more primitive age. Readers of the New Testament for eighteen centuries have rarely made even the attempt to do so; and consequently that familiar volume, when read today, is apt to convey to us in many places almost any meaning but that which is naturally and simply its own. It is only by force, therefore, and at the peril of much confusion and possible misunderstanding, that we remind ourselves that Papias' conception of the temporal messiahship is in all essential points that of the New Testament itself. To us this is a purely materialistic idea. Yet when we bluntly pronounce it so, we must remember that if materialistic, it is the materialism of the Sermon on the Mount and the Prodigal Son, the Parable of the Talents and the Good Samaritan; for it is safe to say that there is nothing in the earlier Gospels which is inconsistent with this messianic future, or does not distinctly presuppose it. The Paradise of those Gospels, the kingdom of heaven, the eternal punishment or reward, the "end of the world", hell, resurrection, day of judgment, eternal life, redemption, immortality, are all parts of the same fundamental conception. So with all the lofty moral ideals of which the Gospels are so full, and for which we chiefly prize them; if these ideals seem to us to demand for their realization a larger field than this visible universe, the Christian of that age did not think so. In his view, the divine qualities of charity, faith, love, purity, forgiveness, self-consecration, were all attainable within the earthly kingdom which was to appear before that generation had passed, and which, at certain exalted moments, seemed already to have begun. Plainly, it was as true then as now that the spiritual mind sees all things spiritually. And we cannot doubt that this messianic framework, within which the religious thought of the age of necessity moved, took varied character and coloring according to the special mind which held it; shaping itself for religious natures of the higher type in strict obedience to their imperious needs.

In any case, millenarism was the prevailing Christian belief of the age. Within the ranks of primitive Judaic Christianity, at least, barbaric to the world's eye, untouched as yet by philosophic speculation, it was the universal faith. It was the orthodoxy of the century. None but heretics questioned it. So far from being alone in his faith, Papias represented in this respect all the accepted writers, all the Christian "Fathers", of his time. Justin Martyr, his contemporary, discusses this point with Trypho the Jew, after the following fashion: "Tell me", said Trypho, "do you really claim that this place, Jerusalem, is to be rebuilt, and do you expect your people to come together in it, and be made happy with Christ and the Patriarchs and Prophets?" ... "And I answered, I am not so worthless a fellow, O Trypho, as to say one thing and mean another ... Many, as I have told you, think otherwise. . . . But I, and all entirely right-minded Christians, know well that there is to be a resurrection of the flesh, and that for a thousand years Jerusalem will be built up and adorned and enlarged; as the prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah and the others declare". Irenaeus, alarmed at the errors which were creeping into the church, wrote a work of five books "against Heresies"; but for Papias and his doctrine he has only approving words. There was no heresy in that, but only the highest truth. Quoting the words of Jesus as given Matt. XXVI. 29, Irenaeus says : "Here the Lord promised to drink of the fruit of the vine with his disciples; thus indicating at the same time an earthly inheritance in which the new fruit of the vine is drunk, and his own fleshly resurrection. For it is the newly risen flesh alone that could receive the new cup. For he cannot possibly be thought of as drinking of the fruit of the vine with his disciples in supercelestial places;

nor again can they who drink it be conceived as without flesh; as it is the property of flesh, not spirit, to drink of the vine" The "New Jerusalem" of the Apocalypse is the true and actual Jerusalem; the Jerusalem of history having been but the image of the real. "Of this tabernacle Moses received the pattern on the Mount; and nothing is allegorical here [in the New Jerusalem], but everything firm, true, and substantial, prepared by God, for the enjoyment of righteous men". According to the "Presbyters", whom Irenaeus, as well as Papias, quotes so often, there are to be gradations of well-being in these messianic realms. "For since the men themselves are real, the transplanting must be real; so that they shall not vanish away among things that are not, but progress among things that are ... There is a distinction therefore between those who produce a hundred-fold, who produce sixty-fold, and who produce thirty-fold: the first will be taken up into the heavens, the second will pass their time in Paradise, the last will inhabit the city. Therefore it is that the Lord said : In my Father's house are many mansions".

Tertullian also writes a bitter "Prescription against Heretics"; but finds no place among the heresies for the doctrine of the millennium. The end of the world, as he believes, is close at hand, awaiting only the destruction of the Roman empire. "For we know that a mighty shock is impending over the entire universe, the end of the present world, threatening fearful woes, and retarded only by the continued existence of the Roman empire." In view of this, the hope of the faithful lies in the coming of the Messiah's kingdom. "We avow that there is a kingdom promised us upon earth, this side of heaven, yet in another state of being; I mean after the resurrection for a thousand years, in the divinely built city of Jerusalem, let down from heaven. Indeed, this prophecy has been very lately fulfilled, during the expedition to the East. For it appears, even upon pagan testimony, that in Judaea for forty days, in the morning hours, a city hung down from the skies, disappearing with all its walls at the approach of day. This we affirm to be the city provided by God for receiving the saints on their resurrection, and refreshing them with an abundance of spiritual blessings, as a recompense for those things which, in this world, we have either despised or lost". The worst heretics, in Tertullian's eyes, are those who claim for the soul an immediate immortality. "Let us now turn to those Scriptures which refute those animalists, for I will not call them spiritualists, who claim that the resurrection is here and now, or immediately upon the departure from this life". Are we not told that the Lord must first come in the clouds of heaven? "But who has yet seen Jesus descending from heaven, in like manner as the Apostles saw him ascending? ... Indeed, is there anyone who has risen again — except the heretic?"

It is not necessary to pursue these citations further. They represent, as I have said, the prevailing faith of the period. Origen seems to have been the first to oppose these "disciples of the letter", and insist upon a figurative interpretation of the New Jerusalem and its joys; and there were soon others to follow in his steps. But the old belief, deeply entrenched in the Scriptures themselves, and resenting the devices of the allegorists, held its own persistently. In western churches, and certain regions of the East, it remained unshaken through the third century. In fact, it has never yet died out of the Christian Church. The expectation of a millennial reign, under some form, has shown strange power to survive; even its grossest features reappearing generation after generation. Even where it has been rejected as a doctrine, it has left its ineffaceable stamp; and it will hardly be claimed that the popular notion of the future today is essentially nobler or more "spiritual", except in name, than these primitive beliefs. The creeds of the church have disclaimed the Apocalyptic doctrine as a whole; but, for some occult reason, while silent upon the millennium, have retained the resurrection of the flesh, and the visible return of Christ in glory to judge the quick and dead. In these days we mention the millennium only with a smile; but the first two Christian centuries are not to be explained without it;

nor was it surrendered by the infant church till unwelcome speculations from without came in to disturb its naive messianic dream.

CHAPTER V

THEOLOGICAL SPECULATIONS

It is hardly to be supposed that beliefs such as have just been described would satisfy all minds. Papias himself, as will be remembered, alludes to certain "retailers of strange doctrines"; thus suggesting other intellectual currents than any which we have yet traced. We have seen, too, that the "shipmaster of Pontus", as he was called, was giving the churches something to think of; and we soon find that Marcion's mental restlessness was one instance only of a theological ferment which portended serious results.

Let us return for a moment to Marcion and the Scripture investigations which he was pursuing. In the course of those investigations he came upon writings more ancient, and to his mind far more trustworthy, than the floating Gospel narratives then chiefly in vogue. These were the Epistles of Paul. To Marcion, as we have already seen, Paul was the only true Apostle. He was the "Apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father". He had a Gospel of his own to preach, very different from that of the older Apostles, whom he had so sharply rebuked for their "dissimulation". Paul was the real representative of Christ and his word.

We cannot be surprised that Marcion found a difference between the earlier Gospels and Paul's Epistles (supposing that his Gospels and Epistles corresponded with ours), for the conflicting views of Christ which these writings present strike every thoughtful reader today. In the Gospels, we have the homely details of the Master's daily life and speech, with hardly a hint of his celestial functions; in the Epistles, the celestial functions become all in all, with hardly a hint of the earthly and human career. In the Gospels, the Jewish life and ceremonial are frankly assumed; in the Epistles, they are as frankly dismissed, as "weak and beggarly elements", to which no Christian should "desire again to be in bondage".

In a word, for we need not look far to explain this distinction, Paul was a scholar of the rabbis; and as such versed not only in the barren subtleties which we commonly associate with that name, but also in much wider investigations. It was a period of transcendental speculation, whose influence could hardly have failed to reach the Jewish schools of thought, even had the Jewish mind been less responsive then than it is now to the spiritual or intellectual activities of the hour. In Alexandria, as we know, the contact of Greek and Jewish thought had produced one of the most far-reaching theological movements of the age; and neither Palestine nor Tarsus was so far distant from Alexandria as to remain wholly uninfluenced by its religious life. According to an early tradition, Paul had sat at the feet of Gamaliel, one of the most advanced scholars of his day; and, whether this be true or not, his Epistles in themselves give abundant proof of his familiarity with the best rabbinical training then current. We need not go beyond that training, or the Jewish literature of the age, to find tokens of a widespread Hellenistic influence, which a mind like Paul's would be the last to have escaped. He comes to his new faith with ideals of the Messiah and his reign quite unlike those of the Galilean disciples. He, too, is looking for a speedy coming of the Lord, but the Messiah of whom he dreams is a being of a far more exalted type. This was a theme evidently on which

Jewish speculation had already occupied itself, and over which Paul himself must have pondered, long before he had heard of Jesus of Nazareth.

We have already spoken of the influence upon the Jewish imagination exerted by Daniel's vision of the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven. "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him". But other texts there were which had also exercised the ingenuity of the age, and whose influence upon Paul's messianic ideals his Epistles plainly show. Among these was the double narrative of the creation in Genesis, to which he attached so profound a significance. The distinction between the first two chapters of Genesis, which was pointed out by a French critic about a century ago, and which became almost the starting-point of modern biblical criticism, had been discovered by Jewish scholars, it seems, seventeen centuries before, and had led, in Alexandria at least, to very mystic conclusions. According to the first chapter, "God created man in his own image". According to the second, "The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul". Here, then, according to the schools, are two creations; the first a heavenly man, of divine birth and divine nature; the second of the earth, earthy. The latter was the real man, as he has already appeared on earth, the former the ideal man, as conceived in God's thought, and dwelling with him from all eternity. This heavenly or ideal man has become identified in Paul's thought with the Messiah; and upon the above passage he bases his doctrine of the first and second Adam. "So it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven".

These are conceptions, we must remember, for which Paul found the way prepared, even if the definite ideals were not given, in his earlier faith. The idealizing process had already begun. The Messiah has ceased in his thought to be the earthly ruler of an earthly kingdom, he has become a celestial being, present with God from the beginning, and awaiting the moment to enter upon his earthly mission. Paul is looking for a heavenly Messiah, and finds him in Jesus of Nazareth, who, having risen from the dead, has thus shown himself a being of spiritual nature; the very Lord from heaven. It is in this light that Paul attaches such supreme importance to the resurrection of Jesus. Indeed, he tells us little else of Jesus but this one fact. He assures us that if this be not true, then his preaching was vain, and all faith in Christ vain. If it were not true, then even those who had died in the faith had perished. In this escape from the grave lay the very proof and secret of his messiahship.

The belief in the resurrection of Jesus was already current in the Christian community, it appears, when Paul entered it; but it was not on this testimony that he relied for his own acceptance of it. Others had had their visions of the risen one; he, too, had had his. He also had seen Christ. But to what does he allude here? Not of course to such bodily appearances of Jesus as are described in the earlier Gospels; for it is never supposed that Paul was in Jerusalem at that period, nor is it conceivable, had he witnessed these miraculous incidents, that he would have waited for the lesser miracle at Damascus, to be converted. He must be referring to some special vision, at Damascus or elsewhere, granted to him after becoming acquainted with the new faith, but before his final acceptance of it. What the nature of this vision was we can easily conjecture from the description of a similar experience, which he gives us himself with singular vividness. "I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I knew a man in Christ above fourteen

years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man ... how that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter". However obscure these psychological phenomena may be to us, to Paul, with whom they were not infrequent, they evidently carried great meaning. They were his revelations. They supplied him with the intuitions which were so much more convincing than any human testimony. In the present case, this apparition of the risen Jesus, objectively real to him, was plainly the very proof for which he was waiting. Not the living man, in flesh and bones, to be touched and handled, and to partake of physical nourishment, but the spiritual and already glorified Jesus, coming down from the right hand of God. Jesus therefore had not really died ; he had triumphed over death, and had now descended from heavenly regions, to reveal himself in spiritual form to Paul. In thus overcoming death, and establishing the spiritual kingdom, he made the spiritual life possible for all who believed in him. "Christ the first-fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming". With his coming, the new life would begin. All his followers, whether then living, or already dead, would be clothed in incorruptible bodies, and enter upon immortal life. "Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump : for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality".

In view of these convictions, drawn from his previous faith, we cannot be surprised that Paul's language concerning his Master takes from the beginning so exalted a form. He describes him as sent forth from God "in the fullness of time". He calls him the "Lord of glory". He declares that through him we and all things exist. He holds him to be the very Son of God, sent to the earth for a season, "in the likeness of sinful flesh". As Paul pursues his mission, we cannot but feel that this lofty conception grows more and more celestial, less and less human. Indeed, if his shorter Epistles, admitted by Marcion into his collection, but questioned by later scholars, are really his, the heavenly regions, with their hierarchy of Angels, Principalities, and Powers, became to Paul the familiar scene of the entire Gospel transaction. In these heavenly places, as he believed, Christ was throned, "Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come". Christ was the supreme agent in creation : "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, ... all things were created by him, and for him". Paul goes so far as to say, "In him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily".

These are sublime ideals. If the human Jesus still holds his own in this celestial companionship, a great step has been taken towards that union of the human and the divine, for which the human soul so passionately sighs.

It is the supreme test of idealism, that while it lets the imagination range at will in highest realms, it is yet able to keep the feet firmly planted on solid earth. It is not strange that Paul could not meet this test. Too much was at stake. What Christianity meant to him, if he was to accept it at all, was the advent of a heavenly being on earth. If Christ was not such a being, then his faith was vain. The theological refinements of centuries have accustomed men to feel that such a being could be human and superhuman in one. To Paul, standing at the threshold of these discussions, no such illusion was possible. If Jesus was really the superterrestrial visitant which his resurrection declared, then his human life in Galilee could have been only a passing incident, of little meaning. It was but the visible token, the sign-manual, of a divine event. To blend that earthly life with the spiritual functions of the Son of God became to Paul more and more impossible, and

he ceased at last to attempt it. The time came when he could say : “Though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more”.

How else can we explain the fact that Paul’s writings contain so few allusions of any kind to the life or teachings of Jesus? That life had hardly ended when Paul came upon the scene; its memories were still fresh; the companions of Jesus were at hand to tell him, if he chose to ask, all the personal qualities that had exerted such mighty power over men. But he did not choose to ask. He prides himself upon not asking. He takes special pains to say to the Galatians: “When it pleased God ... to reveal his Son in me, ... I conferred not with flesh and blood : neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. But other of the disciples saw I none, save James the Lord’s brother”. In other words, their memories of the Lord’s daily life and speech, or of his familiar habits and tones, had no interest for Paul. Even the precepts of the Master had no place in Paul’s teachings. His letters to his followers would have gained tenfold moral power, if reinforced by lofty maxims from the Master’s lips. So, at least, it seems to us, to whom the earthly life of Jesus is the great spiritual event of the ages. But not a few allusions to his death and resurrection, two or three scanty references to the words of Christ, whether told him by others, or received by special vision, we cannot tell, and that is all. No parables, no beatitudes, no exhortations, no discussions with Pharisee or publican, no self-consecration to a sacred career, no heroic self- sacrifice. Those earthly incidents, we must suppose, were for the hour only, and for those who witnessed them; the real Jesus, all the time, was the celestial visitant. The grand meaning of that life in this view was not that the human became divine, but that divinity dwelt for a moment in the ranks of humanity. Except for the Christ himself, and those that “are Christ’s”, the human and divine remained as distinct as ever. Had this involved the Apostle Paul alone, it would be simply one chapter the more of the world’s religious philosophy, to be easily closed, and forgotten. Where it affects the struggles of many generations to gain a firmer hold upon divine realities, it becomes a more serious affair.

One disciple, at least, was not slow in following in the steps of the great Apostle. Paul’s exalted conception of Christ had seized upon Marcion’s imagination. It had been forgotten by the churches, he declared, which had clung too fondly to the terrestrial promises of Judaism and its terrestrial scenery. Both the Christian Scriptures and the Christian faith needed a thorough purification. According to Marcion, pursuing Paul’s thought quite beyond Paul himself, Christianity owed nothing whatever to Judaism; its coming was an absolutely new epoch in the career of humanity; not a higher unfolding of a previous revelation, but the very beginning of man’s higher life. It was the first entrance of the divine into the world. In the presence of this new life, and the heavenly future which it involved, all speculation upon the messianic kingdom and the end of the world lost its interest. An endless future in celestial companionship disclosed itself. Till then God had been wholly unknown; he revealed himself first in Christ. All previous history compared with this was as earthly to heavenly. The Old Testament was not false; it was the story of a primordial race under an inferior and primordial God. Marcion shrunk from none of the logical consequences of his position. “A corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit”, he quoted; “neither a good tree corrupt fruit”. The cruelties and idolatries of Israel could have come only from an evil deity. Jehovah was a God indeed, the Creator of the world, as the Jewish Scriptures claim; but it was this lower world which he created; above which was a spiritual world, where dwells the supreme God.

For the theologian of today, to have two Gods to account for would be embarrassing. Not so to Marcion; hardly so, indeed, to any of the Christian divines of

that early time, accustomed as they were to speak of the “prince of the world”, or “prince of the power of the air”, with his legions of evil angels or demigods. Marcion was fond of quoting from the Psalms : “God standeth in the congregation of the mighty he judgeth among the gods”. “I have said, Ye are gods”. These were phrases quite as familiar, of course, to the Christian as to the Jew, and must have meant something to them both. In fact, polytheism died slowly, even under the assaults of Judaism or Christianity; losing its name in the process, while bequeathing to them its spirit. For Marcion, these two Gods were the keystone of his system. The true God, the only one worthy of the name, was pure spirit, the embodiment of goodness and love, dwelling in the highest heavens, calm and undisturbed. The other, Demiurge or Cosmocrator, as you choose, whom he identified with the Jehovah of the Jews, was the lover of war, and the embodiment of sternness and cruelty. His supreme characteristic was justice. He is the God who “creates evil”, who spoiled the Egyptians, who required “an eye for an eye”, who made Saul a king, and then repented of it, who had to ask Adam, “Where art thou?” not knowing where he had hid himself, and came down to Sodom and Gomorrah, to “see whether they had done altogether according to the cry of it which had come unto him”, and who rejected Moab and Ammon for all time, for not offering hospitality to the Israelite invaders. Jehovah, according to Marcion, sincerely thought himself the one only God, being unaware of the higher Being in whose place he was figuring. The Prophets, ignorant also of the ineffable Father, were inspired by the Demiurge to predict a false Messiah, who came indeed, but came only to insure to scattered Israel the recovery of their land, and the repose of Abraham’s bosom; while the true Messiah came to offer liberation to the human race.

The two worlds, according to this daring innovator, were as distinct as the two Gods. The one was a spiritual realm, the other purely earthly, having to do with matter alone, in which inheres all evil; a dualistic notion by no means peculiar to Marcion, but standing ready then as now as the easiest explanation of the existence of evil and sin. Between these two worlds no communication was possible, as the material can have no touch with the spiritual, nor even consciousness of it. Only by introducing into the lower world the quality of spirit could the alliance between the two be established. This was accomplished by the Son of God, who appeared in Capernaum unannounced and without human birth, who took the name of Christ that he might be the more readily recognized as the expected Messiah, who assumed the form of Jesus of Nazareth, who put on the “appearance of sinful flesh”, and led a spirit-life on earth, to awaken there the latent sense of the divine. Many perplexing problems which have disturbed the Christian world from the beginning disappear in this hardy-process; not least, that of a suffering God. As the birth and childhood of Christ were apparent rather than real, so also his death. It was the futile vengeance of the Demiurge against one who came to supplant him. The agonies of the crucified God were apparent agonies, the death a phantom death. The flesh, whether of Christ or of his followers, has no place in the resurrection. The resurrection is a purely spiritual event. It is the escape of the spirit to higher realms; its passage, through sphere after sphere, to its heavenly home.

These strange doctrines were by no means mere matters of speculation, or of Scripture criticism alone. They meant with Marcion the purging of the Scriptures of their Jewish corruptions, and the purification of the church of all its false dogmas. He undertook this reform unflinchingly. He undertook a moral reform, also, with quite as unflinching a hand; for he held that the precepts of the Gospel had been neglected, and demanded a far more rigid enforcement. If matter is evil, and the flesh sinful, then all fleshly pursuits are sinful. He brought into sharp contrast the Mosaic laws of divorce and those of Jesus, and included marriage itself among the evils to be reformed. No marriage was allowed in his churches, nor were married persons admitted to baptism unless first

divorced.1 He taught abstinence from meats, as well as from the pleasures of the world. His continence, and the abstemiousness of his disciples, were among the severest charges which his opponents had to bring against him. None led a stricter life in those days than the followers of Marcion, nor were any more ready, when the hours of persecution came, to face the horrors of martyrdom.

However abstract and impracticable these notions may seem to us, in those days they had power to arouse the highest enthusiasm, and for a time it seemed as if they might prevail, and the Christian church be founded on dogmas even more transcendental than those of Paul. The movement spread rapidly. "As wasps build their combs", says Tertullian, Marcion's most unforgiving foe, "so do these Marcionites build their churches". In point of fact, the Marcionite church became a clearly defined and compact organization, and held its own among Christian churches, with its bishops and presbyters, quite into the fifth century. A bishop of the fifth century claims to have converted more than ten thousand Marcionites in Syria. A historian of the same period writes bitterly: "This heresy is not only found today in Rome and Italy, it has overrun Egypt and Palestine also, Arabia and Syria, Cyprus and the Thebaid, even Persia, and other regions far and wide".

It is worth noting here that it was the uncompromising asceticism of the Marcionites quite as much as their theological dogmas which brought them into disrepute. The early Christian conscience seems to have encountered great difficulty in adjusting these nice points of the new ethics, and often found itself in strange predicaments; not knowing at first where to draw the lines between the customs of the world and the requirements of the Christian Scriptures. Tertullian himself, who denounces Marcion today for forbidding marriage, is found tomorrow denouncing another theologian quite as severely for marrying not once only, but twice; or, as this writer gracefully puts it, "marrying persistently".

Another interesting personage, whose independent thought brought him into disrepute about this same time, was Basilides. Judging from the fragmentary accounts which the church has handed down to us, we infer that he appeared first in Syria, and went from there to Egypt, which was apparently the scene of his best teaching or preaching, and the center from which emanated the many schools which bore his name. Though we have to content ourselves with little knowledge of the man, yet the character of his doctrines appears plainly enough through the hostile criticisms which they evoked. Basilides was no organizer like Marcion, and was less interested in missionary or practical concerns than in getting at the interior meaning of Christianity and its significance for the world. He does not seem to have shared Marcion's aversion to Judaism, yet at the same time occupied himself little with this point, being influenced more by the mystic tendencies current then in Alexandria, than in questions of Scripture criticism. Christianity presented itself to his mind less as a historic event than as a spiritual process, releasing mankind from its thralldom by revealing the soul's innate divineness. The eastern mind welcomed allegory and symbolism, and few have ever gone farther into the realm of abstractions than Basilides. The Jewish Jehovah was to him a very anthropomorphic Deity. God was above all personification; he was absolute Being. He could not even be defined. He was above every name that is named. We can assert only his existence. Indeed, hardly that. To other philosophers he may be existence pure and simple; to Basilides he is non-existence. So at least Basilides' historians insist, making much sport of this non-existing Being who yet creates existing worlds. This exalted Being, or Not-being, must of course be far removed from the actual universe. Two celestial regions intervene, each with its invisible hierarchy of principalities and powers; above the Hebdomad the Ogdoad, above the Ogdoad the highest heavens, or realm of the

Infinite. In the Ogdoad rules a mighty Archon, of great power and splendor, knowing of nothing beyond the Firmament, and fancying himself the one God; in the Hebdomad a second and inferior Archon, Jehovah of the Jews, also ignorant of all above himself, and also deeming himself the God of Gods. Each of these Archons creates for himself a son, who sits at his right hand; each son being endowed with a portion of the eternal sonship which makes him superior to the Archon himself. Below these realms is the kosmos or earth in which we live, awaiting the divine awakening.

All this time, within this lower creation lay a germ or seed of the divine, the incipient son-ship of the Highest, planted in certain souls, and constituting them children of God. This was hidden from both Archons. It was the great mystery, — "which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men". The universe has always carried at its heart this mighty longing for the infinite: "For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God ... For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now". At last comes the Gospel, flashing like a flame of light from sphere to sphere, from the highest to the Ogdoad, from the Ogdoad to the Hebdomad, through every Principality and Power and Dominion. Each Archon learns the mystery with dismay, but yields his power at once to the Son who has revealed it. Finally, this light descends upon Jesus the son of Mary, imparting to him its radiance. From Jesus it passes at once to the spiritual portion of the race, to the sons of God who have so long awaited it. The world endures till all the elect, becoming intuitively conscious of their sonship, "follow Jesus, and hasten upward, to come forth purified". Light seeks light. Man seeks heaven as his native place.

It will be seen that in this system the Son of God, although taking the form of Jesus of Nazareth, is no more an actual man than the Archons or the spirits of the Ogdoad. No doctrine of the incarnation having yet been formulated, the relation of God to Christ was variously conceived, and appears in these different treatises under various forms of union.

With Basilides, as with Marcion, if not also with Paul, it is clear that the whole process was apparent rather than real. The highest heavenly power, Nous, descending upon the earth, united himself with the son of Mary, led his earthly life, suffered himself to be apparently crucified, then returned again to him that sent him. Whatever Gospels Basilides had before him, his conception of the Gospel narrative was purely mystical.

It is not easy for us to bring these strange abstractions back to life. We do not think in Ogdoads or Hebdomads nowadays, and it is hard for us to take seriously such barbaric terms. But then, if we refuse it here, we must for the same reason refuse to take the entire religious thought of the age seriously. We have already found how foreign to our beliefs were certain ideas of men in best repute, and on the most solemn of religious themes. If Papias or Tertullian seems less fantastic than Marcion or Basilides, is it not rather a difference in their imaginative or speculative habits, than because the one comes essentially nearer than the other to the religious ideals of today? If we would know our spiritual progenitors at all, we must consent to take them on their own ground; to speak their language, and think for the moment their thoughts.

This becomes still more essential as we approach another of the noted thinkers of this period. We have already formed some idea of the speculative tendencies then abroad, and can easily see how such tendencies must have been stimulated by the new spiritual problems which Christianity brought to the front. Among those most profoundly impressed by these problems, and who seized them if not in their most imaginative, at least in their most poetic aspects, was Valentine. As in previous cases, we get our knowledge of the man and his writings only through a hostile medium, and are permitted

to recover but few facts of a life which must have been full of excitement and interest. No interpretations of Christianity, in its hours of freshness and bloom, could have greater charm for us than those of the keener-sighted and more intellectual of its disciples; but unfortunately it is precisely these which are least likely to have been preserved. Valentine seems to have been a native of Egypt, possibly of Jewish birth, to have pursued his studies in Alexandria, and to have come to Rome to teach at about the same time with Marcion himself. The descriptions of his doctrines and those of his numerous followers have become so hopelessly mixed that it is even more difficult than in other instances to discriminate between master and disciple, and harder still to interpret his thoughts into anything like the language of today. We can at best only hint at beliefs which had such great vogue, and exerted such widespread influence upon the nascent Christianity, that they must not be passed by in entire silence.

To Valentine, as to Basilides, the coming of Christ was a stupendous moment in the world's history; the goal and fulfillment of its destiny. Ages had been preparing for it, forecasting step by step the supreme hour when the divine essence in man, after many sufferings, should recognize and rejoin its heavenly source. These foreshadowings of the final event, so far as we can reconstruct them, are like splendid rehearsals on a celestial stage; the longings, the frustrations, the eventual attainments, of heavenly natures leading the way to the great human drama. In those days there was little to impede the imagination in its dramatizations; no cold scientific habits, or too definite historical knowledge, or over-critical instincts; no acquaintance with Copernican or Galileans systems, to forbid the creation of sphere beyond sphere as the scene of these invisible transactions, no limit to the heavenly beings needed to people those spheres.

God, according to this exposition of Christianity, is the fathomless abyss where thought stops. He is Depth, consorting with Silence. He cannot, or will not, remain alone or inactive; longs, indeed, for some object of his love. From him therefore issue successive emanations or self-manifestations; series after series of Aeons. There are thirty of these highest Aeons, constituting the Pleroma, or infinite Fullness. Of these Nous alone (foreshadowing Christ and Jesus) knows the Father, revealing him in due time to the other Aeons. The first disturbance of the celestial harmony is caused by the youngest of the Aeons, Wisdom, who in her untimely longing for the Infinite rushes forth from the Pleroma, only to bring into being an abortive mass which is afterwards shaped into the earth. This is the beginning of evil in the universe. Great consternation seizes the remaining Aeons; and the lost harmony is restored only by the appearance of Christ and the Holy Spirit, completing the mystic number of the Aeons, and imparting at last to the celestial company the knowledge of the Divine.

The scene being now shifted to lower regions, the Demiurge appears. He is the Creator and ruler in his own sphere, called into being by the above catastrophe, and an ignorant and unconscious agent in higher hands; imaging the infinite Powers in action above him, and preparing the way for his own downfall. He is enthroned upon seven heavens, and fancies himself the Supreme; declaring, "I am God, and beside me there is none else". His agent and creature is the spirit of evil, the Devil, or Cosmocrator, who strives to keep man a creature of earth. His reign continues until the Son, whom he has himself created, and supposes wholly his own, and whom he sends forth to relieve men's woes, heals those woes in a higher sense, revealing the hidden mystery, while the Demiurge, finding himself dethroned, yields to his destiny.

For this great drama, as we have seen, three Christs, or manifestations of the Christ, are necessary, the last of whom embodies himself for his human mission in the son of Mary. At his appearance, his own disciples, the truly "spiritual", recognize him at once,

are revealed in their true nature, and rise with him to heavenly places. These spiritual beings are the real humanity; they are "the salt of the earth", and have been foreshadowed, like the rest, from all time. Their tragic struggles on earth are the efforts of the higher nature to purify itself from alien elements. They are "children of eternal life". In one of the few passages from Valentine's writings which have been preserved, he pictures this struggle of imperishable beings in a perishable universe : "Ye are immortal from the beginning, and are children of eternal life; but ye were willing to have death apportioned you, that ye might spend and consume it, so that in you and through you death might die. For when ye overcome the world, but are not yourselves destroyed, ye are lords over creation and over all that is perishable". Man is bound to his baser appetites only so long as the Demiurge rules over him and suppresses his consciousness of a higher estate. The earthly passions are strangers to his heart, and treat it as travelers do an inn, dwelling in it for a moment, but not regarding it as their own. "It seems to me to fare with the heart much as with a tavern; which is worn and trodden into ruts, and is off times covered with the filth of travelers who have dwelt there wantonly; having no care of the place, as belonging to others. Such a place is the heart so long as no thought is taken of it; being unclean and the abode of many demons. But when he who alone is good, the Father, visits it, it becomes sanctified, and full of light. And he who has such a heart is blessed, and shall see God". In the great consummation these varied elements return to their own. All that is mundane disappears. Death dies. The spiritual regains its home, and the primitive harmony is restored.

In all this, if our interpretation can be trusted at all, we find a spiritual process throughout; a phenomenal world, in which all that is human or earthly disappears in its ideal significance. Only in this mighty process of the ages could the rising of humanity from its low estate, and its assumption of its better nature, be fitly typified. And the main features of this scheme, it is to be remembered, are found by Valentine or his school within the letter of the Jewish or Christian Scriptures. It is the hidden meaning of those holy books, disclosing itself to those who have the key. The sublime imagery of the Old Testament Prophets, which the Demiurge himself was unable to interpret, was now for the first time disclosing to the initiated its secrets. The writings of Evangelists and Apostles, the "oracles of the Lord" himself, had their hidden sense as well, which the "spiritual" alone could discern. Paul was their authority for this : "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: which none of the princes of this world knew ... But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: ... neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man". It is Paul, too, who says : "It pleased the Father that in him the entire Pleroma should dwell".

It is Paul who speaks of "thrones, dominions, principalities and powers"; and of "the world-rulers of this darkness, and the spirit-hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places". When we read in the Scriptures, "The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul", we are to understand this not of the Supreme Deity, but of the Demiurge, who could impart only the "soul", or animal powers, leaving the spirit to come in due time from the true God. The thirty years spent by Jesus before he entered upon his ministry portray the thirty Aeons of the Pleroma; as also does the Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard. The lost sheep of the Gospels typifies Wisdom, the youngest Aeon, wandering beyond the Pleroma; the woman seeking her lost piece of silver denotes Enthymesis, or the yearning for the Infinite, recovered by that same Aeon, after many ages, at the coming of the Christ.

This sounds trivial enough to our modern tastes. Yet we may be sure that it was the most trivial instances that were most willingly preserved; and even through these we can discern an earnest and determined search for the spirit hidden beneath the letter of Christian truth. Nowhere has man's dim sense of something divine as his by right, or of a higher world to which he belongs yet does not belong, found bolder utterance than in these occult readings of the Christian Scriptures. Had the Valentinian Gospel been known among the Italian painters of the fourteenth or fifteenth century, one scene, at least, would not have remained without its artist. The aged Simeon, we are told, taking the infant Jesus in his arms, "blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word : for mine eyes have seen thy salvation". This was a symbol of the Demiurge, looking down upon the child who had come to take from him the kingdom which he had, until then, supposed was his own.

Perhaps I owe my readers an apology for leading them, thus unawares, into the deadly ambush of Gnosticism; but that name has acquired so forbidding a sound that I must be excused for having postponed the mention of it to the last possible moment. Yes, this is Gnosticism, in so far as that many-sided movement can be seen in the persons of its most noted exponents. It is no place here to analyze Gnosticism, or give its history, but the thing itself can no more be ignored in speaking of the second century than the presence of the scientific spirit in speaking of the nineteenth. The question is not so much to define Gnosticism, as to let Gnosticism define the age in which it appeared. Gnosticism was simply the theological attitude of the time; the form in which its religious philosophy chose to shape itself. When the Roman empire in its career of conquest set all religions and philosophies face to face, bringing the worships and systems of the East into Rome itself, some startling results were bound to follow; and these dualistic and allegoric extravagances are only isolated instances of those results. It would be impossible, if we desired, to trace all the Gnostic schools back to their sources; but some lines can be briefly pointed out.

Obscure indications of what was happening even on purely Jewish soil are afforded by such stories as that of Simon the Sorcerer; who, whatever his real character, had a great religious following in Samaria in apostolic times, and was regarded as the "Great Power of God". But other indications, much less obscure, appeared elsewhere, at the same time. Both Basilides and Valentine, we must remember, had some connection with the schools of Alexandria, an intellectual center where the contact of classic philosophies with Hebrew and other oriental faiths was more marked and fruitful than at any other point. That Judaism had long felt, in some measure, this rationalizing influence, we know very well; but all other Hellenistic tokens are but faint compared with what we find in the writings of an early contemporary of Paul, Philo the Alexandrian Jew. To Philo, as to other thoughtful Jews, the literal interpretation of Hebrew history, with its cruelties, its idolatries, and its gross anthropomorphism, had become intolerable. From this the Greek and Roman fashion of dealing with the gods of their Olympus offered a convenient and welcome escape. The Old Testament received an occult interpretation. It was a grand piece of symbolism, intended from the beginning to hide diviner truths. Later generations, troubled in their turn by traditional beliefs too sacred to be renounced yet too unreal to be longer retained, owe an immense debt to Philo for having domesticated this spiritualizing process within the Jewish faith. At his hands the Old Testament became a splendid allegory, behind which the sublimest tenets of philosophy lay hidden, and in which Moses and the Patriarchs became types of heavenly virtues, or lofty metaphysical ideals. Judaism became the mouthpiece of Stoic and Platonic philosophy.

This process of interpretation once entered upon, there is no necessary limit in any direction. Jehovah comes to embody the highest thought of Deity. He is the One

Supreme; he is the universe itself; he is the All. He cannot be defined, for he has no distinctive qualities or names. “He is not of a nature to be described, but is simply Being”. This Philo finds hidden in the words : “Ye shall not make with me gods of silver, neither shall ye make unto you gods of gold”. The world has been in existence, ideally, from the beginning of time. As man was created “after the image of God”, so this visible universe is only an image of the archetypal idea, or real world, existing in the mind of Deity. In creating the visible world he could not act of himself, “for it was not lawful that the wise and blessed God should touch ignorant and disorderly matter”. But there was no lack of helpers; the air being filled with incorporeal beings, called by philosophers demons, but by the Scriptures angels, passing constantly back and forth, as seen by Jacob in his dream. These spirits are the words of God, at the head of whom is the Word, the Logos, the Idea of ideas. The Logos performs many functions, and so receives many epithets at Philo’s hands. He is the image of God, as being the original or archetypal man; he is the High Priest; he is the first-born, the Helper or Comforter; he is the Second God. “Why is it”, Philo asks, “that the Scripture says : In the image of a god created he man?, as if it were the image of another God, and not himself? Very beautifully and wisely has this expression been used”, is the reply; “for it was impossible for anything mortal to be made in the image of the most high God, the Father of all; it could be made only after the second god, his Logos”. The Scriptures, according to Philo, make a distinction between the “sons of men”, who build towers of Babel, and the “sons of God”, who, though not quite worthy perhaps to be called sons of God himself, are yet “virtuous and wise”, and deserve to be called children of his “eternal image, his most sacred Word”. The seventy elders who saw the God of Israel typify these higher souls striving for the actual sight of God. The primitive man was formed of finest clay, receiving from God a breath of divine life which he has never wholly lost. When Abraham was led forth, and bade “to look towards heaven, and tell the stars”, it typified the soul escaping from itself and becoming absorbed in God.

This occult wisdom which enables one to discover the hidden truth of things is naturally not open to all; it comes by inspiration to those capable of it. It comes in trances, such as that which fell upon Adam, or upon Abraham, “as the sun was going down”. The mind, in this exalted state, receives direct notions of invisible things; sacred mysteries, not to be imparted to the uninitiated. Philo describes, with great emotion, the rapture of the God-inspired soul; how, “raised up on wings ... having passed beyond all sensible things, it yearns for the things of the mind; and beholding there, in their perfect beauty, the patterns and ideals of things perceptible here to the sense, it is seized by a sober intoxication, like the frenzy of the Corybantes, only with a nobler longing, and so is borne upward to the very verge of super-sensual things, into the presence of the great king”. Indeed, he does not hesitate to declare, like Paul, that he had himself shared in these unspeakable experiences.

This revived Platonism, tinged with oriental mysticism, Philo passed on to more philosophic and creative thinkers, at whose hands it took a form even more abstract, and lasted, as the Neo-Platonic School, quite into the fifth century, counting no less a personage than the Emperor Julian among its disciples, and affording a dignified close to the long reign of Greek philosophy. Certainly, philosophic mysticism could hardly reach a higher point than in the person of Plotinus, the founder of the school, who so disdained his own bodily existence that he refused to tell either his parents, his country, or his birthday; who, when asked to sit for his portrait, declined to leave to posterity an image of so base an image, and who four times, through the intensity of his spiritual passion, rose to actual union with God.1 This touch of apparent fanaticism was only an outward and incidental feature of a singularly noble life and refined system of thought,

which claims our attention here as one token the more of the lofty themes which were then occupying the best minds of the age. It gives us the philosophic side of the movement whose religious or Gnostic form we have just seen under the contact of Christianity.

It cannot be said that any direct connection can be established between Philo and the Gnostic schools. The origin of Gnosticism is absolutely obscure, and all that can be done is to point out the relation of Basilides and Valentine to Alexandria, and the unequivocal resemblance between many of Philo's ideas and theirs. What Philo had done for Judaism, in disclosing its occult significance, these and others were easily led to do for the younger faith which was making its appearance as Philo left the stage. The more easily, as the early Christians clung so tenaciously to their Jewish origin, and insisted on discovering their own highest mysteries hidden beneath the words of Moses and the Prophets. To the profane eye, it might seem a somewhat subordinate role to assign to Christianity, to make it simply an echo of the older dispensation; but this was not the view of the age we are studying, as we have had abundant opportunity to note. Marcion, indeed (who was Gnostic rather by courtesy), made quick work of the whole Jewish matter, casting it scornfully aside as unworthy intelligent thought; but Basilides and Valentine, with their numerous followers, welcomed the allegorical method with fervor, and gave it a footing in Christian councils from which it has never yet been dislodged. The extraordinary aspects which it assumed at their hands, hardly more fantastic, after all, than with many of their mediaeval and modern imitators, find an easy explanation in the more ingenuous temper of those primitive days, and the disturbed spiritual conditions to which Christianity at first addressed itself. It would need more explanation still, if Christian tenets had not stirred the pagan imagination to novel flights.

The three names which I have given are but a few out of many; some later, some probably earlier than themselves. The followers of Basilides and Valentine became subdivided into various sects, alongside of which, from similar or different sources, sprang up numberless schools known to us hardly more than through their names. The earliest writer upon this subject mentions twenty-one distinct sects; while another, somewhat later, gives twenty-two. Gibbon knows of fifty; one of the latest and most thorough historians of Gnosticism gives forty-three. We are to think of these sects as spread over the entire field of Christendom, and entering by antagonism or assimilation into the life and thought of all the churches. As time went on, it is plain that their doctrines, in some quarters, at least, became more and more extravagant. Charlatans entered their ranks, impostors played the hypocrite under the mask of their convenient tenets, voluptuaries availed themselves of the distinction between carnal and spiritual to indulge in forbidden pleasures, and to decline any such profession of their Christian faith as would involve the perils of martyrdom. They seem also to have borrowed much from the astrological superstitions of the hour, and magicians and ghost-fanciers found as many dupes among them as they find among the worshipers of this enlightened nine-tenth century. But despite these vagaries, common to it with many similar movements, Gnosticism was a power to be reckoned with in many directions. In the domain of morals, apart from certain aberrations, it advocated a system of asceticism too exacting to be popularly accepted, yet which reappeared later in the rigors of monasticism ; in the field of worship, it contributed more than its share to the hymnology and ritual of the young church; while it was the source apparently of much of the magic ceremonial which has held its place with such singular persistency in Christian worship. Most important of all, however, and the service by which it will be longest remembered, is the light it throws upon the theological speculations out of which the Catholic theology was born.

It will be clear from the above, I think, that Gnosticism has little claim to be called a system. There is but slight proof that these various schools held any conscious relation to each other, or recognized any common fellowship. It is doubtful even whether they had any common name, until this name was conferred upon them by the historians of heresy, for purposes of classification. Their prominent characteristic was held to be the claim to an occult knowledge of the Christian revelation. The Gnostic is he who knows; who has a profounder insight into the eternal secrets than the unillumined worshiper; and through this knowledge gains immediate access to Deity. This mystic insight into things divine became a contagious doctrine, and the first impulse evidently was to insist upon it as the distinguishing attribute of the true Christian. The leading Christian Father of the end of the century, Clement of Alexandria, so far from resenting the name Gnostic, claims it for himself and all of his faith. The Gnostic, according to him, is the true Christian. He is the only one who penetrates to the inner knowledge of things ; and by this knowledge overcomes the world, and becomes one with God. For a moment Gnosticism seemed destined to implant itself in the bosom of Christianity. Afterwards the tendency fell under suspicion, and this very claim of superior knowledge was denounced, and became the convenient designation of the many groups which were wandering from the trodden paths.

In later days, as is well known, Gnosticism was declared a heresy; and it may be expected of me, before dropping the subject, to draw the exact lines which separate it from Christianity. Some of my readers have already taken exception, perhaps, to my treating the movement as if it were really part and parcel of Christian history. It must be remembered, however, that we are not treating Christian history as a whole; we are standing within the second century, to see what was happening then and there; and with the best purpose in the world, I can see no distinction whatever at that time between the three leaders here mentioned and other Christian teachers. They had their opponents, no doubt, from the start. Justin Martyr hated Marcion with a godly hatred, and declared his followers impious heretics. At the same time he admits that they “are called Christians”, just as Pharisees and Sadducees were called Jews; the one case seeming to him quite as unrighteous as the other. The Gnostic was worse than other heretics, it appears, mainly because he denied that the Messiah would reign in Jerusalem a thousand years. The other Fathers, haters of heretics as they were, all acknowledged that the prominent Gnostics claimed to be Christian, and were commonly called so. Perhaps none of them puts the case with more tell-tale simplicity than Tertullian. “As they are heretics”, he says, “they cannot be Christians, ... and so have no right to the Christian writings; so that we may properly say to them : Who are you? When and whence did you come? What have you to do with my property, as you are none of mine? You, Marcion, by what right do you cut my wood? You, Valentine, who gave you leave to turn my streams aside? Apelles, why are you removing my landmarks? This is my property; I have held it a long time; I held it first; I have safe title-deeds from the original owners; I am the heir of the Apostles”. The simple fact is that these men considered themselves Christians, and were called so by others; they had their churches, bishops, Scriptures, and worship, and are charged by their opponents with aspiring to high ecclesiastical positions; they base their doctrines on the Christian Scriptures; one of them is the first scholar known to us to edit a Gospel, or collect the Epistles of Paul; another, according to his critics, wrote a commentary on the Gospels in twenty-four books. It would have been difficult for any of their opponents at that moment to have brought forward more satisfactory credentials than these. If it is claimed that they were pronounced heretics in the end, and cast out of fellowship by the leading churches of the time, this cannot be denied. But what shall we say of Tertullian, who abandoned the church because it would not come over with him

into Montanism? Or of Justin Martyr, Papias, and Irenaeus, who were declared heretics for their millennial errors? Or of Tatian, cast out for his asceticism? Judged by the final decisions of the church, when doctrines were at last established, every one of these church Fathers fell into heresies quite as perilous to the faith as the speculative errors of Gnosticism. It is quite superfluous at this distance to attempt to determine their degrees of error, or even to insist upon the name of heretic at all.

At that time, it must be remembered, there could be no genuine heresy, for there was no established faith. No Councils had yet rendered their decisions. There was no accepted Christian canon. There was no Christian Church. Churches there were, scattered through Asia Minor, Palestine, Greece, Rome, Africa, and Gaul; but no Church; no one organization including them all; no single head; no full consciousness of unity. We are witnessing in these very struggles, and the dissensions which they reveal, the first motives for a compacter union. The sense of unity, however feeble, is beginning to assert itself, though writers differ as to the tests to be applied. Before many years there will plainly be some established tribunal before which all teachers of novel or false doctrines must appear and give account of themselves. But meantime all doctrines have their chance. If Justin and Irenaeus have a right to their views of the great Christian mysteries, so have Basilides, and Valentine, and Bardesanes, and Saturninus. Fortunately these great questions could not be decided in a moment; and the world's philosophy had got well inside the church before the gates were closed.

I do not mean to intimate that there was any moment when these Gnostic ideas were received with universal favor. Indeed, the opposition to them began at once. By the end of the century, the great magnates of the church had entered upon an unsparing campaign against the whole mystic crowd. The vagaries of the followers, if not of the leaders, gave ample field for satire and caricature. The very mention of Aeons or of the Pleroma filled the good Fathers with mirth. "Iu, Iu, Pheu, Pheu!" cries Irenaeus; "for well may we strike the tragic note at this audacity; at these unblushing names coined for a system of falsehood". He professes to be much affected at the sorrows of Acamoth, sitting and weeping over her exile from the Pleroma, and suggests that all the seas, fountains, and rivers, and especially the hot-springs, flowed from her tears. Tertullian considered Bythos and Sige, Nous and Veritas, as the first four-in-hand known to history; was evidently anxious lest the Aeons, from their stupendous number, should not be adequately housed in the heavenly regions; and imagined the celestial palaces piled up, story upon story, and labeled, no doubt, "rooms to let". The amenities so familiar to all theological literature were visited freely upon the great leaders of the movement, especially upon Marcion, whose successful propaganda of his doctrines exposed him to peculiar virulence. The epithets applied to him form an instructive theologic anthology. Justin Martyr called him a devil; Polycarp, "the firstborn of Satan"; Irenaeus a snake; Hippolytus, a hound; Rhodo, a wolf; Epiphanius, a viper; Cyprian, a blasphemer; Tertullian, at different moments of his wrath, a monster, a gnawing-mouse, and a cuttle-fish.

Meantime, despite all vituperation and excommunications, the new doctrines got a hearing everywhere, and left hardly a single region unvisited. The following century found Marcionites and Valentinians from Gaul to Africa. The several historians of heresy enumerate as many sects as churches, and intimate, one after another, that the worst of the task is still to be undertaken. In the fourth century, during the Arian controversy, Gnostics still existed in Gaul, Spain, and Aquitania, and still troubled the faithful by their over-zealous asceticism. In the sixth century there was still necessity for Byzantine legislation against the Marcionites.

Our chief interest in Gnosticism, however, is in its beginnings, before it has yet been pronounced an outcast, and while it is still fighting on equal terms against the early traditions, and luring the Christian mind so resistlessly into the regions of abstract speculation. Before it can be banished from the churches, its work is accomplished. For more than a century, as we have seen, Christianity has been so steeped in allegory and mysticism that it can never be quite the same again.

CHAPTER VI

THE MYSTIC GOSPEL

Christianity had done its best, as we have seen, to purge itself of the virus of Gnosticism. But it was too late. It might cast out its Marcions and Valentines, but it could not undo the work they had wrought. Gnosticism had become bone of its bone. To read the pages of what was soon to be known as the New Testament is to come upon these hated doctrines again and again. They mark especially all the later books, bringing them into vivid contrast with the earlier. How unlike the Jesus of the Galilean Gospels is the "Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men". What place could be found in Matthew or Mark for this language? "Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature : for by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers ... And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. ... In him dwelleth the whole Pleroma of the Godhead bodily". Or where could this come in? "Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they". Or this? "His name is called The Word of God ... And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords". Strange reading this, also, for those who know the death and resurrection of the Master only as narrated by the early Gospels : "Put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: by which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; ... and is gone into heaven, ... angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him".

It must be confessed, however, that these are but fragmentary and most inadequate tokens of a great spiritual movement. Is there nothing more to show? Does nothing remain but these scanty citations, or the recriminations of hostile theologians, to mark an agitation which stirred the young Christian Church so profoundly? Unfortunate, indeed, for the student of religious history, if this is really so.

Happily, if appearances do not deceive us, we are not so badly off. Just as the three earlier Gospels were assuming their final shape, and receiving the sanction of the churches, a fourth, whose unwonted form betrays a wholly dissimilar origin, is added to the number. We can only guess at its exact source. At a time when nearly all Christian writings were virtually anonymous, we cannot complain if this also shows but little trace of its authorship. From what school of thinkers it comes, however, there can be little question. Its opening verses reflect familiar meditations, and carry us at once into a religious atmosphere which we have learned to associate with Alexandria. We cannot be surprised at this. If the Jewish mind had been so influenced by Greek philosophy, how much more the Christian, with new and strange problems on its hands as to the relation of the human and the divine. To the Jew, these speculations threw light upon a grand historic past; to the Christian, they offered a splendid interpretation of incidents and truths still fresh in mind. The eternal Word, the only-begotten Son in the bosom of the

Father, whom Philo could depict with the unimpassioned indifference of a philosopher, becomes for the Christian soul a sublime reality. It has taken flesh, and dwelt among men. The drama of ages has reached at last its fulfillment. How inadequate for the portrayal of this celestial scheme must the simple Galilean chronicles have appeared, with which till then the church had been content. Plainly, another Gospel must stand by their side, to reveal the divine significance of what they had treated as purely earthly events.

We must not pretend to more knowledge of this unknown writer or his origin than we really possess. It is only conjecture that connects him directly with Alexandria, or indeed with any special locality or circle; and we must rest content with marking the close affinities of thought and expression between the Fourth

Gospel and the Alexandrian School. As little do we know how far the author was indebted to the older Gospels for any of his historic material. There is certainly no sign of antagonism on his part, nor of any conscious purpose to supplement or correct them. One wonders, indeed, whether he even knew of their existence, so little does he hold to their narrative, or trouble himself to show where he deviates from it. The deviations are profound, and, if reconcilable at all with the primitive accounts, have never yet been reconciled. At the same time, the ingenuous and occasionally realistic character of the new narrative is too marked to allow us to suppose that the writer is inventing his story, or even wholly subordinating the outward events to his spiritual theme. He bases his Gospel upon what he believes to be actual facts; yet he leads us through unfamiliar scenes from beginning to end, and we become aware that he is drawing from some distinct and original historic source. Wherever this Gospel was written, in Alexandria, or in Asia Minor, a tradition of Jesus had survived as unlike the Palestine picture as Phrygia was unlike Galilee. It is no longer a Galilaean ministry that we are witnessing. It is in Judaea that the Messiah begins his earthly work; in Judaea that he chiefly continues it; and in Judaea that he ends it. Instead of lasting but a single year, it goes on from one Passover to another, and still another. He has at his side, not the familiar Twelve, but four or five companions hardly known to the other Evangelists. He discourses with his disciples or the multitude, not in familiar conversation or parable, but in stately tones of reverie or monologue.

But it is not so much the historic scenery which distinguishes this Gospel from the others, as the spirit in which the facts are handled. The writer's interest lies, without concealment, not in the incidents which he is recording, but in their spiritual significance. Though transacted on earth, it is none the less a heavenly history which he presents. Indeed, it has no earthly beginning. There is no birth, not even a miraculous one; still less any Baptism, or Temptation, or Gethsemane. We are taken back at the outset to the very beginning, before time was; into the mysteries of the eternal councils. The actor in these scenes is not the human Jesus that he seems; not really he. It is the very Word, the Logos, which was with God from the beginning and was himself divine. He was the agent through whom all things were created. He was the only son really born of God; the only begotten; and shared the life and light which constitutes the essence of Deity. All this time, while the Son rested in the bosom of the Father, the world was lying in darkness, unaware even of the light which was shining upon every soul which came into the world. In him alone lies the redemption of a world bound in the tragic antithesis of darkness and light, evil and good. Now, at last (we are not told how or when), he has taken the form of flesh; has dwelt among us indeed in an earthly tabernacle, and we have gazed upon his glory, full of grace and truth. We have received what Moses and the Law could not give; what he alone who is in the bosom of the Father can declare. With the coming of the Christ, man enters at last upon his divine inheritance, the sonship of God.

With this Prologue, so impressive in its simplicity, and lending celestial dignity to all that follows, the new Gospel opens. The one connection with the human incidents which elsewhere attend the birth of the Messiah—or his entrance upon his ministry — is offered by the introduction of John the Baptist, "the man sent from God ... to bear witness of the Light". It is not exactly the Baptist we know so well; the gaunt hermit of the wilderness, whose strange mien and attire, and fiery reproof of Pharisees and Sadducees, publicans and soldiers, make the most vivid sketch by far in the old Gospel picture; not the half-despairing preacher of the kingdom, doubtful to the end whether Jesus of Nazareth were really "he that should come". This John the Baptist knew the Messiah from the start; had known of him before he came; and appears before us but for a moment, to usher in the incarnate Son of God. The anchorite, the wild reformer, the preacher of righteousness, has become a shadow of himself, a ghostly form which passes for a moment before our eyes, speaks the language of the Alexandrian philosophy, points dramatically to "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world", and disappears speedily from sight.

In a Gospel thus opened we shall hardly expect much individuality in the various actors, or much definiteness of place or time. Phrases like "the next day", "the day following", "the third day", "after these things", occur here and there, but have nothing behind to give them meaning, and introduce a chronology which is absolutely vague throughout. Men and women appear; but we must be prepared to find that they are as shadowy and intangible as the Baptist himself, and with even less part or concern in what occurs; that their conversation and actions are unreal, and that their presence simply affords occasion for the utterance of abstruse thoughts far beyond their comprehension, where speaker, listener, and narrator are forgotten in mystical and exalted monologue. The Messiah speaks in oracles; sometimes with no audience before him, and into the empty air; always as if looking beyond his hearers to the generations yet to come. We are in a shadow world throughout, where the invisible, the ideal, the spiritual alone is real.

Even the humanities, the tenderest, pass for little here. At Cana of Galilee, where a marriage feast seems for the moment to lend a pleasant personal touch to the opening narrative, when the mother of Jesus ventures to tell her son that there is no wine for the guests, Jesus replies : "Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come". Plainly, it is the Logos that speaks here, not the man. The whole scene indeed vanishes as we read. It is no real marriage; it is the entry of the Messiah upon his wonder-working career. It is the "beginning of miracles", in which he "manifested forth his glory".

The men and women of the narrative, as has been said, play no essential part in the course of events, but serve for the most part as occasions for philosophic discourse. At Jerusalem a certain Nicodemus, unknown to the other Gospels, comes stealthily into Jesus' presence at night. He has no real question of his own to propose; the conversation, if such it can be called, is carried on on two distinct planes; he shows no understanding of the Master's sententious speech; he disappears forthwith from the scene, and is forgotten by the narrator before the chapter is finished. But meantime his brief remark has afforded an opportunity for the Christ, quite regardless of Nicodemus's presence, to unfold the purely heavenly character of his mission. In the Gospel of Matthew on a similar occasion, as Jesus enters upon his ministry, we have the fine ethical precepts of the Sermon on the Mount; here we listen instead to an unfathomable utterance upon the radical distinction between things of the flesh and things of the spirit. It is to the "spiritual" alone that the kingdom of heaven belongs : "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God ... That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit". Christ's coming of itself brought out the vital antagonism between the creatures of darkness and the

creatures of light: “This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, ... but he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest”. In these mystic words, hardly more intelligible to us than to Nicodemus himself, the whole mission of Jesus is lifted once for all from earthly to celestial spheres; but before the discourse is ended, the hearer has passed wholly from our thought, and the result, so far as he is concerned, remains an unimportant matter of conjecture.

Again, as Jesus passes through Samaria, a woman meets him at a well. She is a woman of the people; of the lowest ranks of the people; even more impervious than Nicodemus himself to the higher truth. She can see in the Jewish stranger only a sorcerer, reading the forbidden secrets of her private life; the conversation between them is, as before, on two mutually inaccessible levels; the woman comes and goes as vaguely as Nicodemus; but none the less has elicited from the Christ the finest message of his Gospel, thrown out upon the air with none but a hardened woman to hear, and none to remember or report. “Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father ... God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth”. Where else in all literature do the material facts, the well, the water, the thirst, the woman, the husband, melt so completely into thin air, leaving only a spiritual essence behind?

Once for all, we must take these pages on their own ground, and catch from them the breath of that special age, if we would feel their power. If we seek here the charm or variety of historic incident, the nature-touch of parable, or even the burning tones of moral indignation or reproof, we look in vain. This is no chronicle, nor ethical treatise. In themselves these monologues, returning constantly to the same mystic theme, are strangely monotonous. It is only as they lift us with them into spiritual reverie that we discover their true force. This is especially true when familiar scenes from Gospel history pass now and then before us. The Jewish Sabbath is violated, as in the other Gospels. In them, as we remember, it calls forth fine moral precepts, and is made to inculcate lessons of beneficence and right. “The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath”. “Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days”. Here it serves instead as a text for a theological disquisition, carrying us once again into the deepest mysteries of the Godhead. The Jews who throng around the Messiah in the streets of Jerusalem listen to a discourse on certain transcendent distinctions between the Father and the Son. Far from resting on the Sabbath, says the Christ, God works continually; and the Son also works. The Son reflects the being of the Father : “What things soever the Father doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise”. He is absolutely dependent on the Father: “The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do”. “I can of mine own self do nothing : ... because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me”. Yet the Son claims equal honor with the Father. In his hands, indeed, is the divine judgment; for his voice calls even the dead to life, and separates forever the believer from the unbeliever, assigning the one to eternal life, the other to “the resurrection of damnation”. Had the Jews understood their own Scriptures, they would have found all this concealed there; for beneath the letter was a hidden message. “They testify of me.” All testimony of the past points to the Christ.

The Christ of this Gospel may be of the Jewish race, or he may not; we cannot tell. He is called “Jesus of Nazareth”; he passes as a Jew; he is the son of Joseph, whose father and mother all know; he quotes from Jewish Scriptures; there is a story that he has come out of Galilee. Yet, on the other hand, he speaks of Galilee as if it were not his own country; and throughout the entire Gospel, the Jews are mentioned as if of a foreign race. They are always “the Jews”. Even the Christ himself, in addressing the Jews, speaks of

"your law", and "your father Abraham". He goes still farther : "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him". For the Logos, it would seem, the eternal Son of God, all questions of race or fatherhood or nation are of too slight account to be considered.

But other things beside places and individuals melt away under this spiritualizing process. One of the marked peculiarities of our Gospel is its strange silence in regard to the Lord's Supper. It seems at first glance to know nothing of this incident whatever. The disciples gather at supper, it is true, on the night before the crucifixion; but the evening passes without any allusion to the rite which the Christian Church has ever since associated so closely with those closing hours. Can it be that the tradition, although so widely known among the churches, had not reached the author of this Gospel? Or is it left unmentioned because he would have his readers disregard the outward form of this historic rite, and see in it only its latent sense? If he refers to the Supper at all, this must be the explanation; and one of the early chapters of the Gospel seems to force us to this conclusion. No supper is mentioned there, nor any actual bread or wine. Jesus is in the synagogue at Capernaum. Below are the Jewish multitudes, with minds still intent upon the miraculous loaves on which they had been fed, and clamoring for some new sign, like the falling of the manna in the wilderness; above, the Christ, engaged in lofty speech which even the disciples cannot comprehend. In most narratives it would be bewildering to find allusions to a solemn rite like the Eucharist, before its establishment, and addressed to an assembly for whom the Eucharist could have no meaning; but here it does not surprise us at all. Time and place, flesh and blood, bread and wine, are but symbols at best of a diviner reality. The only true manna is the "bread of God; he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world". "I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. ... I am the living bread which came down from heaven : if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world". "Verily I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you ... For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed". These forms and words are nothing; it is the spirit alone that tells. "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life".

Even the miracles of this Gospel, like other outward incidents, lose their verisimilitude, and become themselves but symbols. They are no less vivid or genuine than elsewhere, they are apparently quite as historical, and are often even more realistic in their details; but while in Matthew, Mark, and Luke the tenderness or beneficence of the act itself challenges our attention, here the act always serves some ulterior purpose, for which alone it is introduced. It becomes expository or didactic; it points a moral; it affords a starting-point for a theological discourse, or the discussion of abstract and inscrutable truths. Of what moment is it in such a narrative, the writer seems to say, that the hungry multitudes are fed, or the blind made to see, or even the dead raised to life; it is not the thing itself, but the something symbolized that we are to remember. A man born blind sits by the wayside as Jesus and his disciples pass. The Master stops, makes clay to anoint the eyes of the sufferer, and bids him "go, wash in the pool of Siloam", and be healed. A beautiful act of helpfulness, which touches our deepest sympathies, and on which we would gladly dwell. But no; it is not the physical blindness that we are to be moved by, but the spiritual. It is "that the works of God may be manifest in him", that he has been healed. The blind man escapes from a lifetime of darkness to proclaim obscure truths, and enunciate the author's dogmas. The Christ is shown thereby to be "the light of the world". "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world". "For judgment

I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind". The passing touch of the human and the real disappears at once in the theological and ideal.

Again, a dear friend of Jesus dies. The Master's relations with the whole household are peculiarly tender, and as he approaches the bereft home he is deeply moved. For a moment, one single moment, the stately march of the narrative is disturbed, the Logos is forgotten, and a living man stands before us. Jesus weeps. Yet only for a moment. All has been prearranged, we find at once; the bitter trial was known and intended from the beginning. "When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby". The Master still tarries two days in the same place, though knowing that his friend's death approaches. Then he says to his disciples: "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep.... And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him". When the grave is opened, and the dead comes forth, it is that the people that stand by might "see the glory of God"," and believe that this was "the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world". It was a token in advance of his own resurrection, which was to overcome death for all who believe. I am not for a moment criticizing this scene. No interpretation can rob it of its dignity or pathos. I am only calling attention to the character of a Gospel in which, even in moments like this, the historic fact loses itself so completely in its speculative import.

Again, false leaders are troubling the church as this Gospel is written; teachers of strange doctrines; false Messiahs, perhaps, such as were long ago predicted. All these, and indeed all previous teachers, says our Gospel, are but thieves and robbers; they are like hireling shepherds, fleeing from danger, and forgetting the safety of their flocks. "All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them ... I am the good shepherd : the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep ... I am the good shepherd and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep". These are charming human touches, and bring the Christ very near to earth; but only to lift us at once to the clouds again. The good shepherd is the Logos; clothed with the very power of the Father. If he lays down his life, he has power to take it up again when he will. He can impart to his own eternal life. He shares in the very essence of the Father. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life.... My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all ... I and my Father are one". The Jews, to whom Jesus addressed these words, cry out against such a blasphemous assumption, and take up stones to stone him : "For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God". And a vast assumption it was, if this were the Jewish Messiah of the earlier Gospels. Not so with the Logos; in whose mystic relations with Deity the old messianic notions have been forgotten. Do not his mighty works prove his supernal nature ? Do not their own Scriptures represent God as surrounded by heavenly hosts, and rank even Jewish and heathen rulers as gods? How much more could he whom the Father had sent into the world claim to be the very Son of God.

In these exalted moods, the imagination rarely concerns itself with precise definitions; and we cannot expect our author to show us the exact relations which this celestial being holds to the Infinite. Certainly he does not do so. Perhaps he had not formulated them in his own mind. These thoughts were still new; and the Christian mind had not yet entered upon those subtler distinctions which afterwards became so familiar, and were supposed to reconcile all contradictions, and remove all impossibilities. Meantime, so far as this Gospel is concerned, these contradictions stand, in all simplicity,

side by side. The Son once rested in the bosom of the Father, and was with him “before the world was”; he was sent down to the earth and became flesh; like God, he “had life in himself”; he hath all judgment committed to him, and “quickeneth whom he will”; he is of the Father’s essence, and is himself divine; yet at the same time, he “can do nothing of himself”; he can do and speak only as the Father has taught him; and never ceases to declare his dependence upon the Father who sent him, and whose will alone he has come to perform.

By and by this will not be enough; and the Son’s august relations with the Father must be formally catalogued and established. As yet they belong to the sphere, not of logic, but of pure spiritual imagination.

But the story is not yet fully told. Insubstantial as are the scenes of this life in Judaea, it has like all others, if not an earthly beginning, at least an earthly close. Though there is no place in this Gospel for the struggle or agony of Gethsemane, though the cruel end has been foreshadowed from the outset, though the Son of God need not fear death, but has power even to raise himself from the grave, though he has come into the world simply to manifest, in his coming and going, the divine counsels, this cannot prevent a certain solemnity gathering over the closing hours, as of souls charged with momentous secrets. The familiar scenes of the earlier Gospels flit bewilderingly before our eyes; the same, yet strangely different; like the broken, inconsequent apparitions of a dream.

Though the Christ has gone daily in and out of Jerusalem during the two or three years of his ministry, he enters now as a stranger, and with the palm branches of a victor. Though never appearing before as the Jewish Messiah, he suddenly becomes the “king of Israel”, is received with shouts and songs, and seated upon an ass, as in ancient prophecy. Though his death is necessarily but a transient incident, and his burial can be therefore but for a moment, he is none the less anointed for his burial; not, indeed, as in other narratives, by a sinful woman, but by Mary, the loved sister of Lazarus, who wipes his feet with her hair. A vague trouble, as of Gethsemane, passes over his soul; yet brings no heartbroken supplication, — “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.” No; but a far more triumphant strain: “Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour? but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name”. His life has already reached its predestined close; and what follows has no terror, because no human reality. “Now is the judgment of this world : now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me”.

He meets his disciples for a final repast; yet not as in the other Gospels at the Passover, for the real Paschal lamb is to be offered on the morrow; nor yet to establish a covenant or initiate a rite. Beginning with a beautiful symbol of humility, in which the washing of his disciples’ feet is sublimated into the tie which binds the Son to the Father, and the disciples to each other, and to their Master, he fills the hours of the feast with long discourse, in which the mystic speech of the Gospel reaches its height; culminating in a vision of those whom the Father has given him as with him in heavenly places, and beholding the glory which has been his from the beginning.

All this, we feel, is not the work of a falsifier, far though he wanders from the ancient narratives. It is rather the work of one to whom the facts of the Judean ministry, as he has learned them, are divinely significant, and to whom the hidden meaning of such events is alone of real account. It is impressive enough, this fine disdain of the letter which killeth; this absolute absorption in the spirit which giveth life. It points us to many deep truths, and gives a sublime interpretation to the story of the Christ. The process has its perilous side, it must be confessed; and one who commits himself to it must bid

farewell once for all to the historic sense, to which the commonest facts are of infinite worth. It removes these divine events from the path of human history. Were this the only record which had survived, we might well deplore its uncompromising mysticism, and long for a touch of the human and the real. But it is not; and we can enjoy its spiritual interpretations without reserve.

Among many points of resemblance to the earlier Gospels which this writing contains, there is one feature wholly peculiar to itself. It comes towards the close. The time approaches when the Son of God must depart. His earthly work is ended, and his disciples will see him no more. “I came forth from the Father”, he says, “and am come into the world : again, I leave the world, and go to the Father”. He speaks of no return upon the clouds, or messianic reign on earth. Yet he promises the disciples that he will not leave them wholly alone. The divine resources are infinite; the angelic hosts numberless. Among them is one whose function it is to take the place of the Logos when he departs. It is the Paraclete; a celestial being unknown to other writers of the New Testament, but evidently familiar to the readers of this Gospel. As in other systems of the period, this divine agent has many names. He is called now the Spirit of truth; now the Holy Ghost; now he seems hardly distinguishable from the Logos himself. Yet his character and functions are clearly marked. He is a direct effluence from the Almighty, sent to the world to fill the place of the Logos, and able to come only after the Logos has left the earth, but then to remain with the believer forever. “I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Helper, that he may abide with you for ever”. “It is expedient for you that I go away : for if I go not away, the Paraclete will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you”. He is to disclose to the disciples the secret meaning of truths which they had been slow to comprehend, and reveal the new teachings which till then they had not been prepared to hear. “I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now ... But the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you”. The Paraclete has ceased to be a familiar name to our ears, that of Holy Ghost having early superseded it in Christian theology; but its presence on these pages is an interesting reminiscence of a movement which long agitated the church, and gives them an individuality distinctly their own.

This closing discourse, though so profoundly mystical in its spirit, is not without its touches of deep affection, passing at times, as the highest thought so often does, into tones of passionate tenderness. He commends to the Father, in words of great sublimity, those whom he has chosen as his own. His love for them is even as the Father's love for him, who loved him “before the foundation of the world”. His prayer is for them alone, and such as believed in him through their word. The world had not listened to him or heard his voice, therefore could have no place in his remembrance; but all the more are his disciples, sanctified through the truth, and sharing his heavenly glory, to become one in him. He even declares : “The glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one : I in them, and thou in me, that they may be perfect in one”.

It may seem strange to us that the “love” which so pervades these farewell words, and forms as it were their special note, should not embrace the entire world. The writer has freed himself wholly from the Jewish limitations which characterize the earlier Gospels; why does he stop short with the little circle of the elect? We cannot answer this question. We can only accept the fact as one illustration the more that the thoughts of one age are not the thoughts of another, and must not be forced upon another. Many conceptions which eighteen centuries of human activity have made familiar were just suggesting themselves to the second century; and even the mystic, it seems, could not

rise wholly above the horizon of his time. In any case, Christendom had still long to wait, as we know, for the thought of God as concerning himself equally for all his creatures.

The closing incidents of the Messiah's life, while following in general the familiar traditions, and adding some important details, resemble the earlier narratives rather as ghostly forms resemble living figures. The conversation with Pilate, though addressed to Roman ears, is an echo of the theological discourses which have preceded: "My kingdom is not of this world ... To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice". The guards who accompany Judas, as they heard the voice of the Christ, "went backward, and fell to the ground". There are no human revulsions before the fatal hour, nor any real sufferings at the end. The ideal death, not the real, was the supreme hour in this tragedy. No cries of anguish come from the cross, no despairing words : "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The celestial visitor announces with a word the end of his mission, and departs. "He said, It is finished : and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost".

So, by the middle of the second century, a fourth Gospel takes its place beside the other three, destined, in so far as it is accepted at all, to open wide the doors of the young faith to the entrance of mysticism. It would be impossible to overrate its power, or be blind to the splendid assurance and sustained imaginative force with which it lifts the entire earthly scenery of Christianity into visionary spheres. The dividing line between the seen and unseen was less sharply drawn then than now, and many questions which force themselves upon our thought were not even asked. In an age when a human emperor, with more than the foibles of ordinary humanity, could be seriously worshiped after death as a god; when Olympus, a well-known mountain in Greece, had hardly ceased to be regarded as the abode of all the gods, or Jupiter to be revered as the supreme divinity, though sharing the basest human passions, it was quite possible, no doubt, to think of the life in Galilee as real, and yet conceive this sublime dream-world, in which the Logos, the eternal companion of Deity, steps down for the hour, inhabits a human form, allows his enemies to heap upon him indignities which touch him not, then passes back into heavenly realms, leaving a subordinate Aeon in his place. If Paul could imagine the Galilean preacher, who had died but yesterday, and whose daily companions he had known and talked with, to be the very "Lord from heaven", still more easily, no doubt, could the writer of this Gospel, who had held no such living relations with Master or Apostles, view those sacred hours in their purely celestial aspects.

We cannot quarrel with one who has added so exalted a page to the world's religious literature, or asserted so sublimely the rights of the spirit to claim all things as its own. Man's spiritual history, Christianity itself, would hardly be complete had this page not been written, and written by one to whom this was the truth of truths. We must not quarrel, either, with the place he has won for his Gospel in Christian hearts; or the success with which he has effaced the earlier records, and made his interpretation supreme. It could hardly be otherwise, perhaps, so long as the love of the marvelous reigns in the human soul, or the pressure of stern spiritual problems drives humanity into the arms of the ideal. If religious truth is a thing which must never be looked squarely in the face, then indeed these pious endeavors to soften the hard outlines of reality cannot lose their value; and the Fourth Gospel will still hold its place as the consummate flowering of Christian faith. Among certain schools, as we know, this mystic volume is the saving of Christianity, rescuing its facts from their sordid literalness. It is the keynote of Christian philosophy. To them, as to the writer of this Gospel, the unseen alone is real. According to their faith, the pre-existent Logos, eternal effluence from Deity, alone renders possible the communion of the human with the divine. Without the Logos, man

and God remain forever apart. The metaphysical necessities of philosophy dominate the spiritual necessities of the soul, and the Fourth Gospel becomes in such hands an imperious occultism, summing up once for all God's message to the world. Fortunately it is not necessary to contest this point here. In an age when the historic temper and the scientific spirit, unknown in those primeval days, have come at last to their rights, such a question may safely be left for the future to decide. For those of us who cannot for a moment accept any single writing as the last word of Christianity, the beauty and poetry of this Gospel still retain their charm, and it stands as an eloquent chapter of Christian history.

But it is a chapter only, not the whole. If the mystic interpretation of the life of Jesus was beautiful, that life was also beautiful; the more beautiful, the more distinctly its actual features are seen. Its secret lies in its reality. To that earthly life all abstract theories owe whatever significance they possess; and when one speculation after another has had its day and been forgotten, it is the life itself which will remain as the supreme message of Christianity to the race.

Viewed in this light, these four Gospels form a unique record of momentous hours. Neither can take the place of the other. Without the Fourth Gospel, we should never have known the rapturous dreams which the young faith could excite, or the daring ideals it could create; with the Fourth Gospel alone, we should never have guessed that Jesus of Nazareth led a human life, ending in a human tragedy. For this knowledge we must still turn to those homelier chronicles in which facts, too, have their rights, and which claim for themselves no nobler function than to record ingenuously the comings and goings of one sacred year in Galilee.

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